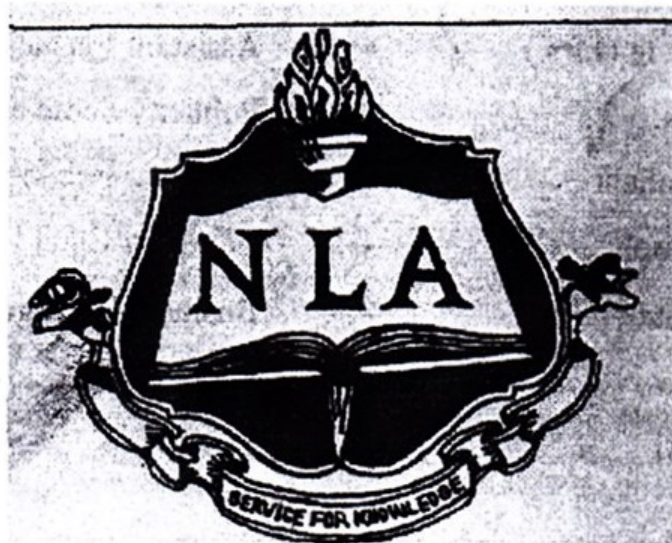


LIBRARY FOCUS

JOURNAL OF THE NIGERIAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

KADUNA STATE CHAPTER



VOLUMES 17 & 18

1999/2000

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EDITORIAL

This is Volumes 17 & 18 of the 1999/2000 Library Focus. Whereas the Library Focus has been one of the most current journals in the country, the present edition has however come out some months behind schedule. This is not unconnected with the difficulties encountered while sourcing for, processing and packaging materials for the journal. Thus, not only did the larger proportion of the articles received fail on assessment to meet the selection criteria, but that the writers of publishable articles were also not prompt in returning the corrected version of their work for further processing.

In spite of the administrative hitches enumerated above, this edition of the journal carries ten articles written by experienced teaching and practicing librarians from different libraries of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The articles cover such important areas as inculcating reading culture in future library users; information system for marketing decision support; managing human behaviour in academic libraries; library automation: a look at the X-Lib software; citation analysis as a tool in determining the literature used by researchers in social sciences and the librarian in information technology age. Other exciting works in this volume are research reports such as, begging for attention: the case of Waziri Junaidu – history and culture bureau, Sokoto; acquisition of information handling skills by secondary school students, problems of overdue materials in the main library of the Ahmadu Bello University, and library development in Benue State, Nigeria.

The various works published in this volume are meant to provide opportunity for us to educate one another. This becomes necessary because interaction of ideas is crucial to human development. It is my hope therefore, that this issue of Library Focus will stimulate that process.

K. A. Momoh
Editor-in-Chief

ACQUISITION OF INFORMATION HANDLING SKILLS BY SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

By

Dr. Felicia E. ETIM

ABSTRACT

This paper reports the result of a study designed to identify strategies available to secondary school students for their acquisition of information handling skills and students who actually possess the skills. The result of the study indicates that students mostly prefer teacher-dependent strategies while secondary school students actually possess the skills in varying degrees. It calls for a change in current teaching methods in secondary schools.

INTRODUCTION

It was formerly believed that the best way to learn was through pedagogy. The focus of curriculum planners was the teacher and the content. Students were required to believe or at least pretend to accept everything that the teacher said (Britain, 1973). Modern research (Okpala, 1992) into learning has shown that learning occurs through continuous interaction between the learner and the environment. The learner must therefore play an active role in the learning process. He does not have to be passive, that is to sit, listen, memorize and regurgitate facts. The learner is now provided with the opportunity to actively seek knowledge, make observations, formulate definitions, make judgements, analyze and synthesize facts, think, imagine and draw conclusions. For the learner to live up to this expectation he has to acquire effective information handling skills (HIS). These would help him to learn throughout life, rather than memorize mere factual information that would get out of date even before he graduates from school. It therefore means that the present "talk and chalk" method should be de-emphasized and gradually replaced with more resource-based learning.

Studies conducted into facilities in schools and libraries in Nigeria have revealed a lot of inadequacies (Brittain, 1973; Dike, 1983; Ifemesie, 1985; Okpala, 1992; Kaniki, 1994). The dwindling economy has also made the improvement of these structures difficult. Yet

the need by students to seek and use information is not diminished. Getting the best from this poor situation will not be possible unless students are well equipped with adequate information handling skills (IHS). This study is therefore aimed at investigating the acquisition of information handling skills by students and the strategies available for such acquisition. Specifically, the research questions formulated for this study were:-

1. What are the strategies available for the acquisition of Information Handling Skills (IHS) by secondary school students?
2. Which Information Handling Skills (IHS) have been acquired by secondary school students?

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The study was a simple survey research involving a study of a population of secondary school students.

Study Population

The population consisted of all secondary school students in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria. As at 1997/98 school sessions these students numbered 130,758 (One hundred and thirty thousand seven hundred and fifty eight) from 240 (Two hundred and forty) schools spread over ten educational zones.

Sampling

Thirty (30) schools were randomly selected from the ten educational zones, three from each zone. Similarly, a total of 576 students, 288 males and 288 females were randomly selected from the schools selected for study.

Research Instrument

A UNESCO standardized test (Irving, 1987) was used to test students information handling skills. The test involved students use of the skills for assignment. Also a five point likert scale questionnaire was used to measure the availability of strategies for acquisition of information handling skills (IHS).

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using simple percentages.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Availability and Students Preference of Strategies for the Acquisition of Information Handling Skills

S/No.	Strategies For Acquisition Of Information Handling Skills (HIS)	Frequency and Percentage Availability	Frequency and Percentage Preference
1.	Instruction from teachers, parents and librarians	192 (33.3)	145 (25.17)
2.	Reading	141 (24.48)	130 (22.57)
3.	Group discussion with peers	101 (17.53)	99 (17.19)
4.	Private study with library resources	54 (9.38)	83 (14.41)
5.	Programmed instruction directed by teacher	47 (8.16)	66 (17.46)
6.	Research of past record and experience	31 (5.38)	31 (5.38)
7.	Use of demonstration (realia)	10 (1.74)	22 (3.82)
TOTAL		576 (100.00)	576 (100.00)

% In Parenthesis

Respondents were required to identify from a list of existing strategies those available to them and those mostly preferred by them for the acquisition of Information Handling Skills (IHS).

Table-1 shows that the option of "instruction from the lesson by teachers, parents and librarians" had the highest percentage of 33.33%. The second available strategy was

“reading” with a score of 24.48%. The third available strategy was “group discussion with peers” (17.53%). The fourth materials like textbooks, journals etc for private study (9.38%). “Programmed instructions and directives given by teacher” (3.16%) was fifth, “study using past records and experiences” was sixth with 5.38% while the last available strategy was “study using operation in which real life situations were represented in other forms (1.74%).

The results confirm student’s dependence on teachers for their information needs. This development emanates from the practice of spoon-feeding the learner with notes. On the contrary, studies sponsored by UNESCO in 1987 (cited by Irving, 1987) and UNISIST in 1988 in selected developed countries show “reading” as the most preferred strategy for acquisition of Information Handling Skills. “Using the library for independent study” was placed second. The situation in schools under study need to be reversed because reading remains the primary step in the process of getting message/information in the school system.

Table-2: Percentage Analysis of Information Handling Skills Acquired by Students

S/No.	INFORMATION HANDLING SKILL	FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ACQUISITION
1.	Identification/Clarification of Topic	199 (34.50)
2.	Knowledge of Information Source	154 (26.74)
3.	Evaluation of Information	94 (16.32)
4.	Ability to make Useful Notes	78 (13.54)
5.	Proper Organization of Notes	51 (8.85)

% In Parenthesis

Scores for each student from the UNESCO standardized test gave the data on Table 2. The results clearly show that secondary school students have acquired some information

handling skills but in varying degrees. The skill for "Identification and Clarification of Information" was widely acquired by 34.55% of respondent, followed by the skill for the knowledge of information sources (26.74%). 16.32% of the students had the skill of "evaluation of information; 13.54% of the students had the skill for making useful notes while only 8.85% could organize notes properly. This result is not surprising because earlier studies by Maryland (1981) and Irving (1987) show that information handling skills have been used by student for many years. The problem has been that of co-ordination of these skills for improved information processing. To encourage the development of these skills, a conducive learning environment is required, where classroom management allows students to work at their own pace and style. It is within such an environment that the totality of the information handling skills can be developed and sharpened.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed at identifying the available strategies for the acquisition of Information Handling Skills and students who actually possess the skills. Results have shown that teacher aided strategies are mostly available and mostly preferred by students for their acquisition of information handling skills. Students do possess the information handling skills but in varying degrees. Implications are that there is need for a re-orientation of teaching methods to favour students centred approaches without which the skills for the student's personal information management will continue to be impaired.

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