# Survey of Information Acquisition and Dissemination to Distance Learning Students: The Case of National Open University of Nigeria, Ibadan Study Centre.

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## Abstract

This study investigates the survey of information acquisition and dissemination to distance learning students: a case study of National Open University, Ibadan study centre. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study and the study population consisted of registered library user which was 2,284. Simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 227 and questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. Data was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that 147(67%) of the respondents sought and acquired information from the internet and 158(74%) got theirs information from the centre staff. Information was also disseminated to the students through friends and colleagues and centre staff. While 161(76%) also confirmed that information were readily available to them through interpersonal contact with friends and colleagues.160(75.5%) respondents from the centre also agreed that they accessed and utilized the available information which they acquired through interpersonal contact and their lecturers on daily basis. The major factors affecting their information acquisition and dissemination were inadequate sources of information, lack of relevant information.

**Keywords:** information, open university, information needs, information dissemination

## Introduction

Education is the greatest force that can be used to bring about changes and also the greatest investment that a nation can make for the quick development of its economic, political, sociological and human resources (UNESCO, 2002). It was in realization of this that the Nigerian National Policy on Education (NNPE) was formulated for the country. National Policy on Education makes provision for the education of the citizens through primary education, secondary education, tertiary education, nomadic education, teacher education as well as adult education (NPE, 1998). Education could be formal or informal, face to face teaching or through distance learning. Most adult education programmes are carried out through the distance learning. Distance learning is described by Keegan

{1996) defined distance learning as a non-contiguous communication between students and teachers mediated by print or some forms of technology. Fitzpatrick (2001), defined distance learning as the type of education that reaches a broader students audience and which better addresses students' needs, save money, and more importantly uses the principles of modern learning pedagogy.

In Nigeria, distance learning is also variously described as external degree, part-time degree, Distance education, correspondence or sandwich programmes. Distance learning usually refers to open learning applied to situations in which there is a geographical expiration between the learner and the learning institution. It involves the open learning approach and occasional interaction with the teacher. The focus is on the needs of the individual students and is more learner-centered. The learner chooses the place of study, time and pace of learning. Dissemination and acquisition of information and resources is not a new activity in Nigeria. Information acquisition and dissemination is needed in the distance learning centre in gathering information and disseminating information to the distance learner so that they are properly informed on the changes that are taking place in their various programme. These changes includes: registrations of courses, information about the programme and when their lectures commences and where to receive lectures and other important notice needed by the distance learners (Soola, 1999). Information dissemination through resources and pragramme requires the use of media. Mass media is very important in the information acquisition and dissemination of information resources in Nigeria especially when it is related to public matter like the public enlightenment and announcement (Soola, 1999).

Several classifications have been developed to describe media used in distance education (Butcher, 2003, Schlosser and Tooth 2000, Barron, 1999, McIsaac & Gunawardena, 1996). They can be categorized into those which are used to convey subject instructional content to learners, and those which permit communication between teachers and students. First, is face-to-face, which is a long established cornerstone of education and this allows for immediate interaction between teachers and learners, and learner and learner and enables individual interaction (Butcher, 2003). Text medium refers to scripted and other related signs like numbers and it exists in various forms. In distance learning, print serves as the primary source of instruction or may be supplemental. It can

be in form of textbooks, posters, letter, circular, workbook, and so on. Texts are also available using modern information and communication technologies (ICT). Texts include short message service (through GSM) hypertext, electronic mail, chats and so on. Audio media using various means include radio, audio cassette, telephone, voice mail, and audio conferences. Video distributed media include video tape, satellite delivery, and microwave; broadcast video, desktop video, and so on, and also integrated multi-media through ICT (Butcher, 2003).

**Literature Review**

According to UNESCO (2002), open and distance learning represents approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners. Mudasiru (2006) defined distance learning as a term to describe the student centeredness of distance education and it deals with the use of print and electric technologies to present individual lessons to learners at a distance. Correspondence study entails distance learning through postal subgroups, that is, learning at home and communicating with the instructor using print materials.

Adebayo (2007) defined open and distance learning (ODL) as the type of education that takes place outside the conventional school system; it is imparted without necessarily having personal interaction with students or learners. The practice of ODL in Nigeria takes various forms, which include correspondence study education, distance learning (Sandwich programmes), Part-Time Teacher Training Programme (PTTP), Open University, weekend programmes, adult literacy education programmes, National Teachers Institute (NTI) and e-learning. From the above view, one can deduce that distance learning not only shares the goals of the conventional school system, but it also aims to provide access to a historically underserved, place bound, and highly motivated population.

Distance learning is not a recent concept in Nigeria. Akinpelu (1982) indicated that the Department of Adult Education at the University of Ibadan first proposed the need for distance learning in 1960. The programme was titled 'pilot correspondence programme in the Science subjects' to experiment in the field of science education at pre-university

level and thereafter to expand gradually to certain other vital areas necessitating in-service training. This project was renamed 'Correspondence Courses Leading to University Degrees and Diplomas'. This notwithstanding, there had been Correspondence colleges in Britain and other places that conducted correspondence courses for interested Nigerians through 'Rapid results' as well as others where courses in business related subjects and administration were obtained. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) was first launched in 1983 but was suspended in 1985 by the military government. President Olusegun Obasanjo re-launched it in 2001 and NOUN now provides instruction for some 60,000 students as at 2002 (ODL Paris 2002)

Alternatively, the user may seek information from other people, rather than from systems, as involving information exchange. The use of word 'exchange' is intended to draw attention to the element of reciprocity, recognized by sociologists and social psychologists as a fundamental aspect of human interaction (Gouldner, 1960). In terms of information behaviour, the idea of reciprocity may be fairly weak in some cases (as when a junior scientist seeks information from a senior but hierarchically equal colleagues) but in other cases may be so strong that the process is inhibited, as when a subordinate person in a hierarchy fears to reveal his ignorance to a superior (Jackson, 1959).

'Information' may be understood in any of the senses mentioned earlier. Thus, in information exchange, an individual may be looking for facts, advise or opinions, and may receive any of these either in writing or orally. Sometimes the channel itself may be of overriding significance, as when orally given advice may be preferred over anything in writing. Again, a user may be interested in a specific document as a physical entity, as in the expression of a need to view variant copies of an incunabulum (Wilson, 1981). In information transfer it may be a fact, an opinion or a piece of advice that is transferred orally, or a physical document 'containing' the fact, opinion or advice may be given another person.

**Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are to:

(i)     examine how information is acquired by National Open University of Nigeria

(ii)    investigate information dissemination procedure to students by National Open University of Nigeria

(iii)   examine type of information available and accessible to distance learners at the National Open University of Nigeria.

(iv)   identify the problems confronting information acquisition and dissemination

**Research Method**

The survey research design was adopted for this study and the target population consisted of students of National Open University (NOUN) Ibadan study centre, the population is drawn from 5 schools: Law, Education, Art and Social Science, Science and Technology and Business and Human Resources. There were 363 in Law, Education 273, Art & Social Science 634, Science & Technology 703 and Business & Human Resources 311 which gave a total of 2,284 respondents. Simple random sampling technique was employed to select 227 respondents from the schools. The questionnaire was the major instrument used for data collection, supplemented by the interview method. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as table, frequencies and percentages.

**Findings and Discussion**

A total of 227 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the student of National Open University of Nigeria Ibadan study centre among 5 schools Law, Education, Arts and Social Science, Science and Technology and Business and Human Resources and about 204 copies were duty filled and returned giving a response rate of 89.5%.

**Table 1:    Response rate**

| | Questionnaire | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Distributed** | | **Returned** | |
| **Schools** | **No** | **%** | **No** | **%** |
| Arts and social sciences | 69 | | 39 | 19.1 |
| Science and technology | 70 | | 40 | 19.6 |
| Business and human resources management | 31 | | 36 | 17.2 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Education | 27 | 48   23.5 |
| Law | 36 | 42   20.6 |
| **Total** | **227** | **204  89.5** |

**Demographic characteristics of respondents**

Most of the respondents, 93(43.9%) in National Open University of Nigeria, Ibadan centre were between the ages of 26 to 35, follow by 83 (39.2%) were between 18 to 25 years, 20(9.4%) were between the ages of 36 to45 years and only one (0.5%) from the National Open University of Nigeria, Ibadan centre was between the age of 56 and above. There were more male 109(51.4%) then female 94(44.3%) respondents.

Majority of the respondents 73(34.4%) were in 100 level, only few 3(1.4%) respondents were in their final year of study. Most of the respondents 165(77.8%) were single while 30 (14.2%) were married and only 7(3.3%) in the centre were widowed. Virtually all the respondents 105(49.5%) from 100level to the 500 level had WASCCE/GCE and 78(36.8) had OND/ NCE respectively, and some of the respondents 13 (6.1%) and one (0.5%) in the centre also had first degree and masters respectively from outside the university. Majority of respondents 76(35.8%) were self employed, 25 (11.8%) were civil servant, while 24 (11.3%) were traders.

**Table 2: Sources of acquisition of information by respondents**

| Sources of information acquisition | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| Centre staff | 73 | 34.4 | 85 | 40.1 | 28 | 13.2 | 5 | 2.4 |
| friends and colleagues | 83 | 39.2 | 101 | 47.6 | 9 | 4.2 | 3 | 1.4 |
| Lecturers | 51 | 24.1 | 81 | 38.2 | 49 | 23.1 | 8 | 3.8 |
| Newspapers/magazines | 45 | 21.2 | 80 | 37.7 | 39 | 18.4 | 19 | 9 |
| Journal publications | 20 | 9.4 | 77 | 36.3 | 59 | 27.8 | 24 | 11.3 |
| Reference sources (encyclopedia, dictionaries) | 25 | 11.8 | 72 | 34 | 61 | 28.8 | 22 | 10.4 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Internet and Electronic databases | 86 | 40.6 | 56 | 26.4 | 36 | 17 | 6 | 2.8 |
| Library | 53 | 25 | 81 | 38.2 | 40 | 18.9 | 12 | 5.7 |
| Conferences, Workshops and papers | 27 | 12.7 | 66 | 13.1 | 66 | 13.1 | 20 | 9.4 |
| Newsletters | 12 | 5.7 | 76 | 35.8 | 73 | 34.4 | 16 | 7.5 |
| Radio/TV broadcasts | 33 | 15.6 | 72 | 34 | 61 | 28.8 | 14 | 6.6 |
| Textbooks | 54 | 25.5 | 102 | 48.1 | 21 | 9.9 | 6 | 2.8 |

*Research Question 1: What are the means of acquiring information in the National Open University of Nigeria?*

Table 2 showed that majority of the respondents 142(67%) agreed that they sought and acquired information through the internet and database within and outside the centre. Some of the students 158(74.5%) sought for information through the centre staff and others acquired through their lectures 132(62.35), newspapers/ magazines 125(58.9%), journal publications 97(45.7%). While few 12 (5.4%) claimed that they did not acquire information through these sources. acquired their information through their friends and colleagues from within and outside the university premises.

The interview conducted with the librarian and ICT officer in the NOUN revealed that information is acquired for the distance learner through purchase, gifts and donations as well as through the internet. From the result it could be concluded that the students of National Open University of Nigeria Ibadan study centre gathered their information through the centre staff, friends and colleagues.

**Table 3:**       **Sources of Information Dissemination in National Open University of Nigeria**

| Sources of Information dissemination | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| Centre staff | 61 | 28.8 | 99 | 46.7 | 19 | 9 | 9 | 4.2 |
| Friends and colleagues | 48 | 22.6 | 118 | 55.7 | 19 | 9 | 1 | .5 |
| Lecturers | 37 | 17.5 | 85 | 40.1 | 52 | 24.5 | 6 | 2.8 |
| Newspapers/magazines | 22 | 10.4 | 81 | 38.2 | 58 | 27.4 | 12 | 5.7 |
| Journal publications | 29 | 13.7 | 65 | 30.7 | 59 | 27.8 | 16 | 7.5 |
| Reference sources ( encyclopedia, dictionaries) | 28 | 13.2 | 45 | 21.2 | 73 | 34.4 | 15 | 7.1 |
| Internet and Electronic databases | 51 | 24.1 | 76 | 35.8 | 54 | 25.5 | 6 | 2.8 |
| Library | 23 | 10.8 | 59 | 27.8 | 77 | 36.3 | 8 | 3.8 |
| Conferences, Workshops and papers | 21 | 9.9 | 61 | 28.8 | 79 | 37.3 | 16 | 7.5 |
| Newsletters | 19 | 9 | 70 | 33 | 71 | 35.5 | 12 | 5.7 |
| Radio/TV broadcasts | 26 | 12.3 | 71 | 33.5 | 55 | 25.9 | 21 | 9.9 |
| Textbooks | 47 | 22.2 | 87 | 41 | 27 | 12.7 | 16 | 7.5 |

***Research Question 2: How is information disseminated in National Open University of Nigeria?***

      Table 3 revealed that majority of the respondents 166(88.3%) agreed that information was being disseminated to them through these medium: friends and colleagues, 160(75.5%) the centre staff, that is the staff of National Open University of Nigeria, Ibadan centre and also 127(54.9%) through the use of internet and electronic databases within and outside the centre. While some set of students 97(45.8%) disagree with it that they do not get information through the radio/TV broadcasts. The result of the

interview further revealed that bulk sons, students' interactive portal, radio and television broadcasts were the various ways of information dissemination to the distance learners. Others were flyers and hand bills

The result simply implied that most distance learning students of the National Open University of Nigeria Ibadan centre get most of the vital information through the centre staff, friends and colleagues and the use of internet and electronic databases in the centre when the need arises.

**Table 4**: **Availability of Information Sources to the Respondents**

| Information sources | VRA | | RA | | NRA | | NA | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| Lecturers | 77 | 36.3 | 77 | 36.3 | 26 | 12.3 | 5 | 2.4 |
| Official publications ( bulletins, memos) | 29.2 | | 88 | 41.5 | 28 | 13.2 | 10 | 4.7 |
| Interpersonal contact (friends and colleagues) | 82 | 38.7 | 79 | 37.3 | 20 | 9.4 | 10 | 4.7 |
| Newspapers/magazines | 34 | 16 | 51 | 24.1 | 76 | 35.8 | 16 | 7.5 |
| Journal publications | 28 | 13.2 | 41 | 19.3 | 86 | 40.6 | 18 | 8.5 |
| Reference sources ( encyclopedia, dictionaries) | 53 | 25 | 46 | 21.7 | 62 | 29.2 | 10 | 4.7 |
| Internet and Electronic databases | 75 | 35.4 | 57 | 26.9 | 47 | 22.2 | 8 | 3.8 |
| Library | 50 | 23.6 | 60 | 31.1 | 55 | 25.9 | 9 | 4.2 |
| Conferences, Workshops and papers | 20 | 9.4 | 49 | 23.1 | 73 | 34.4 | 23 | 0.8 |
| Newsletters | 21 | 9.9 | 51 | 24.1 | 68 | 32.1 | 27 | 12.7 |
| Radio/TV broadcasts | 36 | 17 | 44 | 20.8 | 71 | 33.5 | 23 | 10.8 |
| Textbooks | 74 | 34.9 | 80 | 37.7 | 25 | 11.8 | 2 | .9 |

*Research Question3: What type of information is available to distance learning students?*

Table 4 showed that majority of the respondents 161(76%) confirmed that information are readily available to them through interpersonal contact (friends and colleagues) and other medium are; through the lecturers 154(72.6%), official bulletin 117(41.7%) and the

least 69(22.5%) shows that most of the distance learning students do not found most information readily available through conference, workshop and papers in the centre.

It was revealed that information is available to the distance learning students from schools Law, Education, Arts and Social Science, Science and Technology and Business and Human Resources through interpersonal contact, lecturers, official bulletin and the least conference, workshop and papers.

**Table 5:** **Problems encountered by the distance learning students**

| Problems encountered | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| Inadequate sources of information | 42 | 19.8 | 70 | 33 | 56 | 26 | 11 | 5.2 |
| Non-availability of relevant information | 58 | 27.4 | 44 | 20.8 | 41 | 19.3 | 29 | 13.7 |
| Lack of willingness of colleague to disclose vital information | 21 | 9.9 | 49 | .23.1 | 74 | 34.9 | 32 | 15.1 |
| Inability to get the relevant information at the right time | 58 | 27.4 | 46 | 21.7 | 56 | 26.4 | 17 | 8 |
| Lack of relevant information sources in the libraries | 63 | 29.7 | 48 | 22.6 | 54 | 25.5 | 12 | 5.7 |
| Inability to satisfy information needs most time | 54 | 25.5 | 59 | 27.8 | 43 | 20.3 | 20.3 | |

*Research Question 4: What are the problems encountered in information acquisition and dissemination in National Open University of Nigeria?*

Table 5 showed that 112(52.8%) and 111(52.3%) of the respondents were faced with the problem of inadequate sources of information and lack of relevant information in the libraries, other problems are inability to get the relevant information at the right time 104(49.1%), lack of willingness of colleagues to disclose vital information and non-availability of information. While, the respondents also agreed that the same problems

faced in the acquisition of information by the centre to the students were as well applied to the dissemination of information to the distance learning students.

The Librarian and the ICT officer interviewed also highlighted some of the problems usually encountered in the process of disseminating information to the distance learners. These were inadequate time to read information on the notice boards, lack of fund, low bandwidth, distance barrier, and communication conflict between the school and the students. These factors will no doubt serve as great impediment or constraints to effective information acquisition and dissemination of information to the distance learning students by the centre.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

The importance of information to the distance learning students cannot be overemphasized. This is because information is the soul of any successful academic activities. While the centre is expected to disseminate relevant, accurate and timely information to the students as often as possible, the students on the other hand are to explore all available sources to acquire this information for their optimum utilization.

In spite of the laudable efforts of the National Open University to ensure that adequate and timely information were disseminated to the distance learners in order to keep them updated always, certain problems still undermined the acquisition of information by these students such as inadequate sources of information, lack of relevant information in the library, and inability to get relevant information at the right time, among others. These problems should therefore be urgently addressed in order to bridge the communication gap between the centre and the students, which may have devastating effect on the academic success of the students.

The following recommendations are hereby proposed:

1. Channels of information acquisition and dissemination should be made available to the distance learners, in such a way that will not be difficult to access i.e. a standby media (radio and T.V) and they must be well informed.
2. Display board should be encouraged to ease the student's eagerness of getting information about their various courses of study.

3. Distance learning students should be encouraged to make use of the available facilities in the centre.

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