

The Information Seeking Behavior of Teacher Trainees of Evangelical Presbyterian College of Education, Bimbilla, Ghana

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Abstract: - This study investigated the information seeking behavior of teacher trainees of the Evangelical Presbyterian College of Education, Bimbilla, Ghana. Hundred (100) first and second year teacher trainees were selected for the study. Respondents were selected using random sampling technique and questionnaires were used as the data collection instrument. The results showed that, the information needs of the trainees were related to their course work. Also, internet was found to be the main source of information for the teacher trainees and finally print information resources was preferred to electronic resources by the teacher trainees. The study suggested the following recommendations; the library should improve upon the collection to reflect the programs run in the college, the library must be provided with internet connection, the collection of the library must be updated regularly to meet the specific needs of the students and finally, the library should adopt marketing strategies such as orientation programs, public lectures, public announcements to always keep users abreast with their services.

Key words: information behavior, teacher trainees, Evangelical Presbyterian College of Education, Information Seeking

I. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is duped ‘‘Information Age’’ because so much information is generated at a level that is difficult to access it by information users. Due to the enormous increase in the volume of relevant literature, especially in the field of science and technology, the situation has given birth to the concept of information explosion. This term describes the occurring phenomenon of data superfluity attributed to the vast volume of published information; in this context, controlling and organizing information, in a way such that the problem of information overload is avoided, is quite a challenging task (Dipak & Kundu, 2015). This has brought a challenge on libraries to study the information needs of their users and to serve them with appropriate information to meet their needs. According to Kadli (2011), the need for information is one of the cognitive needs of humankind so much so that information seeking is a basic activity indulged in by all people and manifested through a particular behavior. People contact friends, use mobile phones, watch televisions; others read books and Newspapers in an attempt to acquire the needed information. Therefore information is regarded as one of the basic needs of people.

Yet, the information needs of people vary. While some people search for information for academic purposes, others need information for recreation. For example, Silva & Chandrawamsa (2016) reported that students need information to prepare lecture notes, update their knowledge, prepare answers for questions, reading, thinking purposes, research works, observations and experiments, discussions and preparing for presentations. According to Dipak & Kundu (2015), teachers rely on both print and electronic materials for their information needs. Also, people need information about their favorite songs and musicians.

‘‘The kinds of information required by the user, the methods used in searching for such information, the time spent to retrieve same, problems faced and solutions made, the satisfaction and dissatisfaction arising from the information gathered and the relationship of the user with the system – all come under the realm of user studies’’ (Kadli, 2011).

Teacher trainees are trained to take up teaching roles in the basic schools in Ghana. Teacher training in Ghana is the mandate of teacher colleges of education. There are 46 teacher training colleges in Ghana. Four (4) of these colleges are located in the Northern region of the country.

This study was conducted to find out the information seeking behavior of teacher trainees of E. P. College of education, Bimbilla to enable the college library undertakes measures to satisfying the information needs of the user community.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The services of a library are based on the needs and aspirations of users. According to Fox (2010), academic libraries depend on user data to understand their information needs and make corrections on past mistakes and improve upon the future services of the library. User studies is about examining the characteristics and behavior of users of library services. Colleges of Education in Ghana have been converted into degree awarding institutions and hence new community of users has been created. In order for the library to remain relevant in the faces of these new users, services must be designed to meet the specific information needs of the users. This study therefore is conducted to investigate the information seeking and information needs of teacher trainees

of E. P. College of Education, Bimbilla and to make recommendations on how to improve future services.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are to investigate:

- i. the information needs of teacher trainees
- ii. the sources of information to teacher trainees
- iii. the format teacher trainees require for information

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

History of scientific research on information seeking behavior dates back to 1940. Markwei & Rasmussen (2015), sampled forty-one marginalized youth to study their everyday information behavior. The results revealed that (i) their information needs are related to their basic needs, (ii) the source of information to them were purely interpersonal (iii) the study also revealed that the marginalized youth seek information by contacting the people in their communities.

Another research was conducted on the information seeking behavior of students of National Law University, Uttar Pradesh, by Srivastava, Pradash, & Bangla (2016). In this study, the information seeking behavior and information communication technology skills of the students and faculty members were investigated. The study focused on the following; the library use of the students; ICT and internet awareness of students; the usage of legal e-resources by law students; and students awareness of online legal databases. The study revealed that most of the students of law use the library for their information needs. It also revealed that most of them depend on textbooks as their main source of information; others also indicated that they use the library to access the online resources. It was found that majority of the student use internet to access information as 70% of the students indicated that they use internet for their information needs.

The study of Dipak & Kundu (2015) revealed that teachers rely heavily on print materials as their main source of information and that teachers are gradually adopting ICT since some of them indicated that their main source of information is through the electronic resources.

According to Attafua (2015), the preferred source of information to teachers are books and other monographs. This same study revealed that teachers of the university were active users of the library; however, their visits were occasional.

In a study to investigate the information needs of students in Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Nigeria by Fasola & Olabode (2013), the study revealed the following information needs of the students; course work (66%), current affairs (15%), industrial attachment (7.6%), recreational (6.6%) and finally social information (4.8%). The study also indicated that library resources remain the main source of information to the students followed by internet, personal collection and colleagues respectively. Textbooks were the preferred format

of information for the students followed by internet, newspapers, journals and finally theses.

Natarajan (n.d.) found out from a study that the information seeking behavior of students of management institutions in NCR of Delhi, involved the daily use of the institution's library and internet was found to be the major source of information to them followed by e-journals and print materials was the least preferred.

Shanmugam (1999) conducted a study on teachers in some selected teacher training colleges in Malaysia. A total of 197 trainees were selected for the study. It was revealed that most of the information needs of the students were centered on their course work. There was little awareness of information that was not related to their course work and academic informal and interpersonal sources of information were preferred. Print materials such as books recorded low used. In the study of Ismaila (2019) on graduate students information seeking behavior of Kwara state University; students were asked of their information needs. Findings of the study revealed that educational information was the information predominantly use by the students for academic purposes. Hugar, (2019) investigated into Information Seeking Behavior of Medical and Allied College Students in Goa State. Results of the study showed that print materials were preferred by the college students. Anthony & Futo (2019) conducted a study on the information needs and seeking behavior of final year students of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri. Survey method was used and 5885 questionnaires were administered with 98% returned rate. Course related information was rated highest as the information needed by the students. This current research is centered on the information seeking behavior of teacher trainees of E. P. College of Education, Bimbilla, Ghana and this will be the first study to be conducted on information seeking behavior of students in teacher training institutions in Ghana.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Settings

The research setting was E. P. College of Education, Bimbilla, usually called BIMBICO. BIMBICO is a teacher college of education located in Nanumba North Municipality in the Northern Region of Ghana. The College is a mission school established by E. P. Church Ghana. The student population of the college is 824 made up of 420 first year students and 404 second year students. The following courses are run by the college; they are put into two main categories; thus, General program and Science program. General program courses are the Arts related courses such as; Social studies, Religious and Moral Education, Music and Dance, and Catering Science education courses are also made up of; Maths/Science, Information and Communication Technology (ICT)/Maths and Agricultural Science. The information needs of these students vary from one to another. The library serves as the main information center for the college community. Services provided by the library include: reference service,

reprographic services, information literacy education, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), and chat with the librarian where users can receive virtual reference services. In practice, the library has to understand the information needs of users as a pre-requisite to providing relevant information to them.

3.2 Selection of Participants

The research involved first and second year teacher trainees of Bimbico. The third years did not take part in this study because they were on their teaching practice and therefore was not available for the study. Survey method was used and random sampling technique was used to select participants for the study. As the sizes of the classrooms were not the same, proportional sampling technique was employed to ensure that every member had the equal chance of being selected from each class. The proportional ratios was derived from the classes totals from the following formulars: $T1/TN*100$ and $T2/TN *100$ where T1 is the total of the first year students and T2 represented total of second year students and TN was the total number of both the first years and the second years and the hundred is the total sample required. Participants for the first class was arrived at by dividing T1 by the total students and multiplied by the total sample required. Here the total sample was 100 students to be selected based on the level of the students. 51 and 49 first and second years respectively were therefore selected to part in the study.

Questionnaires were used as a data collection instrument. 100 questionnaires were self-administered to the research participants and there was 100% return rate. The entire questionnaire were retrieved and analysed. The researcher used one week for the data collection because, each group of students were made to respond to the questionnaire after class lessons.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section is the presentation and discussion of the findings of the study. Results on the demographic information of respondents, their information needs, sources of information and finally format of information required by the respondents will be presented under this section.

Table 1. Demographic information of Respondents

Gender	Frequency		Program	Percent		Level	Frequency		Percent
Male	55	55%	General program	57	57%	First year	51	51%	
Female	45	45%	Science	43	43%	Second year	49	49%	

Source: Survey of the field, August, 2019

The table above contains the demographic information of the respondents. The demographic information is put into three (3) categories. These include; Gender of the respondent,

Program offered by the respondents and the level of the respondents.

The study revealed that 55% of the respondents were male students and 45% were female students. Students who offered the general program were 57% while science students were 43%. Also, students were asked to indicate their levels in the college. 51% were first year students while 49% were second year students.

Table 2. Information Needs of Respondents

Type of Information	Frequency	Percentage
Political information	4	4%
Health information	4	4%
Marital information	2	2%
Course work information	85	85%
Information on how to make money	5	5%

Source: Survey of the field, August, 2019

Five main needs were revealed by the study; these are; information relating to their course work, information on how to make money, political information, health information and marital information.

From the analysis on Table 2, the study revealed that most of the respondents need information on their course work as 85% responded in favor of it. This validated the findings of Shanmugam (1999) whose study revealed that teacher trainees require information that is related to their course work. The need for information on course work must have arisen as a result of the fact that, teacher trainees are always preparing for their course examinations which are tied to the course outlines. For this reason, it requires that teacher trainees cover topics in the course outline before the examinations. This may be the reason why teacher trainees preferred information on course work to other information. The other information needs revealed by the study included; information on how to make money (5%), political information (4%), health information (4%) and marital information (2%).

Table 3. Sources of Information to the teacher trainees

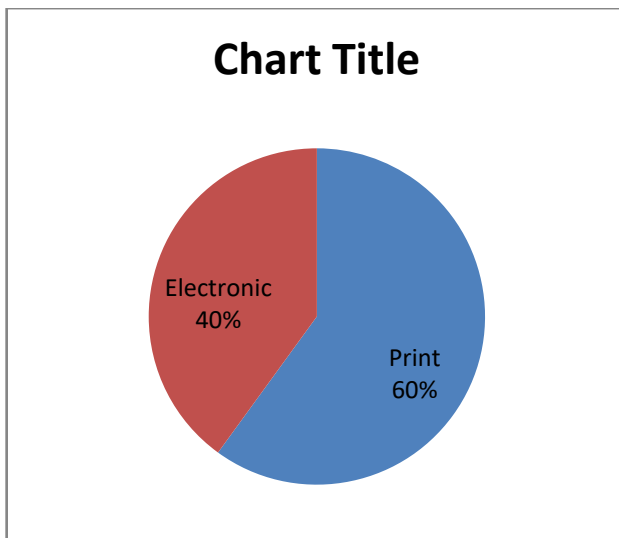
Source of information	Frequency	Percentage
1. Television/radio	5	5%
2. Library	8	8%
3. Internet	60	60%
4. Course materials	20	20%
5. Lecture notes	7	7%

Source: Survey of the field, August, 2019

Table 3 contains sources of information for the teacher trainees. Respondents were asked to indicate the information sources they prefer in their everyday information seeking. They were required to select one option from the check lists in

the questionnaire. It was found that internet was the main source of information to them (60%), followed by course materials (20%). Library was third on their preferred lists (8%). Lecture notes (7%) and Televisions (5%) respectively were the least preferred information sources for the teacher trainees. The finding agreed with Natarajan (n.d.) study, which revealed that internet is the main source of information to students in management institutions of NCR, Delhi. However, the results of the analysis contravened with the findings of Dipak & Kundu (2015) and Attafuah (2015), whose studies revealed that the main source of information to students are mainly textbooks.

Figure I. Format of Information required by teacher trainees



Source: Survey of the field, August, 2019

Teacher trainees were asked to choose their preferred format of information. Two options were given in the questionnaire (print materials and electronic materials). The study revealed that print format of information was required more than electronic format. Print format recorded 60% and electronic format was 40% as can be seen in the figure above. This can be depicted on the pie chart above. This validated the studies of Srivastava, Pradesh, & Bangla (2016), Dipak & Kundu (2015), Attafuah (2015), and Fasola & Olabode (2013) whose studies reported students preference for print materials in libraries. This finding however contradicted findings of Shanmugam (1999) whose study on teachers in some selected teacher training colleges in Malaysia revealed low patronage of print resources. Print information format is preferable because they are readily easily accessible without a computer technology. Once the material is bought, usage can continue until the end of the document lifespan. They do not require any internet bundle or any equipment to facilitate access to its content. In sum, teacher trainees preferred both print and electronic information but print materials serve their information needs more than electronic sources.

V. CONCLUSION

This study sought to achieve 3 objectives. These include; to investigate the information needs of teacher trainees; sources of information for them and finally to investigate the format of information required by the teacher trainees. Findings of the study revealed that the information needs of the students centered on their course work, information on how to make money, political information, information on their health and finally marital information. It was also discovered that, teacher trainees main sources of information were: internet, lecture notes, course materials, library and TV/radio. Teacher trainees preferred print information format to electronic format. These findings will inform the library with regard to its collection development. As the core mandate of every library is to ensure continuous access to information. This is guaranteed if user needs are identified and provided for, hence the need for studies on user information seeking behavior.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher has come out with the following recommendations:

- The information needs of the trainees are related to their course, the library should therefore improve upon their collections to reflect the programs run in the college build their collection to reflect the programs run in the college.
- Even though, internet is also another source of information to the teacher trainees, there is no internet connection on the campus of E. P. College of Education. The college authority as a matter of urgency should provide internet connection most especially in the library.
- The library should also ensure that their stock is up to date to be able to meet the growing needs for print materials by the trainees.
- Various marketing strategies such as; orientations, public lecture, library week celebration, user education and public announcements etc. must be adopted by the library for the services provided to create the awareness of the trainees on the kind of products the library has for them.

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