

## **Democratisation or Denial of Knowledge**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

This paper discusses the importance of university libraries, Information Technologies (IT) and ELearning to its users, the university students. Libraries according to Gong (2013), grow out of needs hence, a university grows out of the needs of the students of the particular university and its other stakeholders. Therefore, the importance of a university library, IT and ELearning cannot be overemphasised because university libraries, IT and ELearning help students know their subject matter in depth and it also does assist students grasp concepts easily. A university student is helped to consolidate what they have learnt in class and what has been put on the subject portal or ELearning. Additionally, libraries according to Troy (2014), help students view concepts learnt in class from different viewpoints and later be able to apply them in varied situations. It is also common knowledge that a university student is one who is able to validate the information given by a lecturer by looking at what other scholars have said about the same subject (Literature review). To validate what has been said above, Neely (2006: 72) describes an information literate student as follows, "The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information and its sources then thereafter incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system." This is also done in order to help a student have an informed position in their academic life. The same author, Neely, (2006: 76) says this about performance indicators of the information literate student, "The information literate student validates understanding and interpretation of the information through discourse with other individuals, subject-area experts, and or practitioners." This is not done by students at Katima Mulilo Campus. They do not bother to discuss school work with their friends after class. 'It is one for himself and God for us all'.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Different scholars tackle same issues in diverse ways and a good student can learn from them and thereafter find their own feet in the same field which seemed to lack with most of the students the researchers taught and this brought about this research. The students did not seem to view the library and ELearning as having information that could be tapped to consolidate what they have learnt in lectures. As a result, the students were truant and their assignments and tests lacked innovation exposing a rote kind of learning where they regurgitate what has been learnt in class. There is also heavy reliance on the subject portal. Whatever quote the lecturer puts on the portal, the students would use the same quote even if it had an error.

### **RATIONALE**

Learning does not end and rote learning should not be an option. We learn from birth to death and these lessons come from different experiences and from those experiences we become better citizens because our experiences (MacDonald, 2015) help us to judge situations accordingly. This study was important because UNAM is giving accreditation to these students who might not be able to go out and show that they are able to gage information and its sources critically. The justification for this study is to help students view studying as a lifelong thing not only for preparing to pass an examination.

### **AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study was to find out why there was so much regurgitation in the researchers' students' work thereafter find a solution in order to help the students acquire a 'bird's eye view' of their subjects. The study sought to achieve the following objectives;

1. To discern the root cause of the problem as to why the students were showing this element of regurgitation in their assignments and tests.
2. To ascertain their use of the library, IT or ELearning.
3. To find ways of helping the students be analytical and innovative in their studies.

### RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used both the qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative method involved collecting data using a non-participant method through an introspective manner. The quantitative method involved taking the statistics of the frequency of students', library staff and of lecturers' responses which were given through the self-administered questionnaires.

### DATA INSTRUMENTS

The following were the instruments that were used during the data collection process; questionnaires, notebook and a pen. The notebook was used for writing the researchers observations and comments each time something important was noted during the research.

### DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Data were collected through non participant observations and through self-administered questionnaires which were distributed by the researchers with the help of some lecturers. The respondents were students, the library staff, IT staff and the academic staff (lecturers).

### DATA ANALYSIS

After collecting the data, it was analysed according to the following categories;

Year of study, gender and then according to the responses the student respondents gave following the questions on the questionnaire. Secondly, the library staffs', IT staffs' responses were also analysed and finally the lecturers' responses were analysed too. After analysing the students' responses separately according to the year of study, they were later combined to give a summary of the findings from all the students who participated as respondents. The library staff's responses were analysed together as a unit and likewise the IT staff's responses.

## II. FINDINGS

### Students' Questionnaire

1. Two hundred and five respondents took part in this research broken down as follows;
  - a) One hundred and eighty six (186) students took part in the research of which 100 were female students and 86 were male students
  - b) Three (3) library staff and two Unam IT (computer) staffs,
  - c) Sixteen academic staff

The first year and second year students included students from all departments thus, Bachelor of Education Upper Primary (BEDUP), Wild Life and Animal Health. The third and fourth year students excluded the Bachelor of Education Lower Primary (BEDLP). The respondents were chosen randomly. Additionally. More questionnaires were given out but not all were returned.

2. The students indicated that most of them got information from the internet and library, internet only and from the library in the following descending order;

<b>Internet and library:</b>	<b>102 students</b>	<b>65.38%</b>
Internet:	34 students	21.79%
Library:	20 students	12.82%

3. a) When they were asked to say how often they used the library, the following were the answers in descending order;

<b>Sometimes:</b>	<b>95 students</b>	<b>55.88%</b>
Yes:	67 students	39.04%
Hardly:	5 students	2.94%
No:	3 students	1.76%

Those who said 'no; and 'hardly' generally said they had their own information and the internet so they had no use for the library.

b) As to how helpful the information was, they said;

**Very helpful: 114 89.06%**  
 Not helpful: 14 10.93%

NB: The information was not helpful for Mathematics and Science only.

The library is not helpful because some books are misplaced on the shelves and also there are a few copies so when they are borrowed, there is nothing left in the library.

As regards to how often they used the library, they said;

Every day: 28 18.91%  
**Twice a week: 47 31.75%**  
 Once a week: 19 12.83%  
 Thrice a week: 37 25%  
 Once a month: 17 11.48%

4. a) Does the library provide adequate information in your course? (Tick in one of the boxes below)

**Yes: 85 54.48%**  
 No: 71 45.51%

b) If your answer to a) was no, explain:

Most of them did not give an answer to this question. Those who did were few and they were negative answers such as; sometimes I do not find what I am looking for, there are no books etc.

c) Is there enough space in the library?

Yes: 126 67.74%  
 No: 56 30.10%

5. a) Are the library staffs friendly? (tick in one of the boxes below)

Yes: 148 81.76%  
 No: 33 18.23%

b) If not why do you say so?

The Library staffs are very rude and not friendly. They have other things to take care of.

c) Have you ever asked the library staffs for help? (tick in one of the boxes below)

Yes: 128 69.18%  
 No: 57 30.81%

d) Did you get it? (tick in one of the boxes below)

Yes: 103 56.59%  
 No: 79 43.40%

6. What do you do in your spare time?

Studying:		76	61.29%
Nothing:	33	26.61%	
Listening to Music:		2	1.61%
Sports:		3	2.41%
Playing computer games:	2	1.61%	
Reading Magazines and watching movies and soapies:		8	6.45%

7. a) Are you aware that UNAM has relevant online resources? (tick in one of the boxes below)

Yes: 133 75.14%  
 No: 44 24.85%

b) Do you know how to access the online resources you need? (Tick in one of the boxes below)

Yes: 106 57.60%  
No: 79 42.70%

8. a) In your own opinion, which of the two is most helpful in your studies, the library or ELearning or the subject portal?

ELearning/ Portal: 100 67.56%  
Library: 48 32.43%

b) Why do you say so?

Those who went for the portal/ ELearning, said;

- They got straight forward information on the subjects. Everything they needed to know was on the portal or ELearning.

Those who chose the library said;

- There was information given by different authors on the same topic so it was better than the subject portal.

9. Do you agree that a library is a treasure trove of knowledge? (tick in one of the boxes below)

Yes: 168 92.81%  
No: 13 7.18%

#### Explain

Provides information from many sources: 169 92.85%  
Does not provide information: 13 7.14%

#### Library Staff Responses

1. How many students on average use the library every day?

Below 30

2. If few, what do you think could be the reason for this behaviour?

They lack library skills or have no knowledge of the library: 2 66.66%  
They lack a reading culture: 1 33.33%

3. Was there a time when students used the library fully?

Yes: 2 66.66%  
No: 1 33.33%

4. When was that?

During the Exam time: 2 66.66%  
No answer given: 1 33.33%

5. In your opinion what could be changed about this library to make students use it as expected of a scholar?

Library orientation and lecturers need more references:

To train students how to use the library:

Students should be informed on how to use the library at the beginning of the year: 100%

6. How many have borrowed books from May this year to date?

Less than 200: 1 (They were not sure of the number)  
No answer: 2

**7. Is there a specific programme whose students seem to make good use of the library?**

Yes: 3 100%  
 No: 0

**Which programme is this?**

BEDLP, Animal Health and Natural Sciences

**8. Is there a specific programme whose students seem not to make good use of the library?**

Yes: 3 100%  
 No: 0

**Which programme is this?**

Languages 1 100%  
 Social sciences and Languages 2

**9. How do you familiarise each cohort of students to the use of the library?**

No orientation is done

**10. Do you get any complaints from the students?**

Yes: 1 33.33%  
 No: 2 66.66

**What type of complaints?**

They do not complain because they do not know their needs and the use of the library. 1 33.33%  
 They complain about lack of prescribed materials and computers not working yet they are the ones stealing the mice and infecting the computers. 33.33% 1  
 No answer given. 33.33% 1

**11. How do you address them?**

The Library continues to buy books which have been selected by lecturers and the stolen hardware but this takes time due to financial constraints: 1 33.33%  
 We do not address them since there is no time for Library education on the programmes. I think this is a serious mistake: 1 33.33%  
 No answer given: 1 33.33%

**Lecturers' Questionnaire**

**1. What course do you teach?**

There was representation from all departments on campus

**2. Do the students in your course use the library?**

Yes: 10 62.5%  
 No: 4 25%  
 Yes and No: 2 12.5%

- Under 'Yes and No', two respondents wrote that , 'it all depended on a particular module'

**3. What makes you say 'yes' or 'no'?**

The lecturers' responses were varied; some said;

- They were sure students used the library because the assignments revealed so,
- They see students with the books during lectures.

Others said;

- Students only go to the library when they are asked to
- According to their performance in class, few use the library

**4. Are there any prescribed or recommended books for your course in the library?**

Yes:	13	81.27%
No:	1	6.25%
Yes and No:	2	12.5%

It looked like the books were there according to a good number of lecturers even though some information on individual subjects had only one copy.

**5. If the answer to 4 is 'yes' is there any evidence that your students use these books?**

Yes:	12	75%
No:	2	12.5%
Yes and No:	1	6.25%
No answer given:	1	6.25%

There was evidence according to the lecturers' responses but this evidence seem to contradict with the responses below which show that the reference lists for their students was either scanty or poor. There was no 'good' answer.

**6. Give evidence**

The evidence gotten from lecturers was that;

- Students were told where to find the books for students to use
- The library was the only place with the work they saw in their students' assignments
- They saw those books with the students in class

The others were;

- There were few copies on the shelf:
- Prescribed books were not available in the Library:
- No answer given:

**7. How rich is the bibliography/reference list of your students' assignments?**

**Explain**

Scanty:	12	75%
Poor:	3	18.75%
At least three references:	1	6.25%

**8. Do your students' reference lists contain reference books that you have not referred them to?**

Yes:	7	43.75%
<b>No and not adequate:</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>50%</b>
We do not use references:	1	6.25%

**Explain:**

Students are not reading widely -

Students do not do much reading as well as reasoning -

They get most information from the internet -

Some use a book or two but they do not appear on the reference list -

Sometimes they do not indicate references -

They do make an effort to consult additional reading materials +

They normally include those sources so long they contain information that relates to what they are doing.

+

There is evidence in their assignments, they are listed.

+

**9. Do you agree that the KM campus library has no relevant books for the subjects that you offer?**

Yes:	8	50%
No:	7	43.75%
Yes and No:	1	6.25%

The responses are almost 50/50 meaning the situation of books is neither good nor bad

#### **10. Explain what you mean**

The explanations were varied, some said:

- The library had only one book in the module,
- They rarely found the books they needed,
- The modules were new but books were difficult to find
- There were books in some modules but not in others.

Other said;

- Given the environment, the library had sufficient books
- One lecturer was impressed with the quality books the library had in the two departments the staff taught

The findings concerning the students responses revealed that students relied so much on internet and library and the responses were at 65.38% seconded by the internet only at 21.79% and the last one was the library only at 12.82%. It was also clear that the students used the library 'Sometimes' only as the responses were at 55.88% seconded by the affirmation 'yes' which was at 39.04% while the remainder went to 'hardly' and 'no' at 2.94% and 1.76% respectively. This clearly indicated that the students did not use the library often even though they knew it had a lot of information. The portal was more important to them than the library confirming the rote memory kind of learning which leads to regurgitation of the portal or E-learning information. This is most likely that they were truant because they knew they would pass the examination just by memorising what is on the portal or ELearning. Their aim is to pass the examination not to learn because they would even tell the researchers that they could pass with general knowledge therefore, they did not need specific knowledge

The findings coming from the library staff's responses were clear that students did not use the library as required as we can see that only less than 30 students went to the library every day and to add salt to the injury, only one person gave this response meaning it could even be far less than that. The library staff's opinions on the situation were that the students lacked;

- Library skills or had no knowledge of the library and that;
- They also lacked a reading culture

The library staff further said in their responses that the number of library users (Harshani, Khatibi, & Azam, 2020) become bigger during examination time only and most importantly all of the library staff were of the opinion that;

- Students should be orientated to the library and that lecturers needed more references:
- Students should be trained on how to use the library at the beginning of each academic year.

However, they mentioned that there were students from BEDLP, Animal Health and Natural Sciences who made good use of the library and there were also students from Languages and Social sciences who did not like using the library. Nevertheless, this contradicted with what some academic staff said as some of the subjects with information having a lot of grammar books in the library. The library staff went on to respond to how they would have loved to orient the new students each academic year by saying there was no orientation of any kind given to the students. Their response to the question that required them to say whether they do receive complaints from the students, one of them said there were complaints of lack of prescribed materials and computers not working yet the students were the ones stealing the computer mice and infecting the computers but the other two said they did not receive complaints because the students did not know their needs and the use of the library. As to how they address the complaints, one of them said they address these complaints by buying books which have been selected by lecturers and the stolen hardware but this takes time due to financial constraints while the other two said there was nothing to address since there was no time for Library education on the orientation programmes which they felt was a serious mistake.

Coming to the lecturers' responses, 62.5% of the lecturers said their students were using the library as it was clear from the students' assignments and because they saw them bring those books to class while two of the academic staff said that it all depended on particular modules because some modules had information in the library while others did not have any information. 37.5% of the lecturers said students only went to the library when they were asked to and that according to their performance in class, few used the library. Generally, there was a revelation that when the students were told to go to the library because a lecturer had seen a book there, they did not discover the books on their own. The lecturers who said there were prescribed books in the library said that due to the evidence that they indicated to their students where to find those books and that what was found in the students' assignments could only be found in the library. Additionally, one of the lecturers who said there were prescribed books in the library meant only one copy of the book in the module he teaches. The others

who said 'no' and 'yes and no' who had the other 50% said they rarely found books they needed and that the modules were new but books were difficult to find although there were books in some modules and none in others .

### **III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Conclusion**

The one million dollar question is, if our students went out in the field with this state of thinking what positive development can they give to Namibia? No one gives what they do not have. Therefore, they need to have the ability to select information, analyse it and apply it in similar situations and they can only do that if they look at what other people have said about the same topics. This does not only apply to the time they are studying at UNAM but learning is a lifelong matter (Alheit, 2009). How will they teach the learners to be independent thinkers, (Sharpe, 2014) if they, themselves are dependent on what they are taught in class only? How will they produce analytical learners if they cannot evaluate information and its sources critically and incorporate that information in their university life but rather choose to bring up what they have learnt in lectures without validating the information?

#### **Recommendations**

From the findings it is clear that the Katima Mulilo students do not deliberately avoid the library as assumed by the researchers but it is due to lack of knowledge about what a library can offer. As they go on they come to discover the importance of the library as we are able to see through some of the finalists' (fourth year students) interest in the library. For that reason, the following are the recommendations for this study;

#### **Orientation**

Every person needs some kind of learning orientation (Calantone, Cavusgil, & Zhao, 2002), in order to be aligned or directed appropriately in a new environment which is going to be part of the individual(s) for a period of time. Therefore, this paper suggests that every cohort of new students that join Katima Mulilo campus should be oriented to the use of the library as this is very vital for the students' academic life which is their core business on the campus. The library staff should be put on the orientation programme at the beginning of each academic year. We have seen from the students' responses that they too were complaining of being left out on the orientation programme. Some of these students have been learning in the Zambezi region institutions from grade 1 to grade 12 and they go to train at Katima Mulilo campus which is the highest institution in the area. Now if this highest learning institution in the region does not orient them to sources of knowledge, where are they going to learn that from? Rumsey (2008: 10) says the following about orientation; "Library staff may provide a personal tour of the buildings. An alternative may be a virtual tour, for example, using a video presentation. Whatever the method, it is advisable to become familiar with the building and collections of any library of which one is expecting to make repeated use."

#### **An Annotated Bibliography**

Additionally, all departments or subjects in the departments at the campus can compile selected bibliography literature for the first year students which will cover a diverse of topics including all related matters in all the subjects in the department. This will give the students some idea of what is expected of them in a higher learning institution.

#### **Sample Assignments**

There could also be adaption of sample assignments which could provide some inspiration and applicable direction for the fresher on campus. These assignments should have an acceptable number of pages. Another alternative of helping students seek other people's works is by using generic options like the following social networks such as Twitter or Facebook and creating blogs on the internet. Students could use such platforms to share sources of information with others across the UNAM campuses in order to interact and learn from each other.

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