

Information use and sharing behaviour among Ghanaian immigrants in New Zealand

Eric Boamah

School of Social Science, Open Polytechnic New Zealand,

Eric.Boamah@openpolytechnic.ac.nz

Abstract

In this article, I explore and analyse the information culture of Ghanaians immigrants in New Zealand. The concept of information culture relates to values, beliefs and behaviours that influence the ways in which information is identified, accessed, used to achieve desired results, shared and preserved for the future. This occurs in all sectors within a country including the education, health, agriculture, religion, science and technology. In Ghana, the influence of the cultural norms, beliefs and values is very strong on the ways people access and share information. Ghanaians easily carry this influence on their activities even outside the country. New Zealand has its own cultural norms and values which impact on people's information culture. This study explores how Ghanaian immigrants have carried their information culture into New Zealand and how the New Zealand context has impacted on the information behaviours of Ghanaian immigrants.

This study employs interpretive qualitative case study, using Oliver and Foscarini's (2014) three level framework for analysing information culture as the underpinning theory. Data is drawn from 26 interviews with Ghanaians living in New Zealand for various reasons including studying, working, recreation, sports and entertainment. Participants were selected using the snowball sampling technique from Ghanaian communities in Wellington, Hamilton, Auckland and Christchurch.

The study was motivated by findings from the author's PhD study that explored contextual factors influencing the management and preservation of digital cultural heritage resources in Ghana and the experience in living and working in New Zealand. During the time this author undertook his study between 2010 and 2013, there were just two known Ghanaian PhD students at Victoria University of Wellington. But since 2013 to now, there are 10 Ghanaian students doing PhD in different fields in Victoria University alone. There are many more in other New Zealand universities as a result of how they share information about schools. Although Ghanaian students living in New Zealand can read and understand all practical information about their preferred courses and how to study them in from the websites of the various universities, personal information shared by friends who are already studying and living in New Zealand play a major role for them decide to travel to New Zealand to study. Ghanaians trust to confirm the information they have read online with colleague before they act upon it. The oral nature of the Ghanaian culture has clear influence on the way the both students and workers search, use and share both practical information relating to immigration, accommodation and living in New Zealand. Ghanaian students do not fully trust the information provided by many New Zealand agencies so they will always need to confirm how it has worked for a colleague before they confidently act upon them. Most Ghanaian PhD students are not aware of many aspects of the practical information provided by the International office and the Faculty of Graduate research in their various universities. Analysis of data in this study is still in progress.

Keywords: *Information culture; Ghana; New Zealand; Information behaviours; Immigrants*

Reference:

Oliver, G., & Foscarini, F. (2014). Records Management and Information culture: Tackling the people problem. London. Facet Publication