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A Framework of Cooperation Between Academic Staff and Library Staff for a Meaningful University Education for Students

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Introduction

There is no arguing the fact that no matter how intellectually endowed a lecturer may be, he or she cannot exclusively impart to the student all that the student requires in any given subject matter. This is because knowledge is dynamic and quality teaching depends among other things, on a number of variables; namely personal and in-depth knowledge of the subject matter, quality and up-to-dateness of the research put into it, teaching method employed as well as the communicative ability and skill of the teacher. Besides, modern teaching and learning are resources based and student centered. The teacher in this era of information explosion is not sufficiently equipped with all the necessary modern gadgets to keep track of the latest developments and advances areas of specialization. Worse still, most academics do not use the library available to them on the wrong assumption that they do not find the materials they require. Even when they use the library, they do not maximize the expertise and resourcefulness of the librarian and other library staff who are better positioned to assist them in their information retrieval.

Consequently, there is the need for effective cooperation between the teacher and the library staff who normally acquire, process, organize and make available materials in every subject field, if the students are to be given quality and meaningful university education. By training, attitude, orientation, function and commitment, the librarian is a teacher in any academic setting. Librarians' responsibilities extends far beyond organizing and maintaining library collections. Their major responsibility and prime function Davies says, are to implement the Education Programme of the parent Institution by working directly with the academic staff to facilitate and expedite their teaching and by working directly with students to effectualise and to enhance learning." Knight acknowledges the role of the librarian when he said, "the librarian is a teacher whose subject is learning itself". The library collections will be meaningless if it is not used in the day to day instructional programme of its parent institution.

One of the key ways to give students meaningful education resides in

the quality of teaching. The quality of library staff as a teacher is equally of utmost importance. The library staff first and foremost must be a sound professional as well as an education generalist. Thus, the library staff carries out dual roles-management of the library and instructions to student or client.

The library-academic staff cooperation is very fundamental in the actualization of an Education Programme of excellence. This is owing to the fact that both of them are close associates in teaching and learning, visa-vise their complementary roles. Moreover, by virtue of their position and day to day interaction with students and other library clients, they are in better position to know and understand the information needs of students and how best to meet them. This immense understanding of the students information needs is sine qua non for effective and result oriented academic programme of excellence. But if the library staff is isolated from the planning of instruction, they fail to provide for the teacher, group, or student the degree of effectiveness possible when pre-planning and direct communication exist.

The Need for Academic-Library Staff Cooperation

It is a truism that academics and librarians have not adequately perceived the commonality and complementary nature of their duty and have therefore not co-operated sufficiently in the discharge of the functions thrust on them by society. However, the fact remains that academics and librarians are partners in the Education industry-teaching, learning and research and the need for them to co-operate in the Education of students is too glaring to be ignored. As partners whose work are complementary to each other, and also spend much of their time more than any other group on campus interacting with students, it is incumbent on them as building a balanced collection of information resources to support the teaching-learning objectives. This is more so, because modern Education is not only resource based but also learner oriented rather than teacher oriented.

In policy formulation and selection of objectives, it is important to consider on a holistic manner the needs of the student- readiness, interest, abilities and the ideals of parent institution. Since no man is an island unto himself, when academics and library staff plan and work together they will have greater fulfillment for their labour and the students will be the best for it, in that, in such harmonious working relationship they will share appropriate learning experiences which will help them to fill necessary gaps, especially those gaps which have to do with successful and timely provision of relevant and important learning resources. The library staff is there after all to help the teacher to make a continuous plan for the effective evaluation of the students' performance. Through this cooperation, provisions are made for instructional improvement. One of the library's staff duties is to translate educational goals and objectives into supportive teaching and learning experiences. The library staff operationalises the Educational goals and objectives of its parent institution. In the words of Smith,⁴ the library staff involved in the instructional process will be expected to design teaching-learning strategies that will help to implement the following objectives: the development of effective thinking, the cultivation of positive working habits and study skills, the inculcation of positive social attitude and identify new directions and so on. The library staff helps the teacher by introducing or reinforcing study skills which will help the teacher to guard against the tendency to teach too much too fast. The library staff equally helps them to break complex tasks into natural components by supplying the teacher with appropriate teaching resources or materials.

The Art of Cooperation

There is multiplicity of ways through which academic staff can co-operate with library staff in order to give students a more meaningful education.

But in this work only those ones which the writer has considered fundamental and of great importance shall be explored and discussed. These include:

- Curriculum planning and development
- Selection of library information materials
- Acquisition of library information materials
- Evaluation and weeding of library collections and
- Communication of information.

Curriculum Planning and Development:

Curriculum planning, designing and development is one of the key areas academics and librarians need to work together as a team because its theoretical and conceptual framework is complex and highly tasking and requires a very levels of educational system because running an academic programme without a well thought out and articulate curriculum is like flying an aeroplane without a compass and in that case disaster is very imminent. Adequate pre-planning is essential to successful integration of the supportive resources, facilities and services afforded by the library. The library should be informed as to what is to be taught, in what sequence, at what level as well as what the anticipated results are. Even the use of the library is supposed to be preplanned by the academic staff as this will help them to know the resources within the scope of the students. It will also help them to select, quire and use those relevant and adequate resources in the teaching learning situation. It the library is excluded in the curriculum development, two problems are likely to arise namely: how to match materials to the capacities of students.

The specialized competence of the Librarian is essential to solving both of these problems. When resources are omitted from the basic instructional, the plan is crippled to the point of ineffectiveness. It is the responsibility of the library staff not only to search and identify resources to develop understanding but also to search out and identify those resources uniquely appropriate in matching the interest and capacities of the students.

Tailoring fundamental knowledge to the needs, interest, goals, abilities, concerns and progress of students is a vital concern to the library staff as individual learning styles are personal and different. It is both the library staff responsibility and privilege to relate and inter-relate resources with the learning programme and to effectualise, individuals and humanize the process of instruction. This brings us to the issue of cooperation in selection of information materials.

Cooperation in Collection Development

In theory, every member of University Administration, the faculty, the student body, and the library staff should participate in book selection. But in concrete reality, only the University Librarian and staff, and the faculty members show any appreciable degree of interest. Even the interest of the faculty members in book selection is often taken for granted whereas only a few of them are actively committed to building the collection in their areas of specialization. This explains why some university librarians strongly feel that collection development is the sole responsibility of the library. It is the view of this writer that the responsibility should be a joint one between the academic staff and the library staff. It is in this area that both should co-operate and demonstrate that they are compatible associates in the education of students.

Acquisition of Library Materials

In library parlance, acquisition is not synonymous with purchase or

buying, thought it is included in the concept. It goes beyond purchase to include gifts/donations and exchange, legal deposit, bequeaths and so on. Whatever form it takes, the fact remains that it is only through acquisition that information materials could be placed in the library for use. Acquisition is one of the fundamental and professional responsibilities of the librarian. The library committee has a role to play in this regard and that is to strive to the good offices of its members to make sure that their decisions in respect of acquisition are respected both in cash and otherwise. It is only by so doing that they could help to build the library. However, it is important to acknowledge that their decisions in respect of acquisition are respected both in cash and otherwise. It is only by so doing that they could help to build the library. However, it is important to acknowledge that the professional expertise and charisma of the university librarian on the one hand, and the credibility and influence of the members of the committee on the other hand, are the pivot round which achievement of results revolves. The library is an integral part of academics.

Being the supreme academic body, the Senate needs to take active interest on how the library is being developed, ensuring also that sufficient funds are made available for timely procurement of relevant information resources for the present and future. This is of crucial importance because if academics decisions of Senate are not translated into material reality by acquiring those supportive resources that should make teaching, studying and learning fascinating, then those decisions will be will be meaningless and all the intellectual energy expended before at these decisions will amount to nothing.

Besides, the library is growing organism and its growth needs to keep peace with that of the institution and students admissions. Therefore, the Senate should as a matter of policy ensure that the library committee- a committee of Senate is encouraged by implementing its decision in respect of collections development of the University library.

Another essential area of cooperation has to do with evaluation and weeding of library materials. Every library is set up to achieve specific pre-determined aims and objectives. From time to time, evaluation is carried out to find out if these aims and objectives are being realized. That is, is it is not acquiring materials that are that are needed by users. Most in acquisition involved in collection development need to know this so that they may take corrective measures. Similarly, weeding, the practice of discarding or transferring to storage excess copies, rarely used books and materials no longer in use or Evans puts it "the purging of library materials or officially withdrawing a volume from library collection because it is unfit for further use or no longer needed" is not over-night process and as such cannot be performed in isolation. The librarian must consider the library's goal, the funds for buying more satisfaction titles, the relationship of a particular book to others on particular subject, the degree to which the library will function, as an achieve and the possible future usefulness of the book. It is only when you have all these in mind that you can carry out effective weeding. As could be seen, these activities are not as easy as one may ordinarily think-hence the cooperation of the academic staff and the librarian is highly needed. To this end, librarians should do their best to make the academic staff realize their obligation to the university and the library in this regard. The responsibility of the librarian and academic staff is to keep the collection in the subject field sound and up-to-date by a careful evaluation and weeding –making sure that all necessary gaps are filled in the collection.

McGraw has provided a fairly comprehensive list as to what should be weeded as follows:

- Duplicates
- Obsolete books especially in science and technology
- Unsolicited and unwanted gifts
- Superseded editions

- Books that are infected, dirty, worn out, shabby and books that promote juvenile delinquency
- Books with small print, brittle paper, and missing pages;
- Unused, unneeded volumes of sets
- Periodicals with no indexes.

It should be noted however that the above list is a guide and may not be swallowed hook line and sinker. It is left for every library to determine what is best for it. The last but not the least area of cooperation is information communication. Communication is a subject largely neglected in administration, a generation ago but now a very live topic of consideration. Lending credence to this Muford⁷, says “a well conceived organization staffed by able people may flounder by reason of communication failure”. The importance of communication for the purpose of receiving information cannot be stressed too strongly. It is the area fraught with pitfalls and the likelihood of oversight. In this regard, the existence of a library liaison officer in the faculty whose responsibility is to serve as a link between the faculty and the library is of critical importance. For the library collection to be balanced and inviting, the librarian must be conversant with the basic ingredients of the instructional programme: what is to be taught, how it is to be taught and the anticipated results. Davies⁸, has recommended that the library staff should liaise with the faculty as to:

- Discuss the prevailing education philosophy, goals and objectives;
- Discuss the organization pattern of teaching programmes
- Discuss possible pattern of integrating library usage with the teaching and learning programme;
- Request for permanent loan, copies of the teacher’s edition of each textbook, currently used and so on.

In addition, such a liaison officer should be able to attend all relevant faculty meetings, students project defense (post graduates and undergraduates) as well as being up-to-date with faculty and individual staff research activities. When the librarian is armed with all these, coupled with adequate provision of fund, there shall be no doubt about the adequacy of the library collection.

The teacher is responsible for teaching students, imparting knowledge to them. But teachers need the support of the librarian who makes their work easier by providing them with required information materials. The lecturer acknowledges this when he or she refers the student to the library to meet with the librarian who in turn breaks down classroom work into simpler material bits by matching the lecture with the relevant information materials. This means that meaningful education is the one that flows from lecture room (lecturer) to the students and to the library (librarian) and from the library back to the classroom in a triangular sequence.

The Role of the Student

The student who learns and understands the mechanism of library operations and services will be better for it. As the diagram indicates, the teacher and the librarian are there for the student. Both of them work together in planning and designing of the curriculum, sharing experiences and making all the necessary inputs in relation to the course contents are stocked in the library for use by library clientele. It is up to the student to take advantage of these variety of materials and build himself academically. To use these resources, the student must know the mechanism of library organization, operations, and services. The librarian teaches students the organization of the library and the system of classification resources from the library, using the library catalogue which is the main key to unlock the resources as well as the relevance of assistance from other library staff. The student who learns and understands all these will never lag behind in academic pursuits. Such students will not only

enjoy the services of the library such as loan services, reference services, provision of study facilities, searching, and bibliographic instruction, but will also develop the habit and culture of independent learning which will carry it to greater academic heights in future endeavours. Also, by using the library students confirm the lesson already received and can appraise it quantitatively and qualitatively. By using the library, students can by serendipity discover new relevant facts of immense benefits to academic life.

The Library and the Librarian

The library consists of books and other information resources in different forms and the task of the librarian is to see that maximum use is made of the collection to stimulate intellectual curiosity and promote independent learning. Each book is not only unique, but exhibits relationship with each other. Unless these relationships between materials are known and clearly established, the full use of library resources are unlikely to be made. This relationship between books must as far as possible be promoted and users be made aware of them if the library resources on which considerable time and money have been spent in book selection, ordering and cataloguing will be gainfully utilized and relevant materials not overlooked.

The Teacher's Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the teacher to teach and impart knowledge to students. It is also within the ambit of teachers' responsibility to advise and provide guidance to the student. In doing so, teachers should realize that education has undergone a metamorphosis from teacher-centered approach to learner-oriented approach, which means that the motivation, initiative, interest, and talents of the learner need help to blossom. Teachers can adapt to changes by re-orientating themselves, and they can promote the use of the library by referring students to consult and use library resources.

The teacher equally needs to make it a point of duty to use the immense and varied library resource and the expertise and experience of the librarian to enrich the content of lectures in quantity and quality. Teachers may not be in tune with the state-of-the-art resources and advances in the minutest area of specialization. The library and the librarian are better positioned to make up for these limitations and this they do by a process known as selective dissemination of information (SDI) where the profile of the lecturer is kept and matched with current relevant information in the field.

Conclusion

Teachers are neither self-sufficient nor absolutely independent, no matter how talented they may be, as far as giving the students meaningful and qualitative education is concerned. It went further to emphasize the need for the teaching staff and the library staff to co-operate-pointing out distinctly specific areas where this cooperation is needed most. The roles of the academic staff, librarian and students were spelt out and diagrammatically illustrated.

Academic library staff cooperation is the keystone and springboard that would usher students to their educational fulfillment. This is because modern education is not only resource based but also student centered. Besides, classroom work, textbooks and course of study have limitations of their own. It is only by such careful planning and cooperation between the teaching staff and library staff-leading to better use of library resources that these limitations can be removed. Apart from this, the teacher should emphasize and encourage the use of the library by referring the students to information resource available therein. This is necessary even if they do not use the library themselves,

because by so doing, they will not only link lectures to the library but also encourage independent study, which is the hallmark of higher learning and education as well as enable students to discover more facts for themselves. On a more serious note, for this symbiotic relationship and cooperation to be sustained, the librarian needs to make relentless effort at promoting the use of the library not only as instrument of teaching and learning but also as a source of personal interest and enjoyment.

Finally, since it is indisputable that an educational programme of excellence that would give the student more meaningful and fulfilling education requires not only the direct involvement of the library staff in all phases of the instructional programme but also recognizes and utilizes the library as a special teaching and learning laboratory, the librarian needs to initiate the under listed actions to foster this all important cooperation:

1. Ensuring that teaching staff are regularly informed of new acquisitions and services.
2. A profile of each academic staff should be kept so as to keep track of information needs.
3. Current materials should equally be conspicuously displayed so that client could see them.
4. Ensuring that meetings of the library committee are held regularly and that relevant statistical and other information is presented as appropriate.
5. Ensuring that library staff at strategic points exhibit high level of cillity in the discharge of their duty.

Contrariwise, the teaching staff need to show more active interest in the collection development of the library by being involved in selection not only because they are subject specialist in their respective being selected for acquisition.

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