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## ASSESSMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING IN NIGERIAN LIBRARIANSHIP

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**ASSESSMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING IN NIGERIAN  
LIBRARIANSHIP**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examined the concept of strategic planning in librarianship. This article becomes pertinent because few studies have examined academic libraries' planning documents to see how they are prioritizing among the competing issues and challenges facing them in the last two decades. This paper addresses the gap in the literature, theory and practice. The paper argued that effective strategic planning involves understanding the library domain, assessing relevant resource base and creating a shared view of the future, by asking fundamental questions such as what do libraries need to do to support excellence in service delivery and remain competitive in any academic environment?.

This paper argued that strategic planning involves gathering and processing information, identifying and evaluating options, deciding and refining objectives, formulating and implementing plans, monitoring and reviewing progress.

Through a content analysis of academic library strategic plans, the paper discovered the extent to which strategic planning principles are monitoring and addressing emerging and traditional needs of the library and its service delivery. The paper concludes that library leaders and the planning team should work together to develop an effective system for ensuring the commitment of all library staff to strategies of their libraries.

**Keywords: Strategic, Planning, Librarianship, Assessment**

**Word count = 4,643**

## **Introduction**

### **Overview of Strategic Planning**

Strategic Management (SM) is an ongoing process concerned with the identification of strategic goals, vision, mission and objectives of an organization along with an analysis of its current situation, develop appropriate strategies, put these strategies into action, and evaluate, modify or change these strategies when needed (Dess, Lumpkin & Eisner 2008). Strategic planning is “a systematic process of envisioning a desired future, and translating this vision into broadly defined goals or objectives and a sequence of steps to achieve them” (Roberts & Wood, 2012, p. 10). The process typically involves six steps: developing a vision; developing a set of core values; conducting an environmental scan; developing goals and strategies; implementing and assessing the plan; and revisiting the plan (Dole, 2013). In addition to an environmental scan, which analyzes external factors impacting the organization, libraries involved in strategic planning might also benefit from a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis, which examines internal factors (Morgenstern & Jones, 2012).

The SWOT analysis and environmental scan are important steps in strategic planning, as they help the organization to take stock of the internal and external situation and make informed decisions about how to move forward. The strategic plan itself and each of its goals or strategies should be assessed against specific metrics. As such, it is necessary to establish who will be accountable for each aspect of the plan (Forbes.com, 2011). While the specific goals of a plan will vary from one library to another, libraries do not operate in a vacuum. It is important for the library to align its strategic plan with the mission and goals of the larger institution, in order to demonstrate how it directly supports those goals and mission (McNicol, 2005). Viewed as a whole, these plans can offer a perspective on how libraries are envisioning their future, and where they are planning to concentrate efforts and resources.

Several studies have used strategic plans as a source of information on the priorities and directions of academic libraries. Many of these libraries align their own plans with that of their parent institution. Indeed, as it is impossible for academic libraries to respond to all the trends and challenges in the field, they can use the mission and goals of the college as a guide for prioritizing their goals and allocating their resources (McNicol, 2005). Bielavitz found programs and services related to community engagement in the strategic plans of libraries of the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities, which supports a core tenet of these institutions (Bielavitz, 2011).

Because alignment with the parent institution is so important, academic libraries will often redirect their plans as institutional priorities shift (McNicol, 2005). For instance, the library might adjust its programs and services to meet the needs of a college that is putting increased emphasis on research.

Strategic planning is a component of strategic management (SM). As shown in the literature, SM is achieved through three basic phases: strategy formulation, which is concerned with defining the mission, vision and goals, and concluded by selecting a suitable strategy; strategy implementation, which involves selecting leadership and an organizational structure, and providing the required resources; and lastly, strategy evaluation and control, which includes the adoption of measurement tools for evaluating the performance of the organization. This Model as shown in Figure (1) is constructed to be congruent with these three stages. However, it includes other aspects that are especially designed to suit academic libraries. All the components of the model are merged into the following three stages: pre-planning stage; planning stage; and post-planning stage. Dealing with these issues successfully will enable the organization to reach its goals and to fulfill its vision. To ensure the optimal development and implementation of the SM stages, there are three connection channels linking the components of the model into a coherent whole. These are: an alignment channel, which ensures the total consistency of the library's mission, vision, and strategy with those of the parent institution; quality control, which links the implementation of the strategy to the performance measurement process; and a communication and involvement channel, which builds the engagement of employees from different management levels into all steps of the SM process.

Strategic planning is one of the most thought-provoking exercises an organization can undertake. Strategic planning allows an organization to make important decisions or choices by taking a future view of what it hopes to accomplish and how it will do so. A strategic plan is built on a systematic analysis of the organization's existing structure, governance, staff, program or service combination, collaborations, and resources (financial, human, technical, and material) against where they are and where the Organization which to be. This analysis is dynamic because it allows an organization to perceive which of its aspects need to change in order to achieve its goals. A well-developed strategic plan serves as a blueprint for making these changes because it describes the following:

- A dream for the future
- Strengths and weaknesses of the organization
- The nature of the changes contemplated for future sustainable growth and development

- The structure of these changes
- Those who are responsible for guiding change
- The resources required, whether they currently exist within the organization or to be generated from external sources.

A strategic plan represents an organization-wide agreement among staff, directors, and other stakeholders concerning what represents success and how it is to be achieved. It therefore allows a manager to approach the strategic plan's activities with confidence. Strategic plans is institutionalized so that they serve as the basis for performance standards, decision-making, planning, and resource mobilization and allocation. Strategic plans is also systematically reviewed and revised so they remain up-to-date and relevant. The whole organization must embrace the plan so that it will serve as Organization blue print for subsequence plan, which must be both practical based upon the organization's mission and flexible, to allow for rapid change. The organization need to always put into consideration that change is the only constant thing ever and 'Those who fail to plan, plan to fail'? While that can't speak to all facets of life, it certainly true in Librarianship as a Profession, hence strategic planning is inevitable.

Strategic Planning is the core duty of Librarians it help them to determine where the library plans to be in the short and long term, various components of the strategic planning process are helpful. Strategic planning is to a Library what a map is to a road rally driver. It is a tool that defines the routes that when taken will lead to the most likely probability of getting from where Library as Organization is to where the parent Institution want it to go. And like a road rally, strategic plans meet diversions and hindrances that call for adjusting and bending as the plan is implemented. Strategic plan itself and each of its goals or strategies are assessed against specific objective. As such, it is necessary to establish who will be accountable for each aspect of the plan (Forbes.com, 2011). Specific goals of a plan vary from one library to another, because libraries do not operate in a vacuum. Libraries aligned their strategic plans with the mission and goals of the larger institution, to effectively support those goals and mission (McNicol, 2005 for successful accomplishment.

Academic libraries' services have changed very fast in the last twenty years. Nowadays, electronic resources, networks and the World Wide Web represent a large fraction of the library and information services. Hence Librarians as head of academic libraries "must also be able to demonstrate the value of what they are doing and provide evidence of the impact that they are making" (Payne, 2005), so that it is important to use methods to assessment where they were before, where they are now, as against where they should be to be relevant. Librarians must manage staff, information resources and machines strategically to survive and stay relevant.

## **Concept of Librarianship**

Librarian is a person who is professionally qualified to head a library. A Librarian manage both Human and material resources of the Library to support the accomplishment of the vision and mission of the large Institution they serve. Librarians are known to be maintenance of information resources that are in charge of library usage, collection of information resources in print and non-printed format. Librarianship is centered with Strategic Planning Management activities, as educator and leader within the process, whether the process happens within the library or in the Institution. They consistently apply disciplined approach to strategic planning so as to better prepare and evolve quickly as the market changes and as different market segments require different needs for information products or Services in the Global world. As Library grows and as the environment becomes more complex the need for strategic planning becomes greater. Through Strategic Planning vision and mission statement are clearly stated, plans are draw as map and channel toward effectively and efficiently achievement of the set goals. More importantly, such plan would serve as guides to other libraries as they organize, collect and disseminate information.

## **CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Accordingly to Drucker strategy is described as “a company's basic approach to achieving its overall objectives” and defines “strategic planning” as: “the planning for a company's long-term and short term goals, future that includes the setting of major overall objectives, the determination of the basic approaches to be used in pursuing these objectives, and the means to be used in obtaining the necessary resources to be employed. Johnson and Scholes affirmed that strategic planning is used at one level to denote overall direction. Strategic planning is a process of defining long-term objectives, identifying quantitative goals and objectives, developing strategies to achieve set objectives, and finding resources to implement those strategies, selecting the appropriate strategies to achieve the stated goals.

Strategic planning is a tool that is useful for guiding day-to-day decisions and also for assessing progress and changing approaches when moving forward in an Organization. It is one of the most important functions of the Top Level Managers in an Organization. This is the process in which the Top Level Managers outline the Organization future goals and detail the ways in which they will achieve these goals. In order to be prepared for this responsibility planning is necessary. Strategic planning is necessary in the Library because it help to provide the Librarians with a sense of direction and outlines measurable goals. And to help them effectively select, organize, present and preserve information resources relevant to education and research in the Universities. It assists Librarians in sustaining quality resources and provides quality services that will enhance present and future research and scholarly community. Strategic planning helps Librarians to build intellectual connection among these resources and educate the university community in the effective use of information.

## **.ASSESSMENT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING IN LIBRARIES**

Assessment of strategic planning in Librarianship has a sequence of related steps and the process vary, it is considered in relation to the size and type of organization and the scope and purpose of the plan. Academic libraries typically consider the following areas as part of their planning activities: their mission or purpose; their values and beliefs; their view of the future, expressed in a single vision or multiple scenarios; their directions and goals; their plans for actions and their financial resources required.

Effective strategic planning involves understanding the business arena, assessing your resource base and creating a shared view of the future, by asking fundamental questions such as:

Why do we exist? What business are we into? (Mission)

Where are we now? How did we get here? (Situational audit)

What factors will impact our future? (Environmental appraisal)

- What do we want to be? Where do we want to go? (Vision and goals)
- How can we get there? What are the implications? (Strategic options)
- What needs to be done? Who will do it? When? (Action plans)
- How will we track progress? (Performance indicators)

“Strategy is the direction and scope of an organization over the long term: which achieves advantage for the organization through its alignment of resources within a changing environment, to meet the needs of markets and to fulfill stakeholder expectations.” This aspect covers researching and analyzing the forces of the external world, including and as well as reviewing and auditing the internal situation, especially personal performance as a Librarian and resources. The tools used include environmental scanning, analysis, User Community mapping, and competitive bench) (marking, SWOT, and cross impact analysis. The typical output is a set of formal planning assumptions to inform other aspects of the planning process.

Librarians have learned over the years that planning processes (whatever their scale) need to be properly managed and carefully planned. The key tasks involved can be summarized as follows:

- Defining the project.
- Auditing the situation.
- Setting strategic objectives.
- Identifying different strategies.
- Evaluating the alternatives.



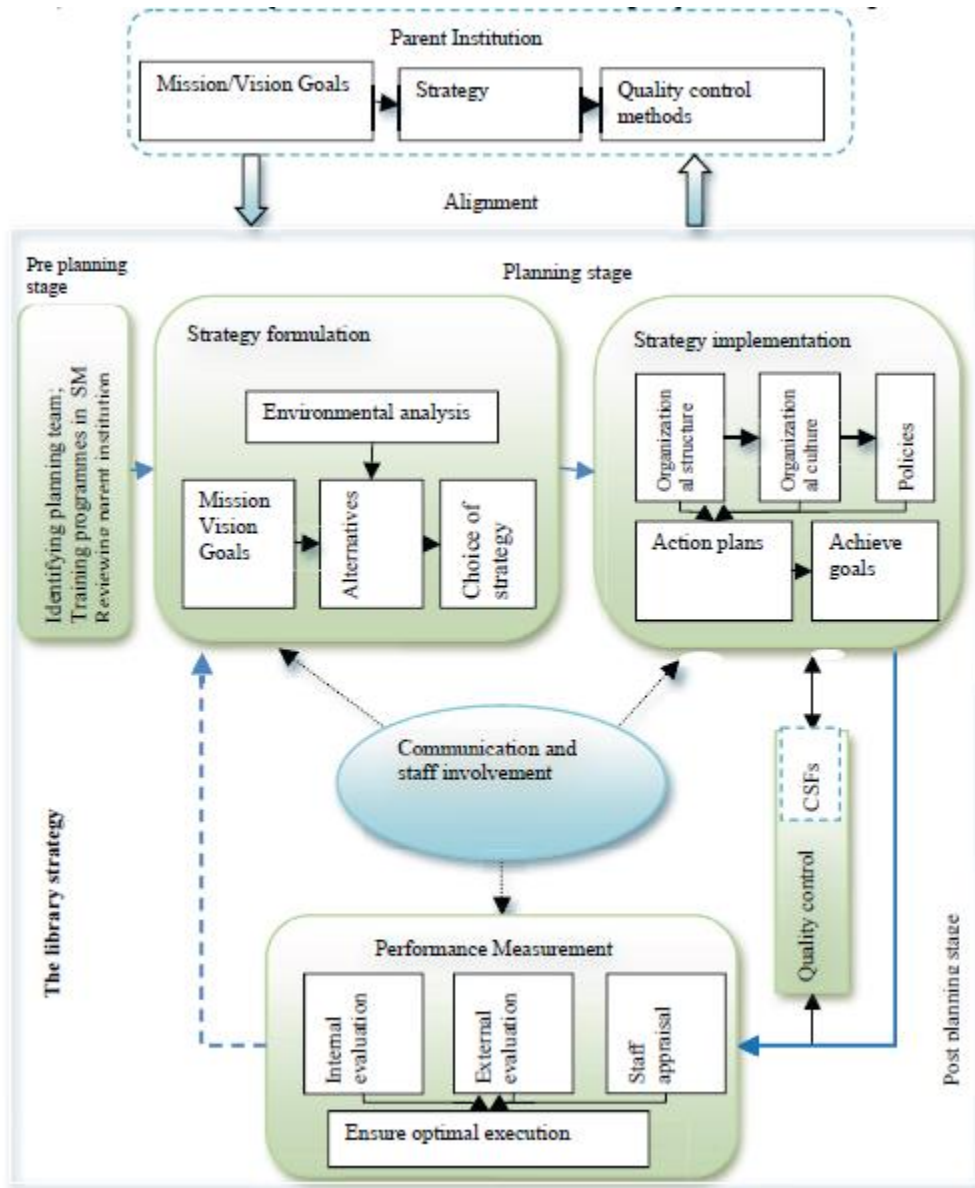
- Preparing budget estimates.
- Formulating the plan.
- Initiating action programs.
- Monitoring strategy progress.
- Reviewing the plan.

This involves discussing and agreeing on fundamental issues, such as the scope, purpose, and functions of the Library; its guiding principles and philosophies; its desired future situation and the direction required to get there. Tools used include: mission, positioning, vision, and values statements; key result areas; critical success factors; goals; and targets “typical accepted core value of any Library which is to provide the parent body with quality resources and services that will adequately support teaching, learning and research activities. As affirmed by *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science* (2001,2nd.ed.).

### **Models of Strategic planning in the Library**

Strategic planning has been conceptualized as a series of fundamental questions and a set of interlocking components. It can also be seen in more practical terms as a sequence of related steps. Models for operationalizing the strategic planning process vary and need to be considered in relation to the size and type of organization and the scope and purpose of the plan. The literature indicates many models for strategic management and strategic planning. Some of these were generally made to suit organizations from different sectors and includes phases of the SM process (Coulter, 2005). Others were directed for nonprofit organizations such as the Bryson’s framework for public and nonprofit organizations (Bryson, 1988), which was applied at Indiana University Bloomington and was seen by McClamroch et al (2001) worthwhile for its’ Libraries. Some others emphasize certain features of the strategy as seen in the Conceptual framework of “Strategy as Moral Philosophy” which was developed by Singer (1994). For academic libraries, Birdsall and Hensley (1994) developed a strategic Planning Model for Academic libraries composed of six components: selecting the most appropriate members of an organization and selecting an organizational structure to conduct planning; scanning the environment, which begins with a review of organizations mission and vision, followed by a review to major impact analysis of strengths weaknesses opportunities and threats; analyzing strategic options; designing unit plans; accepting the agenda, which involves affirming existing goals and develop new ones if necessary; and lastly adopting the strategic plan. Frameworks also were seen concerning:

aspects of SM in libraries such as the “Mixed-model CAF-BSC-AHP and PAQ-SIBi-USP”, which was developed by Melo and Sampaio (2006) for measuring the quality of academic libraries and information services; or facilities of libraries such as the Hofmann’s (2005) strategic planning framework for information technologies for libraries.



*Figure 1: Models of Strategic planning in the Library Adopted from Khalfan Zahran Al Hijji (2014)*

## **Relevance of the model to the current paper**

The Model, which is presented in this paper, is a result of a comprehensive survey of strategic management (SM) literature. It provides a guideline for academic libraries' leaders particularly in Nigeria and other developing nations to adopt SM principles and practices in their libraries and to overcome the obstacles that they might face in their future strategies. The Model comprises the basic components of SM: strategy formulation; strategy implementation; and strategy evaluation and control, and it is applied through three successive stages: pre-planning; planning; and post planning. To ensure the optimal development and implementation of these stages, the Model offers three connection channels linking the components of the model into a coherent whole. These are alignment, quality control, and a communication and involvement channels.

## **Stages of Strategic Planning (figure 1)**

### **Pre planning stage**

The aim of this stage is to prepare for strategic planning. It includes three activities: identifying the planning team or committee; providing the team with skills and knowledge of strategic management; and conducting a review of the parent institution's strategy. The first and the second activities are the responsibility of library leaders who are required to select highly skilled professionals to form the team, and then to support them with the training programs according to their needs. However, the third activity and most steps of the following stages will be carried out by the appointed team. Members of the planning team should be selected according to two criteria: firstly, they must be all professionals holding degrees in library science or management; and secondly, they must represent all units and management levels in the library. Sub committees may also be required to facilitate the optimal communication between the main team and stakeholders of the library in order to ensure the continuing flow of information from different units of the library to the team. Despite the selection of highly experienced employees to compose the team, some or maybe all of them might not have the basic skills and knowledge of the SM process. Therefore, and in order to ensure the right direction in formulating and implementing strategies, training workshops in this regard should be designed to provide the team members with the required knowledge. After the completion of training, all members of the team will be supposed to have the ability to think strategically, and then to identify the elements

of strategic planning and the process of strategic management. From this point, the team will start its duty by reviewing the strategies and other kinds of plans of the parent institute on. The present model supposes that the parent institution already has its own strategy when leaders of the library commence the work in strategic planning for information services. Thus, it is essential for the planning team to visit and review the university's strategy and analyze its components, in order to identify the basic elements that must be taken into consideration for the library's strategy, and which ensure the successful alignment between the two strategies. However, if the university has not yet developed its strategy, the library planning team should consider, at least, the mission and vision statements of the university if they are available, or meet university principals to clarify their vision for the University.

### **Planning stage**

This stage is achieved through the fulfillment of two components of the Model: strategy formulation; and strategy implementation. The first one includes four steps: identifying vision, mission and goals of the library; conducting an environmental analysis; specifying alternatives; and choosing the strategy. The second component also aims to achieve the strategic goals of the library through four steps: developing an organizational structure; identifying the organizational culture; developing policies; and identifying action and operational plans.

### **Strategy formulation**

Leaders and principals of all organizations should articulate: a vision shaping the direction and future of their organizations; a mission statement explaining what exactly the organization does, and justifying the reason for its existence; and goals that are targeted to be achieved in order to achieve the vision. Before commencing the formulation of library strategy, the planning team should be sure of the existence of these three important components of SM in the library. If this is the case, the next step is to ascertain that these components are conforming to good SM practice, as described in the literature, and then to ensure their alignment with those of the parent institution. This Model therefore, suggests that library principals and planning team identify in an earlier stage of formulating the strategy, the purpose of the library and the type of information services it offers, and then articulate vision and mission statements, and library goals

accordingly. The most important thing in this step is to ensure the participation of all library leaders in articulating these issues, and the commitment of all staff to achieving them.

Once vision and mission statements are articulated and shared, and goals and objectives are developed, the environmental analysis should be carried out. In this process, all strengths and weaknesses of the library, and all opportunities and threats that may help or affect the implementation of its strategy are brought together for analysis and discussion. For this reason, and as a result of its paramount importance for developing strategies, the environmental analysis has been included in the heart of the first component (strategy formulation) of the present Model. The planning team should work very closely with librarians from different departments and from different management levels to identify and analyze these issues. Having compared strengths to weaknesses and opportunities to threats will enable the team to address alternatives that may help to overcome weaknesses and threats and enhance strengths and opportunities; and then by comparing these alternatives, the best one will be chosen as a strategy.

### **Strategy Implementation**

When the strategy is formulated, the next step is to put it into action through the identification of human resources, the allocation of budgets, and the adoption of efficient procedures. To achieve this successfully, the Model suggests that the planning team should work in developing the following issues. First, the organizational structure of the library, which facilitates the optimal communication between all employees, and specifies decision-making authority; the structure should be designed to match the strategy and to suit the size of the library. Second, the organizational culture, which includes basic assumptions and values that must be shared by employees as the way to perceive, think, feel, and behave in the library. When people learn to deal successfully with problems, this becomes a common language and background. Thus culture arises out of what has been successful for the organization (Aiman-Smith 2010). Al Hijji indicated that social values and behaviors of staff members and library users affect the performance of some libraries. Therefore, it is critical to identify, in advance, how to manage these problems and how employees will share cultural values that raise the level of commitment to the successful implementation of strategies. The third issue, which must be taken into account in the implementation process of strategies is the development of policies and procedures that are essential to be followed in providing services and managing different resources. The planning

team, therefore, should review any policies and procedures that exist in the library in order to check their consistency with the requirements of the strategic plan and to adapt them accordingly. The final issue is the development of action or operational plans. These plans are intended to achieve each of the strategic goals of the library.

### **Post planning stage**

When the strategy is in place and steps towards its implementation have been taken, the next step is to ensure that the quality of services provided, and the performance of all library units and employees are compatible with its requirements. This should be done through close supervision of the employees, and continuous evaluation of services. Quality control is achieved through a system of quality audits at every stage of the process of implementing strategies. This system should be connected to a set of critical success factors. The measurement process then should be carried out to explore the extent to which the library performance meets these factors. The researcher is of the opinion that the combination of the two methods will help in getting better results. Thus, the Model suggests that internal evaluation should be conducted on an ongoing basis and applied by librarians at every level of the library. The external evaluation by researchers and academic bodies however, should be conducted at least once during the period of the strategy. Different kinds of evaluation tools such as surveys, interviews, and statistics should be taken into consideration. Library directors should use the results of different kinds of measurement to monitor the direction of the strategy implementation, and then make decisions to amend action plans accordingly. The measurement process also includes staff appraisal. People are the drivers of any organization. They develop and implement the strategies, and they measure the success of the strategies. Thus, the measurement of libraries should include an ongoing appraisal of staff to assess their ability to perform their duties, and consequently to ensure they are working towards achieving the strategic goals of the library. For this reason, special forms should be designed reflecting the nature of the different job of libraries, and connected to the strategy of the library. The annual basis of appraising staff is seen as reasonable by the researcher. However, the appraisal should be made against specific levels of performance and objectives that are targeted by action plans. Moreover, the evaluation should explore the strengths and the weaknesses of each staff member, and should be connected to the motivation system and training programs. The results of the different kinds of measures help the planning

team and librarians to identify issues that must be taken into consideration in developing further strategies.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper contributes to the academic and managerial discussions of strategy planning in the library. The paper has argued that strategic planning refers to a process and framework for relating an organization to its environment, defining its scope and direction, and deciding actions needed to achieve specified goals. This involves gathering and processing information, identifying and evaluating options, deciding and refining objectives, formulating and implementing plans, monitoring and reviewing progress. Therefore, library leaders and the planning team should work together to develop an effective system for ensuring the commitment of all library staff to strategies of their libraries. This requires forming different kinds of committees, which aim to improve co-operation and understanding between management and staff, and to ensure the participation of employees in decision-making and planning activities, which consequently make them feel that they are role players in the management process of their libraries. Moreover, efficient communication should be established between librarians and staff members of other units of the university to ensure that information services in the library meet the needs of their units. Furthermore, good communication with the university management will provide library leaders with the opportunity to explain the problems that they face in implementing strategies to the university principals in order to get their support to solve them. For all these reasons communication and staff involvement is located at the heart of the present Model.

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