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The University Library, Information Provision, and Use by Policymakers in Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU), Nigeria

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Introduction

The concept of development is a universal one. Nyerere (1978:27) says development is the power of people to solve their own problems with their own wisdom, experience, and resources, with a view to eliminating poverty, pestilence, and starvation. In accomplishing this, reliable human resources remain the backbone of any nation's development.

Adedeji (1998:7), supporting this view says:

Human development is the process of increasing knowledge, skills and capacities of all the people in any society….capacity to face the future, master the probable and manage the unpredictable.

Akinleye (2002:63) writes that

Human resources constitute the ultimate basis for wealth of nations, capital and natural resources are passive factors to accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations and carry forward national development. Clearly, a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people, to utilize them effectively in natural economy will be unable to develop anything else.

Universities exist with the aim of advancing the frontiers of knowledge. They help to enlarge human choices, skills and capabilities, by developing human resources.

The traditional functions of Universities include teaching, research and community service as well as knowledge preservation (Ifidon 1985:89).

Okiy (1998), referring to Aguolu (1983) identifies six main functions of Nigerian Universities as:

- Conservation of knowledge
- Pursuit, promotion and dissemination of knowledge through teaching
- Advancement of knowledge through research, pure, applied and development oriented.
- Provision of intellectual leadership.
- Development of human resources for meeting manpower needs.
- Promotion of social and economic modernization.

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In order to carry out these responsibilities efficiently, Universities need reliable and effective policy making body as well as an effective implementing body. Onye (1998:3) citing Anafulu (1996) posits that a typical university has hierarchical structures, official decision-making processes, institutional policy, routines, etc., to achieve its goals. There are governing bodies within the university structure. UNECA (1996:6) says governance is "the process through which institutions, businesses, and citizens' groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations, and mediate their differences."

The Olabisi Onabanjo University, a state-owned public university, statutorily has governing bodies which work to define, refine, and actualize its goals. These policymaking bodies are:

(i) The University Governing Council

(ii) The University Senate.

The University Governing Council is headed by the Pro Chancellor as Chairman, with the Registrar serving a Secretary. It consists of members representing various interests outside the university appointed by the visitor and other university community members representing specific interests. The Vice Chancellor is an important member.

The University Senate basically consists of internal university members, headed by the Vice Chancellor, with the Registrar as Secretary. The Council and Senate have oversight of the day to day running of the university through the Vice Chancellor who is the link between these two bodies and the university community. The Vice Chancellor as the leader of the university's management team translates and executes policies formulated by the two bodies.

Tiamiyu (2002:32) opines that at all levels of human needs, individuals require information about the nature and extent of their needs and about the resources they can harness in meeting these needs. The university's policymaking requires timely and unhindered access to information to ensure adequate and positive decision- making and implementation. The basic requirement for good governance is unhindered access to quality information.

The university library is the part of the university with the responsibility for selecting, acquiring, processing, storing and disseminating needed information, to meet the mandates of the university. Onye (1998:5) says:

> Librarianship's main purpose is to promote effective academic action through making knowledge available through efficient bibliographic control and through a rapid and effective dissemination of information…

Information itself is of little value until is disseminated and used to create new knowledge. The role of academic libraries is therefore central in the business of knowledge creation.

Machlup (1962:52) pioneered the idea of adding economic value to information. He invented the phrase "knowledge industries" to refer to the growing prominence of education, information, and research and development (R&D).

Drucker (1968:13) came up with the concept of "knowledge economy"; while Bell (1973) and Cronin (1983) as cited by Tiamiyu (2002:30) wrote on "post Industrial society" which is described as the replacement of raw energy or muscle power from industrial to "knowledge Industries".

Tiamiyu (2002:41) referring to Cogburn and Adeya(1999), Mansell and When(1999) writes that:

Regardless of the academic debates, one thing that is reasonably clear is that both information and knowledge, in the widest sense, are becoming fundamental components of socioeconomic development. Globally, investment in intangible goods and services is growing much more rapidly than investments in physical goods and services. Also nations endowed with greater knowledge and information resources are becoming more competitive.

Information plays an indispensable role in achieving goals. This assumes a higher dimension if one considers information use by a university's policymaking bodies. The relationship between them and the information managing institution—the library—is closely linked.

Aiyepeku (1997:2) equates information with capital, labour, and material. He also likens information to money and power, which make the difference among people and nations. Stanley (1990:6) submits that information is a basic human need, after air, water, food, and shelter. He concludes that people need information to manipulate other factors of production.

Aboyade (1981:6) asserts that "information is a necessary resource for the development of all other resources." Olabisi (2001:2) calls reliable information is the cornerstone for building the awareness, expertise, and practical strategies necessary to improve the world. In the opinion of Ariyo (1991:18), information reduces the degree of uncertainty in the operating environment of an organization.

Afolabi (2003;92) discusses information seeking behaviour, saying that it is the "way an information user conducts himself or acts when looking for, receiving or acquiring Information". Citing Krikelas (1983), Afolabi (2003) also defines Information seeking behaviour as any "activity undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need."

Policymaking is a task that requires the ability to obtain and analyse relevant information. As such, a system is expected to accurately sense its environment for information to make policies, co-ordinate and control its sub-units for it to survive (O'Reilly and Robert, 1977). Ajibero (1993:13) defines information as "data of value in planning, decision-making, and evaluation of programs."

Policymakers need reliable information. They select information from sources perceived to offer high quality information. Failure to obtain relevant information in policymaking will lead to inadequacies. Aboyade (1990:64) observes that "many laudable government programmes in Nigeria have failed to achieve desired objectives because such have not been supported by adequate information dissemination programmes." There is a positive correlation between the quality of information and effective policy performance.

Onatola (2004:29) submits that academic libraries are set up for the sole purpose of complementing the easy achievement and continuous promotion of academic excellence in the parent institution. Falaye (2003:124) states that "university libraries are established primarily to serve the academic and general purposes of the staff and students of such Universities."

The prevailing global economic downturn has made it difficult for most Nigerian academic libraries to stock all the relevant materials. Another major problem as expressed by Ifidon (1996), Omagbemi, Ogunbote and Adekunmisi (2003) is the explosion in the number of people aspiring to benefit from the book-culture, without a plan for the library to meet their needs. One may conclude that the Internet and other ICTs present opportunities value added services (Oketunji 2004).

Historical Background

The Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU), formerly Ogun State University (OSU) was established as an autonomous, state-owned public and non-residential institution in 1982. The university started with

faculties of arts, science, law, education and social and management sciences, along with colleges of agricultural science and Obafemi Awolowo College of Health Sciences (OACHS).

The library operates a complex of libraries located in nine service points where there are campuses to ensure an effective information delivery system.

These service points are:

- The Main library, Mini Campus, Ago Iwoye
- The Law library Mini Campus Ago-Iwoye
- The Main Campus Branch Library, Ago-Iwoye
- The Branch Library, Ijebu Igbo
- The Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences Library, Ikenne
- The Sopolu Research Library, Ikenne
- The Obafemi Awolowo College of Health Sciences Library (OACHS) Sagamu
- The College of Agricultural Sciences Library, Aiyetoro
- The College of Engineering and Technology Libray, Ibogun.

The Policymaking Bodies

Policymaking in the university is the duty of the Governing Council and the Senate; while it is the duty of the university management under the Vice-Chancellor to implement such policies. The Management Committee sees to the day to day administration of the university and makes decisions to ensure a conducive atmosphere for learning, teaching, and research.

The University Governing Council

The Governing Council of the university consists of members selected from various communities and interest groups in- and outside the university. These include the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Chairman of Council appointed by the Visitor who is the State Governor, the Vice-Chancellor and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor; eight persons representing a variety of interests appointed by the Visitor. Others include representatives of Senate, Congregation and Convocation. The Ministry of Education and the National University Commission are also represented. The Registrar serves as the Secretary to Council. It is headed by a Pro-Chancellor and Chairman appointed by the Visitor.

The University Senate

The Senate is made up of the Vice-Chancellor (Chairman), Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the University Librarian, all professors, deans and provosts, heads of departments, co-ordinators of academic programmes, and six full-time members of the academic staff. The Registrar is a non-voting member of Senate, and serves as Secretary.

The Senate establishes the academic policy of the University. It advises the council on the provision of facilities to carry out policies formulated as well as ensuring student and staff discipline.

Statement of Problem

Studies have revealed that collection development remains a problem in Nigerian academic libraries, due to problems outside the library system. A study by Omagbemi, Ogunbote, and Adekunmisi (2004) revealed that Olabisi Onabanjo University library had yet to meet the target of the University Planning Committee of 100,000 volumes for the first five years and 1,000,000 volumes in its first twenty years, nor the Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (CULNU) standard of four

books per user. This study aims at helping to further improve the university library's information delivery capability.

Objectives of the Study:

- To assess the availability of resources at the Olabisi Onabanjo University library.
- To determine the level of use of the library by policymakers
- To identify the information needs of policymakers.
- To identify sources of information open to policymakers.
- To identify problems associated with the use of the library and proffer solutions.
- To bring the challenges of the library to the attention of the policymakers in an empirical form.
- To harness the findings of this study to improve on information delivery and use.

Research Questions:

- Do policymakers in Olabisi Onabanjo University make use of the library?
- If they do use the library, what is the level of this patronage?
- Are there problems associated with the use?
- What are the information needs of these policymakers?
- Is the library capable of adequately meeting these needs?
- What sources of information are available to these policymakers?
- What are the problems and challenges of the University library in meeting the information needs of this group of users?
- Are policymakers adequately aware of the problems/challenges of the library?
- How could the use of the library be enhanced?

Significance of the Study:

The Olabisi Onabanjo University Planning Committee had proposed that the university library's collection would be 100,000 volumes by the end of the university's first five years. It ultimately projected 1,000,000 volumes by the end of the first two decades (Omagbemi, Ogunbote, and Adekunmisi 2004:89) Their study reveals that the library's collections were yet to hit the mark of 100,000 projected for its first five years after its two decades of existence. Coupled with this is the geometrical increase the number of the staff and students who need service, without a corresponding increase in library funding, resources, and staffing. This study is of significance as it aims at assessing the use of the library by university policymakers. It is expected to be a add to the research of Omagbemi, Ogunbote, and Adekunmisi. The findings is believed will be of mutual benefit to the library and the policymakers.

Methodology

A questionnaire was used for the study. A total of 120 copies were administered. Eighteen were distributed to the Governing Council, while 102 were administered to senate members. Of the 18 administered to council members, only 7 were returned, while out of the 102 administered to the senate, 82 were returned. In all, a total of 89 copies, representing 80% percent, were completed and returned.

The questions included:

- information seeking behaviour or pattern
- types of information needed to enhance their job performance
- level of usage of OOU library
- source(s) of information available to the policymakers
- level of effectiveness of OOU Libraries in meeting their information needs.

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Results and Discussion

Table 1: Respondents' perception of information

Items	Frequency	Percentage
All variables that increase knowledge or remove uncertainty	79	88.8%
News/enlightenment	02	2.2%
Published facts on a subject	03	3.4%
Communication	05	5.6%
Knowing about things	-	-
Total	89	100%

Respondents are nearly all in agreement about the definition or perception of information. This is to be expected, since most respondents are professors, associate professors, readers, and accomplished professionals in various fields. This set of policymakers are quite capable of using information positively.

Table 2: Patterns of information need

Information needs	Frequency	Percentage
Performance of official duties	68	76.4
Professional/Academic Development	82	92.1
Policy/Decision making Activities	83	93.3
Economics Activities	52	58.4
Social Activities	05	5.6
Government Affairs	37	41.6
Recreational Activities	-	-

Nearly all respondents need information for policy/decision-making activities, An almost equally large number require it for professional/academic development. More than half need information on economic activities, while none indicated interest in recreational activity information. This is an area that should generate further research, since it might be dangerous for executives and policymakers not to be involved in recreation.

Table 3: Information sources for policymaking

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Discussions at meetings	77	86.5
Reports of ad-hoc committees	89	100
Invisible college	61	68.5
Personal files	84	94.4
Visit libraries	56	63

Reports of ad-hoc committees remain the respondents' major information source; files and discussions at meeting ranked second and third respectively.

Since visiting the library ranks lowest, it means the policymakers cannot be truly aware of the challenges of the library except the ones documented for meetings by the library management. If this group of patrons uses the OOU Library, their goodwill toward the library will improve and they will be more sympathetic to its challenges and problems. The library will be operating in a friendlier environment, thereby enhancing its services.

Table 4: use of libraries/information sources

Libraries/information sources	Frequency	Percentage
OOU Library	47	52.8
Personal libraries	29	32.6
Special libraries	71	83.1
Other academic libraries	22	24.7

More than 80 percent of respondents use special libraries, such as the IITA Library, the Development Policy Centre Library, NISER Library, (all in Ibadan), the ICAN Library, NIM, NIIA Library and a handful of other special Libraries along the Lagos – Ibadan axis. More than half use the OOU Library, while another quarter use other libraries. The poor patronage being experienced by academic libraries compared to special libraries can be attributed to the fact that special libraries are more focused in their collection development, have a limited number of users, and more sophisticated services. Factors like the non-residential nature of the university may also contribute since it affects operating hours. Location, limited reading space, and general atmosphere may equally affect patronage.

Table 5: Use of OOU library

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Often	15	16.9
Sometimes	32	36.0
Never	33	37.1
No response	9	10.1
Total	89	100%

While a little more than half of the respondents use the library, more than one third do not. The possibly erroneous belief that the library may not have desired information might have kept this group of individuals away, since they are quite aware of its limited funding and geometric increase in the number of users it continues to serve.

Table 6: Problems encountered using OOU library

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Seating	42	89.4
Ventilation	37	78.7
Lighting	07	14.9
Crowding	39	83.0
Lack of current materials/Internet	41	87.2

About half respondents claim to use the OOU Library. They identified poor ventilation, poor illumination, inadequate collection, and absence of Internet connectivity as some of the problems of the library. Other problems include inadequate space and crowding.

Table 7: Respondents need for specialized services

Services	Frequency	Percentage
Provision of information on current acquisition	89	100
SDI	89	100
Make available search aid materials	47	52.8

From the above table, it could be observed that all the respondents favour the library's specialized services, such as current awareness and selective dissemination of information. The provision of materials such as abstracts and indexes are also desirable. The university library created a Reference and Bibliographic Unit from the Readers Services Division. It is hoped that this step will help satisfy the needs of the policymakers and improve their use of the library.

Conclusion

The survey revealed that a majority of the respondents need information in the performance of their jobs, for professional development and policymaking. They rely more on the information from meetings and colleagues than from the library. Inadequate study space and restrictive operating hours were seen as problems.

The OOU Library's provision of reference/library materials was seen to be inadequate by those who use the library facilities. In order to encourage use of the library by OOU policymakers, efforts should be made to reduce problems identified by the respondents. These problems include:

- lack of current materials
- poor ventilation
- inadequate sitting space
- crowding
- location
- operating hours

The library has had a recent increase in the funding and has been able to embark on the following:

- Provision of alternative power supply to stop interruption of services
- Improved collection development
- Appointment of more personnel
- Air-conditioning of the Main Library reading areas
- Establishment of a multimedia centre
- Access to various databases on CD-ROM
- Library newsletter for user information/education
- Establishment of bindery to facilitate the binding of worn-out materials for
- continued access
- Involvement of NGOs in improving library collections through donations.

The Olabisi Onabanjo University Main Library services and routine are partially automated. The completion of automation and networking is expected to further enhance the use of the library. Implementation of information technologies will reduce the bottlenecks being encountered in the manual use of libraries. Efforts should now be made to achieve Internet connectivity. This will assist this group of library users because of the personalized and simultaneous access to the Internet.

The university library should embark on an aggressive marketing of the available library services. This agrees with Popoola's (2001) view that information availability does not mean accessibility and use and that academic libraries should stimulate primary demand for their products and services. Such stimulation can be aroused through adequate marketing. An example is the under-used carrels provided for lecturers and postgraduate students at the main campus branch library. The activities of the multimedia centre should be brought to the notice of users by sending information about its services and products to policymakers. If the reprographic and bindery services for users are made available throughout the operating hours of the library, the problems of photocopying materials after 4:00 p.m. and on weekends would be solved.

Public relations is an essential ingredient in marketing services and goods. Since some of the policy markers are also users, and latent users, the patronage of OOU library by the university's policymakers will improve, if the positive measures recommended are consistently pursued.

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