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Constraints to the Effectiveness of Legislative Libraries in Enhancing Legislative Process in North-Western State Houses of Assembly of Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was conducted to identify constraints to the effectiveness of legislative libraries in enhancing legislative process in North-Western State Houses of Assembly. Data collection took place in 2012, questionnaire was used in collecting data from the legislators. One hundred and sixty two (162) copies of questionnaire were administered to the legislators from the five State Houses of Assembly, namely, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi and Sokoto. Thus, one hundred and forty one (141) representing 87 percent copies of questionnaire were returned and used for this research work. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data collected from the questionnaire, based on the variables of the study. Some problems associated with the provision of information resources and services were identified such as inadequate funding, non-availability of current information resources and services, inadequate provision of ICT facilities i.e. internet, electronic documents etc., un conducive library environment among other. Measures to overcome the challenges that include provision of adequate budgetary allocation, provision of current information resources and services, creation of conducive library environment within the vicinity of the legislators' offices etc. were as well proffered to the highlighted challenges.

Keywords: Legislative libraries, Legislative process, Information resources, services, North-Western, State houses of assembly, Nigeria.

Introduction

It is a fact that libraries are attached to organization to support the achievement of the overall aims and objectives of their parent institutions. However, due to constraints affecting the operations of such libraries in so many ways that include shortage of funds, non-availability of current information resources and services, un conducive library environment among others.

Pullinger (2012) noted that a sound legislative library would contribute to a well-informed democracy. However, libraries in State Houses of Assembly of Nigeria could not effectively support the legislative process as evidently practice in advance democracies.

Review of Related Literature

The provision of information resources and services by legislative libraries in Nigeria are faced with some problems which may affect their effective utilization and satisfaction of users information needs. Among the major challenges facing the provision of information resources and services by legislative libraries is political instability occasioned by incessant military take-over and the resultant dissolution of the legislature. This ultimately made legislative libraries to assume a seasonal outlook in terms of information resources and services. Jegede (1991) advanced that:

The National Assembly Library was one of the very first victims of the December 31st 1983 coup. The library was to be dismembered as members of the National Assembly were sent back to their constituencies. After much pleading and persuasion (of course the library staff have been redeployed) the library was handed to the National Library of Nigeria. However, before the National Library had completed taking it over entirely, it was again transferred to the cabinet office... P.13

Aina (2004) confirmed the above view by proving that:

One important aspect of the legislative process in a democratic setting that is severally lacking in Nigeria is a well-funded research unit as well as a well-stocked library. Years of Military dictatorship have severally slowed down the development of this critical aspect of the legislative process. P.1

The foregoing implies that it is only a well-stocked library with varied information resources and services that cater for the information needs of legislators that would add to the development of legislative process in a democratic dispensation. Another basic problem is underfunding of legislative libraries. Consequently provision of information resources and services has always been affected in so many ways: user needs assessment survey, collection development, staff development etc.

Based on the research findings of Abubakar and Haruna (2010:8), on a survey of information needs and seeking behavior of Kwara State House of Assembly Legislators, the following factors affecting provision of effective information resources and services are identified as listed by the librarian of the Kwara State House of Assembly:

- (i) Inadequate funding of the library
- (ii) Lack of modern information technology
- (iii) Obsolete library resources

However, inadequate funding for legislative libraries may be influenced by the recognition of those libraries by their parent bodies as just store houses or mere archives for books and parliamentary hansard not as a place where information resources and services could be provided for effective utilization and satisfaction of legislators information needs. This corroborated Aligrudic (2009:7), when he stated the problem affecting the parliamentary library of Montenegro, “is a drawback that is mostly connected with a neglecting of the Library and the librarianship as a service and profession of a minor importance for the parliament, as well as unrecognizing of the information values in the contemporary world”. Joseph and Nkebem (2011:2), agreed with this statement while identifying from their research findings that “qualitative data from the study portrays insufficient awareness of the need for a good parliamentary library, a situation which has resulted also into insufficient attention and apparent official neglect of the library”.

Another problem pointed by Bappa (2001:78), in his research findings on information needs and library resources utilization by national legislators in Nigeria showed that most of the respondents indicated the inability of the library to provide them with the much needed information technologies like computers, internet and E-mail services hinder their activities as legislators. This however, could be considered as those resources and services provide up to date and reliable information which could aid legislative functions. The respondents also highlighted lack of user education as a challenge to the effective utilization of information

resources and services as most of the respondents indicated their inability to locate materials in the library. Mohammed (2001) pointed that:

User education programme can conveniently cause positive change of the user's resources and services use for the realization of their individual and collective goals and aspirations as well as for the acquisition of the relevant ideas, experiences and knowledge required for competence and success in their endeavours and places of work. P.6

Joseph and Nkebem (2011:4), citing Big, (2009), in his research and information services on Nigerian National Assembly revealed that parliamentary library in Nigeria is small and grossly ill-stocked with books that are not up to date. He also identified the absence of internet facility, inadequate skilled staff and the irregular use of the library by the legislators. This is supported by Ogunyomi (2010:10), as he stated that "the National Assembly Library has insufficient books and operational space". National Secretariat of Nigerian Legislatures (2006:9), equally stated that "in some State Houses of Assembly, the library buildings were yet to be stocked with books. In others, the libraries were equipped with old and outdated publications".

The foregoing views rightly corroborates Joseph and Nkebem (2011:8), in their research findings reveals that "the Cross River State House of Assembly has a room in the complex, which is not spacious enough to make allowance for real functioning library". They equally stated about 50 percent of the respondents consider the library not good enough, likewise the collections, or library holdings are relatively few, and lacking in professionalism as it relates to the arrangement of the materials. Their findings also found that, the scale and quality of the services offered by the library is at a low level due to the absence of a well-trained manpower in the library. The respondents as noted from the findings were also not satisfied with the provision of seating and study facilities of the library.

Similarly, to prove this opinion, Ikpaahinde (2001:7), in his paper on information dissemination strategies for legislative libraries in Nigeria presented at National library of Nigeria Jos indicated "unfortunately the need for an institution or department that can enhance the flow of

information, in this case the library has also been taken for granted as shown by the derelict nature of some legislative libraries in the country”.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify the challenges associated with provision of information resources and services in enhancing legislative process by the libraries under study
2. Find out measures of overcoming these challenges.

Methodology

Survey research method was employed for this study. Survey research was the most appropriate and convenient in undertaking a study of this nature that comprised wide range and dispersed population. Questionnaire was used in collecting data from the legislators. One hundred and sixty two (162) copies of questionnaire were administered to the legislators from the five State Houses of Assembly, namely, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi and Sokoto. Thus, one hundred and forty one (141), representing 87 percent copies of questionnaire were returned and used for this research work. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data collected from the questionnaire, based on the variables of the study.

Result of the Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Table 1.1

Houses of Assembly Libraries	No of Questionnaires Distributed	%	No of Questionnaires Returned	%
KDSHA	34	20.99	29	17.90
KNSHA	40	24.69	36	22.2
KTSHA	34	20.99	30	18.51
KBSHA	24	14.81	21	15.43
SOSHA	30	18.52	25	12.96
TOTAL	162	100	141	87

Table 1.2: Challenges associated with the provision of Information Resources and Services

Challenges	Houses of Assembly Libraries											
	KDSHA LIBRARY		KNSHA LIBRARY		KTSHA LIBRARY		KBSHA LIBRARY		SOSHA LIBRARY		Total of Responses per types of challenges	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Shortage of funds from the parent organizations	29	21	23	16	30	21	20	14	23	16	125	19.84
Non-availability of current information resources and services	29	21	15	11	21	15	21	13	25	18	111	17.62
In adequate provision of ICT facilities i.e. internet services, electronic documents etc	25	18	15	11	20	14	21	15	20	14	101	16.03
Un conducive library environment	21	15	15	11	19	13	16	11	20	14	91	14.44
In adequate user education program	21	15	19	13	15	11	20	14	12	9	87	13.81
Poor Cataloguing System	18	13	14	10	10	7	—	—	20	14	62	9.84
In convenient distance of information resources and services to the legislators chamber and offices	14	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	14	34	5.40
Unwillingness of library staff to assist users	6	4	2	1	4	3	4	3	3	2	19	3.02
Total of Responses per Library	163	117	103	73	119	84	102	70	143	101	630	100

Table 1.2, show that the overwhelming majority 125 (19.84%) of the legislators indicated that it is the shortage of funds that was affecting the provision of information resources and services. While 111 (17.62%) maintained that non availability of current information resources and services are the challenges. This was followed next by in adequate provision of ICT facilities i.e. internet services, electronic documents with 101 (72%) legislators attested to it as a challenge. The table further revealed that 91 (14.44%) legislators indicated un conducive library environment as a challenge to them. In addition, the legislators specifically indicated

inadequate space of the libraries. From the table, the least number 19 (13%) of legislators indicated that unwillingness of the library staff to assist users was the challenge.

However, looking at the above responses, it can be deduced that provision of information resources and services suffered from shortage of funds, This findings is supported by Ong (2006:7), who maintained that “currently, most of the Parliamentary libraries share the common problems of lack of priority, limited funds and have few (as well as trained) staff. Thus, Responses on un conducive library Environment corroborated with Ogunyomi (2010:10), when he remarked that “the National Assembly library has insufficient books and operational space”. Thus, Uchey and Ngozi (2011:73), asserted that “favourable environmental conditions in the libraries are factors that promote the effective use of resources in the library”.

On the other hand, data that portrays user education programs as a challenge confirmed the findings of Bappa (2001:78), in which he revealed that lack of effective and practical user education hinders legislators locate materials in the library. However, problem of mounting effective user education by the libraries could be due to lack of libraries’ parent organizations cooperation and the legislators. This no doubt affected effective utilization of information resources and services by the users. In light of this statement, Mohammed (2001:6), attested that “the need to educate the law makers and indeed other categories of library and information users on how to use library and information systems, resources and services properly becomes very necessary”. However, such programmes should be incorporated into the induction training normally offered to the newly elected legislators, where legislators would be taught information handling skills and how to make use of the libraries effectively for different purpose, and the exercise should also be reviewed from time-to-time.

Responses on the problems of cataloguing system tallies with the findings of Joseph and Nkebem (2011:8), who revealed that “Cross River State House of Assembly library is lacking in professionalism as it relate to the arrangement of the materials”. On the in convenient distance of information resources and services, Corroborating to this findings, Yilduhur (2009:53), in his findings on Policy Analysis and Research Project revealed that 40 (47.6%) of the legislators agreed that distance is a big problem of access to information materials. However, challenges

related to unwillingness of library staff to assist users could be ascribed to the fact that the libraries are manned by unqualified staff. This is agreed with Ong (2006:7), who maintained that “Parliamentary libraries share common problem of lack of few as well as trained staff. The skills level of staff, with very few exceptions, ranges from none to some basic library qualifications.

Table 1.3: Measures to overcome the challenges

Measures	Houses of Assembly Libraries											
	KDSHA LIBRARY		KNSHA LIBRARY		KTSHA LIBRARY		KBSHA LIBRARY		SOSHA LIBRARY		Total of Responses per types of measures	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Adequate provision of budgetary allocation	21	15	28	20	30	21	20	14	25	18	124	19.37
Adequate provision of current information resources and services	25	18	27	19	21	15	21	15	18	13	112	17.5
Adequate provision of ICT facilities i.e. internet services, electronic documents etc	25	18	15	11	20	14	21	15	20	14	101	15.78
Creation of user needs assessment and awareness on available information resources and services in the library	27	19	18	13	16	11	18	13	18	13	97	15.16
Provision of conducive library environment	21	15	15	11	19	13	16	11	20	14	91	14.22
Provision of sufficient information retrieval devices	13	9	10	7	20	14	—	—	19	13	62	9.69
Provision of convenient distance of information resources and services to the legislators chamber and offices	14	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	14	34	5.31
Willingness of library staff to assist users	6	4	2	1	4	3	4	3	3	2	19	2.97
Total of Responses per	152	108	115	82	130	91	100	71	143	101	640	100

Library												
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Data from table 1.3, signifies that a good number of the legislators 124 (19.37%) indicated adequate provision of budgetary allocation as a way to the solution of the challenges. While 112 (17.5%) of the legislators indicated that current information resources and services should be provided as a measure to overcome the challenges. The table further revealed that 101 (15.78%) attested to the provision of ICT's as way for solving the challenges. A least number of legislators 19 (2.97%) indicated that willingness of the library staff to assist users could serve as a measure to overcome the challenges.

The choice of adequate provision of budgetary allocation by majority of the respondents could probably be associated to the value that it brings to bear on the provision of resources and services. This finding corroborates Haruna and Oyelekan (2010:16), who found that "if the library is adequately funded, problems associated with information resources provision and utilization will be reduced to the barest minimum".

Responses on the provision of adequate current resources and services on the other hand could be accredited to the fact that in the absence of current information resources and services in the library, legislators' ability to perform their responsibilities of law making could be affected.

However, reactions on the adequate provision of information and communication technology (ICT's), i.e. internet service, electronic documents etc. This could be because ICT's provides access to wide varieties of information to the legislators that could enhance their legislative duties. Ong (2006:7), noted that "parliamentary libraries need to increasingly make use of existing and new information communication technology to access free information and resources".

The choice of user-need assessment and awareness of resources and services by the legislators corroborates with the findings of Obasuyi (2007:80), who revealed that "in modern library practice, studies of information users are important to enable the library provide adequate information and services to their clientele". But this finding is contrary to Diso (1994:148), who

acknowledged that “while user studies are very scanty in Nigeria, it is difficult, if not impossible, to provide services on the basis of these needs, even where they are known, because resources are far too inadequate to respond to such needs”. Hamalai (2010:98), also confirmed that “considering the size of National Assembly on the nature of its work which should require intensive library consultation, the level of patronage and volume of library use is relatively low. There is therefore need to create awareness on the library and its usefulness to legislative work”.

Similarly, result on the provision of conducive library environment conforms to similar findings by Uche (2009:65), who revealed that, conducive “library environment is the major factor that promotes reading habits”. Also, the finding corroborates that of Uchey and Ngozi (2011:80), while they revealed that “good environmental conditions such as good ventilation, adequate physical facilities and noise control are required to boost and sustain patronage and use of the services provided by the libraries to its users”.

Summary of Findings

1. The findings reveal the followings challenges: non-availability of current information resources and services, inadequate provision of ICT facilities i.e. internet services, electronic document etc. Ikpaahinde (2001:13), corroborates that “the non-application of ICTs in most Nigerian libraries and legislative libraries for that matter is a major hindrance to the complete harnessing of the gains of globalization with regard to information service”. Unconducive library environment, inadequate user education program, poor cataloguing system, in convenient distance of information resources and services to the legislators chamber and offices, shortage of funds are among the major problems faced by the libraries.
2. The findings also revealed some measures to overcome the challenges that include, provision of adequate budgetary allocation, provision of current information resources and services, creation of conducive library environment, provision of ICT facilities and library staff should be trained on how to use them, creation of awareness on the availability of information resources and services in the library, provision of sufficient

information retrieval devices, information resources and services should be close to the legislators chamber and offices and provision of sound policies that would guide the operation of the libraries.

Conclusion

Activities in legislative institutions are likely to significantly improve when libraries that supplies them with relevant information resources and services functions without constraints. Enhanced legislative process in the State Houses of Assembly requires a befitting library to meet the legislators' information requirements.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Legislative libraries in North-Western State Houses of Assembly of Nigeria should provide information resources and services that are relevant to the information needs of the legislators to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their work.
2. An aggressive user education and user needs assessment programmes should be embarked upon by the libraries to sensitize the legislators about the available information resources and services and to provide such resources and services based on the information needs of the legislators. This is because some of the prevailing impression from the research findings was that of lack of awareness about the available information resources and services, and inadequate user needs assessment.
3. The libraries should acquire modern information and communication technologies and especially should be linked with the internet facilities to enable the legislators have access to abundant information worldwide.

4. State Houses of Assembly in the North-Western Zone should make adequate funds available to the library so as to enable the libraries acquire necessary resources and to provide services that would enable the libraries meet the information needs of the legislators.
5. Legislative libraries in North-Western State Houses of Assembly in collaboration with other State Houses of Assembly in Nigeria should pull together in a networking arrangement their information resources and services so as to facilitate information sharing for the benefit of the legislators.
6. State Houses of Assembly should create room for good guiding policies and stick on the policies for proper operations of their libraries. This would create enabling environment for the libraries to provide information resources and services that could satisfy the information needs of the legislators.

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