

STRATEGIC APPROACH TO LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

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A Paper presented at a Workshop on Mission Oriented Approach to Library Development and Management for Education Effectiveness in Nigeria Schools and Colleges Organised by National Library of Nigeria in Collaboration with the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria held at 3 Star Hotel, Dutse, Jigawa State between 20th and 24th September, 2010.

Abstract

The paper discusses the relevant of Library and Information Centre in access to information need especially in the 21st Century Nigeria. Therefore Strategic Development and Management of Libraries and information centres were examined, followed by approach to their strategic development and management. It concluded that libraries and information centres need to periodically conduct SWOT analysis of their performance with the view to developing strategic plan and implementation strategies and collaboration with other relevant bodies to provide quality information services especially through consortium building with dynamic management style in place to cope with the exigencies of the time.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary libraries and Information Centres of the 21st Century regardless of their type, location and aspirations serve to facilitate easy access to needed information from wherever through establishing state-of-the-art information systems (especially ICT-based); provision of printed and non-printed/digital information resources; organizing and packaging variety of relevant information services; and networking/collaborating with other libraries, centres, institutions, agencies and organizations to meet the immediate and anticipated information needs of their customers irrespective of their location, and frequency of needs and time.

The attainment of these expectations presuppose that libraries and indeed information centres require some form of strategic plans and goals that will see to their systematic development and management. This is even more important and necessary due to the challenges posed by the advances in ICT and its impact on information system, services and the capabilities of the information seekers and providers, in information access and utilization.

THE NEED FOR STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION CENTRES

By their nature and characteristics, libraries and indeed information centres are more or less like living organizations which tend to grow systematically with time to cope with the changing needs of their patrons. They were also dynamic in nature to keep pace with the advances in the technology and the dynamics in societal development, needs, expectations

and challenges. Some of the contemporary challenges libraries and information centre face and which require strategic approach to overcome them include:

- The proliferation of other professionals in such areas as mass communication, computer science, information technology, electronic engineering, etc into the scheme of knowledge/information management, service delivery and access.
- Inability of libraries and information centres to periodically access their strengths and weakness and also identify the opportunities and threats passed by their internal and external environments (SWOT);
- The impact of ICT and the Internet on the structure, characteristics and nature of information systems, resources, and services as well as the capacity and ability of information seekers and providers in information/knowledge, management, access, dissemination and utilization;
- The effect of the nature, content and structure of library and information systems, services, education and training on the information providers' and users' skills acquisition and utilization as well as on their potentials in knowledge management especially as it relates to knowledge creation, organization, dissemination and sharing;
- The impact of globalization, networking, collaboration and cooperation on library acquisitions; cataloguing/processing; information services and demands; information access and utilization; and

- Lack of dynamic management structure and unavailability of an articulated library policy, strategic plan, mission, goals and objectives.

APPROACH TO STRATEGIC LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

The foregoing point to the fact that library and information centre managers' main task is to ensure that their outfits' respond according to the managers' of their clientele and the advances in the society so that they can be continually relevant in the scheme of things for the society. Thus,

- At the on-set, it is important that libraries and information centres established their goals which may centre around:-
 - Provision of reliable sources and medium of access to quality information resources and sources especially through the utilization of ICTs.
 - Provision of variety of information resources and services for improved access to and advancement of the customers' socio-political, economic, cultural and education attainment,
 - Establishment and installation of reliable state-of-the-art library and information systems and facilitates especially the ICTs, for improved information and knowledge management, service delivery and programmes to cope with the changing needs of the customers and the prevailing circumstances.
 - Institutionalisation and promotion of human capacity building agenda and programmes for assured quality, competent and motivated staff for the promotion and provision of relevant, effective and efficient

library and information service delivery packages to the right customer at the right time and location.

- Institutionalisation of dynamic management structure and policy necessary to continually move, upgrade and promote the library and information systems and services to cope with the exigencies of the day and moments.
- Institutionalisation of policies on networking, partnership, cooperation and collaboration with relevant institutions, agencies and organizations for provision of improved library and information services, security, communication, access and utilization within and outside the library and information centre domains.

The nature and content of the overall and specific goals and aspirations of a library and information centre and indeed of any other establishment or organisation will largely determine the strategies to adopt in order to actualize them. Strategic approaches to development and management any organization or establishment is needed and necessary especially when conceived within the context of an organisation's attempt to develop and manage its affairs most effectively and efficiently using the available human and material resources so as to create, maintain and sustain a niche over and above others in a competitive environment.

Some of the expectations progressive libraries and information centres have to contain with for their strategic and systematic development advancement and management include:

- What is the nature of the prevailing library and information environment and who are the stakeholders and competitors in attracting and retaining existing and anticipated library customers?

- What type of library and information services, programmes, systems, facilities and resources are needed to create a niche over and above others?
- How can the library and information centre perform better than others to become a model and serve as leader?
- What professional and general knowledge, education, training, experiences, competences and skills are required and needed by staff to ensure that the library and information centre meets up to their customers' immediate and anticipated needs and expectations and also maintain a leader?
- What internal and external factors serve or could serve as encumbrance or cog in the wheel of progress and advancement of the libraries and information centres and also to compete favorably against others for leadership?
- What administrative and managerial policies, values, dynamics and expectations are needed to advance the course of the libraries and information centers to cope with the changing challenges ahead?
- What should be done continually to improve the performance and management of library and information centers to compete and lead others in the provision of requisite library and information services record to cope with the changing needs of the customer?

Response to the forgoing expectations will largely be a by product of the analysis of the environmental scanning of the libraries and information centers especially when carried out within the context of SWOT Analysis

where their strength, weakness, opportunities, context and threats would have been identified and relevant strategies and policies are developed and adopted for systematic implementation.

Although libraries and to some extent information centres are generally regarded and seen as non-profit establishment, their progressive development, advancement and effective management are better realized when conceived within the perspective of typical business outfit that their survival and advancement largely depend upon how they can continually attract and retain existing and anticipated customers in competitive environment and also maintain and sustain a niche over others.

The strategic options and approaches a library and information centre can adopt for its systematic development and management will greatly be influenced by the outcome of its SWOT analysis vis-à-vis its resolve to have in place a strategic vision, mission, goals and objectives and plan. Some of the strategies that could be considered for adoption and implementation for systematic advancement and management include:-

- ⓑ - **Operational strategy** which deals with how the library and information centre should be organized and managed to provide effective and efficient library and information services that will cope with the changing needs of the clientele without any prejudice to the overall mission and goals establishing it as well as that of the proprietor(s).
- ⓒ - **Strategic management** which deal with taking strategic decisions on what should be the direction and future of the library and how?

This should have correlation with the library's short and long-term plans, programmes and services, particularly anchored on the outcome of the a strategic analysis of its SWOT: strategic choice of possible options to remedy its weakness and strength; its existing strength and capacity to deliver; as well as strategic implementation plans to meet up to its short and long-term expectations based on set performance targets.

- **Growth strategy** aimed at monitoring the performance of the library and information systems and services and designing systematic growth/expansion plans to accommodate and impact on new developments and anticipated needs of immediate and remote patrons especially through the application of diversification strategies to improve upon the existing products of services (constructive diversification) and also to expand its services horizon and introduction of new products of services (conglomerate diversification).

- 4. Stability strategy to have firm grip of its constituency of operations without undue prejudice to accommodating new developments and initiatives in systems operations, services and management.

- 5. Rightsizing strategy to institutionalize monitoring and evaluation mechanisms with the view to continually assess the performance of the systems operations, services, personnel and management to determine which of them require some modifications, expansion, reduction or to be expunged and when and how to take action.

6. Relations strategy which deals the overall coordination of all the functional areas of the library and information systems, operations, services and personnel for effective and efficient control and management to: facilitate efficient utilization of the available facilities and personnel; integrate the various activities within the factional areas towards archiving the desired goals (especially using cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis); and ensure quality synergy among the functional areas for strategic advancement of the library and information centre.

Conclusion

There is no doubt in the fact that the 21st century has brought with it variety of challenges, most especially the impact of the unprecedented advances in the fields of ICT on knowledge management, information systems, access, services and utilization. One of the concomitant effects of these challenges is the insinuation that the conventional library and information systems, operations and services may not be in the position to cope effectively with the demands and challenges of the 21st century alone. Debunking this insinuation will certainly require libraries and information centres to continually assess their operational and managerial abilities and capacities especially through SWOT analysis, develop their strategic plans and plan implementation strategies and collaborate/synergies with other relevant agencies, institutions and systems, especially through consortium building to provide quality and relevant information services with a dynamic management style in place to cope with the exigencies of the time.

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