

## Quality Assurance Management in Nigeria Academic Libraries

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The education enterprise thrives on quality services and, as such, the success or survival of any educational enterprise is strongly dependent on the quality of its services. Information explosion and global competitiveness have placed a compelling demand on educational institutions to enhance the quality of their delivery process and products. It is, therefore, important that the management of the school sectors be taken seriously. This is also applicable to the management of academic libraries with a view to foster quality education by providing quality services to meet the needs of their patrons. The concept of Quality Assurance relates to quality culture, encouraging best practice, participative approach, continuous improvement and satisfying the needs of the customer. It is also identified that while the concepts of quality assurance management were generally understood, there were obvious problems in areas such as customer service and performance measurement whose solutions to such problems and the likes were suggested in the study.*

**Keywords:** *Quality Assurance Management; Nigerian Academic Libraries*

### **Introduction**

The academic or university library remains the heart of the university. The library's role is to support the intellectual development of the university community by making provision in terms of resources and facilities and services to users of varied categories (students, lecturers, professionals and scholars). Thus, an academic library is a library that is attached to a higher education institution and serves two complementary purposes: to support the curriculum and to support the research of the university faculty and students (Curzon and Jennie, 2009). The library is a learning centre because it makes provisions in terms of materials needed for learning cutting across all courses offered by the institution for effective learning and research activities and resources to support the pedagogy of each faculty (Aina,

2004). The author further stated that the mandate of an academic library is achieved when the users are satisfied with the information resources, facilities and services. These form the basis for measuring user's satisfaction and are premised on the quality of the library's collection and services.

Ogunbiyi and Okpe (2013), believes that quality education is impossible without quality library. Thus by implication, the quality and the reputation of a university is also dependent on the quality of the university library. These authors believe that the quality and effectiveness of academic programme of a university are measured in part by the quality of the library. Quality Assurance on the other hand is a way of measuring, improving and maintaining the standard of any human activity that has a value. It may be academic, sport performance, business or economy. Quality Assurance is a means of ensuring that the best

practices are encouraged in a social system. Quality Assurance ensures standards are built into the functions and services of academic libraries. Arikewuyo (2004) asserted that Quality Assurance process involves setting up standards and ensuring that the standards established are kept to and reviewed periodically. It entails procedure for assessing quality parameters, quality standards, regular quality assessment, periodic review of set standards and evaluation. Osinulu and Amusa (2010) believe that quality assurance requires a meeting point between the standards for academic libraries and what is available; setting up standards and ensuring that the standards established are kept to and reviewed periodically; identification of crucial elements that require evaluation; establishment of the procedure for assessing quality parameters; quality standards; regular quality assessment and periodic review of set standards.

There are minimum standards for academic libraries as prescribed by the American Library Association (ALA), Nigeria Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian University (CULNU), Nigeria Library Association (NLA), National University Commission (NUC), and others for quality provision of information resources and services.

National Universities Commission (NUC), Nigeria. The value of a library collection is measured by usability and size. There are standards and guidelines in Nigerian academic libraries which include collection standards and general library policies. These include total collection and yearly additions and are correlated with student population. ALA (2006) outlined the provision of authoritative and up-to-date resources that support its mission and the needs of the users. There is no absolute standard for the size of a collection, but resources should adequately support particular user needs. In a seemingly opposition to this idea, the Ventura College Accreditation Team (2004) recommended an initial total minimum collection of 50,960 volumes of books, serials, videos, films, and other items to a maximum of 378,000 for 19,000 students. ALA (2006) took no specific position on quantity and quality of staff because its document on this only posted this question what is the ratio of staff to the number

of library clients? ALA stated that staff serving students should have the knowledge and ability to ensure effective management and use of the resources. They should also have diverse backgrounds to meet the teaching and learning needs of the users. It also requires excellent communication skills. Rittenhouse (1991) supported this assertion by noting that without passion, sympathetic, and competent staff at the point of contact with patrons, no amount of provision in top quality facilities, collections, and programming will succeed.

## Literature Review

Quality assurance, as defined by Borahan and Ziarat (2002), is all planned and systemic actions deemed as necessary to provide adequate confidence that a product or service will fulfil specified requirements for quality. It is a way of measuring, improving, and maintaining the quality of any human activity that has value. Furthermore, it is a means of ensuring that the best practices are encouraged in a social system like academic, sports, business, etc. Quality assurance process involves setting up standards and ensuring that the standards established are upheld and reviewed periodically.

Quality assurance in the library according to Agunbiade (2006) embodies all plans and procedures geared towards ensuring that the right types of books, journals, equipment furniture etc relevant to the types of programmes being run in each of the given institutions are procured and made available to the users of that institution. The quality and quantity of a university library's collections' according to Ogundipe (2005), is a major indicator of effective service delivery. Kulkarni and Deshpande (2012) assert that the effectiveness of the library is adjudged by the comprehensiveness of library collections denote availability and adequacy of current journals, exhaustive subject coverage as well as access to print and non-print media The library collection is said to be qualitative when the collection of the library resources are current, relevant in meeting the various needs of library patrons. Hilman, Warrokka and Taib (2012), submit that the role of the library is very crucial in terms of providing efficient

resources that would help to support higher education. They further noted that the library today is affected external factors such as information technology, globalization, internationalization, and the global business in the higher education. These researchers thus suggested that in view of the aforementioned, the library should in view of this search for a centre stage on how to be a competitive organization in terms of library management; the library should not seek to provide quality service but ability to move forward and adapt to the management of quality which must meet the expectation of customers. Besides, the library should apply certain quality management system or employ quality assurance.

In view of the point raised above, Balogun and Saarti (2008) thus raised the suggestion that the International Standardization Organization (ISO) which is one of the possible ways to manage quality in an organization could be employed. This organization emphasizes continuing improvement of services, or a process oriented. Thus in order to achieve those planned and systematic actions, and procedures that are necessary to provide adequate confidence which ensures that quality is being maintained and enhanced, and product/services meet the specified quality standard, ISO strategy could be employed. ISO is an international standard employed by worldwide companies to ensure that their quality assurance system is in place and effective. The authors submit that conformance to ISO 9000 standard would bring the guarantee that organization delivers quality products and services. It is therefore the role of the organization management to decide the quality assurance policies and objectives. Also, there is need for evaluation by external assessor to examine the quality assurance of such company to make sure that it complies with the expectation of ISO 9000. The essence of this is also to evaluate the conformance and performance of an organization in applying the quality assurance.

There are many benefits attached to implementing ISO 9000 in the library. Mola (2007) found five benefits that could be attain from ISO 9000.

They are; Continuous improvement process; Definition of responsibilities; decision making

based on data; the standardization of procedures ; and Organization's cultural changes and attitudinal shift which make staff to become more sensitive to quality related issues in day to day work process. This enables organization such as library to be better operated in terms of user satisfaction.

Other benefits of ISO according to Praditteera (2001), include: enhanced accountability of parent institution; improved good image and better service resulting in improvement of library service; improves library management control; enhanced continuing quality management; increased operational efficiency and productivity improved documentation increased perception of library quality services by customers; reduced operating cost; improved management of library resources; improved library staff morale and attitudes; improved effectiveness in team work; better communication process among library staff; and improved library customers' perception on quality library management.

Quality assurance in librarianship was defined by Dabas (2008) using 3As. These are: **Accessibility** – this stands for building, staff, and equipment. This implies excitement, ease, convenience, comfort, and interest in using the printed, electronic and online information resources. **Availability**- this includes the proportion of documents made available to users on request. These are the physical resources of the library. **Applicability**- the availability and accessibility of resources will enhance the applicability of the resources. **Quality assurance management** implies what the organization has to fulfil, the customers quality requirement and other regulatory requirements such as government regulations on product and service quality standards. This is the overall function of the management. The management determines and implements the quality policy and requires the commitment of top management including strategic planning, allocation of resources and other systematic activities for quality such as quality planning operations and evaluation. (Lawrence 2000). Therefore, quality management consists of four major constructs- quality planning, quality control, quality assurance and quality improvement. Therefore quality management deals on product/service quality but also on

how to achieve it. It also helps to achieve consistent quality.

Dike (2007), itemized the following for the successful implementation of quality assurance in a given library:

- Librarians need to be able to identify, select, deploy and disseminate appropriately needed information materials to different category of users. Library is primarily set up to collect organize, process, store, preserve and disseminate information resources to users. Thus, the quality and quantity of the collection remains the major indicator of good library. This quality is defined in terms of current resources, relevant in meeting the information needs of users as well as sustaining the teaching, learning and research activities that higher institution of learning like universities are known for (Taib; Warokka and Hilman, 2012). Besides, selected materials should meet higher standard of quality in content, expression and format. Ogundipe, (2005) argued that priorities given to libraries in the local development process is not high when compared with other basics like portable water supply, electricity, good road, sports and recreational activities. This author added that any academic institution that does not give library priority with other necessary facilities may not be able to produce excellent student that will compete favourably with their counterpart within and outside the country.
- Library budget needs to be planned, provided, spent and monitored for effective use. The library budget is an instrument for turning library aspirations into reality. Jill (2016) noted that budget determines the services that will be offered by your library and the resources devoted to each library program. According to this author, the budget must be well and carefully developed in such a way that available funds are utilized effectively. This would help the library to realize the set service objectives.

Also, there is need for increased funding. This is very important because of increased cost, increased usage, plus or minus new services that would be offered. Besides, additional resources for new services can also be made available for product and service upgrade.

- The space needed for housing the acquired information resources must be enough and adequate the environment should be safe for the library staff and patrons. Besides, good and functional furniture that are appropriate for different categories of users, helpful directional signs, good lighting, convenient opening hours, information technology systems to enable excellent information service, and good sanitary facilities.
- There is the need for user education which relates to library orientation, teaching use of library in academic institutions and provision off library guide books to students. Dube (2011), added customer relationship management, responsiveness reliability and marketing and publicity of services and products. These are meant to support the need of users.
- Library statistics must be computed for easy analysis to enable the library provide useful information on the relevance of the resources.

Another important indicator of quality assurance is human resources. These are the staff that deliver information services to the library clients. The role played by human resources is very paramount in delivering quality services. Librarians are saddled with such responsibilities as delivering information services to users. They select, acquire and process relevant information resources. They render such services as Current Awareness Services (CAS), Document Delivery Services (DDS), they collaborate with faculties to develop new services, provision of reading facilities. Quality of human resources that will deliver information service to the users is very crucial at this point. There is need for quality staff that are knowledgeable and competent. Tiemensma (2009), explained that the quality of library staff to effective information

delivery is dependent on staff attitude, skill, performance management and reward systems which is meant to provide feedback on performance; and staff involvement in planning and decision making. These encourage team work and shared responsibility. Kulkarni and Deshpand (2012) believes that staff quality depends on these factors timeliness, courtesy, interpersonal relation, and helpfulness, customer oriented, positive welcoming and polite.

### **Challenges Experienced in Implementing the Quality Assurance Models in Nigerian Academic Libraries**

In academic library environment, assurance was defined as documenting “observed, reported, or otherwise quantified changes and attitudes and skills” (Hernon, Dugan and Schwartz, 2006). These investigations have been usually carried on by researchers or professionals interested in management of change or design of standards that will encourage high level of performance. Traditional ways of looking at planning was directed towards inputs, processes and outputs. Today, since academic libraries are exposed to the critical observations of accreditation agencies and their expert teams, according to Evans’ experience, accrediting agencies would like to become familiar with library plans and processes they employ to carry out relevant Quality Assurance activities (Evans and Aire, 2013). Among the most important issues are library goals in relation to their institution goals, how the learning outcomes correspond with library collection management policy and how the library discharges its services with an optimal support for learning outcomes.

The following challenges are experienced by Nigerian academic institutions in implementing Quality Assurance:

- The Quality Assurance teams are often opposed by lecturers in the course of discharge of their duties. Mere sighting of the Quality Assurance team in the classroom makes some lecturers uncomfortable.
- Management barely uses the feedback from the Quality Assurance efforts.
- Relevant equipment and materials for effective Quality Assurance are

lacking in Nigerian academic institutions and libraries. Example is CCTV in libraries and lecture halls linked with top management officers.

### **Solutions to the Challenges Experienced in Implementing the Quality Assurance models in Nigerian Academic Institutions**

The solutions are:

- **Self-service-** social enterprise which relates to managing services rather than institutions libraries moving towards innovations rather than being mere service providers volunteers (but warnings about managing them) establishing Quality Assurance unit within the library working in collaboration with the Quality Assurance unit of the academic institution.
- **Creating more on line services-** adoption of new technologies to make of information resources easily accessible to users through the internet.
- **Formulation of effective library policies** addressing numerous problems associated with operations and service delivery of the library.

### **Conclusion**

The paper assessed the extent and nature of Quality Assurance Management (QAM) practices implemented by academic libraries in Nigeria. Application and maintenance of Quality Assurance in academic libraries will improve the quality of teaching, learning, and research in tertiary institutions and, in turn, raise the standard of education in these institutions. Quality Assurance ensures that standards are built into the functions and services of academic libraries. Application of the principles of Quality Assurance will ensure best practices in academic libraries leading to effective information delivery systems. IT ensures that clients' information needs are adequately provided for. Above all, sustainability of Quality Assurance will provide parameters for measuring academic library performance. It is, therefore, paramount that for a library to have a maximum performance there must be Quality Assurance

and its management in Nigerian academic libraries.

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