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RELEVANCE OF POLICY/GUIDELINE FOR EFFECTIVE RESOURCE SHARING ACTIVITIES AMONG FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the relevance of framework for resource sharing activities among federal university libraries in Nigeria Cross sectional survey design was used in the study. The secondary population of the study was thirty six (36) federal university libraries in Nigeria out of which eighteen (18) university librarians. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire and interview that was administered to academic librarians and university librarians respectively. The Data collected were coded into Microsoft excel. Statistical Packages of Social Science (SPSS) was used, while Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics for the study. The findings revealed that there is no policy/guideline that guides resource sharing activities among the federal university libraries, the study also found that different types of resource sharing activities were practiced by libraries under study. However study recommended that there is a need for federal university libraries under study to have policy/guideline on resource sharing, library co-operation, interlibrary loan or partnership activities. Finally, the study proposed policy/guideline framework for resource sharing activities among the libraries under study.

Keywords: Policy/guideline, Resource Sharing Activities, University Librarians, and Federal University Libraries

INTRODUCTION

Library is vehemently regarded as helpful to students and learners towards qualitative researches and achieving academic excellence. Furthermore, to buttress on the relevance and importance of library, a library facilitates the planning and implementation of learning programmes that will equip the students with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in a constantly changing social and economic environment. Library provides a contact point and physical place for teachers and learners to meet outside the structure of the classroom, thus, allowing people with different

perspectives to interact in a knowledge space. A library serves as a wealth of resources for researchers. It is a place to rub mind with notable and renounced authors and researchers. Libraries often provide quiet areas for studying, and they offer common areas to facilitate group study and collaboration hence provide good environment for learning and research.

Libraries are one of the few places where young and old, schoolchildren, college students and adult learners can all participate in learning. Omeluzor, Bamidele, Ukangwa and Amadi (2013) Omeluzor et al. (2013) further pinpointed that: Library enhances the sharing of resources: library serves a practical role in sharing expensive resources needed for every course offered in a university. It makes learning easy by providing resources (books and non-book) for patrons. Library serves as a knowledge-sharing centre and serves a practical role in sharing expensive resources. Libraries also provide the services of librarians who are experts at finding and organizing information and interpret information needs. Libraries help to connect with other researchers thereby enhancing the value of the library's services. The library also provides resources for research and

avenue to publish research findings. If a researcher wishes to publish a book or his findings in journals, the librarians can help him to locate the most appropriate journal, or publisher to approach.

Academic libraries are the libraries found in post secondary educational institutions in Nigeria; which are established to support students, researchers and faculty members to access resources and services for teaching, research and other academic activities. Therefore, libraries are the heart and life wires of all the tertiary educational institutions. Academic libraries are an essential component of any tertiary educational institution. Thisfacts, has been recognizes by International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and UNESCO in 2014 when they asserted that university libraries are indispensable to the functioning of universities and the achievement of their academic missions. However, literature indicated that libraries in Nigeria are in a sorry state of as they have become the custodian of inadequate resources and services because of government's negligence in funding education (Gurpreet, 2010).

Onwachekwa (2014) noted that, the quality of every university education is also measured by the support and services

rendered by its library. In the case of academic libraries in Nigeria, the reverse is the case, because academic libraries are in a deplorable condition due to neglect, though the intervention of the Nigerian government as a result of several agitations by concerned citizen started to yield positive developmental interventions through the assistance and support given by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TetFund) and other donour agencies. In spite all efforts made, academic libraries in Nigeria need to re-strategize and find lasting solution to perennial problems highlighted above, so as to be able to satisfy the teaching, learning and research needs of faculty members, students and researchers they are meant to serve. One of such ways is through their engagement in resource sharing, library co-operation, library consortium, inter-library loan and or partnership activities as the case may be. By engaging into this relationship, university libraries would benefit from one another through interlibrary loan co-operation, staff exchange, gift and exchange of resources and services to mention but a few.

Resource Sharing Activities (RSA) simply refers to the mode of operation where two or more libraries share, give and exchange their resources and services for mutual benefit of one another. RSA entail the process of exchange, giving and sharing of resources and services in libraries for the benefit of library users in terms of partnership, interlibrary loan, co-operative cataloguing, co-operative reference, co-operative acquisition, exchange of personnel, sharing management information system and cooperative storage etc. Thus, the essence of participating in resource sharing in libraries is for the libraries to share and exchange resources and services by making them more accessible to their library users' community. It has been observed that no matter the size, funding and equipment a library has, it is difficult to meet the needs of their users' demand for resources and services. As such, there is need for libraries to co-operate, share and exchange resources and services in order to meet those needs and aspirations of their users.

Existing studies such as Obasola (2015); Heloisa (2013); Adam and Usman (2013); Lawal, Bassey and Ani (2011); and Nwegbu, Echezona and Obijiodo (2011) established that, Nigerian academic libraries practiced one or other forms of RSA but they lack policy/guideline for such process. It is against the

aforementioned background and problems that, this study examines the relevance of policy/guideline for the purpose of resource sharing activities among federal university libraries in Nigeria. The paper also proposed policy/guideline framework for resource sharing activities among federal university libraries in Nigeria.

REVIEW RELATED LITERATURE

i.   Resource Sharing Activities (RSA)

Resource sharing activities are necessary for the existence of modern libraries world over, as much as these libraries are willing to be up-to-date in rendering effective support and services to their various patron communities. Ever libraries are no longer stand alone in rendering effective support and services without forming resource sharing activities for sharing of resources and services. The concept of resource sharing activities among libraries is very essential and a welcome development in the areas of libraries operational functions and services provision. This is because of the fact that no library, no matter the capacity of its staff members, resources as well as the range of services offered can satisfy all the needs and requirements of its users at all times. Therefore, the alternative is to embark on partnership, resource sharing

or co-operation activities for sharing, gift and exchange of resources and services for the benefit of the library users. Resource sharing activities have always been at the centre of the existence of libraries and librarians working in the several institutions in as much as they satisfy their users' needs. Therefore, professional librarians in libraries charged with creating, evaluating, acquiring, storing, managing, preserving and disseminating resources and services to their users.

Furthermore, resource sharing activities among libraries begin with an awareness of the inequity in the distribution of resources and staff that render services among the university libraries that are willing to explore the local options for extending access to some resources and services. But due to physical distance of the libraries and other reasons even this limited system resource sharing activities was not widely practiced in the participating libraries. Onwuchekwa (2014) ascertains that resource sharing activities among the libraries are very important and serve as key to possess the resources and services for the benefit of the library serving users. Therefore, the concept of resource sharing activities simply means that libraries come together to share and exchange as well as rights of

users to access the electronic databases, electronic and manual books and journals across libraries for teaching, learning and other research activities. As such, the resources and services mentioned above are the instrumental to the survival of institutions.

Hence, academic librarians in Nigeria believe in the fact that resources exchange is sound practices that are beneficial to both librarians and library users. At the same time, partnership among libraries also mean the coming together of different libraries for a collective use, sharing, exchanging of resources and services and it reduced cost which lead to easy accessibility of resources and services by the users (Ali and Owoeye, 2010).

Resource sharing activities in different types of libraries are done with the aim of making those resources and services available or increase the volumes and numbers of those resources and services as well as their accessibility to the library end users who are always in need of accessing them to undertake their teaching, learning and other research activities in line with the goal and objectives of the parent institutions and at the same time increasing the existing numbers of materials and services in the

libraries for the benefit of the users community.

ii.   Policy/Guideline

Policy/guideline is a principle of action adopted by a group or individual to guide them in their day-today activities. It could also mean a statement of intent and implemented as a procedure or protocol for achieving some goals and objectives. According to Posner (2012) policy/guideline is also a deliberate system of principles to guide decision in both private and public organizations, policy/guideline as a definite course of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions on certain phenomenon (Blakes, 2012).

Besides entering into inter-library loan practice, libraries also thought seriously about resource sharing in many other areas, such as co-operative acquisition, co-operative cataloguing, co-operative classification, etc, inter-library loan are practice as one of the most popular resource sharing activity amongst libraries. Inter-library loan in a traditional library severely affected by barriers of ICTs, such as apathy of the lending library, distance, language, time, method of delivery etc. A computerized inter-

library loan system overcomes these limitations especially when there is a center as well as the written policy/guideline to be adhering to in the activities (Nowrouzi-Chakoli, 2012).

Hider (2004) proposes that development and use of common standard is one of the most important tasks for library cooperation. Dewey Decimal Classifications, Library of Congress Classification, Sears List of Subject Headings are major development of standards in the field of library science and information management. The inherent capabilities of networked technology have presented libraries with opportunities to take their services to new levels. Like Integrated Library Systems (ILS) continues to be a key part of consortium activity which will pool different libraries together for exchange and sharing activities.

In the same vein, Nowrouzi-Chakoli (2012) stated the following points need to be consider in order have effective and workable resource sharing activities. These points are: policy of the activity; participating libraries; process of the activities; mean of communication; level of commitment; and credibility of the members. From the above literatures reviewed on policy/guideline on resource sharing activities in libraries, it can be deduced that existing studies sees policy/guideline as a deliberate system of principles to guide decision and achieve and outcome in an organizations. It was proved that, the policy/guideline has been realized by libraries a long time ago. However, its application as principles or instrument towards library cooperation or resources sharing activities has been the bond of contention as results of certain barriers such as apathy of the lending library; distance, language, time, and method of delivery.

METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted cross sectional survey design as a guide in collecting data related to resource sharing activities. Based on the preliminary survey conducted, it was found that there are One Hundred and Fifty Two (152) academic libraries attached to universities in Nigeria according to NUC (2017) this comprises of Sixty Eight (68) private universities, Forty Four (44) states universities and Forty (40) federal universities. This study was carried out in academic libraries of Forty (40) federal universities in Nigeria. Out of 40 federal universities, 36 were found appropriate for the research. The population of the study comprises of 36 federal university librarians of the federal

universities in Nigeria. Considering the complexity of the study's population, stratified sampling technique was used in selecting the sample from strata. 50% of 36 federal universities were selected as secondary population and these 18 federal universities have the total of 18 university librarians. Hence, the subjects of the study are 18 university librarians.

The study conducted interview with eighteen (18) federal university librarians. The instrument was validated though content validity, evaluation, scrutiny and criticism by experts in the field of Education, Statistics, and Library and Information Science. Test re-test method was adopted to determine the Cronbach's alpha of .92 (92%) for the questionnaire. Data collected through interview is organized and presented using thematic analysis with the help of coding system: C0001-C0018.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section presents data collected in two forms; data collected through interview discussion and that collected through questionnaire. As such, results of data collected are presented separately by providing analysis of interview then followed nu analysis of data collected via questionnaire administration.

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW

The analysis and interpretation of data obtained from interview with university librarians (participants) in the libraries under study on the availability of policy/guideline, reasons for engaging in resource sharing activities. All the Eighteen (18) University Librarians in the libraries in the sampled federal university libraries in Nigeria were successfully interviewed. Their responses are analyzed using simple descriptive statistics, the data collected from the participants were sorted, organized and coded from 001-018 for easy identification.

(Ref Table 1) shows that more than half (77.8%) of the university librarians under study interviewed were male while only 4(22.2%) were female. The result of the study mirror that, majority of the university librarians in the federal university libraries is male. Also, in the same table 1 with respect to the educational qualification shows that, more than majority of the university librarians interviewed 15(83.3%) have Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Library and Information Science while only 3(16.7%) of them have Masters in Library and Information Science (MLIS). By implication, most of the university

librarians interviewed fulfilled the requirement of National University Commission (NUC) guideline for appointment as university librarian.

According to (**Ref Figure 1**), university librarians were asked to provide information regarding the availability of policy/guideline for resource sharing activities. All the participants 18(100%) indicated that there is no availability of the policy/guideline guiding resource sharing activities in their libraries. By implication this shows that the federal university libraries in Nigeria engage in resource sharing activities without policy/guideline guiding them. However, they (to C001 – C0018) all responded that "*there is no policy/guideline for resource sharing activities but we engage in the activities in an informal agreement*". Therefore, "since there is no policy/guideline the question of area coverage did not arise".

Drawing from the above results, since there no policy/guideline for resource sharing activities guiding the activities engaged in by these libraries; the researcher asked about the efforts of the university librarians in making or forming policy/guideline. Data collected proved that, all the university librarians under study (CO001-CO18), on the course of

developing policy/guideline on Resource sharing activities have the following points in common that: Policy/guideline is very essential in all dealing and for resource sharing activities to be effective there is need for developing policy/guideline this can be done through: Holding regular meeting to discuss the importance of developing working policy/guideline for resource sharing activities, organizing conferences and seminars to create more awareness on the importance of resource sharing activities with policy/guideline, collecting views and opinions from policy makers, university librarians and other librarians with the view to formulating the policy/guideline.

Nevertheless, the librarians revealed that they engaged in resource sharing activities in an informal agreement among libraries; therefore the researcher asked the university librarians under study about their reasons for engaging in to informal arrangement of resource sharing activities. All the participants (Code: 001-018) revealed that the reasons they engaged in to informal arrangement of resource sharing activities are: promoting free flow of resources and services among member libraries; promoting mutual understanding among participating

libraries; helping and avoid duplication of purchase of resources and services among libraries; helping in reducing the cost of library operations among members; helping the users to leverage resources and services through virtual union catalogue, increase in demand for resources and services by the users; improve wider access to resources and services by participating libraries help to encourage wider patronage for the users; enhanced better library operations, providing greater support for users to access different resources and services that are not available in their local library and help in exchanging ideas, technique, resources and services among the librarians.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examines the relevance of policy/guideline for resource sharing activities among federal university libraries in Nigeria. From the findings of the study, it is concluded that there was no policy/guideline that guides the libraries under study in practicing resource sharing activities. The finding also shows that all the libraries under study engage in one or more types of resource sharing activities. From the study it was found that libraries under study

have their reasons for practicing/engaging in resource sharing activities.

Resource sharing activities are very essential to the existence of any library world over, in as much as they want meet the endless demand of their patron, as such university libraries under study engage in resource sharing activities in spite of the fact that there was no policy/guideline governing the activities. Even though, there was no policy/guideline for resource sharing activities, but the libraries under study are practicing one or more types of resource sharing activities. Libraries under study have their reasons for engaging in resource sharing activities, which include: increase in their resources and services, rendering effective support and services, avoid duplication in subscription and bringing the libraries together for communal effort etc.

Based on these findings and conclusions, it is recommended that there is need for federal university libraries in Nigeria to increase their efforts through organized campaigns, implementation and advocacy on having policy/guideline that can be used for resource sharing activities among members. The federal university libraries in Nigeria should encourage their librarians to embrace and practice other

types of resource sharing activities other than interlibrary loan; gifts and exchange as found in this study. Since federal university libraries in Nigeria have essential and valid reasons for engaging in resource sharing activities with not vital reasons for maintaining the activities for the nearest future.

Proposed Framework for Resource Sharing Activities (RSA)

This section presents proposed framework for partnership for effective resource sharing activities among federal university libraries in Nigeria.

The first tier of the proposed framework present three factors: University Libraries (UL); Library Resource and Services (LRS) and Library Partnership Activities (LPA). The University Libraries (UL), as recognized in the model are essential components of the university; that are saddled with the responsibility of supporting the faculty members, students, and other researchers to access resource and services. Similarly, the University Libraries (UL) are the life wire upon which the university community relied on in order to access and use the resources and services for numerous reasons.

As proposed in the framework is a principle of plan of action unanimously agreed to be abide-by all federal university libraries and their host institution in order to guide them in partnership for resource sharing activities. This policy/guideline should be implemented as a procedure or protocol for the purpose of achieving partnership for resource sharing activities among federal university libraries. The policy/guideline agreed to facilitate resource sharing activities among federal university libraries should include clear, concrete and attainable objectives and goals. As such this policy/guideline for resource sharing activities among the university libraries and the involvement of librarians in different activities is very essential. **(Ref Figure – 2)**

In general, the management of federal university libraries should have constructive attitude (that includes mutual respect and trust); technical skill, knowledge and expertise; and willingness to learn; operational techniques efficacy, and positive attitude towards maintenance culture. Redness of academic librarians is very essential for achieving and maintaining partnership for resource sharing activities. Readiness for the purpose of this model has to do with willingness and ability of academic librarians to discharge and carried out

their duties for the purpose of sustaining resource sharing activities.

Finally, the proposed framework summarized seven (7) motivational elements, which include training; seminar; workshop; conference; reward; incentive; and conference. The policy/guideline covers the aspect of training, seminar, workshop and conferences for academic librarians and other library personnel. These manpower development activities can enlighten and educate the academic librarians on the need, essence, and importance of partnership for resource sharing activities. This enlightenment and education would help in enhancing the confidence and competency of academic librarians towards sustaining the partnership for resource sharing activities. The proposed model also suggested that, reward for hard work and punishments for defaults should equally apply. Similarly, incentives on studies and other academic activities that are related to partnership for resource sharing activities should be given to academic librarians.

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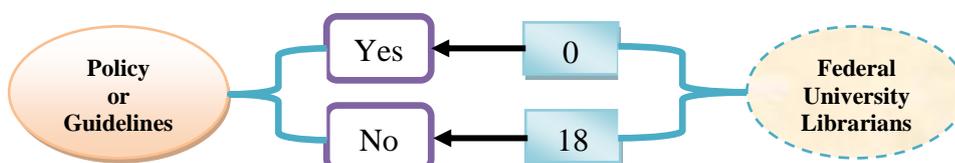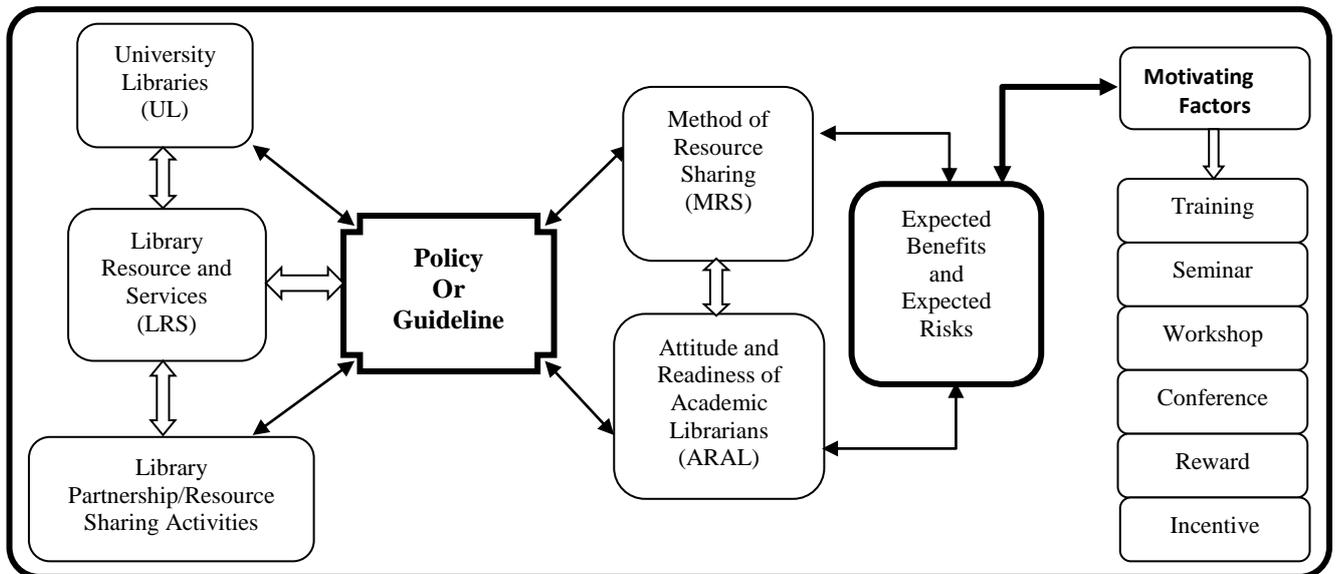**Figure 1: Policy/Guidelines guiding the Practice of Resource Sharing Activities**

Figure 2: Guideline Framework for RSA among Federal University Libraries in Nigeria

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Table 1: Showing Characteristics of the University Librarians

Gender	N (%)	Qualification	N (%)
Male	14(77.8%)	MLIS	3(16.7%)
Female	4(22.2%)	Mphil	NIL
		PhD	15(83.3%)