Strategies for Implementing Information Policy by the National Libraries in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *This paper discussed the strategies for implementing information policy by the National Libraries in Nigeria being desirable in the face of the emergence of an information society. A National Library is a library established by the government as a country's pre-eminent repository of information. Unlike public libraries, these rarely allows citizens to borrow books. Often they include numerous rare, valuable, or significant works. A National Library is that Library which has the duty of collecting and preserving the Literature of the nation within and outside the country. Information policies are a social political regulation, economic and technological decision related to the role of information in society (2003). In a nutshell information policy is a set of regulations and policies guiding information.*
KEYWORDS: strategies, implementing, information policy, National Libraries, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Information policy is one of the many different types of public policies that make a government. Information is inestimable at all times and in all circumstances, especially for national development. The need to have a national policy or information policy that will stimulate a cohesive information generation and dissemination environment has been discussed severally (Uhegbu, 2004). The National Library of Nigeria is a parastatal under the Ministry of Education. In its crusade for an information policy, Nigeria The Nigerian Library Association has organised several seminars, workshops, and conferences with a view to coming out with a blueprint to enable the government to formulate an information policy. For example, a draught

of the national policy on information resources and services was produced at the NLA conference at ASCON Topo, Badagry, from February 18–20, 1991.

The library is an important institution that plays a prominent role in shaping the knowledge society if it is closely driven and monitored by information policy. Basri et al. (2012) affirmed that the establishment of information provision stems from the library, as it has expertise in acquiring, disseminating, organizing, and administering information. As a result, reading (2005) opined that the library is not only a collector, but also a steward, safeguarding the nation's heritage and ensuring citizens' equality of access. The impact of libraries is also critical in the development and establishment of an information society, also known as a "knowledge society."

The National Library seeks to use strategic solutions to construct an effective open customer service environment; they also promote the digitization of our country by constructing a service environment for researchers and the general public with new methods and service solutions. The National Library generates online content and reaches new clientele and partners through new service channels. Basri et al. (2012) also commented that only information professionals are capable of delivering their expertise in monitoring, regulating, shaping, and implementing activities such as trans-border dataflow, national information systems, information experts and professions, content dissemination, reading campaigns, information retention, public access centres, knowledge sharing, national bibliographies, repository libraries, acquisition of foreign and local publications, availability of information, and book access.

Information Policy: General Overview Information policy is any law, regulation, role, or practise (written or unwritten) that affects the creation, acquisition, organization, dissemination, and/or evaluation of information. Most often, information policy is discussed in terms of governmental legislation. The goals of any policy may vary widely according to the organisation and the context in which they are made.

Broadly speaking, policies are instituted in order to avoid some negative effect that has been noticed in the organization or to seek some positive benefits. Given the preceding scenario, different people define policy differently. However, a typical policy has the following attributes: a scope, a mechanism, and an action. Each role defines a scope for initiating the policies, a framework or structure that embodies the mechanism of the policy implementation, and the action, which is the effect of the policy on national programmes and events.

Information Policy Instrument in Nigeria: Since the 1990s, efforts have been intensified for the formulation of information policy instruments by different bodies or stakeholders. Some of these efforts can be traced to:
- Librarians/information scientists
- Mass media practitioners
- Computer Association of Nigeria
- Ministry of Science and Technology and several other government ministries and parastatals

The ministry of information, youth, and culture, for example, has several parastatals and departments that are responsible for administering and implementing information policies. The Department of Culture is responsible for the formulation and execution of the national policies for the promotion of all national cultural activities through the National Commission for Museums and Monuments and the Council for Arts and Culture.This body is responsible for the policies guiding national museums. The national museums contain artefacts that are valuable to the historical heritage of our nation.

The National Libraries in Nigeria, Strategies of Information Policy Implementation:
- **The National Library is recognised as a centre of the published cultural heritage.** This is to achieve a comprehensive collection of books relating to Nigeria and the Nigerian people, for present and future use as part of the national heritage. The National Library ensures the availability of the published national heritage in the community.
- **Databank Activities in Nigeria:** Databank activity is the totality of computerised information. It includes the whole sphere of automated processing and technological utilisation of information. One of the major aspects of electronic information is the development of databases in various sectors. The focus of these databanks is to meet the demands and expectations of users of the vast amount of data for scientific, technological, and socio-economic development.

In recognition of this role, many organizations throughout the country are now training their personnel in the area of computer applications and appreciation.

Strategies for database activities in Nigeria
- Stimulating the growth of local IT industries through government patronage of local IT industries, products, and services
- Developing market-oriented software for the local market and export
- Developing local expertise and resources through adaptation
- Introducing nationwide competitions for innovative ideas at all levels, from primary schools to tertiary institutions and R&D centres, will instil the spirit of innovation and excellence in our young professionals.
- Cultivating or upgrading the maintenance of culture

The National Library prepares and publishes a current bibliography of Nigerian publications and thereby promotes the development of a national bibliography. In Nigeria, many libraries have special collections of government publications called "Nigerian." These libraries provide indexes to government publications available in their sections. The National Library Edict of 1970 delegated responsibility for national bibliographic control to the National Library of Nigeria, which was also designated as the national depositary of:
- All publications by Nigerians
- All publications in Nigeria
- All publications about Nigeria, regardless of place of issue

The National Bibliographic Control Division created by the National Library of Nigeria is responsible for the following obligations:

- **Bibliographic Control:** The National Library is responsible for the production of the National Bibliography of Nigeria and the catalogue cards for entries in the National Bibliography of Nigeria.
- **Cataloguing-in-Publication:** The National Library of Nigeria processes all foreign publications. It also registers Nigerian publishers; each publisher receives a set of International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN). It also catalogues standard books before they are published.
- **Preparation of the National Union Catalogue:** The National Library of Nigeria prepares the National Union Catalogue. This was started in 1988 when 139 entries were made. By the end of the twentieth century, the number of entries had surpassed 1.5 million.
- **Retrospective Bibliography:** The National Library of Nigeria published a collation of cumulative volumes of earlier bibliographies of Nigeria.
- **National Union List of Serials:** The National Library of Nigeria is responsible for the preparation and issuing of International Standard Serial Numbers (ISSN). The National Library set up the Nigerian National Serial Data Centre. The centre prepares the register of Nigerian serial titles. In 1984, the register contained 2091 serial titles. Then, by 1990, the number had doubled. In addition, the centre prepared the following publications as part of its responsibility:
1. Serials in Nigerian Print
2. The Nigerian list of registered serials
3. The Nigerian list of serial publishers

The National Library of Nigeria also provides services to the Federal Government, the world of learning, and the general public by preparing and publishing special bibliographies, indexes, statistical compilations, or other works that facilitate the handling of library functions.

The National Library as an Agent of Change with its Digital Library Solutions: The National Library is supporting the international goals of research and the competitiveness of universities. Data-intensive research and science are becoming increasingly common, requiring digital resources and research environments (big data, etc.). The library develops solutions for open science. The library's relevant clients are researchers and research groups, universities, and research institutes, with national and international research infrastructures as partners of the national library.

Customer Expectation: The National Library's strength is its understanding of traditional research clients and digital library clients, as well as its ability to market and customise services for each client. The National Library's services are considered integral to the research process.

The National Library participates in discussions on national research strategies and the development guidelines for research: to build a staff of librarians who will not only be qualified to operate the library but also exercise leadership in developing library services as a

significant factor in the lives of people throughout Nigeria. The National Library has also contributed its quota in the area of library training by occasionally offering a six-week course for library clerks in the services of government, statutory corporations, commerce, and industry, as well as seminars for members of business, industry, and commerce in Lagos. In addition, the National Library has provided personnel training and expert advice on the organisation and management of libraries for various corporations and several government departments, such as:

1. Board of Customs and Exercise
2. Cabinet offices
3. Federal Ministry of Works and Housing
4. Federal Ministry of Labour
5. Federal Ministry of Health
6. Nigerian Ports Authority
7. Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation

The National Library contributes significantly to the advancement of library studies in Nigeria by providing facilities for both professional and non-professional training. For example, some members of its staff visited lecturers for the Institute of Librarianship at the University of Ibadan as early as the 1960s and did participate as examiners in the promotion examinations for Library Assistants in the government's civil service. The National Library was able to set up travel and study awards for its Ford Foundation grant. The importance of such an award is that the recipients are able to see established libraries in operation and thereby gain practical experience.

The National Library of Nigeria provides the necessary conditions for digital research and learning environments as follows:
- by building services for digital humanities in research projects and groups.
- Opening existing National Library metadata and resources (data catalog, format and content descriptions, use rights metadata, open interfaces).
- Creating developer partnerships for digital research environments

Strategies for the Implementation of Science and Technology Information Policy by the National Libraries include the following:
- Increasing public awareness of science and technology and their vital role in national development and well-being
- directing science and technology efforts toward identified national goals.
- Creating, increasing, and maintaining an indigenous science and technology base through research and development
- Promoting the translation of science and technology results into actual goods and services
- Motivating creative output in science and technology
- increasing and strengthening the technological base of the nation.

It has been established that one of the factors contributing to rapid industrialization is the dissemination of usable research findings to industrialists in the language and format they understand. It is therefore assumed that inadequate or ineffective dissemination and use of information must have been responsible for the slow pace of industrial development in Nigeria. The raw-material research and development council was established as part of the national science and technology policy to address this issue (Abdullahi and Ajoku, 1998).

With the establishment of the Nigerian communication industries, they have now been completely privatised to improve information services. The Integrated Service Digital Network (ISDN) has successfully enabled the compatibility of analogue and digital communication services. These services include electronic mail, teleconference fax messages, and short service messages. The Nigerian telecommunication environment has recently appreciated its penetration of telephone lines per population density. The National Communication Policy of 1987 thus provided the mechanism for the inclusive mobilisation of all the structures of human interaction, information exchanges, and the sharing of live experiences in society.

CONCLUSION

The National Libraries in Nigeria have strategies and ways for implementing information policy that aid in diverse ways, including the implementation of science and technology information policy that also creates, increases, and maintains indigenous science and technology through research and development.

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