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IMPLEMENTATION OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION POLICIES IN LIBRARIES IN NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA (NOUN)

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Abstract
The aim of this paper is to assess the implementation of Library and Information Policies in Libraries in National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). Specifically, the paper looked at the written information policy available, existence of the unwritten information policy, extent of implementation of information policy in Libraries, extent of implementation of the policy and barriers to effective implementation of the policy. The review and quantitative approaches were used in the paper. To evaluate the degree and the obstacles to implementation, statistical data were utilized. This approach was used because primary data generate numerical data that is sufficient to assess the policies' applicability in libraries. Regarding this, opinions from a chosen group of stakeholders were sought regarding important matters such as the presence of information policies within their area, the degree of implementation, and the obstacles to implementation. These three metrics are frequently used to assess actions or results related to the formulation of policy. The participants were selected from eight study centres of National Open University. Fifty-two of the seventy online (Google Docs) surveys that were distributed to the librarians (the stakeholders) were filled out and submitted online representing 74% return rate. Results were obtained using a simple tabulated frequency. Majority of the institutions under investigation were found to operate with unwritten information policies, and the majority of them do not have written information policy statements. The study found that the application of information policies was at an average level. The study revealed the factors that prevented information policies from being implemented in libraries effectively as: resistance from important stakeholders; insufficient funding for libraries; lack of funding for training and retraining; unclear operational guidelines; conflicts with other policies; absence of compliance monitoring among others. The study recommended among other things that the National Open University of Nigeria's libraries and information centres should be required to apply policies as part of their operations as recommended by the Nigerian Library Association and the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria.
Keywords: Library, Implementation, Information, Policy

Background to the Study

The lifeline that ties together every facet of society is information. Data that is meaningfully transferred from a source to consumers is referred to as information (Yahaya, Ejigbo, Oladokun, 2019). Another name for it is processed data. Information can be presented orally, electronically, or in print in a variety of methods. In the field of communication, it is the most significant and ubiquitous entity. The world is moved by it. Knowledge has the power to enlighten and transform society. Despite being overused, this phrase is poorly understood and lacks a widely accepted definition (Satija, 2013).

Although information is created in the brain through sense perception, it cannot be recorded or communicated without a physical medium. Print materials, audio materials, visual materials, and audio-visual/multimedia resources are thus examples of information carriers. Information has grown to be a potent force in the development of a country in the digital age. Any message or piece of knowledge that may be shared or transmitted is referred to as information. These ideas and information are not isolated; rather, they are encapsulated in tangible media like books, CD ROMs, social media, cassettes, and other items that can be directly or indirectly passed from one generation to the next or from one person to another. Effective communication and information management are critical in enterprises. Libraries are made so that the proper information is available when it is needed.

No industry can function without libraries, which are in charge of gathering, choosing, processing, storing, and distributing information to its users—just as humanity cannot exist without information. In actuality, the library plays a vital part in every facet of human activity, whether it is the research, education, or service sectors. The library is a necessary resource for everyone who wants information. To be able to make educated decisions, people of all backgrounds need to have access to knowledge. Libraries are essential for the government, which is the biggest institutional partner in society, to raise public knowledge about policies, projects, and programs, make decisions, and support trade and culture, among other things.

Because of the great role of information, there is the dire need to put in place a blueprint that will regulate the acquisition, processing, storage, dissemination/communication of information. This policy is better known as library and information policy. Library and Information policy may be international, national, or even institutional. The essence of institutionalizing this rule is to set standards and international best practices in information handling (Nwabueze and Anyira, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

The implementation of library and information policies in the libraries of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) faces several challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, limited funding, and insufficient staff training, which hinder the full realization of these policies' objectives. Despite the growing importance of libraries in supporting distance education, NOUN's libraries struggle to effectively apply national and institutional policies aimed at enhancing access to information resources. These challenges result in gaps between policy formulation and execution, thereby affecting the quality of services provided to distance learners (Olowu, 2020; Agboola and Opeke, 2019). Consequently, this disconnect underscores the need for a thorough examination of the barriers to policy implementation and their implications on library service delivery.

Objectives of the Study

The general purpose of this paper is to evaluate the implementation of information policy in National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN).

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. identify the available library and information policy
2. evaluate the type of library and information policy.
3. ascertain extent of information policy implementation in selected libraries
4. examine the level of information policy implementation in your library
5. determine the barriers to the implementation of library and information policy in National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN).

Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. Which of the following written information policy document is available in your library?
2. Which of the following unwritten information policy exists in your library?
3. What is the extent of information policy implementation in selected libraries in National Open University of Nigeria?
4. What is the level of information policy implementation in your library?
5. What are the barriers to effective implementation of information policy in your library?

Review of Related Literature

This section discuss literature relating to this study under the following subheadings:

The Concept of Information Policy

A formal collection of guidelines or rules that have been formally approved by a government, organization, or group of individuals is referred to as a "policy." Personal prejudice and abuse are certain in the absence of a policy statement. A policy is described as a legislation, regulation, procedure, administrative action, incentive, or voluntary practice of governments and other institutions by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015). Allocating resources often reflects policy decisions. Any policy's objectives might differ significantly depending on the organization and the environment in which it is created. Policies are often implemented to either seek out positive benefits or prevent certain observed negative effects within the organization. In light of the aforementioned situation, the term "policy" can indicate several things. The three characteristics are common to all policies: a mechanism, an action, and a scope. Every regulation outlines the parameters that set off the policies; a framework or structure that represents the means by which the policies are carried out; and the action, or how the policies affect national events and programs.

Information policy, in its strictest sense, refers to a collection of interconnected laws, rules, regulations, guidelines, and processes that direct the management and

supervision of the information life-cycle, which includes the creation, gathering, distribution, retirement, and retrieval of data. It also includes using and having access to knowledge. When policies are combined, they create a framework that significantly influences how people within a society and the society itself—make decisions about politics, the economy, and social issues (Hernon and Relyea, 2003). Any written or unwritten legislation, rule, regulation, or practice that has an impact on the gathering, organizing, sharing, and/or evaluating of information can also be considered an information policy. In order to fully realize their potential in accomplishing national, social, and economic development goals, policy efforts that encourage the use of tools and concepts connected with the global information society are referred to as information policies. Thus, several approaches to information policy exist (James, 2001). It is concerned with identifying, delivering, and managing internal and external information resources needed by employees at all levels of the organisation to perform their jobs as competently and efficiently as possible in order to meet business objectives.

The various guidelines serve the purpose of directing the management of information (Mutongi and Marume, 2016). For example, they outline the types of information to be generated, obtained, gathered, organized, stored, accessed, distributed, utilized, retained, and recycled. They define the authorized individuals who can access the information, whether it is freely available or restricted. They specify the sources and methods for obtaining the information. BCLA (1998) suggests that information policy also sets the regulations for private information providers and the media. According to BCLA (1998), National information policy encompasses the following areas: ability to read and write, transfer of government data to private entities and how it is distributed, freedom to access information, safeguarding an individual's personal privacy, rights related to original creations and inventions, maintaining copies of historical records and documents and entitlements related to accessing and using information.

Mutongi and Marume (2016) also outlined topics usually addressed in an information policy, such as:

1. Identifying and assessing internal information storage areas.
2. Publishing and circulating internal documents within the organization.
3. Standards for publishing content on websites.
4. Storing and preserving information for future reference.
5. Acquiring information from external sources.
6. Usage of external information, including the Internet.

Forms of Information Policy: The identification of three forms of information policies was done by Rowlands in 1996. These types are as follows:

Infrastructural Policies: The development of national (or more recently regional) infrastructure necessary to support an information society is the focus of infrastructural policies (James, 2001). Without infrastructural policies and implementation strategies, it

would be nearly impossible to effectively implement any other vertical or horizontal ICT-related policies. As a result, infrastructural policies are essential for progress in other areas (Mutongi and Marume, 2016). A typical example is the National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy by the Ministry of Communication Technology, June 2012, which has the following policy focus areas: Legal, and Regulatory Framework; ICT Infrastructure; Internet and Broadband; Capacity Building; Universal Access and Service; Transition from Analogue to Digital Broadcasting; Community Broadcasting; ICT and Youth; Local Content Development; Hardware Production; Safety and National Security; Coordinated ICT Development across All Sectors; Research, Development, and Innovation; Investment and Funding; Public Private Partnership; Outsourcing; Management of Scarce Resources; Regional/International Cooperation and Collaboration; ICT and the Environment; ICT and the Consumer; ICT and the Civil Society; Open Data and ICT (Ministry of Communication Technology, 2012).

Vertical Information Policies: Sectorial policies in the areas of manufacturing, tourism, education, and health are examples of vertical information policies. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) (2004) produced the National Education Policy, which serves as a model example and focuses on the following policy areas: Planning, administration, and supervision of education; financing of education; early childhood education; pre-primary education; basic education; primary education; secondary education; mass literacy; adult and non-formal education; science, technical and vocational education; tertiary education; open and distance education; special education; educational services

Horizontal Information Policies: Horizontal information policies refer to those policies that impact on broad aspects of society, for example, policies relating to freedom on information, tariffs and pricing and the use of ICTs by government internally and in its relationships with for example citizens, business, labour and academia. A typical example is the Freedom of Information Act 2011, which has the following policy focus areas: Rights of access to records; Information about public institution; Request for access to records; Time for granting or refusing application; Record keeping and maintenance of records; Destruction or falsification of records; Exemption of international affairs and defence; Exemption of law enforcement and investigation; Training of officials on the right to information and on the effective implementation of this Act; Exemption of personal information; Exemption of third party information; Exemption of personal or other privileges conferred by law; Exemption of course or research material; Denial by a public institution to disclose records; Documents under classification.

In addition to these, Adomi (2008) identified various in-house library policies that fall within the purview of information policy. These are discussed under library policies.

The Concept of Library Policy

Library policies are not separate from information policies. Essentially, library policies are tailored information policies designed to fit the specific needs of the library setting. They encompass the various aspects of information management such as collection development, cataloguing, and circulation. These policies define the core principles of the library as an institution and help library staff prioritize their services accordingly. Additionally, these policies set a standard for services that can be easily understood by library users and the governing institutions. When library policies are formally adopted through a structured process and align with local, state, and federal regulations, they become easier to put into practice. The library policies include:

1. **Collection Development Policy:** The goals of the collection development policy align with the library's mission. The collection development policy aims to build a library collection that upholds the library's mission. All choices regarding the types of materials to be acquired or accessed should be in line with the mission statement. The collection development policy furnishes details to the library's stakeholders regarding the selection of the collection and specifies the individuals responsible for collection-related decisions. A standard collection development policy typically encompasses: Mission statement; Purpose statement; Responsibility statement; Material selection criteria; Material Formats; Foreign language materials; Collection maintenance; Archives and special collections; Gifts and donations; Digital resources; Consortium memberships; Intellectual freedom policy; Library bill of rights; Freedom to read statement.
2. **Cataloguing Policy:** This policy aims to facilitate intellectual access to library items and to offer guidelines for their description. A typical cataloguing policy's range of coverage includes: synopsis of the policy Goals; Software for Cataloguing; Items for Cataloguing; Guidelines, Standards, and Controlled Vocabularies; Cooperation on a national and international level; sources of bibliographic data; treatment of the catalogue; language and script used in the catalogue; classification; cataloguing procedure; and priorities for catalogue upkeep.
3. **Circulation/lending Policy:** The control of activities related to the registration and loan of library items for in-person consultations or for reading at home is included in the circulation and lending of libraries. A standard lending/circulation policy would address the following topics: Materials for In-Library Use Only (Non-Circulating); Eligibility for Library Services; The following policies apply to loans: general policies, material-specific policies, overdue library items, replacement and overdue fees for particular material types, interlibrary and summit loans, appeals of library charges, and individuals with disabilities.
4. **Reference Policy:** A reference policy defines the goals and philosophy of reference services in a Library. This policy also identifies for patrons the levels of service

which the library provides, based on the resources available. The scope of coverage of a reference policy include: Service Philosophy; Purpose of this Policy Statement; Position Statements; Goal of Reference Services; Specific Objectives of Reference Services; Service to Non-patrons; Services for Persons with Disabilities; Types of Reference Service; Restrictions on Reference Service; Ask A Librarian Service; Document Delivery Service; Library Instruction and Orientation Service; Referral and Cooperation; Reference Materials; Circulation of Materials in General Reference Collection; Location and Circulation of Other Types of Materials; Shelving of Materials; Ethics.

5. **Periodicals/Serials Policy:** Magazines, scholarly journals, newspapers, and newsletters are all examples of periodicals, which are published regularly. Periodicals can include daily newspapers, weekly magazines, and quarterly journals. The coverage scope of periodicals policy encompasses purpose, influencing factors, selection plan, closed stacks, microforms, restrictions, conditions of circulation, retention and weeding, and acquisition/cancellation, binding.
6. **Document Reproduction/Reprographic Policy:** The operation of libraries involves reproduction as an essential aspect. A policy for document reproduction establishes the fundamental principles and overall strategy for reproducing material for publication and research reasons. The range of topics addressed in a policy for reprography comprises: Overall Rules; Intellectual Property Rights; Copying through photocopying; Taking photographs; Printing from microforms; Printing images; Film materials; Sound recordings; Crediting and citations in published works.

Research Methodology

For the purpose of the evaluation process, this study used quantitative data that were collected from stakeholders. This approach was selected for the study because, by producing numerical data or data that can be converted into useful statistics, quantitative research would enable us to assess how well information policy is being implemented in our libraries. Regarding this, opinions from a chosen group of stakeholders was sought regarding important matters such as the presence of information policies within their area of expertise, the degree of compliance and implementation, and the obstacles to implementation. These three indicators are frequently used to gauge accomplishments or actions related to the execution of policy. These participants were drawn from the eight distinct study centres of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) in South West Nigeria. Time and convenience played a role in the selection of these libraries. Fifty-two of the seventy online (Google Docs) surveys that were distributed to the librarians (the stakeholders) were filled out and submitted online. Consequently, a 74% return rate was

noted. Simple tabulated frequency percentage was used to analyse the data.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents

S/N	Name of Library	Respondents
1.	Ilesha Correctional Service Special Study Centre, Osun State	8
2.	Iwo Study Centre, Osun State	8
3.	Offa Community Study Centre, Kwara State	7
4.	Okeho Community Study Centre, Oyo State	5
5.	Lagos Study Centre, Lagos State	8
6.	Osogbo Study Centre, Osun State	8
7.	Akure Study Centre, Idanre, Ondo State	2
8.	Abeokuta Study Centre, Ogun State	6
	Total	**52**

Data in the table above indicate the distribution of the respondents as follows: that 52 respondents participated in the study. Ilesha Correctional Service Special Study Centre, Osun State 15%, Iwo Study Centre, Osun State 15%, Offa Community Study Centre, Kwara State 13%, Okeho Community Study Centre, Oyo State 10%, Lagos Study Centre, Lagos State 15%, Osogbo Study Centre, Osun State 15%, Akure Study Centre, Idanre, Ondo State 4%, Abeokuta Study Centre, Ogun State 12%.

Table 2: Which of the following information policy document is available in your library?

S/N	Available Written Policies	Response
1.	Collection development policy	35%
2.	Library use/operations policy	90%
3.	Cataloguing policy	45%
4.	Circulation/lending Policy	50%
5.	Reference policy	34%
6.	Serials/periodicals policy	33%
7.	Document reproduction/ reprographic policy	45%
8	Copyright Law	20%
9	FOI Act	10%
10.	Other National policies	21%

Data in table 2 above indicate the response of respondents when they were asked about the availability of written policies in their library. The response shows Collection development policy 35%, Library use/operations policy 90%, Cataloguing policy 45%, Circulation/lending Policy50%, Reference policy 34%, Serials/periodicals policy 33%,

Document reproduction/ reprographic policy 45 %, Copyright law 20%, FOI Act 10%, Other policies 21%.

Table 3: Which of the following unwritten information policy exists in your library?

S/N	Available Unwritten Policies (In Principle)	Response
1.	Collection development policy	70%
2.	Library use/operations policy	18%
3.	Cataloguing policy	76%
4.	Circulation/lending Policy	66%
5.	Reference policy	81%
6.	Serials/periodicals policy	76%
7.	Document reproduction/ reprographic policy	73%
8.	Copyright law	76%
9.	FOI Act	67%
8.	Other national information policies	86%

Data in table 3 indicate the response of respondents when they were asked about the availability of unwritten policies in their library. The response shows Collection development policy 70%, Library use/operations policy 18%, Cataloguing policy 76%, Circulation/lending Policy66%, Reference policy 81%, Serials/periodicals policy 76%, Document reproduction/ reprographic policy 73 %, Copyright law 76%, FOI Act 67%, Other national information policies 86%.

Table 4: Extent of information policy implementation in selected libraries in National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)

S/N	Items	Full Implementation	Average Implementation	Poor Implementation	Non-Implementation
1.	Collection development policy	15%	42%	35%	8%
2.	Library use/operations policy	52%	41%	7%	-
3.	Cataloguing policy	22%	63%	10%	5%
4.	Circulation/lending Policy	40%	52%	7%	1%
5.	Reference policy	32%	33%	21%	14%
6.	Serials/periodicals policy	66%	24%	5	5
7.	Document reproduction/ reprographic policy	15%	22%	30%	33%
8.	Copyright Law	34%	33%	29%	4%
9.	FOI Act	33%	21%	41%	5%
10.	Other policies	30%	18%	2%	50%

The table 4 above indicate the extents of implementation of (specific) information policies in selected libraries in **National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)**, ranging from Full, Average, Poor, and Non implementations. For collection development policy, full implementation 15%, average implementation 42%, poor implementation 35%, and non- implementation 8%; library use policy full implementation 52%, average implementation 41%, poor implementation 7%, and non- implementation 0%; cataloguing policy full implementation 22%, average implementation 63%, poor implementation 10%, and non- implementation 5%; circulation/lending policy full implementation 40%, average implementation 52%, poor implementation 7%, and non-implementation 1%; Reference policy full implementation 32%, average implementation 33%, poor implementation 21%, and non- implementation 14%; serials/periodicals full implementation 66%, average implementation 24%, poor implementation 5%, and non-implementation 5%; document reproduction/reprographic policy full implementation 15%, average implementation 22%, poor implementation 30%, and non- implementation 33%; other policies full implementation 30%, average implementation 18%, poor implementation 2%, and non-implementation 50%.

Table 5: Generally, how would you rate the level of information policy implementation in your library?

S/N	Very High	High	Undecided	Low	Very Low
1.	11%	24%	25%	30%	10%

Table 5 shows analysis of responses obtained when respondents were asked give their general rating of the level of implementation of information policies in their libraries. The ratings show very high 11%, high 244%, undecided 25%, low 30%, and very low 10%.

Table 6: What are the barriers to effective implementation of information policy in your library?

S/N	Barriers to Policy Implementation	Response
1.	Opposition from key stakeholders,	78%
2.	Inadequate skilled human resources	67%
3.	Poor funding of libraries	87%
4.	Lack of training and retraining	88%
5.	Lack of clarity on operational guidelines	76%
6.	Conflicts with other existing policies	89%
7.	Lack of compliance monitoring	73%
8.	Lack of motivation or political will	74%
9.	Others	52%

Table 6 data indicate that barriers to information policy implementation are Opposition from key stakeholders 78%, Inadequate skilled human resources 67%, Poor funding of libraries 87%, Lack of training and retraining 88%, Lack of clarity on operational guidelines76%, Conflicts with other existing policies 89%, Lack of compliance monitoring 73%, Lack of motivation or political will 74%, Others 52%.

Discussion of Findings

On research question one the study found that the most commonly available policy was the Library use/operations policy, with a 90% response rate. Other moderately available policies included Cataloguing policy (45%), Circulation/lending policy (50%), and Document reproduction/reprographic policy (45%). Notably, policies such as Copyright Law (20%) and the Freedom of Information Act (FOI Act) (10%) were less commonly available. The overall data suggest that while some essential policies are in place, others are either lacking or underdeveloped.

On research question two the study also found that most notable unwritten policies were Reference policy (81%), Cataloguing policy (76%), and Copyright Law (76%). Conversely, the Library use/operations policy (18%) had a notably lower response, indicating a gap in the formalization of these practices. The widespread presence of unwritten policies suggests reliance on informal guidelines, which could lead to inconsistencies in policy application.

On research question three the reported that the library use/operations policy had the highest full implementation (52%), while others, such as the Collection development policy, had only 15% full implementation. Notably, policies such as Document reproduction/reprographic policy faced significant challenges, with 33% reporting non-implementation. This variation highlights the inconsistency in the application of policies across libraries, with some policies being well-implemented and others lacking proper execution.

On research question four the study found that majority of the respondent rated it as low level of level of implementation of information policies in their libraries (30%) or undecided (25%), while only 11% rated it as very high. This indicates a general perception of inadequate implementation of these policies, suggesting a need for improvement in the enforcement and monitoring of policy application to enhance library effectiveness.

On barriers to effective implementation of information policy. The study found that most significant barriers included conflicts with existing policies (89%), lack of training and retraining (88%), and poor funding of libraries (87%). Additionally, opposition from key stakeholders (78%) and lack of clarity on operational guidelines (76%) were also significant challenges. These barriers highlight the complex institutional and financial issues that must be addressed to improve policy implementation in libraries.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a standard set of rules and regulations is necessary to guide the

production, selection, acquisition, processing, storage, preservation, retrieval, and dissemination of information because of the critical role that it plays in society. Information policies are these set of guidelines and norms. The failure to adopt information policies can lead to serious issues including inconsistent information management and the introduction of personal prejudices (race, religion, socioeconomic class, etc.) into the provision of information services. Just as it was found that most libraries operate under unwritten information policies, this study has proven that the majority of the libraries questioned lack formal information policy statements. It was found that the application of information policies was at an average level. Opposition from important stakeholders, a lack of skilled human resources, inadequate funding for libraries, a lack of training and retraining, a lack of clarity on operational guidelines, conflicts with other policies already in place, a lack of compliance monitoring, a lack of motivation or political will are all obstacles to the effective implementation of information policies in Nigerian libraries.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. The National Open University of Nigeria's libraries and information centers should be required to apply policies as part of their operations by the Nigerian Library Association and the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria
2. In order to make improvements, libraries should evaluate how well their information policies are being implemented inside.
3. All Nigerian libraries should prioritize retraining and training their staff members on the process of implementing policies. Additionally, a subject on information policy has to be added to the undergraduate LIS curriculum.
4. The government needs to give libraries additional funding in order to augment its expenditure on research and development. Additionally, the government must to foster an atmosphere that encourages the private sector to contribute to the support of Nigerian libraries.
5. To guarantee compliance, information policy implementation activities in the library should be routinely observed.

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