

An Assessment of Policies and Services Provision to the Physically Challenged Users of Academic Libraries in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis

By

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Abstract

This study was on policies and services provision to the physically challenged users of academic libraries in Zaria and Kaduna metropolis. The study consists of two research questions. The study adopted case study methodology to assess the opinion of five heads of academic libraries under study which constituted the research population. However, the research questions were subjected to descriptive analysis involving tables and percentages. The findings revealed that there were no disability policy in most (80%) academic libraries in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis and there were no special resources for the physically challenged users as well. The study also revealed that the library buildings were of multiple storey's without adequate facilities for the physically challenged to navigate through the libraries. These findings differ from ALA Disability Policy Principle and Standards for all libraries in the world. The researcher recommended among others that Academic library policy must be redesigned to include disability resources and services in conformity with ALA standard and Library management should create a disability liaison office on the ground floor of their multiple storey buildings and affiliate such offices with any library for the disabled across the country for resource sharing.

Keywords: Policy, Disability Police, Academic Library, Physically Challenged.

Introduction

The importance of library policy cannot be over-emphasized because it helps to protect and guide the resource managers in selection, acquisition, preservation, weeding, gift and exchange and resource sharing. Library policies are laid down rules and guidelines for the operation and management of information centres or Libraries. The policy is a written statement which guides the information resource manager in acquiring information resources in the library.

It promotes collections and enhances the acquisition of relevance information resources. Htwe (2007) opined that a policy is a set of principles which guide decision making. Policy in its broadest sense is seen as a set of rules and strategies that guides a course of action for the achievement of a given goal and such can be developed by an organization or an institution. A policy statement is a kind of framework and set of parameters within which staff and users work.

Library policy is a guideline on how to provide answers to where, how, when, what libraries should acquire, select and manage their human and material resources. It is an important step towards having an effective library. The policy serves as a reference point for the staff to consult when deciding on what to acquire or discard, the policy can help assure continuity and ease transition from one librarian to

another. It also helps to provide a means of staff self-evaluation or evaluation of outsiders. It can serve as a shield against complaints with regard to inclusion or exclusions of service delivery.

According to International Federation of Library Association (IFLA, 2001) policy serves many functions which includes; aiding selection of relevance materials, forcing the staff involved to consider the aims and objectives of the organization both long and short term, and the priorities to be attached to different activities, assists with budgeting, serves as communication channel within a library and between the library and outside constituents. It also support cooperative collection development, prevents censorship and also assists in overall collection management activities including the handling of gifts, deselection of materials and serial cancellation. This signifies that for the library to be effective, it requires a well documented and easily articulated guide called information policy (Ona, 2008).

One of the cardinal principles of practice for librarians and other information professionals is to ensure that every one regardless of his age, race, gender, religion, disability, cultural identity, language, socioeconomic status, lifestyle choice, political allegiance or social viewpoint has equal access to information (ALIA, 2001).

That is why libraries across the world are now including disability policy in their Library policies which serves as a guideline on how best to serve the physically challenged users of the library in terms of building, collections and services provision.

As disability policies are now a concern of libraries in the world, yet this is not visible in Nigeria where physically challenged students in various institutions have to struggle to move around the campus with the help of their peers as there is no standard operating procedure, nor has there been any disability-friendly policy (Daily Trust, 2015). It might be understandable if this was the case in a handful of institution, but the problem is universal those with special needs are not welcome (Leadership Newspaper, 2012).

Lawal (2012), stressed that academic libraries in Nigeria fail to display vital information resources and accessible building with guides for wheelchair users on how to navigate through the library. Daily Trust, (2015), further explain lack of assistive equipment in library as one of the main factor preventing the physically challenged from research activities in the institution. The physically challenged persons did not desire top-notch special facilities for themselves, but only the basics for getting educated. It seems that the majority of libraries buildings in academic institutions have been constructed to virtually prevent persons with disabilities from entering them. Moreover, where they can actually get inside, the interior layouts are often done in ways that barely offer them any freedom to move. Going from one floor to another is a distant dream. Due to this gross, a large portion of students in every institution are deprived of proper library accessibility.

Statement of the Problem

ALA (2001), declared that 'library must not discriminate against any of its users but in the preliminary study conducted, it was observed that the policies of academic libraries in Zaria and Kaduna metropolis did not include facilities and services for the physically challenged, no special resources/devices (disability materials) such as Braille materials, talking books, Wheelchairs, reading glasses and other reading aids for the visually impaired and the aged users of the library.

Another problem is the issue of library buildings. Most academic libraries in Kaduna State are of multiple floors which lack necessary facilities such as

ramps, railings, special washrooms and other necessities to assist persons with various disabilities. According to Lawal (2012), the interior layouts of these building are often done in ways that barely offer them any freedom to move round the library yet the library slogan in the world is 'library for all' It is on this note, that the researcher is conducting a research to assess policies directed at the Physically Challenged users of selected Academic Libraries in Zaria and Kaduna metropolis.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study include:

- 1) To assess the policies guiding the provision of resources and services to physically challenged users of academic libraries in Zaria and Kaduna metropolis.
- 2) To identify the types of resources and services provided for physically challenged users academic libraries in Zaria and Kaduna metropolis.

Literature Review

There are physically challenged persons in Nigeria. World Health Organization (WHO 2012) estimates put the number of people with disability in Nigeria at 19 million of the country's population. This figure is too large to be excluded from the policy framework of the country and that of its academic institutions. Leadership, (2012). With accurate qualitative information, proper motivation and special attention, people with severe disabilities can lead productive and fulfilling lives. Many famous people have overcome physical impairments to make major contributions to humanity through the aid of adequate and relevance information from libraries in their respective countries. The English poet John Milton was blind when he wrote his epic masterpiece 'Paradise Lost'. The great composer Ludwig Van Beethoven wrote most of his finest music after he became deaf.

Libraries in advanced world are concerned with disabilities issues in their various libraries for the purpose of meeting the information needs of the physically challenged users through adequate policies and services. This can be view in the activities of British Library which formulated British library service for the disadvantaged. This idea was also conceive by Australia National library (2001) which formulated policy and services for people living with disabilities. American Library Association (2001),

unanimously approved the following policy. The policy was written by the Americans with Disabilities Act Assembly, a representational group administered by the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA), a division of the American Library Association.

1. The association recommends that all library and information providers, as part of their core services, put in place services, collections, equipment and facilities, which will assist individual users with a disability to access and use resources that meet their particular needs for information.
2. The association encourages library and information service providers to consult individuals with a disability, and groups representing them, in the planning, development and ongoing delivery of services.
3. The association acknowledges that the best services are provided by professionals who are aware of the needs of, and service options for, people with a disability.

Bedi (2012), stressed that many years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Nigeria academic libraries are still lagging in the area of library policy and services for people with disabilities. According to Tashim (1990), Nigeria libraries building and facilities are not suitable for the physically challenged because of space limitation in term of sitting space, shelves, offices, light floor, ramps etc which are too close with little space that cannot allow the movement of people on wheel chair. Looking at the various library policies in Nigeria like that of Kashim Ibrahim library policy and services Ahmadu Bello University Zaria among others, it is evident that those policies are formulated mainly to meet the information need of the physically able. The time for a policy is now. We need to affirm our commitment to library service for all including people with disabilities and then act accordingly. Therefore, if truly there is ability in disability then library as custodian of information especially academic libraries in Nigeria needs to recognize these people as potential users and ensure adequate policy and services that will assist them in meeting their information needs.

Methodology

Case Study method is adopted for this study. The populations of the study comprised the head of each of the five academic libraries under study; no sampling is required as the population of the study is relatively small. The exclusion of physically challenged users of the selected academic libraries was because they have no role to play in the policy and services provision of the library. The responses were as follows: University Librarian of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University Librarian of Kaduna State University, Kaduna, Polytechnic Librarian of Kaduna State Polytechnic Kaduna, Polytechnic Librarian of Nuhu Bamali Polytechnic, Zaria and College Librarian of Federal College of Education, Zaria.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study are presented and discussed under the following headings:

1. Categories of Physically Challenged Users of Academic Libraries in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis
2. Availability of Disability Policy and its Level of Implementation in each Academic Library in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis.
3. Types of Special Resources/Devices Available for the Physically Challenged Users of Academic Libraries in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis
4. Types of Special Services Provided for the Physically Challenged Users of Academic Libraries in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis
5. Types of Library Building.

In order to identify the various categories of physically challenged users of academic libraries in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis, list of possible disabilities were highlighted for the respondents to tick as many that visit their libraries for information retrievals. Table 1 below presents a summary of their responses.

Table 1 Category of Physically Challenged Users of Academic Libraries in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis.

Category of Physically Challenged	Names of academic Libraries					%
	Ahmadu Bello University Library, Zaria	Kaduna State University Library, Kaduna	Kaduna State Polytechnic Library, Kaduna	Nuhu Bamali Polytechnic Library, Zaria	Federal College of Education Library, Zaria	
The blind	√	√	√	√	√	100
The deaf	X	X	X	X	X	Nil
The cripple	√	√	√	√	√	100
The blind and deaf	X	X	X	X	X	Nil
The blind and the cripple	X	X	X	X	X	Nil
Total	2	2	2	2	2	100

Key: X = Not Applicable

√= Applicable

Table 1 showed that there were physically challenged persons in our institutions who visit the library for their academic information like any other person(s). It is clearly shown that the blind and cripple are the main physically challenged persons that use academic library in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis. During the interview session, the researcher sought to find out how often the physically challenged users visit the libraries, the response were occasionally. And the library has never carried out a research to know the reason (s) for the drop in their use of library

Policy is used to measure the extent to which an organization performs its functions, meet its objectives in its systems and services. In order to determine the availability of disability policy and its level of implementation in each of the five academic libraries under this study, the respondents were provided with options to choose. Table 2 below summarized their responses

Table 2 Availability of Disability Policy and its Level of Implementation in each Academic Library in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis.

Disability Policy	Names of academic Libraries					%
	Ahmadu Bello University Library, Zaria	Kaduna State University Library, Kaduna	Kaduna State Polytechnic Library, Kaduna	NuhuBam ali Poly technic Library, Zaria	Federal College of Education library, Zaria	
There is no disability policy in the library	√	√	X	√	√	80
There is disability policy with no implementation	X	X	X	X	X	Nil
There is disability policy with partial implementation	X	X	√	X	X	20
There is disability policy with full implementation	X	X	X	X	X	Nil
Total	1	1	1	1	1	100

Key: X = Not Applicable

√= Applicable

Table 2 showed that only Kaduna State Polytechnic had Disability Policy though with partial implementation due to inadequate financial support from the parent institution. The remaining four libraries which represent 80% of academic libraries in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis did not have Disability Policy. That is, there is no provision for the physically challenged in their policies despite the existence of physically challenged persons in the institution and their visit to the library. During the interview session, the researcher sought to find out reasons why the libraries failed to include disability policy in their library policies and the responses were as follows: Lack of disability policy awareness, Lack

of managerial skill to formulate the policy, inadequate financial support from the parent institution and Lack of statistical data of persons with disabilities. The implication of this is that the library will not be able to provide suitable facilities and services for the physically challenged if there are no documented policy that can guide its operations.

The study tried to identify types of Special Resources/Devices available for the Physically Challenged Users of Academic Libraries in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis. Several special resources were presented for the respondents to tick as many that are available in their libraries. Table 3 below showed their responses.

Table 3 Types of Special Resources/Devices Available for the Physically Challenged Users of Academic Libraries in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis.

Resources/Devices	Names of academic Libraries					
	Ahmadu Bello University Library, Zaria	Kaduna State University Library, Kaduna	Kaduna State Poly technic Library, Kaduna	Nuhu Bamali Poly technic Library, Zaria	Federal College of Education Library, Zaria	%
Books in prints only	√	√	√	√	√	80
Special large prints books	√	X	X	X	X	20
Scanned Textbook	X	X	X	X	X	Nil
Computer and Internet	√	X	X	X	X	20
Computers with special software	X	X	X	X	X	Nil
Audio descriptive video	√	X	X	X	X	20
CCTV magnifying aid	X	X	X	X	X	Nil
Braille	X	X	X	X	X	Nil
Total	4	1	1	1	1	140

Key: X = Not Applicable

√ = Applicable

Table 3 showed that Ahmadu Bello University library representing 20% has three special resources which are special large print book, Audio descriptive video for the visually impaired and Computer with Internet facilities but the available computers in KIL, A.B.U Zaria are without special software for the disabled. The remaining four libraries representing 80% has no special resources for the physically challenged users. Books in print are the major information resources provided in most academic libraries in Zaria and Kaduna metropolis as indicated by 4 respondents. Other special resources such as Braille materials and talking book are not provided at all in any of the five libraries under the study. The implication of the

above is that the visually impaired and the blind will not be able to use many of these academic libraries due to absence of Braille material and other devices which can make reading easy for the physically challenged.

In an attempt to find out the type of special services available for the physically challenged users of academic libraries in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis, several special services were listed for the respondents to tick as many services that are available in their various libraries for the physically challenged users. The responses are showed in table 4 below.

Table 4 Types of Special Services Provided for the Physically Challenged Users of Academic Libraries in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis.

Special Services	Names of academic Libraries					%
	Ahmadu Bello University Library, Zaria	Kaduna State University Library, Kaduna	Kaduna State Poly technic Library, Kaduna	Nuhu Bamali Poly technic Library, Zaria	Federal College of Education Library, Zaria	
Through Referral service	√	√	√	X	X	60
Mobile library service	X	X	X	X	X	Nil
Current Awareness Service	√	√	√	X	√	80
Selective Dissemination of Information	X	√	√	X	X	40
Virtual Reference service	X	X	X	X	X	20
Mainstreaming method	X	X	X	√	√	40
	2	3	3	1	2	220

Key: X = Not Applicable

√= Applicable

Table 4 showed that Referral service and Current Awareness Service are the main special services rendered to Physically Challenged users of academic libraries in Zaria and Kaduna Metropolis. These two services are used interchangeably to compliment each others as the need arises in the library as indicated by 3 respondents representing 60% above. Two respondents representing 40% claim to mainstream their services to all their users irrespective of any physical disabilities. Also, none of the five libraries provides virtual reference service and mobile library service to their patrons.

During the interview session it was revealed that there are no librarian(s) assign to render special services to the physically challenged users in the library. Any librarian on duty can be call to provide

such services to the physically challenged users when the need arises. It was further explained that the library staff has never undergo any training/workshop on disability policies and services. The implication of this is that the two available services provided indicated above are not guided nor regulated by any policy which will help to measure what is being provided and the qualification of personnel that must be in charge of the special services.

Library building can be best evaluate or access in term of its flexibility, accessibility and Ease of use. In an attempt to ascertain the type of library building in Zaria and Kaduna metropolis, the questionnaire provided option on types of building use as library for the respondents to tick. The analysis is shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Types of Library Building

Library Building	Names of academic Libraries					
	Ahmadu Bello University Library, Zaria	Kaduna State University Library, Kaduna	Kaduna State Poly technic Library, Kaduna	Nuhu Bamali Poly technic Library, Zaria	Federal College of Education Library, Zaria	%
Multiple storey building with elevator/ramps	√	X	X	X	X	20
Multiple storey building without elevator/ramps	X	X	√	√	√	60
Bungalow with interior layout for wheelchair	X	√	X	X	X	20
Bungalow without interior layout for wheelchair	X	X	X	X	X	Nil
Multiple storey building with special reading room on the ground floor	X	X	X	X	X	Nil
Total	1	1	1	1	1	100

Key: X = Not Applicable

√ = Applicable

Table 5 revealed that most academic libraries in Zaria and Kaduna metropolis are of multiple storey building without elevator/ramps as indicated by 3 respondents representing 60%. Ahmadu Bello University library representing 20% is also of multiple storeys with elevator/ramps which function occasionally.

During the interview session the researcher sought to find out if there is/are any special reading room for the physically challenged on the ground floor of the library, and the response was negative. It is disheartening to know that none of the four libraries with multiple storeys have special reading room on the ground floor for the physically challenged persons. The implication of the above is that without elevator /ramps the blind, the cripple and aged individual will find it highly difficult to access the building easily.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study it could be concluded that academic libraries in Zaria and Kaduna metropolis did not include disability facilities and services in their main policies which can guide their mode of operation towards the physically challenged persons in the institution. In addition to this, the library buildings are too complex to be accessed by the cripple and the visually impaired and nothing is being done to lessen their mobility plight in the library. Despite the increasing awareness of

disability programme by libraries across the world, many libraries in this area claimed ignorant of it and staff training on it were not even encouraged. Must we wait for their protest in future before libraries can take up challenges of serving them better by soliciting for assistance from government and parent institutions?, it is time for libraries to act as agents of information carrier for all users irrespective of physical status.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Academic library policy must be redesigned to include disability resources and services. Librarian must consult individuals with disability, and groups representing them, in the planning, development and ongoing delivery of services
2. Libraries management should create a disability liaison office on the ground floor of their libraries and affiliate such office with any library for the disable across the country for resource sharing because most International Organizations, Religious bodies and NGOs for the blind donate brailled materials, large print books and cassettes to libraries for the visually handicapped in the developing countries.

The library must foster such international linkages to benefit from such donations.

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