

Chapter 10

Framework for Effective Development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy in University Libraries in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

ICT is transforming library practices and procedures the world over. The aim of this chapter is to address the access gap to ICT by highlighting the framework for effective development of relevant ICT policy in university libraries in Nigeria. The chapter explores variety of ICT infrastructure/services that are available in university libraries, sources of ICT funding, ICT policy priority areas, key ICT policy issues and strategies for formulating ICT policy. Questionnaire survey was used for the study. The findings of the study indicate that, there is a widespread use of Internet in the 14 surveyed university libraries; and only 5 of these libraries have computerized library services. NUC/ETF, library development fund (LDF) and university management are major ICT funding sources. ICT funding/budgeting, ICT infrastructure procurement/maintenance, ICT literacy/capacity building and ICT use are the highest ranked ICT policy priority areas in the surveyed libraries. And annual budgetary allocation to ICT in university libraries, training/capacity building for librarians, as well as, organization of ICT literacy programme for patrons are the highest ranked key ICT policy issues in university libraries. The chapter recommends that, each university should formulate relevant ICT policy for its library, besides the national ICT policy.

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INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology (ICT) has a critical role to play in development efforts around the world (Sierra, 2006), particularly in developing countries (such as Nigeria). The widespread use of ICT in the provision of quality education and research towards national development has been advocated. Thus, developing countries have begun taking concrete actions to integrate ICT not only into their economic policies and development agendas, but in the formulation of ICT policy towards effective educational development of the citizenry, as education is the bedrock for nation building. This is so, because access to information and ultimately, knowledge, is essential to societal development, and ICTs are tools for effective and efficient information access, processing, storage and retrieval, management and dissemination in educational/research institutions (the universities), and their libraries in particular.

However, there exists a widespread disparity in access to ICTs both among and within countries and institutions (universities), a notion which is commonly referred to as “digital divide”. The effort of narrowing these access gaps or barriers to information dissemination and access to knowledge is therefore a priority in promoting sustainable educational development in developing countries (Navas-Sabater, Dymond & Juntunen, 2002). And this could essentially be achieved through the provision of relevant ICT policy in the affected countries/institutions (universities). For instance, in Nigerian universities, especially in the libraries, poor/lack of access to relevant ICT infrastructural facilities such as robust Internet connectivity is widespread, and this is principally attributable to poor/lack of appropriate ICT policy in the university system, with the resultant effects of low ranking of Nigerian universities in global perspective in terms of quality education and research. While the rest of the world utilized the advantages provided by ICT, Nigerian universi-

ties have only started embracing it ((Editorial, ThisDay Newspaper, 2008)

Norris, Sullivan, Poirot & Soloway (2003) have also confirmed the low level of use of ICT in education, particularly limited access to computer technology and the Internet in developing countries. Thus there is dire need to tackle the problem of inequitable access to ICT or “digital divide” in Nigerian universities to enhance global competitiveness in our educational and research output. This chapter would therefore explore the state of information and communication technology (ICT) in Nigerian university libraries; and thereafter develop framework for formulation of ICT policy as a tool for effective applications of ICT in the libraries to support teaching, learning and research in the universities.

Timely access to information and knowledge in the academic environment such as the university is dependent on the degree of application and integration of modern ICTs in academic and research activities. The development of a stable, predictable and transparent policy, legal and regulatory framework is a prerequisite for any sustainable approach to improve access to information and communication services (Navas-Sabater, Dymond & Juntunen, 2002) in the university libraries in Nigeria. With ICT, faculty/students could access information beyond their immediate academic environments, nationally and internationally for their teaching, learning and research. The university libraries have been the major access points for information/knowledge by the staff/students towards quality teaching, learning and research. But the Nigerian university libraries are relatively less competitive in the application of ICTs, in the provision of information to their clientele.

The aim of this chapter is to address the access gap to ICT in Nigerian university libraries by highlighting the framework for effective development of appropriate ICT policy towards enhanced information-handling and management. Thus it is the objective of this chapter to explore

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