

Library Staff Capacity in Handling Changing User Needs in Selected Kenyan Public Universities

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Abstract: Academic libraries are currently faced with challenges and opportunities as a result of introduction of Information Technology which has made it possible for library users to access information anywhere and anytime unlike in the past when they had to visit the library to get information for their research and assignments. Librarians can no longer ignore the convenience of the internet especially in this era where users want information fast without much effort. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has led to change in user needs and demands in academic libraries. Since it is an issue that librarians can no longer disregard, this study was therefore set to assess library staff capacity in meeting changing user demands in academic libraries in universities in Kenya. The study found out that library staff have the capacity to meet changing user needs however they have to improve on marketing the services they offer and library staff should keep abreast of the changes in technology and changing user needs.

Keywords: Information technology Staff capacity, User needs.

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Academic libraries are attached to universities to serve the teaching and research needs of students and staff. They are charged with the responsibility to ensure that there is provision of enough information materials and services to satisfy users' needs [1]. One of the important reasons for setting up a library is to pick out and acquire relevant information materials in print and electronic formats, and to organize and disseminate them to the users [2].

So as to achieve required changes in the era of ICT, institutions should build library staff ability to keep up with the trends. Staff advancement approach is dependent on management making deliberate learning openings in the work environment. This serves to upgrade staff abilities to share information for innovative knowledge generation within work groups, learning

communities and social networks. Doing as such shows the perceived participation of the library in academic endeavors [3].

Academic libraries in Kenya are losing their supremacy in their fundamental role of provision of information because of the changing information seeking behaviour, media scene, and information technology developments and user expectations [4]. In this era of rapid growth in information needs, communication and computerized advancements, university libraries face a hard undertaking in giving efficient and effective methods for providing information services to users [5].

II. LIBRARY STAFF CAPACITY IN MEETING CHANGING USER DEMANDS IN SELECTED KENYAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

A. Changing Needs of Library Users

The information environment is significantly changing all through the world. The computer and communication technologies have definitely and legitimately influenced human activities including library and information science practices. Right now, the idea of librarianship has radically changed in its practices particularly in the services to the end users [6]. This century has seen information contents changing into digital format. In this era of information and communication technology (ICT) librarians have experienced change in user demands. Users are expecting more from libraries in the competitive world. Such changes include users being able to access information using mobile phones meaning they can access information anytime anywhere.

Providing internet services is progressively becoming significant for libraries as more issues in life are moving online. San Francisco Public Library is the biggest supplier of fast internet and has facilitated a million online sessions annually, the library additionally loans 200 versatile hotspot gadgets to users to keep for three weeks on end. The library offers programs on

computer basics to coding and it also has a program known as tech week an activity to promote internet access and build tech abilities. A yearly senior tech expo is intended to assist more mature users with skills, for example, downloading digital books and perusing the web. Libraries today offer much more than just books and information. They have become hubs where patrons can access resources like laptops, e-books and hotspot devices reported [7].

B. Library Staff Capacity to Meet Changing User Needs

Because of rapid technology changes, change in the twenty-first Century is consistent. Previously, we had a grip on the best way to change and what could be changed. Presently, innovation is progressing quickly which changes how individuals learn, convey and use data. In an atmosphere of technological change, librarians are confronting the test of grasping technology, yet in addition recognizing that clients are in the driver's seat for change. This affects the roles of librarians [8].

Human Resource Development (HRD) can be depended upon to help and shape a wide scope of University Library activities requiring an equipped and committed workforce. HRD exercises must react to employment changes and incorporate staff abilities with the long haul plans and strategies of the institution in this manner guaranteeing the effective and efficient utilization of resources. Hence, the HRD can enable the university library to concentrate resources in those areas where there are solid probabilities that they can deliver significant upgrades in future abilities and accomplishment. This sort of deliberate organization enables the institution to design resources within a dynamic focused environment, thus meeting consumer needs and fulfilling stakeholder expectations, helping meet its business goal and keep up its strategic direction [9].

In their study on the analysis of Information Technology administration in university libraries in Kuwait, [10] concluded that Librarians should update Information Technology skills to their contemporary capacity in order to assist clients get over their concern about the present universe of networked and digitized information, and help them in cruising through it. In this case academic librarians have to focus on building up their very own abilities just as discovering how to create expanded proficient competency in general. Since the clients are bound to expect web and electronically conveyed services, the developing role of the university librarians will lie in information guiding, training and advising clients on services and information fitting to their needs while showing how best to utilize them. This is a period that requires creative perspectives about services, collections, information access and furthermore the job of librarians. Being ready to oversee change can set one up with the capacity to thrive.

[11] Evaluated reference service at the University of Education in Ghana and it had a high non-use rate of 42.6%, which was

because of library clients' independence and lack of knowledge of the service. The best three inspirations for library clients to utilize the reference service were class assignments, individual interests and utilizing library services. Despite the fact that their attitude was good, clients felt that reference librarians were more effective at displaying customer service characteristics than performing assignments identified with finding out clients information needs, looking and getting information to satisfy their needs. Library staff needs to acquire more skills other than customer service skills and in this study we'll seek to find out what skills are required.

Satisfaction levels of users vary depending on the services provided by the library. I believe users of private university libraries tend to have higher satisfaction levels compared to those of public universities especially in Kenya, this is due to the attention accorded a user in a private university and the resources available. User satisfaction levels are also dependent on various issues such as the services they receive, information resources available and if the user specific needs are met and this warrants the libraries to carry out user surveys continuously because of the changing user needs. Librarians should not just focus on being friendly to customers but should also have the skills to assist students get the information they need to their satisfaction.

To ensure library staff dynamism in the current age, services in university libraries should move from library-focused services to user focused services to keep up with their changing needs. These incorporate customizing research services, tailoring individual to-individual services and guidance, developing online services and guidance, implanting services and resources into course management systems, and offering numerous services to numerous clients on location and online all the time. Furthermore, university libraries ought to expand their conventional role of being a centre for research and library services to teaming up with teaching programs, writing centers, and scholarly services to exhibit the library's job in supporting the results of educating and learning for the academic community. In university libraries, it is the center administrator who has frequently been the individual entrusted with instituting new services to accomodate these changing needs [12]. Librarians ought to have the option to respond to the changing needs of users effectively to keep them satisfied, therefore they need strategies that will keep them abreast with the rapid technological changes. In this study the researcher sought to find out the strategies and make recommendations.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Online access to information has significantly changed the information scene, presently university library clients anticipate similar ease and immediate results, support from qualified staff,

training on access and use and provision of necessary facilities when accessing information through the library gateway [5]. An information provider needs to meet information needs of users hence the reason librarians need to work towards meeting the changing user needs because if they do not the satisfaction levels of users will be affected. Users will continue accessing other sources of information which are not authentic or factual and this will lead to production of poor quality research as well as the library being declared redundant. Anybody with a PC and fundamental rights to a web server can post or change information. This significantly expands openness of data on a boundless scope of points, yet it additionally implies that anybody with such access can alter records and disseminate false information, activities that can't really be recognized by a client [13].

Quality information is required for enhanced decision making for long term economic development and libraries play a major role in providing information. Therefore, changing library user demands are issues that can no longer be ignored, the researcher in this study planned to establish the library staff capacity in meeting the contemporary user demands and hence suggest the way forward in the prevailing situation.

IV. RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

The study aimed at finding out the library staff capacity in handling changing user needs in Kenyan Public Universities.

The primary research questions were:

- Does the library staff have the capacity?
- What skills does the library staff have?
- What factors affect staff capacity?

V. RESEARCH METHOD

[14] Describes a research design as a plan and strategy for conducting research, a way of ensuring that a research process is systematic and that the results obtained are applicable in real life. For the purposes of this study cross-sectional survey design was adopted. Cross-sectional survey entails the collection of data on more than one case at a single point in time in order to collect a large amount of quantifiable data. The main advantage of this design is that the results can be used to make generalizations about the target population since the selected sample is representative of the entire target population [15]. The survey has enabled the researcher to closely examine and find out the library staff capacity in meeting changing user demands in public academic libraries in Kenya.

Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data. Senior librarians were interviewed while data from the rest of the library staff and students were collected through questionnaires. Qualitative and quantitative approaches were also used to collect and analyze data. Qualitative content analysis was adopted for the interpretation of the content of text data through coding and identifying themes [16]. The researcher used Microsoft Excel to calculate and generate results for the quantitative data.

The study was carried out at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology main campus library, Kenyatta University Post Modern Library main campus and University of Nairobi Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library main campus. The researcher chose the universities because they are public universities with considerable population of students. The three universities were purposively selected because they had the ability to provide data that is capable of informing the study and can also be generalized as the prevailing situation in other universities.

TABLE I: SAMPLE SIZE POPULATIONS

University	Library	Target Population	Number	Sample Size
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture	Main campus	Senior Librarian	1	1
		Librarian	1	1
		Senior Library Assistants	12	10
		Library Assistants	6	6
		Students	13,500	100
Kenyatta University	Post Modern Library	Senior Librarians	3	3
		Librarian	1	1
		Senior Library Assistants	17	15
		Library Assistants	8	7
		Students	30,700	100
University of Nairobi	Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library	Senior Librarians	3	3
		Librarians	2	2
		Senior Library Assistants	25	20
		Library Assistants	10	9
		Students	33,000	100
		Total Population	77,289	378

Source: Author

VI. RESULTS

The study was to establish the library staff capacity in handling changing user needs in selected Kenyan public universities. The study asked several questions to find out if the Library Staff in Kenyan Public Universities have the capacity to handle changing user needs.

TABLE II: LIBRARY STAFF CAPACITY

Category	Yes		No		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Senior Librarians and Librarians	7	78	2	22	9	100
Senior Library Assistants and Library Assistants	38	71	16	29	54	100

Source: Field Data

The results on the table above show that library staff have the capacity to meet changing user demands. The researcher was able to interview 9 out of the 11 selected Senior Librarians and Librarians, she also received back 54 questionnaires out of the 67 that she had distributed, therefore the results are based on the interviews that were carried out and the questionnaires received. 78% of Senior Librarians and Librarians agreed that library staff have the capacity. 71% of Senior Library Assistants and Library Assistants indicated yes meaning staff have the capacity while 22% Senior Librarians and Librarians said that

A. Library Staff Capacity in Handling Changing User Needs

The Senior Librarians, Librarians, Senior Library Assistants and Library Assistants were asked whether library staff have the capacity to handle changing user needs. The Senior Librarians and Librarians gave a verbal response while Senior Library Assistants and Library Assistants indicated in the questionnaires. The results were as indicated below:

Library staff do not have the capacity. 16% of Senior Library Assistants and Library Assistants indicated that staff do not have the capacity to meet changing user demands.

B. Library Staff Skills

The students were also asked to indicate what skills the library staff in regards to their capacity in meeting their changing needs and their response was as shown in the table below.

TABLE III: STUDENTS RESPONSE TO LIBRARY STAFF CAPACITY

Statements Regarding Staff Skills and Services	Staff Capacity										Total	
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Not Sure		Disagree		Strongly Disagree			
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Staff have required skills	87	35	133	54	22	9	6	2	0	0	248	100
Staff provide adequate user support	62	25	139	56	31	12	16	6	2	1	250	100
Staff carry out continous training	40	16	79	32	81	32	44	18	6	2	250	100
Staff understand their work	48	19	138	56	38	15	22	9	2	1	248	100
Staff provide customised support	44	18	122	49	46	19	30	12	6	2	248	100

Source: Field data

The researcher through the research assistants distributed 300 questionnaires to students and they received back 250 though not all the students responded to all the questions. As evident from the results, students agree that library staff have capacity to meet their changing user demands. 56% of the students agree that staff provide adequate user support, 56% also agree that staff understand their work while 54% agree that staff have the required skills to assist them. 49% of the respondents agree that staff provide customized support. 32% of respondents agree that staff carry out continuous training while 32% are not sure whether staff carry out continuous user training. The students who are not sure whether there is continuous training could be

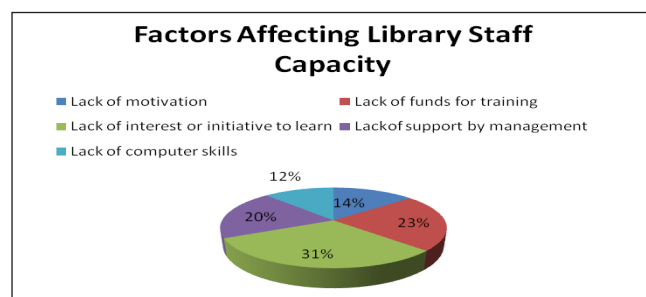
because they don't visit the library or do not read notices to know when the trainings take place.

The response of the students is in agreement with that of Senior Librarians, Librarians, Senior Library Assistants and Library Assistants that Library staff had the capacity to meet changing user needs. SL3 responded that "*library staff have capacity to meet changing user needs because majority have ICT skills*" SL4 commented that "*librarians have the capacity because they undergo continuous in-house trainings and also attending conferences and seminars*". L3 said "*institutions employ qualified staff who have undertaken a course in Library and*

information studies/science”, L5 went ahead to say “*librarians understand their work which involves guiding users on how to access information and providing relevant resources*”. Capacity building in libraries is a key factor in coping with changes especially in the digital age where tools and technologies evolve in geometric rate. It is a fact that the success or failure of any library largely depends on the level and capacity of its staff. Hence, competencies and skills are the basic building blocks of human resource management. In view of these realities, libraries are deeply engaged in training and developing the capacity, competencies and skills of their staff to cope with the trends [17].

C. Factors Affecting Staff Capacity

Senior Library Assistants and Library Assistants responded that Library staff do not have the capacity to meet users changing needs indicated as follows:



Source: Field data

Fig. 1: Factors Affecting Library Staff Capacity

31% of them indicated that lack of interest and initiative by the library staff led to lack of capacity while 23% indicated that lack of funds for training is one of the reasons and most. 20% indicated lack management support, 14% responded that staff do not have the motivation. Few respondents (12%) indicated that lack of computer skills is one of the reasons. Some Senior Librarians and Librarians also gave reasons as to why they felt library staff do not have capacity SL1 cited “*lack of interest by staff to develop themselves for example updating their ICT skills to match the current trends, they are mostly interested in providing basic services such as showing users how to use the OPAC and accessing e-resources, they don’t go out of their way*”. L2 said “*librarians lack the technological skills necessary in the wake of digital library services and globalization*”. This is in agreement with [11] who evaluated reference service at the University of Education in Ghana and it had a high non-use pace of 42.6%, because despite the fact that their attitude was good, clients felt that reference librarians were more effective at displaying customer service characteristics than performing assignments identified with finding out clients information needs, looking and getting information to satisfy the needs.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that library staff had the capacity to meet changing user needs and that they also had the required skills to provide adequate support and understand their work. The study also discovered that the factors that affected staff capacity were mainly because of lack of interest or initiative to learn and also lack of funding for training. Since ICT is dynamic, library staff requires frequent training to upgrade and update their skills. The study therefore concluded that even though there are issues that affect staff capacity, library staff have capacity to meet changing user needs.

The Study Recommended

Though the library staff has the capacity to meet changing user needs, they need to improve on marketing of their library services in order to make users aware for full utilization because this will help meet users demands to their satisfaction. The librarians also have to embrace new developments in ICT by undergoing continuous training to update their knowledge and skills. The administrators of the various public universities should consider implementing policies on funding trainings of staff and frequency of trainings.

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