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ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS AND PARTICIPATION IN UNIVERSITY AND LIBRARY MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

The use of committees is a solution to the problems of an authoritarian structure in universities libraries, and alienation of librarians. The librarians can best function effectively if fully integrated into the academic working and structure of the university by having equal share in university administration as have teaching colleagues. Librarians should have parity with teaching colleagues not merely in salaries and general conditions of service but also in eligibility to participate in university management through senate, faculty boards and other committees. This paper critically examines to what extent librarians have participated in the management of both their library and the university. It reveals that the participation of librarians on committees is widespread among professionals at the upper level. It concludes by pointing out the area in which participation must be felt.

Introduction

Ochai and Nedosa (1998) asserted that the question of academic status for academic librarians has died down. What is however not quite certain is the ability of librarians in academic setting to demonstrate and convince the university in which they operate the justification of the status.

Anderson (1979) noted that conventional wisdom has long held that academic librarians should have parity with the teaching faculty not merely in salaries and general conditions of service, but also in eligibility to participate in university administration through senate, faculty boards and other such committees. It is important that academic librarians should participate in the management of their libraries; therefore, it is unnecessary to rehearse the argument for participation of academic librarians within

the university. There will be full participation if they share in university management as their teaching colleagues. Professional librarians are justified to ask or demand for equal participation in university management, particularly as pointed out elsewhere that the 1993 Agreement between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal Government of Nigeria has laid to rest the issue of whether librarians are academic staff and what role or powers have been exercised by librarians, and who are on such committees.

Shebble and Hill (1984) have pointed out that the growing number of committees in academic libraries has been equated with the use of participative management as a way of organising library operations. However, the authors remarked that "there is little empirical evidence to support this assumption." Generally, universities are run on committee system, and all major committees are headed by academic staff.

Participative management is an approach that stresses worker involvement in management and decision-making (Johannsen and Page, 1990). Group decision making has two major advantages over decision-making imposed unilaterally by management: these are that, group decision tends to be of superior quality and tend to be more readily accepted by the groups.

Merchant (1971: 2001) supports he theory that those who participate in the decisions involving their work are much more satisfied than those who have little input. What documented evidence do we have of librarians' participation? Not many publications have emerged on this. However, there are significant pieces of evidence that articles have appeared on the use of committees in academic libraries. Few examples include Kaplan (1973); Lynch (1972); Sager (1982); Stewart (1972).

The purpose of this article is to consider how far or to what extent librarians have participated in the running of both their library and university. Little evidence is known on such study that has examined librarians' participation in university management in Nigeria. The study is to investigate this issue through examining the following questions:

1. Who is serving on committees both in the library and the University of Ilorin? Are committees in the library and the university involving professionals of all ranks?
2. Are librarians being used significantly as their teaching counterparts on university committees? Are the levels at which they are being used satisfactory to attract such statement that "they have parity with teaching faculty on various university committees?"
3. To what extent are committees used at the university library to foster the spirit of participative management? And how many of these committees exist? What is the composition and functions of the committees?

In addition to exploring these questions, the study attempts to identify ways by which librarians can increase their participation on committees within the University of Ilorin. Through this, the authors hope to provide a base to assess future directions in committee use. Whilst most of what follows demonstrates the situation at the University of Ilorin, other universities cannot differ significantly from what has been discussed in this article because Nigerian universities generally experience the same type of interactions.

It needs to be stressed that this article is based partly on inspection of university publications, minutes of meetings and the literature and also on personal observation. It is obvious that the instances or situations

referred to in this article may not exhaust all the actual records of librarians participating in university activities or governance in academic library. To attempt to cover all the instances of librarians' participation since the inception of the university will be an impossible task in a single work of this nature. However, references to important contributions and representations of librarians on committees within the library and university have been made.

PROFILE OF LIBRARIANS

The University of Ilorin Library has a total of 101 workforce at the time of the study. Of this, 20.7% are academic staff. The academic and professional qualifications of librarians vary. However, they fall into three categories – first degree holders, (those entering the profession as assistant librarian) which is the equivalent of graduate assistant in the teaching line. Also, there are those with postgraduate degree - MLS and finally Ph.D holders

Table 1. Qualifications of Librarians

Qualification	Number of Staff	%
BLS	5	23.8
MLS	15	71.4
PhD	1	4.8
N	= 21	100

The table shows that a large proportion of the academic librarians (71.4%) (15) have MLS as the highest qualification.

Also, 33.3% (that is 7) of the professional population are principal librarians (Senior Lecturer cadre of the teaching faculty), while a minority, 14.3% (that is 3) are assistant librarians. The principal librarian cadre is regarded as the starting position for management staff. At such level, the librarian could hold an acting position at the divisional level, while his counterpart in the teaching line could act as head of department. The status of librarians is as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Status of Librarians

Status	(Equivalent Faculty Status)	Number of Librarians
University Librarian	(Professor)	1
Deputy Librarian	(Reader)	3
Principal Librarian	(Senior Lecturer)	7
Senior Librarian	(Lecturer I)	3
Librarian I	(Lecturer II)	1
Librarian II	(Asst. Lecturer)	3
Asst Librarian	(Graduate Asst.)	3
		N = 21

Participation In Library Management

No doubt the internal management of university libraries is different from that of academic departments. For instance, "whereas the teaching academic is in his work essentially a loner, library staff tend to be in constant contact with one another in their daily doings." (Anderson, 1979). This creates a room for a measure of informal consultation, which is reflected often in an informal structure of departmental management. On the other hand, academic libraries, particularly large ones, are more hierarchical in their staff structure than teaching departments.

It is observed that librarians have found the use of committees (participative management) a solution to the problems of an "authoritarian structure, the alienation of professionals, and a numbing bureaucracy." The discussion that follows will examine with a critical eye the various committees that exist

at the Ilorin university library, with a view to identifying the cadre of academic librarians involved in such meetings along with the functions of the committees.

Library Management Committee

This is a four-man committee in the university library. It involves all heads of divisions, who usually are deputy librarians, with the university librarian as the chairman, and the senior administrative officer in the library as the secretary. In a situation where a principal librarian acts as head of division he or she automatically becomes a member of the team.

The committee principally handles issues or decisions on matters of policy, which affects the generality of staff. The committee is responsible for personnel matters including training and development assessment, discipline, promotion and deployment of staff. As a matter of fact, decision making in the library is vested in the university librarian and the management committee. The committee meets more regularly than any committee in the library but maintains no stated frequency.

Library Academic Board

The use of library academic board in the university library like its equivalent, faculty board is a form of participative management. .The library academic board meeting functions like its equivalent in a number of ways. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss matters affecting library operations and services. It is a forum where issues relating to the profession are discussed. It also functions as an advisory organ to library administration. The forum has always been used as an avenue for briefing librarians by the library administration about issues upon which members have little or no control. A good example is the issue of library budget. Members are briefed on the position of the budget, and usually they have no input in whatever form to what makes the library budget.

Over the years the board had discussed matters such as collection development, research and publications, annual reports, conferences and seminars, staff development and book donation. Other issues discussed include library automation, senate research grant and sabbatical leave. The board meets at the discretion of the university librarian, unlike the faculty boards that have their schedule of meetings integrated into the university calendar. For example on the frequency of library board meeting, information gathered reveals that during 1990 and 1991 sessions, two meetings each were held, and 1992 recorded three meetings - certainly the year recorded the highest number of meetings between 1990 - 1996. In 1993 and 1994 sessions, the library board met only once each, while it met twice in 1995 and 1996 (University of Ilorin Library, 1990 - 1996).

Library Welfare Committee

This is by no means a universal committee in academic libraries. It seems unique in an academic environment, and perhaps as in any other type of library. However, Akintunde and Seblar (1995) reported the existence of such committee at the University of Jos and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University in Bauchi, Nigeria. However, the functions of the committee were not identified. The library staff welfare committee at the University of Ilorin library was put in place by library management in July 1990. At its inception, the membership was unilaterally determined by library management but subsequent events have led to the existence of a democratically elected committee. The library welfare committee was constituted to avert strained relationship between library staff and management. It also assists in enhancing productivity among staff

through the agency of building an informal communication. The committee therefore was set up to initiate ways of maintaining cordiality, harmony, and happiness among staff. It also has the mandate of management to bring forward recommendations for consideration. The committee serves in an advisory capacity to library management.

Broadly, activities of the committee focus on two areas. One, meeting certain needs of library staff, and two, ensuring that library staff activities are not at variance with library goals. The formation of the committee arose as a result of delegated authority. It is a delegated process whereby the issues that affect staff are examined, and library management advised accordingly. The committee consists of six members, three librarians, and three non-academic staff of both the senior and junior cadre. The committee is headed by a principal librarian.

Departmental Senate Research Committee

The Library Senate Research Committee serves as the equivalent of Faculty Research Committee with functions to screen all research proposals and recommend same for approval of the university librarian. The committee is a three-person committee with a deputy librarian as the chairman, who also represents the department on the Senate Research Committee at the university level. Others include a deputy librarian and a principal librarian, who has just completed her doctorate programme. The committee meets at least once in a semester because the senate research grant is released to academics once in a semester.

Student Disciplinary Committee

This committee has been set up to advise the university librarian in dealing with delinquent student users. The committee investigates cases relating to theft and mutilation and makes recommendations to the university librarian. It is on such reports that the university usually bases its decision whether such cases will have to be referred to the university committee that handles students' discipline for further actions.

The committee has the head of readers' services division as the chairman, who also is a deputy librarian or principal librarian acting as readers' services librarian. Other members include a principal librarian and librarian II while the library's administrative officer serves as the secretary. The committee meets as occasion demands - it is the magnitude of cases pending that usually determines the frequency of meeting. However, the committee meets at least once in a semester.

Participation In University Management

The librarians are "members of the university" and are "academic staff." The two terms apply to them, and will normally give eligibility for senate and other bodies on the same terms as teaching staff. Casual observation leads us to conclude that, committees have become an integral part of not only academic libraries but in university community as a whole because as earlier identified, universities are run by committee system and are headed by academics.

As a matter of fact, in most if not all universities, some members of library staff are on some committees and faculty boards as representatives of the library or university librarian. The need for librarians to seek for adequate or full participation in management within the university as enjoyed by teaching staff cannot be over emphasized. There are a number of committees set up at tire university to achieve a number of purposes. Presently there are no less than thirty of such committees (Table 3). For the purpose of this article, the focus will be on a few committees that have close relationship with and pertinent

to library activities. However, references will be made to other committees for the purposes of illustration and relevance.

Table 3. List of some Committees in the University

	Name of Committees/Board	Library Representation	
1.	Board of Survey	x	1
2.	Ceremonials Committee	.	2
3.	Examinations, Scholarship and Prizes	x	3
4.	Hall Masters & Mistresses	.	4
5.	Computer Centre Management Committee	x	5
6.	Equipment Maintenance Centre	x	6
7.	Housing Loans	x	7
8.	Library and Publication Committee	.	8
9.	Management Information Systems	.	9
10.	NUNet	.	10
11.	Senate Research Grant Committee	.	11
12.	Senior Staff Housing Allocation	x	12
13.	Sports Council	x	13
14.	Students Welfare Board	.	14
15.	Teaching & Research Equipment Grant	x	15
16.	Time Table and Room Usage	x	16
17.	University Board of Health	x	17
18.	Campus Transportation	x	18
19.	Management Board of Unilorin Staff Development Centre	x	19
20.	University Joint Committee on Religious Activities	x	20
21.	Unilorin Commercial Farm	x	21
22.	Unilorin Teaching Hospital Board	x	22
23.	Technical Advisory Committee	x	23
24.	Communications Committee	x	24
25.	Community Relations Committee	x	25
26.	Taskforce on Water Project	x	26
27.	Environmental Protection Committee	x	27
28.	Board of Unilorin Printing Press	x	28
29.	Human Resources & Research Development Committee	x	29

Senate

The senate is the highest academic body in any university. The study is concerned with academic activities on campus -discipline on academic matters, moderation of results and the regulation of academic programmes and a number of other issues that revolve around academic matters. The committee functions through a number of committees referred to as 'Senate Committees', with senate representatives on such committees. The election of the representatives is conducted on the floor of senate.

Membership of senate includes the vice-chancellor as the chairman, the deputy vice-chancellors, deans, professors, heads of departments, directors of institutes and faculty representatives who are usually not below the rank of senior lecturer or principal

librarian in the case of librarians. The university librarian is a statutory member of senate. The library as a result of its academic status has a representative seat on senate. Election to this seat is usually conducted at the Library Academic Board meeting. As earlier indicated in this article a professional librarian not below principal librarian is elected for a two-year tenure on senate. The librarian and the library representative are on senate to ensure that unexpected items with library implications are not missed out, and to contest for election to other equally important senate committees or boards. It is necessary therefore that the library representative is articulate, well informed with the capability of expressing himself in a fluent language in order to win the respect of the teaching colleagues on senate.

Faculty Board

The board comprises all academic staff in the faculty irrespective of status and representatives from other faculties and the library. The functions of the board among others include decision making on matters of interest to faculty staff, in terms of their job. It also deliberates on general matters that affect publications and promotion. The scope of the meeting will embrace issues pertinent to the interest of students -approval of results, deferment of courses and such related matters.

As a matter of policy the university librarian is entitled to a representation on the various faculty boards, each representative having a two-year tenure on the board. Representatives to faculty boards are made through a democratic process - by nomination and election. Members cannot be nominated or elected in absentia. Consequently one can only be elected to serve in any of such capacity when he is personally present at the meeting considering the issue. This right of attending faculty boards is fully accepted by the teaching colleagues. The university librarian feels that a member of academic library staff with special expertise in a faculty area should attend such faculty boards, as they are in a better position to offer advice when issues are discussed or omitted. The library has applied this to the faculties of Arts and Agriculture.

Library Committee

This is a 'senate committee' headed by representative of the vice-chancellor. The committee is set up to advise on the planning and development of library services in he university, and to recommend to senate the regulations for the use of the library and its facilities, and advise senate on any other matters. Membership includes senate and registrar's representatives, the university librarian and his deputies and students representatives. A deputy university librarian serves as the secretary to the committee.

The committee is essentially the interface between the university as a whole and the library and it performs to some degree what Anderson (1970) referred to as "consumer function as well as a policy making and directive one."

Library Promotion Panel

This panel is the equivalent of Faculty Review Panel. Members include the university librarian as chairman, all deputy librarians, and principal librarians who are acting divisional heads, the registrar or his representative. Also, it includes one other member of the library committee appointed by the committee itself who is not a librarian and who is not below the grade of Reader with the Senior administrative officer in the library as secretary. The panel processes and forwards all recommendations for promotion of library staff to the ointments and Promotion Committee (A & PC)

Observations And Comments

Apart from the membership of the above committees, the university librarian is a statutory member of the Ceremonials, NUN and Senate Research Grant Committees Students Welfare Board. Of the committees listed in Table 3, librarians c

boast of representation on 8 (26.6%) of them. This seems to indicate that the level of participation in university management is not full and shows that librarians have not been fully integrated in the management of the university. More worrisome is the fact that no librarian was app chairman of any of the committees. Unless librarians take positive move to correct this imbalance then the hope of full participation in university management in the future looks bleak.

There is a clear challenge here for librarians. Their fate is right in their hands. Librarians are members of committees where elections are conducted for representation on other important bodies.

Senate has two seats on Council, and one from Congregation. The difficulty for librarians to secure a place on Council may be attributed to their unconvincing attitude at such committees where they have to fight for election. Academic librarians will still have to improve on their capabilities to convince the teaching colleagues and indeed university administrators of their abilities to make impact on important body as the Council. The authors feel that librarians have a contribution to make to the university's Council as much as their teaching colleagues and maximum effectiveness and contributions in senate and other committees will enhance their chance to achieve full participation.

There are visible obstacles on the way of librarians. Opposition of their attainment comes not only from teaching staff within the university, but also from administrators, who all along are not convinced of the case for representation of library staff either in terms of the contribution they have to make or of their right to full participation. The views of university administrators have been negative on the academic status granted librarians. They have always seen the work of librarianship as different from that of the rest of faculty-seeing librarians as "having different basic responsibilities." Academic librarians should convince this group through their activities and contributions at meetings that they have equal contributions to make to the academic enterprise. This is the only way, and very important too, to get the administrators to recognize that librarians make contributions to the educational process.

As Anderson (1979) noted "library staff members who are seldom seen outside the library will not be viewed as full members of the academic community. "Participation at academic congresses, and other social university activities can boost the image of librarians in the university community. At the University of Ilorin minimal efforts have been made towards this direction. At the university, a librarian was elected as assistant secretary to ASUU. Also, two senior academic librarians have served as members of the union's Consultative Council. Further still, a librarian was appointed as a member of editorial collective of the Falconer -the official newsletter of the union. This is one of the organs ASUU has been using to pursue its objectives by reporting critical analysis of events happening within the university community and ASUU National in general.

Ii. is true that this article focused on academic library participation in library and university management, it was observed that only the library welfare committee remains the only committee in the library where librarians and the non-academic staff interact. There is need to create an opportunity for this latter group to contribute their quota to the running of the library. The formation of library consultative committee headed by the university librarian may be a solution to this problem.

CONCLUSIONS

The review of the use of committees within the library and within the University of Ilorin has revealed a number of things. Close to three-quarters of the university professional librarians are on one committee or board. However, the higher the position rank of librarians, the more likely they are to be appointed within the library and the

university to serve on a committee. For example, the university librarian, his deputies, principal and senior librarians, 14 (66.6%) serve on various committees and boards.

Weighing up the issues discussed in the article, the low advancements made in the participation of librarians in university management may not only be attributed to the attitude of other members of the university community but their educational qualifications. It is mandatory for teaching colleagues to acquire the doctorate degree while this is not so for the librarians. At present, only one librarian has just acquired a doctorate degree. At the university library, the participation of librarians on committees is widespread among professionals at the upper level and this seems to have increased staff enthusiasm and also has helped to solve most major management problems.

The study has shown that the committees in the library function in different ways. The library management committee establishes and implements policies, while the students disciplinary, welfare and departmental Senate Research Grant committees advise and make recommendations to library management. On the other hand, the academic library board by function is problem solving and equally provides a means of exchanging ideas and information among the group. This has revealed that the library uses committees for significant activities. All in all, the use of these committees at the university library has involved a wide cross section of librarians in significant decision making, and perhaps gave librarians the chance to influence library policy and operations. This is particularly evident in library academic board meeting.

Finally, from observation it appears that participation by librarians in university management is increasing but not widespread. This can still be further improved.

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