

Impact of The Legal Personnel as A Law Librarian: The Effective Managerial Perspective Re-defined

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Abstract

Libraries obviously contribute to the overall sustainability and development of learning in institution of higher education. Law libraries equip law students and practicing lawyers for legal duties through the consultation of its vast collection of legal information products and services. In this review, the author carefully re-emphasizes the need for law librarians to have legal background as this will enhance law librarianship and the management of law libraries for the provision of legal information and support for the teaching and learning of law in tertiary institutions. This has much implications for the management, leadership or administration of the law library. It practically has tremendous effect on the level of patronage of law library owing to the easy accessibility of relevant legal information resources and services offered in law faculties in tertiary institutions via the librarian's legal expertise on legal information service. The dual function, knowledge of library and law of the law librarian will aid in the swift provision of law library products and services for law faculties and students. The author recommends training of existing law librarians and library staff on law and the need for law librarians to have legal background as a pre-requisite for subsequent installation or selection as law librarian along with few other recommendations. Social and practical implications were stated accordingly.

Keywords: Impact, Legal Professionals, Law Library, Librarian, Management

1.0 Introduction

Libraries obviously contributes to the overall sustainability and development of learning in institutions of higher education. They play pivot role in enhancement and appreciation of knowledge which is readily and widely applied in life. One vital sector of the educational structure is the library, therefore, the continuity in basic understanding in any field of endeavour is somewhat tied to the provision of information service by the library. According to IFLA (2014), so much impact academically can be made with the availability and efficient utilization of the library and thus its importance in national development and sustenance. They asserted that increased access to information products and services underpins universal literacy in chosen field of study and it is essential as this provide a platform for development. Library users are encouraged when there is an evident efficiency in information service provided by the library. The patronage and frequency of use is therefore dependent on managerial factors basically. Service quality is thus needed in academic and non-academic libraries (Arshad & Ameen, 2010) if these profit organizations must continue running and impacting knowledge for future preference, use and development.

The law library which is established in legal institutions, faculties and schools is vital for the provision of legal information service to law students. The library is undoubtedly relevant for the legal body, for equipping students with the most appropriate information on legal proceedings and the profession as a whole. Muhammed (2015) clearly posited that all human activities inclusive of social, environmental, economic and political aspects take cognizance of the legal profession. With the existence of the legal framework, the law library is of much significance. Improving the quality of legal education could be tied to the prompt availability of legal information service in law libraries. The librarian has been saddled basically with the responsibility of providing such service at the disposal of the law students. Much utility can be gained when an "in-house" is made to direct the affair of its people. That is a lawyer by profession. It is the view of the author that law libraries in some Nigerian universities or other tertiary institutions should not be administratively controlled under the auspices of a non-legal professional. Personal observation and visitation has revealed that the unavailability of legal professionals in law libraries has some form of negative though salient impact on the utilization of legal information found in law libraries. Objectively, the review is aimed at providing information on the status of legal education in Nigeria, spelling out the relevance of a legal professional in providing information on legal matters or issues, emphasizing the place of legal professionals as law librarians in building legal education. It will also review the defects of the non-availability of legal professionals as law librarians and finally provide useful recommendations on the way forward.

Newton D. Baker in 1933 stated that of his deepest convictions is that, in as much as the International Peoples' Congress is concerned, its salvation in socio-political contexts lies in the hands of the professionals of the Bar. The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) indulges lawyers to be instrumental in fighting for justice and human rights. There is a great deal of tussle in striking the balance between librarianship and the practice of law. A lawyer in the library tied with responsibility or tasks may be restricted in the area of court hearings and legal practices, thus reducing the attention of his/her career. There is a tendency of a diminishing courtroom

experiences as the availability for court and/or other proceedings reduce. Therefore, a balance must be struck by the assistance of library staff which may be of legal origin to collectively assist law librarians in carrying out certain significant roles. The Council of Legal Education (CLE) has incorporated into the curriculum of parent institutions the need for lawyers to be in law libraries to enable quick information dissemination and retrieval by colleagues in legal services. Dauda (2011) defined law librarianship as a hybrid of the profession of librarianship and law which in itself thrives extensively on information. It is a special profession of librarianship dedicated to the service of the legal profession which symbiotically intertwines. Dada (2011) is of the opinion that law librarians must be able to teach and conduct research preferably with good academic background in law.

2.0 Review of Related Literature

2.1 The Law Library

Tice (2011) said the law library is the heart of a law school, faculty or department and is an important and key factor in the training of law students, providing law students with materials for relevant research and/or study. Principally, it is the bedrock for legal education. Some scholars refer to the law library as the intellectual heart for legal education. Sometimes it is referred to as the soul, although the writer termed it the heartbeat of the legal training process which has a likelihood in determining the level of improvement and understanding of legal formalities. Its mission in the provision of information and services to legal bodies is crucial the success of legal education (Onwudinjo *et al.*, 2015). In the establishment of law faculties and schools in tertiary institution the law library according to the American Bar Association is a requirement for the accreditation of legal departments, schools or faculties. Similarly the CLE and the Nigerian University Commission (NUC) adopt similar requirements. Danner (2002) posited that the primary role of the law library is to meet the information needs of the law faculty and students. It helps to educate future lawyers and law schools which produces scholarly literature in law. In the United States of America, the law libraries provide further range of services to local and state attorneys. The library with respect to its services could be sub-divided into academic, court, bar association law firm or public law libraries, however the academic law library is of interest to the writer whose history is closely related to the history of the development of legal education in universities. Its collection includes statutes enacted by legislative, court opinion reports, executives and administrative materials of regulations and quasi-judicial ruling, law textbooks and periodicals, journals online and print, encyclopaedia and legal scholarly publications are available in the library. A law library is a requirement for the approval of a law school, law faculty or department (ABA, 2002).

Dauda (2011) pointed out that the law library is central and the laboratory for building the legal profession. In fact, Ekundayo (1994) said during a speech that, anyone in the legal profession who does not keep a good library is not fit to practice law, re-stating the importance of the law library. According to him, the law library content is broadly primary and secondary sources. The primary include report of cases, acts of parliaments, indexes, book of law and secondary services to include journals, supplement, casebooks, library catalogues and other forms of publications. According to Haddison (2017) law library holdings include bibliographies, law journals, digest and treatises, federal legislations, law encyclopedias, foreign law publications, textbooks, dictionaries and encyclopedias, law dictionaries, commonwealth publications, directories, newspapers and magazines, indexing and abstracting materials, to mention but a few. Ukpanah and Afolabi (2011) and Onwudinjo *et al.* (2014) reported that the law library is a collection of legal materials which consist law information organized for use for lawyers in training or already qualified lawyers with those saddled with the responsibility of enacting or administering law.

A diverse group of individuals use the law library including judges, law teachers, magistrates, members of the legal profession practicing lawyers, state counsels, law students, members of the House of Assembly. The academic law library aim is to meet the information needs of the law faculty staff and students of the institution supported (Onwudinjo, 2015). Legal research can be effectively carried out in law libraries as it is a source of information (Olorunfemi, 2015). Legal research helps to facilitate understanding and application of law, correct assessment of legal weakness and it is crucial to legal decision making process. It also prepares them in giving advice to clients, persuasion of jury during court hearings, helps in negotiation process with opposing counsel. The performance of legal research gives the foundation to proceed confidently with a view of achieving best outcomes for clients. It is therefore a critical skill for the practice of law (Shawn, 2013).

2.2 Legal Education in Nigeria

The legal studies in the Nigerian context is a replica of what is obtainable in England (Muhammed, 2015). The quality and conferment of a law degree is dependent on the standards set out by the NUC and the CLE. According to Muhammed (2015), there has been a deterioration of the legal education system and the need for reformation. A number of professionals in legal disciplines, practitioners, jurists have repeatedly demonstrated standards for legal education, although, it is sardonic to state that the Nigerian legal education system is faced with lack of consistency on maintenance of minimum standards and benchmarks for the law schools. This

includes staff mix, adequacy of legal faculties and library holdings which are unavailable, but have been stipulated by the relevant authorities for the practice of law and legal education. This is already of poor quality of teaching and learning due to non-availability of legal information in law libraries, poor financing or funding of legal education projects.

Although, the researcher or author believes that, some of these constraints could be handled if a legal professional is made to head and provide legal services in law faculties and institutions. Historical records revealed that the faculty of law was established in 1961 at the University of Nigeria Nsukka, south eastern Nigeria and then University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife) in 1962 and the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and University of Lagos in 1962 and 1965. Several other institutions have been established since 1970s and presently over 30 universities in Nigeria offer a law degree (Ojukwu, 2003). Presently it is the minimum requirement and standards by the CLE that compulsory subjects like constitutional law, law of contract, criminal law, commercial law, legal methods, law of evidence, Nigerian law of torts, Nigerian legal system, juris-pendence, equity and trust and land law be taught in law faculties with non-legal subjects like history, philosophy, logic, social sciences etc. at the first year of entrance into law. Absolutely, without doubts that the method of teaching and assessment is largely dependent on the facilities available for teaching and learning. Legal education so far required the services of the law librarians in law faculties to supplement lecturers. Inclusively, after graduation from law faculties in university, the Nigerian Law School was established and controlled by the Council of Legal Education (CLE) in accordance with its acts which commenced operations in 1963 in Lagos. Presently, so its headquarters is in Bwari-Abuja with four campus at Lagos Enugu, Kano, and Yenagoa for West, East, North and South region respectively with Abuja at Central Nigeria.

2.3 Job Description of the Law Librarian

Angela Spath, the director of marketing at Williams Mullen Law Firm located at Norfolk, Virginia once said law librarians, when we have important research to conduct, I turn to my library director. She knows the best ways to get the right information quickly and efficiently. This again expresses the duty of the law librarian to be able to know what books to recommend for legal research which is a pivot for legal education and a requirement for the award of Bachelor at Law. The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) (2015) evaluated the job description of a law librarian and reported the following

- (a) **Who is a Law Librarian:** A legal information professional that works in various legal fields including private law firms, law schools and government libraries?
- (b) **Professional Ability Requirements:** He/she must be a team player, collaborate, effective communicator, and persuasive negotiator, flexible and positive minded, innovative and independent problem solver, customer service or relation, a helpful teacher, teach survey and multi-task.
- (c) **Academic/Educational Qualification:** According to AALL (2005), the law librarian requires a masters in library science (MLS) from accredited library school. In addition, to the MLS Degree, a Juris Doctor (JD) degree is sometimes required for public service and administrative purposes in academic law libraries, although positions for technical service and law firm libraries may not require Doctoral Degree.
- (d) **Career opportunities:** Since the law librarians manages technical and public services categories of libraries, the available career opportunities include director, knowledge and record manager, acquisition, access service and systems librarian, electronic services, government document, instructional service, foreign and international librarian, archivist and rare book librarian.
- (e) **Responsibilities:** they include planning of budget, answer reference questions, write articles, shelve books, catalogue materials, teach a class, meet with faculty members, judges or attorneys, implement new technologies and attend professional legal meetings and support research.
- (f) **Work Place:** The law librarian can work effectively in co-operations, governments and schools to include business (legal publishers, insurance companies and legal firm.) non-profit organizations, courts, libraries, law school, colleges and universities.

Anyaegebu, Obuzor-Ekeze, Achufusi and Aduaka (2013) clearly stated that 80% of legal literature for legal education are of foreign origin including legal reports, monographs and periodicals are mostly and easily accessed online. Very little legal research at the undergraduate and post graduate level is been published in Africa. Dada (2011) in Anyaegebu *et al.* (2013) noted a consequent global decrease in legal literature acquisition, a scenario characteristics of law libraries in Nigeria. The dearth of legal information now advocates for current techniques of knowledge acquisition in legal studies, hence, the urgent need for information technology in teaching and learning of law. The law librarian (exclusive to those with legal background) now needs to be ICT inclined and have basic knowledge of legal database.

2.4 Management of Law Libraries for Efficiency in Legal Practice

M.O. Onolaja, an honourable Justice stated that the lawyer can only be as good as the system of legal education that produced him/her. The library is a vital tool for the present dispensation of legal practice. It affects the

quality of the justice or legal system. The quality of decisions made on judicial matters and the coherence in reasoning (logical and critical) is based on the quality of knowledge acquired via consultation of legal literatures available at disposal. The legal education sector is of utmost importance. Managing this area of legal education on the standards set out cannot be over-emphasized, the need for efficient and effective management of law libraries which are vital tools in legal education is therefore mandatory. The basic knowledge of legal practice must be appreciated and acknowledged in the effective management of law libraries. Outstanding know-how on legal literatures (local and international) is most relevant. Haddison (2017) advised that law librarianship and law libraries must capture, update, maintain and give legal information and decisions to judges, attorneys, academic lawyers and the general public, hence its management is vital.

Structural organization of law libraries in law faculties and other tertiary institutions is necessary to give maximum output in management. Chronological and systematic sorting of legal materials with dates and relevance require the knowledge of law and legal education. It is the writer's opinion that more legal-profession based staff be situated in law libraries. This is necessary because, acquisition of approved university or higher law degree requires a broad knowledge and exposure in legal education since this stimulates and this stirs law students in critical thinking or reasoning in legal matters, helps intellectual capacity, promotes assessment of legal cases and improves knowledge on various regulations in the society. One cannot over-emphasized the need for proper management in law libraries as it dictates the productivity of the law school graduates. It is imperative that the legal professional enthusiasm is directed to legal practice and learning because he/she can be made to be head of the affairs of the law library according to the author. The model below briefly describes the position of legal professionals as law librarians in the efficient utilization of legal information and service to law library users. The relevance of the current and updated legal information database and media can be influenced by the availability of a legal professional as a librarian as shown below.

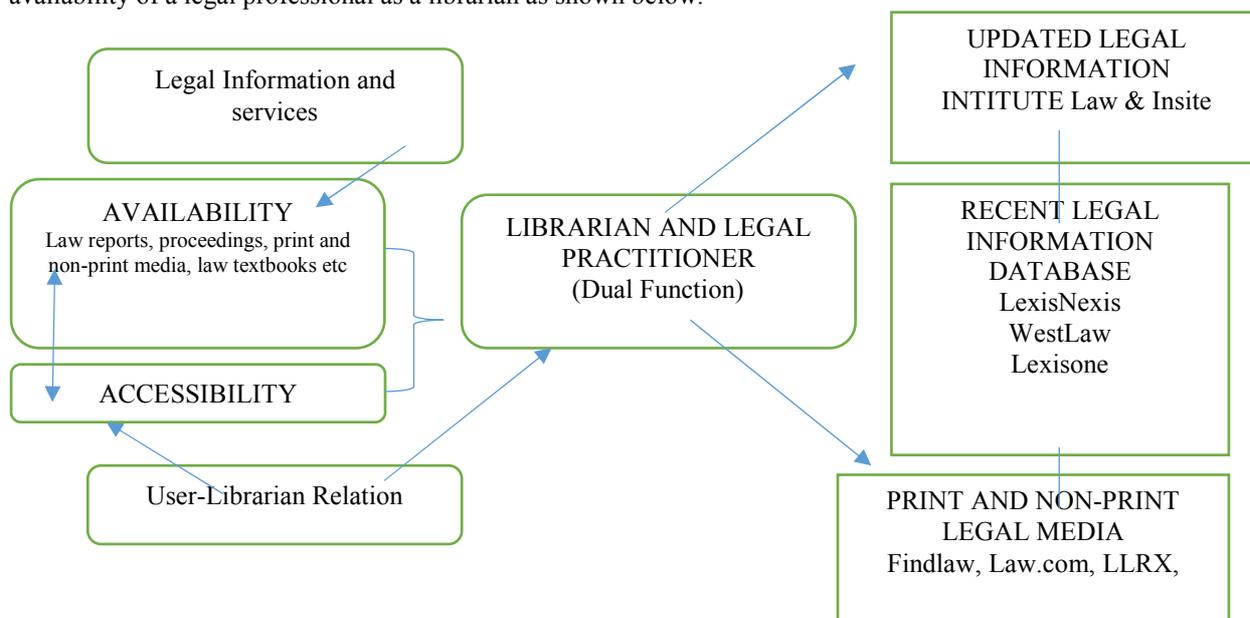


Figure 1: Expressing the centrality of the librarian in the law library (Authors model)

CLE requirement for law librarians include provision of appropriate literature and guide for prospective solicitors which is a pillar in legal education. The Nigerian Bar Association in its continual efforts to standardize legal practices, demands prospective solicitors to be grounded in the juristic functions, thus, the law librarian and lawyer is saddled with the responsibilities of teaching, guiding research, provision of legal information and carrying legal functions in Juris. Anyaegbu *et al* (2013) said, the law librarian must keep abreast of natural legal dynamics as it varies and modifies itself in international circles which involves frequent research in law and in academics, he/she must provide information of legal research, writing, bibliography, guidance and counselling. They remarked that, the law librarian should be able to routinely lead staff workshops, seminars, organize conferences and dish out instructions in area of legal competence in addition to the conventional role of library management. Therefore, an extra job responsibility is placed on the law librarian. Giving assistance in editing, indexing, abstracting of legal research and report is done by the law librarian.

The NUC and CLE recognizes the role of the law librarian to law libraries in the reformation of legal education, he/she must be part of the global legal information network. It is very tasking for law librarians to be able to find a balance at this point. Dada (2011) said, both legal and library background must be on an equal footing without necessarily operating from a point of disadvantage for one side. These are limitations with the use of print law library media e.g. textbooks which include inflexibility, static nature, high cost for purchase of

relevant legal books, shipping logistic delay, limited quantity of books and inaccessibility of legal literature “24/7” when the need arise. It is the candid opinion of the author, that the librarian should be a legal practitioner and information and technology driven personality to ease and solve the problems aforementioned with respect to the fact that print media of legal nature are voluminous, cumbersome, sometimes non-user friendly.

The spectacular thing about the information technology in law libraries is that, it can extensively promote proper storage, retrieval and dissemination of relevant legal literature without physical contact of the users. Also it could facilitate inter-law library interactions and relations and the exchange of legal information within and outside the shores of one’s nation (globally). A non-legal professional librarian may seem not suitable due to lack of enthusiasm in legal practices which is ultimate in legal education and considering the place of library, it is most crucial that a legal identity and a full class library professional be the law librarian.

2.5 Impact of Legal professionals as Librarians

The UK’s leading legal blogger Carl Gardner in an online post said the law library is the best education and training resource for law students and lawyers and should be enhanced and preserved. Gardner (2015) posted that education and training is not distinct or distant from a well-resourced law library. The law library is where a meaningful legal training and education takes place. Interestingly, he noted that this training or education can be carried out with the assistance of an experienced and well-trained law librarian(s). This re-emphasizes the vitality of the law librarian to have a legal background. Haddison (2017) strongly warned that because of the special nature of the law library, its management is imperative, crucial and must be taken serious. Current trends in globalization or digitalization demand that the academic law libraries must be adequately informed to support in the functioning of the law school and continuity of legal education in parent institutions (Haugen, 2005). Pengelley (2001) said, the law librarian is potentially a curriculum instructor of law. This means that, they have tools for guidance of law schools and faculties, professional and toward generating new methods of instructional delivery in law. This ultimately supports the possibility of introducing innovative techniques in teaching and learning of law, hence facilitating student-teacher relationships, promoting the appreciation of legal studies that is relevant in the provision of legal information and education.

Muhammed (2015) asserted that training of law students in becoming lawyers is an attempt to equip them most probably and help in serving as better solicitors, advisors or advocate to governments, associations, companies, institutions, firms, and individuals of private and corporate status. This makes the law students to be pervasive ones, shaping the lives of humans using a good system of legal education. He also asserted that, the quality of legal education in a lawyer is a derivative of the legal information obtained during training. Hence, the place of the library is always paramount. World over, libraries are repository of books and other relevant literatures. In fact, without the books, the library is no library. Law books or collections in law libraries are essential component of law library. However, there is a scarcity of law research report and legal literature in law libraries most especially in African (Dada, 2011) which proposes that the management of law libraries seem to be below expected standard which in turn reflects the leadership knowledge and ability in the libraries.

3.0 Social Implication

The use of the library by students is highly dependent on the level of interaction between library staff and the user. A great deal of human relation is needed and this kind of connection between user and staff is solely reliant on the knowledge gained and shared within. Legal practices are highly enhanced in the place of education which is library centric. The following implications have been pointed out by the author.

1. There will be a decline in the use of law libraries across the nation if law library personnel are deficient in legal proceedings or understand a little of law.
2. The law library is presumably filled with law text, print and non-print, a good understanding of these texts is needed to ease search for information. A reverse scenario may limit patronage and source for alternative by users.
3. The management of the law library has tremendous impact as the central decision maker in the library. A deficiency in the understanding of law may affect his/her delivery of legal functions.
4. There might be high level of non-satisfaction of law library personnel especially of foreign career fields other than law.
5. There is need to share legal information amongst law library staff as this will enhance service delivery in academic law libraries.

4.0 Practical Implications

The use of librarians of non-legal endeavour could have the following practical scenarios as stated below;

1. Mismanagement of the law is sure when librarians do not know how much legal information could be useful to law students.
2. Non-chalant attitudinal display is bound to occur once legal functions are held in the law library since

- the librarian is of a different field of study.
3. Striking a balance between practicing law and being a law librarian could be very difficult except some form of assistance is solicited for the organization can also put in place room for legal practice alongside the work as a law librarian.

5.0 Recommendations

Sequel to the recent events surrounding the level of dissatisfaction expressed by researchers and students using the law libraries in Nigeria and also from proofs given by literatures, the following recommendations have been put forward.

- i. Since, the functionality of a legal system is somewhat dependent on the knowledge acquired during training, it should be made compulsory for law students to be research oriented and legal information seeking.
- ii. A relevant degree in the legal profession should be a pre-requisite, qualification or eligibility for appointment offer as law librarians in law schools and faculties. This will be extremely resourceful in assisting law students in legal information search.
- iii. The recent digital age information explosion scenario requires and/or provides a room for law librarians to be technologically inclined with online legal database services, textbooks and other legal information service outlets.
- iv. An involvement of the law librarian in re-organization of legal instruction through law library services will promote use of law library and legal information for teaching, learning and research.
- v. The collective responsibility of the NBA and CLE in the selection process of law librarian who are legal professionals will promote and boost legal information service.
- vi. This should be replicated in other academic and special libraries like the medical, engineering, and other special and academic libraries in tertiary institutions.

6.0 Conclusion

The law library is very important to all lawyers and students studying law. It directly or indirectly defines the level of accomplishment of a lawyer currently practicing law or in training as it provides access to quality information on law and the administration of justice (Haddison, 2017). The longevity of legal education in any nation is wholly reliant on the availability and accessibility of legal information to law students. The functioning of and services provided by the law libraries translate directly to the effectiveness of the libraries. Proper service delivery will promote the law students behaviour towards use of legal information products and services for personal consumption, consultation and building of confidence as lawyers in training. The law libraries bridges the gap between classroom sessions and the court experience for lawyers as it provides needed information for legal warfare. The dual functionality of the law librarian is crucial to the use of law libraries by law students. Access and knowledge of legal reports, proceedings of conferences of law associations and institutions, case files, statutory reports among others are most relevant to the learning of law and since the law library provides a platform for research in law, head librarians needs to have some level of expertise or knowledge of law or legal issues. As a matter of fact and urgency, law librarians are supposed to be a major, crucial or vital part of the teaching and learning of law which is also obtainable in other academic libraries in their parent institutions. It will therefore be insalubrious to have non-legal personnel at the helm of affairs of the law library occupying the seat of the head librarian with very little or no knowledge about legal proceedings. With much confidence from the view of the author, that if legal professionals are left to handle leadership positions in law libraries across the nation following the abolishment of ratiocination tendencies of parent institutions in selection of law librarians, the utilization of law libraries by undergraduate law students will be much better. Similar processes should be replicated in other special and academic libraries.

7.0 Conflict of Interest

The author has not declared any conflict of interest, the article is single authored and content is written by author alone. All cited authors have been acknowledged duly.

8.0 Acknowledgements

The author is most grateful to Mr. Sylvester Onoriode Obigba for the technical and logistic assistance. The contributions of Dr (Mrs) Patience Uzezi Otolo towards the manuscript is highly appreciated. Also the author deeply appreciates the efforts of Mr Ejiro Urhibo, her lovely husband for his understanding and financial support and father, Dr Theophilus James Okpidi for the intellectual and moral support during the research.

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