



HUMAN RESOURCE NEEDS OF CRITICAL UNITS OF SELECTED UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA: AN EXPOSITORY ANALYSIS OF THE OUTSOURCING OPTION

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the human resource needs of critical units of selected university libraries in Ogun State. It conducts an analysis of outsourcing of library activities in the selected university libraries. A total of five key library personnel were interviewed for the purpose of this research. They included University Librarians and their Deputies. The main method used was case study, conducted in three university libraries in Ogun State; Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (Federal University); Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye (State University) and Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo (Private University). The study revealed that all the libraries studied outsourced mainly the acquisition units to vendors. Other parts of the library operations they variously outsourced included bindery, photocopy and ICT units. This is an indication that library outsourcing has not taken its ground in South-West Nigeria from the evidence available from the selected libraries especially, in the area of cataloguing. It is therefore recommended that, in a situation where we have scarce professionals, outsourcing some of the library activities may be the best option considering the benefits thereof.

Keywords: Human Resource, Outsourcing and University Libraries

Introduction

University libraries are established to support the University curricula by providing current and relevant information resources in different formats. The task of organizing these resources and making them available and accessible to users as quick as possible is performed by human beings. Appropriate human resources profile is therefore essential to effective operation of library services. It goes without saying that performing these critical functions requires professional, competent and innovative human resource. Broadly categorized, human resource is a term used to describe the individuals who comprise the workforce of an



organization. As a term, it is also applicable in labour economics, as for example, business sector or even the whole nation. Human resource is also the name of the function within an organization charged with the overall responsibility for implementing strategies and policies relating to the management of individuals.

From this broad conceptualization, it is obvious that human resource is at the core of operation at the critical units of the library, performing the core activities thereof. These units where human resources provide core operation services include acquisition, cataloging, and circulation as well as Information Communication Technology unit. By way of extension, the issue of outsourcing of human resources activities of these critical units of library has become a subject of professional discourse in view of the shortage of personnel who are professionally trained to man those activities (Hill, 2009).

Outsourcing can be simply defined as a process in which an organization delegates some of its in-house operations/processes to a second/ third party. Thus outsourcing is a contracting transaction through which one company purchases services from another while keeping ownership and ultimate responsibility for the underlying processes. The clients inform their provider what they want and how they want the work performed. So the client can authorize the provider to operate as well as redesign basic processes in order to ensure even greater cost and efficiency benefits (Oketunji, 2008).

In the context of this study, outsourcing can be described as when a library contracts with another company to provide services for any of the library operations that might otherwise be performed by in-house employees. In a situation where the library is having inadequate skilled manpower to perform some of the library operations that are routine such as cataloguing, acquisition, bindery, ICT, circulation or reader services and so on, there is a growing resort to outsourcing of these services to the experts for effective library service delivery (Oketunji, 2008). Outsourcing does not include buying of some items in the library for routine work such as biro, exercise books, stapler, glue, stamping pad, accessioning machine and others. Activities that can be outsourced in the library include acquisition of library resources in different formats, cataloging, bindery, equipment and furniture photocopy, cataloguing and registration cards, security, cleaning, bilingual of translation services, and Information and Communication Technology.

Outsourcing has however become highly controversial with redundancy implications for library staff among other issues. Outsourcing is a frequently misused and misunderstood term and some disagreement can be traced to different definitions (Appleby, 2002 cited in Ugah and Okpara, 2010). Lund (1997) cited in Ugah and Okpara, (2010) used “outsourcing” to mean that someone who is not on the university payroll manages the whole or part of a university library function, employing their own staff and assets. Lund (1997) also maintain that outsourcing describes how services are obtained noting that the term and its practice have been more prevalent in business while it has recently become a persistent and controversial topic among librarians.

Critical Units in the Library

University library is a system that has different units. Generally speaking, we have the following units in any typical university library: Acquisition, Technical, Serial, Circulation,



Reference, Bindery, Photocopy, ICT, and General Administration. Having identified all the units in a University library, it is necessary to point out that some of them form what can be referred to as critical units. From the foregoing, the critical units are: Acquisition, Technical, Serial, Reader Services/Circulation and the ICT unit. They are the units responsible for core activities of librarianship. These core activities are provision of current and relevant information resources that will meet the needs of users, arranging or processing of those resources for easy retrieval and dissemination of information resources to user on request.

Statement of the Problem

The need to improve on efficiency of service delivery has become paramount to any forward looking organization. University libraries are no exception. The economic meltdown and its attendant shrink in financial resource base, coupled with the need to increase and expand facilities in university libraries in Nigeria has made outsourcing of library operations one of the options for consideration. Also, the need to cut down on expenses and improve efficiency in meeting the needs of library users has brought into focus outsourcing of library operations as one viable option. The success of any organization depends on the quality of human resource. Over the years, employees have constituted the key players in any organization. It has been observed in Library and Information profession that there is scarcity of human resource.

However, with the advent of Information Communication Technology (ICT), a substantial number of university librarians are not knowledgeable in library automation. This has been a major concern for library profession in Nigeria. As such many libraries are finding it difficult to computerize their operations. It is also a general phenomenon that majority of libraries in Nigeria are underfunded. Academic libraries are not exception. Federal and State University libraries are also faced with shrinking financial resources allocated to them by the government and university administrators. Some private institution libraries are having the same challenge. Despite this challenge of underfunding, universities tend to increase and expand in enrolment, introducing new courses and programs without corresponding increase in library funding and personnel. There is the additional challenge or the need to improve the quality of service delivery by the university libraries. Based on these critical challenges, university libraries have had to resort to several strategies including the issue of outsourcing to increase efficiency and effectiveness of services rendered. This study is investigating the human resource needs of critical units of University Libraries and exploring the rationale for outsourcing in the bid to meet the current needs of library patrons and for quality service delivery.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the human resources needs of critical units of selected University libraries and conduct expository analysis of outsourcing option. In doing this, the specific objectives will be to:

1. Identify the critical as well as the other units of University library.
2. Investigate the number of professional librarians in these libraries



3. Examine the units of the library that can be and have been outsourced.
4. Find out the reasons for outsourcing the critical units of library.
5. Identify the challenges as well as the impact on information profession.

Review of Related Literature

Outsourcing in libraries has an interesting history and has existed in some form or another for more than one hundred years. For decades, libraries have relied on commercial vendors to perform some of their functions. Until recently, these outsourcing ventures were small in scope and fairly well contained and affected distinct operations. Moreover, it was the smaller libraries with limited resources that brought these services, primarily because of a lack of in-house expertise and resources (Claire-lise and Sever, 1998). According to Kenneth and Kuthlee (1994), for many years, academic libraries outsourced non-core services. The outsourcing of peripheral areas such as security, maintenance of library buildings and courier services has been much accepted. With some exceptions, other operations such as binding and photocopy services have been outsourced by most academic libraries. In the 1960s with the development of approval plans, part of collection development and acquisitions was outsourced. In the 1970s and 1980s, some cataloguing functions began to be outsourced. Today, libraries administrators are faced with a dilemma of how to continue fulfilling the library's mission and provide quality services under the stress of ever decreasing (competent) human resources.

Outsourcing in Academic Libraries, Library's core Services and Man Power Needs

Taking cues from their colleagues in industry and government, academic administrators both in and outside of libraries see outsourcing as an increasingly attractive alternative in the face of shrinking budgets and increasing workloads. What constitutes a library's core services is at the heart of outsourcing debate. Most experts believe that organizations should not outsource core competencies. Consequently, libraries should invest their own energies into doing as well as possible that which they are in business to do and to purchase high quality replacement for other services. The main activities performed in libraries are building collections, organizing them and making them accessible to the public or clients. Olatola (2004) identified four work levels (otherwise called Divisions) of major service points of a typical library as follow: Collection Development Division (Acquisition), Technical services Division (Materials' processing) Readers' services Division (Book usage) and serials Division (Periodicals/ Journals usage) Units that are responsible for these tasks are Acquisition, Technical, Circulation and Information Communication Technologies ICTs Units. Other services the university library offers include: Photocopying, Bindery, Reference, Preservation and Conservation and so on.

In order for the university library to meet the current needs of library users by providing relevant and current materials, information professionals' services are required. Effectiveness of university library depends on the quality of manpower and the support of the university administration. Ugah and Okpara (2010) have identified four different services that could be outsourced in the library as follows:



- 1) **Cataloguing:** Outsourcing cataloguing can be a temporary measure to deal with backlogs. Most university Libraries is facing the problem of backlog. Based on the size of the backlog and available staff, outsourcing can be crucial in reducing cataloguing backlogs.
- 2) **Catalogue card production:** University libraries that still engage in catalogue card production are considering outsourcing it. Libraries with card catalogues may have a backlog of card production or poor quality work. This is even required as they are done at long intervals, and may not be cost effective if they are produced. Binding and book repair units of some university libraries have also had issues of seat of corrupt practices with increasing use of official facilities, material, and time to engage in the private business the detriment of the library while at the same time collecting salaries and allowances. Outsourcing has been identified as a way out.
- 3) **Photocopying:**Most libraries have photocopying services. When the machines break down, library staff must solve the problem. Money generated from this service may be diverted to other activities instead of replenishing the photocopying paper, servicing, and maintaining the photocopier, and buying toner. University libraries can outsource this service. A business partnership should be engaged and allocated space within the library or its vicinity, to photocopy library materials at a reasonable cost to the user.
- 4) **Indexing and abstracting:** Indexing and abstracting are indispensable for navigating complex information. Most libraries do not have the resources to provide indexes and abstracts for their collections of periodical literature and similar material. Due consideration should be given to the issue of outsourcing indexing and abstracting, and the production indexes and abstracts.

One of the common reasons for outsourcing is that the activity being outsourced is a ‘non-core’ activity to the mission of the institution. Another reason is to remove a perceived problem for an institution (Junkle, 1996 cited in Oketunji, 2008). He maintained that managers who do not understand cataloguing as core activity in the library will be more likely to outsource it. Barbara (1994), states that outsourcing may be carried out as a temporary measure in dealing with low productivity in academic libraries. She pointed out that selection and ordering are time consuming and often complicated while cataloguers tend to be slow and frequently have backlogs of materials waiting to be processed. This situation makes outsourcing attractive.

Theoretical Framework

Two major theories that can be identified in explaining outsourcing as a phenomenon are the Social Contract Theory and Social Exchange Theory. Social contract theory was propounded by three scholars: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau. They were concerned with emphasizing the contract as an explanation of nature rather than of the origin of society that is, to get across the idea that whatever the origin of society, the relation between the individual members of the society and their obligation to obey society’s



government and law are fundamentally contractual even in the absence of formal agreement. The relevance of this is that both the Library management and the outsourcing agents are bound by a contractual obligation to perform tasks that are supposed to be mutually beneficial.

On the other hand, the Social Exchange Theory which was propounded by Peter, M. Blau has as its basic assumption that men enter into new social associations because they expect doing so to be mutually rewarding. In addition, the expansion of such relationship with old associates and continued interaction with them remains beneficial. A person who derives benefits from associates is under obligation to reciprocate by supplying benefits to them in return. When this is done both parties profit from association and their exchange of rewarding experiences fortifies the social bond between them. Here, the concept economic exchange becomes relevant once goods and services are given a price. Their price defines the value of commodities independent of any particular exchange relation. This theory is applicable in the library. There is no library that can operate in isolation without having an interaction with third parties in one way or another. In the areas where the library needs services of other party, Library pays in exchange of those services in returns to agencies as their benefits while the library also benefit by providing quality services to its users (International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 1968).

Methodology

The population of this study consists of the key officers in selected university libraries. These university libraries include; The Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Ogun State, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, Ogun State and Babcock University Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State. The data for the study were collected through the use of interview schedule. The reason for choosing interview guide is that the sample size is few (recall that we noted that outsourcing is a management decision activity) and it allows the interviewer to explain more explicitly the purpose of the interview. The respondents were asked to indicate the section of library activities that are outsourced. They were also asked to mention some reasons for outsourcing any of the library activities and the challenges of outsourcing data collected were analyzed with the use of descriptive methods.

Study Findings

Babcock University Library

Babcock University was established by Seventh-day Adventist church and was chartered by the federal government as one of the first three private universities in Nigeria. It was established on May 10, 1999. Her mission is “Building people for leadership through quality Christian education, transforming lives, impacting society for positive change through the pervading influence of our graduates in service to humanity”. (Babcock University 2009-2011 Undergraduate Bulletin: 2)

Babcock university library was established to support the university’s mission through the process of current and broad selection of research and teaching materials and information to the university in Nigeria and beyond (Babcock University Library Handbook, 2008). The library has a total number of sixty five (65) personnel out of which there are nineteen (19) professional librarians. Babcock University library has the following staff structure; out of



these nineteen (19) professional librarians one (1) of them is in charge of Acquisition, technical unit has four (4) staff, two(2) staff at serial unit, twelve (12) staff at the reader services, and two (2) staff at the ICT unit. The major units of the library are acquisition, technical, serial, reader services (circulation and reference section), ICT, and administration units; other units include bindery, photocopy unit, security unit, and housekeeping. The University Library in addition to the main library has branches as follow; Science and Technology library, History and Theology, and Law library. Outsourcing of library activities in Babcock University is partial. The units which the library has outsourced to third party are acquisition and bindery. Library infrastructure such as furniture, computers, and others are also outsourced by the university.

Acquisition Unit: In the process of acquisition, the library makes use of vendors for acquiring library resources both books and Journals. The service of Seventh-day Adventist Institution Library (SAIL), an outsourcing agency based in Beirren-Spring, Michigan, USA is employed in the acquisition of foreign Journals for the library. Other vendors used by the university library include: Mafix Books, Florence Lambard Nig Ltd, the Booksellers Ltd, Learning solutions-a division of Rombic Concepts Ltd, New Global Ltd., Florida Book and Library Equipment, MAS-MORE Ventures Ltd, Routledge etc.

Bindery Unit: The bindery work is also outsourced whenever the library has backlog of materials. Apart from these units that outsourced, all other activities are done by the library staff. At Babcock University, activities such as cataloguing, photocopying, reader services, circulation and so on were not outsourced.

Olabisi Onabanjo University Library

Olabisi Onabanjo University is a state – owned and operated university with main campus located in Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria. The university was founded July 7, 1982 as Ogun State university, and was renamed OlabisiOnabanjo on May 29, 2001 in honour of a former governor of the state, the late Chief (Dr) Victor OlabisiOnabanjo. The OlabisiOnabanjo University library began as a single library at the takeoff of the university in 1983. The library has grown now to the main library at the main campus and eight other branch libraries. These other libraries include the Law library; the Medical library and the Sopolu Library. It also has such other faculty and college libraries in the following places:

- 1) The Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences, Ikenne;
- 2) College of Agricultural Sciences, Aiyetoro;
- 3) College of Engineering and Technology, Ibogun and
- 4) Ijebu Igbo Branch Library, Ijebu-Igbo.

The university library has six (6) units; These are Collection Development which handle acquisition and gift and exchanges; Technical Services unit for cataloguing and classification, card production, catalogue maintenance as well as security and building maintenance; Readers' Services division handles circulation, Reference and Bibliographic services and Reprographic and bindery; serial division. Multi-media Resource Centre and the University Bookshop (OlabisiOnabanjo University Library Ago – Iwoye: Library guide) Currently the library has a



total number of twenty five (25) staff out of which there are fourteen (14) professional librarians. OlabisiOnabanjo library has the following staff structure; out of these seventeen (17) professional librarians one (1) of them is in charge of Acquisition, technical unit has three (3) staff, one (1) librarians at serial unit, one (1) librarian at the reader services, one (1) librarian at the media centre and only one (1) staff at the administrative unit.

Activities the Library Outsourced

Acquisition Unit: The library outsourced the acquisition (purchase) of library resources to vendors. Though the library will make selection based on the programs run by the University from vendors or publishers catalogue. These selected library resources are to be approved by the University, and then the vendors supply accordingly. Some of these vendors include Mafix Books, Florence and Lambad Nig. Ltd, Nitaderm Nig. Ltd, New global Dimension, Abraham Blessing ventures, E and B Books, Options Books and information services, the Book company ltd and others.

Photocopy Unit: The library also outsourced the photocopy unit to outsider to run and pay the rent to the library yearly. Due to low patronage, the service has been stop by external people. This is not good enough because the reason for the photocopy services in the library is not mainly for income generation but to prevent the library materials from mutilation by the library users. It is very important for academic libraries to provide photocopy service.

Other Units Outsourced: In addition, the University at large outsourced the library furniture, cleaning and maintenance to agencies. The University library is processing to outsource the multi-media section to agencies to run for effectiveness and efficiency. Currently the university library has written proposal for library porters instead of security allocated to the library by the university.

University of Agriculture, Abeokuta

The University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (UNAAB) is a federal University. UNAAB is one of the three Universities of Agriculture in Nigeria. It was established in January 1988. The University library was established to support the University curriculum by providing access to current and relevant library materials. NimbeAdedipe Library is the name of the library the total collection at present is 50,622 titles. The library has migrated from the DOS based TINLIB software to a more window based GLAS (Graphical Library Automated System). The library has several centres in order to enhance research and development in the University. These centres include the Agricultural Media Resource and Extension Centre (AMREC), Biotechnological Centre, Centre for Human Resources development (CEMHURT), The Health Centre, Research and Development Centre and so on. Other sections of the library are not different from other university library under studies.

Outsourcing at UNAAB

The Library outsourced partially acquisition of library materials to vendors like other libraries. Some of the vendors used are: Origbo Venture, The Book Company, and Abraham Blessing among others. Apart from this, library staff performed all other activities on their own.



The University currently has a total number of sixty-four (64) staff. The library staff structure in FUNAAB is as follows; there are twenty-six (26) professional librarians, out of whom ten (10) librarians are at the cataloguing section, two librarians at the automation unit, and three librarians each at serial, acquisition and branch libraries respectively. The major units of the library are acquisition, Bibliography/ cataloguing, serial, reader services, administration units, bindery, photocopy unit, security unit, and housekeeping other units include special collection/rare book, research/ development and multimedia resources. The University Library in addition to the main library has branches libraries. However, the library staff structure in universities under study reveal that, both UNAAB and Babcock University have more professional librarians than Olabisi Onabanjo University. The university that has the smallest number of professional librarians is OOU. It is expected that both UNAAB and OOU should have the largest number of professional librarians due to their number of students and library resources.

Reasons for Outsourcing Library Operations

1. It is advanced that the vendor gets variety of library resources in bulk and the price can be negotiated.
2. Also, the library uses vendors because of proximity. It pays the library to outsource the acquisition the vendors than for librarian to go the different publishers, bookshop to acquire library materials.
3. Outsourcing of Library operations sometimes allows library staff (where they are not in sufficient number) to concentrate on other pressing assignments rather than going to different places in search of library resources to acquire.
4. Outsourcing of library operations saves man power and training cost
5. It also sometimes helps the library to get specialized services that are not readily available.
6. It saves valuable time and money and ensures that the job is done right by experts

Discussion of the Findings

From the numerous tasks performed by the University libraries at UNAAB, OOU and BU, it is obvious that outsourcing of critical units such as cataloguing and ICT library infrastructure are yet to be fully embraced in those units. This is as a result of having enough catalogers in their technical units; we can see this from University of Agriculture Abeokuta library where the library has six professional librarians working in this unit. In the area of ICTs/ library automation, Babcock University has two librarians; OOU has only one librarian and library officer and UNAAB has two librarians and one library officer. This unit required ICTs specialists for effective automation services and effective library automation. In a situation where there is no competence ICTs guru outsourcing may be the best option. Also, in the area of conservation and preservation, there is no library that has such unit except bindery. This poses serious implications on records for posterity. This may also yield to outsourcing if the reasons border on inadequacy of manpower. Apart from outsourcing of critical units, of library the following other library activities also outsourced are; photocopying, furniture acquisition, cataloguing cards production, printing of library cards,



indexing and abstracting. This confirms the position of Okpara 2010, who identified different services in the library that could be outsourced

Planning and Implementing Outsourcing Programmes: Recommendations for Library Managers

It is a common saying that he who fails to plan is planning to fail. Outsourcing program is not done over a night; it requires adequate time and staffing depending on the size of a library. It is suggested that outsourcing of any library activity requires strategic thinking, planning and there must be testing of the activity to be outsourced before the implementation. It is important that the library's stakeholders (staff, administration and board members) understand the purpose of the outsourcing decision. They must be able to justify its cost and benefit.

Also, rather than becoming disgruntled employees, displaced staff can and should be effectively used in other areas of the library. For instance, because of their familiarity with the library materials, acquisition librarians may become productive reference and public service librarians. Also where cataloguing is outsourced, Cataloguers, because of their expertise with the patterns and structures of bibliographic control, may be useful in developing of bibliographic instructions and guides to assist users; or as suggested by Oketunji (2008) most cataloguers are also ideally suited for classifying and indexing electronic resources.

Finally, there should be a clear term of reference between the outsourcer and outsourcing agency. In-house responsibilities include inventory control, the preparation of materials to be shipped to the outsourcer, the receipt of processed material from the outsourcer, the evaluation of outsourced services, the review of materials for errors, and the return of unacceptable items must be considered as job for insiders for process sustainability and continuity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is obvious from the findings that, outsourcing of critical units of library operations are yet to fully take off in Nigeria. The only aspect of library that is currently outsourced and common to the libraries under study is acquisition. This may be as a result of not having enough Acquisition Librarian. None of the libraries under study outsource ICT unit despite acute shortage of personnel in this area. The other services that are variously outsourced are not critical units to the library profession. These include photocopying, bindery, printing of library cards and janitorial services. The study recommends the following:

1. The University library Management needs to do a critical analysis of every unit in the library and evaluate the cost. When this is done, if the cost of outsourcing such units is less, it may then become the preferred option at the level of cost effectiveness.
2. The University administrators should not hesitate to outsource any sensitive parts of the library units especially the ICT of library infrastructure in order to meet the current need of library users. It is discovered that while many libraries have not outsourced ICT unit, the unit currently suffer efficient service delivery.
3. The University administrators should take note that it is not the amount or number of the staff that matters but their input into the system. Outsourcing reduces the number of staff to enumerate and compensate and it add value to the system.



4. Lastly, where outsourcing is considered unnecessary, concerted efforts must be made to hire the required number of library professionals and give quality training and exposure that will guaranteed efficient service delivery to library users.



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