

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN IMO STATE: ISSUES, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS.

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Abstract

This paper investigated personnel management in five academic libraries in Imo State. Data were gathered using questionnaire designed for the heads of the libraries studied. Data were analyzed using simple tables and percentages. The study identified the various personnel management functions in academic libraries as recruitment, promotion, motivation, discipline, appraisal and communication. However, the benefits derived from library personnel management activities/functions are adequately trained and developed staff; adequate control and discipline of staff; improved library services; improved library management and staff relationship. Insubordination and bureaucratic bottlenecks were most frequently identified by all the respondents as the major problems of personnel management. The researcher made the following suggestions: Staff training and re-training, recruitment of qualified staff, provision of adequate resources and infrastructure, adoption of participative management style, prioritizing motivation, staff welfare and conducive work environment as some of the ways to ensure veritable personnel management of the academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria.

Key words: Personnel Management, Academic Libraries, Problems, Prospects.

Introduction

The library is a store house of information and knowledge. In recent times the library has become a veritable centre of excellence. It propels and promotes knowledge, entertainment, research and general academic activities.

Adeyemi (1991) as quoted by Madu (2004) outlines the indispensable roles of the library. In his view, they are

Maintenance of adequate stock- monographic and serials: Bibliographic activities which include: newspaper clippings and vertical file maintenance; indexing and abstracting services; preparation and development of reading list, select bibliographies, indexes to the collections and other reference aids and resources; participation in national and international library cooperation, interlibrary lending, and sharing of reference services, reliable reprographic and document delivery services, well-trained and dedicated staff, display and exhibitions of reference stock.

Consequent upon these are effective library services and user satisfaction. These have become most intense in this era of ICT application in libraries. As a result, libraries have become very dynamic. This places great demand on the human resources in the library to act as the most vital catalyst in the library's quest to achieve excellence in service.

The library stands on a tripod of finance, human resources and information resources. Each of these is crucial but human resources/personnel become very crucial and of absolute importance. A well trained and dedicated library staff plays outstanding role in the achievement of library objectives.

The crux of this study is library personnel management. Library managers/administrators have in real terms recognized that the most valuable resource in any library is its people (Jin, 2006). He further explained that perhaps the greatest area of concern to library managers in the last two decades has been technology but the focus is now centered on managing people to provide the highest level of services.

Statement of the Problem

Management of human resources is a major factor to achieve organizational objectives. Personnel is a critical resource which requires effective management. Success in any organization is largely determined by the performance of well managed personnel.

Personnel management in libraries has not been given its proper place when compared to other library functions/services like information materials, finance/equipment. It is a shared responsibility between the library manager and the head of personnel department of the academic institution. The academic library manager's role in personnel management is enormous/great whereas there are

issues, problems and challenges which impede personnel management activities of the librarian.

Consequently, there are problems of having personnel or human resources without focus and commitment to the library objectives. Also there are bound to exist lack of coordination, supervision and poor communication. These will at the long run negatively impact on the library services and performance.

Based on the above, the problem of this study is to investigate the critical role and functions of personnel management in academic libraries. This problem includes challenges posed by management of personnel or human resource in the library.

Research Questions

As a result of the problem stated above, the study articulated the following research questions which it hopes to provide answers to:

1. What are the personnel management functions in academic libraries?
2. What are the benefits of personnel management in academic libraries?
3. What are the roles of the academic library manager in personnel management?
4. What problems are encountered in personnel management in academic libraries?
5. What recommendations can be made in other to achieve effective personnel management in academic libraries?

Review of related literature

Managing human resources so that an organization has people in the right place at the right time is often thought to be a key role of human resources management (Robbins, and Coutler, 2007). Personnel management also called human resources management is defined as a strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization's most valued asset: the people working to the achievement of its objectives. It can be regarded as a philosophy governing how employees should be treated in the interest of the organization (Armstrong, 2001).

Kor and Leblebici (2005) also define Human Resource management (HRM) as all embracing and involves everything about personnel in an organization. Personnel management includes obtaining, using and maintaining a satisfied work force. It is a significant part of management. Personnel management begins with the recruitment of requisitely qualified personnel for an organization. It further connotes the part of a company concerned with the welfare of employees.

Shatat (2003) as cited by Tajeh (2010) observed that the functions of human resources management has a basic role in motivating institutional innovation: there is a strong relation between creative human resources management practices and the creativity of individuals. Managers should manage human resources effectively, which includes mobilizing their enthusiasm to the highest level and making them bring initiative to their work (Jin, 2006).

Byars and Ku (1997) posit that human resources functions refer to these tasks and duties performed in both large and small organizations to provide for and coordinate human resources. According to them, the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) identified six major functions of human resources management as:

- i. Human resource planning, recruitment and selection.
- ii. Human resource development.
- iii. Compensation and benefits.
- iv. Safety and health.
- v. Employee and labour relation.
- vi. Human resource research.

Also Nwachukwu (1988) comments on the role of personnel management and notes that in a modern organization that emphasizes division of labour, the function of manpower recruitment is delegated to the personnel department. It is the function of the personnel office to select, train, develop, assimilate and remunerate employee. He further outlined many general functions of personnel management which corroborates Byars (1997).

Simmons-Welburn and McNeil (2004) observe that the term human resources have been widely adopted by corporations in recognition of changing legal requirements, ethical issues, societal and cultural expectations of the work environment. This has indeed broadened the role of personnel and made it far more integral to strategic directions than it had been in the first half of the twentieth century.

Ostroff (2004) opines that achieving competitive success through people requires a fundamental change in how managers think about their employees and how they view the work relationship. It involves working with and through people and seeing them as partners not just as costs to be minimized or avoided. Conclusively, he was of the view that in addition to being an important part of organizational strategy and contributing to competitive

advantage, an organization human resources management practice has been found to have a significant impact on organizational performance.

Bassi and Mc Murrer (20004), Collins and Clark (2003) and Allen (2006) wrote on the importance and functions of human resources management. They all agreed that all managers must engage in some human resource management activities. In addition, Nzotta (2010), Dessler (2001), Jenry (2007), Onah (2005), Iheriohanma (2002), Alugbuo (2005), Koontz, Wehrich and Carrice (2005) have made vital contributions in the discourse of the concept, functions and importance of personnel management/human resource management in organizations. They are of the view that for effectiveness and efficiency in the achievement of organizational objectives, adequate attention should be given to human resource management According to them, personnel management functions/activities are to be accorded topmost priority and the best practices adhered to for the good of the organization.

Jin (2006) notes that the concept of human resources management has evolved in libraries in the United States. Francis (1998) wrote that a scientific policy on personnel is essential for the library and information professional working in universities. He said it should facilitate recruitment, induction and promotion of staff and getting required quantum of staff. He summed up by noting that a continuous effective training scheme is essential to constantly updating the technical knowledge and competence of the staff recruited.

Tayeh (2010) affirms that creative institutions, libraries in particular, are determined to deal with human resources as an intellectual capital. They perform the most important part of its body, so there is an increasing relationship between the quality of investment in the human power and their job performance. Jin (2006) buttressed this point when he said that the most valuable resources in a library are people and as such staff issues must be discussed. He concluded by saying that no matter how great the quality or quantity of a library collection of books, journals, and electronic resources are or how beautiful a library building is, it means little without the expert management of librarians and staff.

In line with this, Francis (1998) posits that personnel employed in the field of information processing and management requires scientific attention and leadership which brings the most conducive atmosphere for the adopting of modern technologies. In summary, he wrote that the phenomenon of surpassing of the number of workers in the information sector with that in production and service sectors in some of developed countries has evolved a scientific practice of personnel management in the field. By this, he underscored the very essence of personnel management in libraries.

Literature briefly reviewed above, clearly states that there are issues, problems and prospects inherent in personnel management activities in academic libraries. They also point to the fact that personnel management in academic libraries is a critical function and needs to be given adequate attention.

Methodology

This study is a survey research. It broadly aims at soliciting data from heads of academic libraries on issues, problems and prospects of personnel management in their libraries. A questionnaire tagged "Questionnaire for Heads of Libraries in Tertiary Institutions on Library Personnel Management (QFHOLITLPM) was designed for data collection. It has four sections A, B, C and D. Section A solicits general information: B is on issues and benefits of library personnel management: C is on problems/challenges of library personnel management; and D deals with prospects. There are 14 items and they are combination of both Likert and open response questions.

The respondents are the five heads of the selected academic libraries studied. Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri (AIFCE); Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO); Federal Polytechnic, Owerri (FPNO); Imo State University, Owerri (IMSU); and Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo, Ohaji (IMOPOLY). All the institutions are government owned (whereas the first three are owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the last two are owned by the Imo State government). The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents in two days. Five copies of the questionnaire were distributed, one each to the five heads of the libraries studied.

Findings and Discussion

Data gathered from the tertiary institution libraries where the questionnaires were administered by the researcher are presented below:

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution Pattern

Name of Institution	No of questionnaire distributed	No of questionnaire returned
A.I.F.C.E, Owerri Library	1	1
FUTO, Library	1	1
FPNO Library	1	1
IMSU, Owerri Library	1	1
IMOPOLY, Umuagwo Library	1	1
Total	5	5

All the copies of the questionnaire distributed to the various academic libraries studied were completed and returned. This shows 100% return rate.

Table 2: General Information of the Respondents

Name of Library	Designation	Qualification	No of years served as Head of Library	No Of staff	Professionals	Para-Professionals	Support staff
A.I.F.C.E, Owerri Library	College Librarian	B.Ed, MLS	20 years	50	6	7	37
FUTO, Library	University Librarian	MLS	4 years	34	17	12	5
FPNO Library	Librarian I	MLS	8 years	103	29	40	34
IMSU, Owerri Library	University Librarian	BLS, MLS, Ph.D	5 years	17	5	-	12
IMOPOLYUmuagwo Library	Asst, Chief Librarian	BLS, MLS (In view)	20 years	37	8	14	15
Total				241	65	73	103

There are total of 241 staff in the five academic libraries studied. FUTO library has more staff in general as well as in professional librarians. Imo State Polytechnic library Umuagwo has the least number of staff and also professionals. The respondents' designations include University Librarian, Polytechnic Librarian, College Librarian, Asst. Chief Librarian and Librarian I. Respondents from Imo Poly and FUTO who are assistant chief librarian and librarian I, respectively by implication responded on behalf of their heads of libraries who directed them to do so.

Each of the respondents on the average has served at least 4 years as head of their libraries whereas those who said 20 years presumably understood the question to be years of work experience. This is based on the fact that headship in some academic libraries is tenured for 4 years first and renewable for another term of 4 years, while that of university is a single term of five years. Consequently, no head of library would serve for 20 years. Furthermore, the academic qualifications of the respondents cut across first degrees and masters degrees in librarianship. Only the respondent from Imo Polytechnic library is yet to complete master's degree in librarianship, while that of IMSU has a Ph.D.

Table 3: Engagement in Personnel Management Activities/ Functions

Do you engage in personnel management?	No Respondents	Percentage
Yes	5	100
No	-	-
Total	5	100

All the heads of the five academic libraries studied agreed that they engages in personnel management activities/functions. The reason for this response is not far-fetched as they all have staff averagely above tens to manage. As the Nigeria Institute of Management observed, human capital is the heart of management and management involves working with and through people to achieve

organizational objectives. Hence without human resources and its management, organizations cannot be efficient.

Table 4: Degree of Engagement of Personnel Management Functions.

Functions	Very often	often	Undecided	Not very often	Not often
Recruitment	1	2	-	1	1
Appraisal	3	1	-	1	-
Motivation	-	1	1	2	1
Discipline	2	2	-	1	-
Training & Devpt	1	1	-	2	1
Promotion	3	1	-	1	-
Other functions (please specify)		1	-	1	-

As shown in table 4, the degree of engagement in Personnel Management functions indicate that recruitment is engaged often, promotion very often, motivation not very often, discipline very often, training and development not very often and appraisal very often. These are as highlighted by the various heads of libraries in the academic institutions studied. Other personnel management functions highlighted by 2 respondents include communication (formal and informal) with library staff. Communication in management and libraries specifically promotes effective personnel management and over all achievement of objectives.

This implies that most of the personnel management functions are engaged in very often by heads of academic libraries.

Table 5: Responsibility for personnel management functions/activities.

Institution/Library	Heads of Libraries	Unit Heads	Institutions Personnel	
FUTO	✓			
IMSU	✓	✓		
AIFCE	✓		✓	
FED POLY NEKEDE	✓		✓	
IMO POLY	✓			

Responding to the question on who has the responsibility for personnel management activities/functions as his/her schedule of duty in the library, data gathered are as highlighted thus. At IMSU library, the head of the library (university librarian) and the institutions personnel department were identified. Also mention was made of departmental heads and other in supervisory positions while in FUTO library, the university librarian who is the head of the library performs these functions. Similarly, the heads of libraries at Federal polytechnic Nekede and College Librarian at A.I.F.C.E library in conjunction with their institutions personnel department are saddled with the activities and functions of library personnel management. It is only at Imo Stat Polytechnic library Umuagwo that the head of library involves in library personnel management alone. Responses from these respondents prove that heads of academic libraries perform personnel management functions with their institution's personnel department. This result therefore confirms personnel management as one of the managerial functions of a librarian. It is important to note too that management and council of the various academic institutions also involve in personnel issues at different levels. This was not mentioned by the respondents.

Consequent upon this, varied responses were gotten on the very precise roles of heads of academic libraries in personnel management. The roles identified include: recruitment, appraisal, promotion, motivation, training, monitoring and issuing of instructions, directives, and discipline and generally to see to the effective management of staff to realize library objectives. These responses buttress answers the heads of libraries checked when the responded to the personnel management functions they engage in when asked earlier.

Table 6: Types of benefit derived from personnel management

Benefits	No of Respondents	Percentage
Adequately trained and developed staff	4	80
Improved library services	5	100
Improved library management and staff relationship	5	100
Adequate control and discipline of staff	5	100
Other benefits (please specify)	-	-

The benefits that are derived in library personnel management are adequately trained and developed staff, adequate/control and discipline of staff, improved library services and improved/library management and staff relationship. White (1985) upholds that various types of benefits evolve from library personnel management. Those he mentioned cut across some of these checked by these heads of libraries. The benefits checked by respondents in the research agree with the Nigerian Institute of Management (2006) list of advantages of personnel management and it in summary stated that getting results and managing people are inseparable. They thus concluded that every management theorist, ranging from Frederick Taylor to Peter Drucker acknowledged that personnel management is beneficial in ever/ organization.

Table 7: Challenges/problems encountered in library personnel management

Problems/challenges	No of Respondents	Percentage
Insubordination	5	100
Favouritism	4	80
Shortage of Staff	4	80
Inadequately trained staff	4	80
Budgetary insufficiency	4	80
Bureaucratic bottlenecks	5	100
Other problems (please specify)	1	20

Many challenges of library personnel management were ticked by the heads of libraries. Insubordination and bureaucratic bottlenecks were most frequently identified by all of them. Also specific mention was made about indiscipline in response to other problems as well as accommodation problems. Generally,

these are problems encountered in the course of personnel management and which also hinder it.

They are potent problems and great challenges known as obstacle to personnel management. Consequently the library is not an exception.

Table 8: Severity of problems encountered in personnel management

Problems/ challenges	Very Severe	Severe	Cannot say	Not severe	Not very severe
Insubordination	1	2	-	1	1
Favouritism	-	-	-	2	3
Shortage of Staff	-	4	-	1	-
Inadequately trained staff	-	1	-	3	1
Budgetary insufficiency	1	4	-	-	-
Bureaucratic bottlenecks	1	1	1	1	1

The problems which were identified as challenges to effective personnel management in libraries are judged by the respondents to be severe. In response precisely, 80% of the heads of libraries studied affirmed that the problems were severe while 20% was of the opinion that such problems were very severe. The interpretation therefore is that there are severe problems to the heads of academic libraries in their personnel management activities.

Conclusion

The five academic libraries investigated in this study engage in personnel management activities and functions. Some of the personnel management functions the heads of libraries undertake include recruitment, promotion, motivation, discipline, training and development as well as appraisal of their

staff. The heads of these academic libraries, a librarian in FUTO library and their institution's personnel department have the responsibility of personnel management as their schedule of duty.

The various heads of the FUTO, A.I.F.C.E, Federal Polytechnic, IMSU and Imo Poly libraries play significant roles in the personnel management activities in their libraries. Personnel management activities as the study revealed are beneficial form which adequately trained and developed staff, improved library services, improved library management and staff relationship, adequate control and discipline of staff as well as good communication have been proved as beneficial in their libraries.

Finally conclusion was also drawn from the result of this study that personnel management in academic libraries is fraught with problems. These problems are shortage of staff, inadequately trained staff, budgetary insufficiency, bureaucratic bottlenecks and indiscipline. These problems are recorded to be severe in these academic libraries and pose great threat to effective library management.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to ameliorate the identified problems of personnel management in academic libraries to achieve effectiveness.

1. Academic library managers should be more pro-active and carry out fully their responsibilities in personnel management activities in order to achieve greater success.
2. Motivation and staff welfare should be greatly prioritized and promoted. This will produce a happy work force and make personnel management easier.
3. Staff development and capacity building are key factors in personnel management. Academic library managers should always ensure that there

are regular staff development programmes for their staff as this will go a long way in achieving/promoting effective personnel management.

4. There should be increased effort to improve relationship between academic library managers and their staff. The importance of this in achieving success in personnel management cannot be over-emphasized.

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