

Information Environment and Decision-Making Effectiveness in Nigerian Academic Libraries

F.P. Abifarin

Principal Librarian

Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi.

Abstract

The article surveys the opinions of managers of Nigerian academic libraries about their information environment and its relationship to decision-making effectiveness. A sample of 42 academic library managers was subjected to a questionnaire on the subject. The result of the investigation shows that most managers appreciate the nature and characteristic of information required for decision-making. They also attribute their decision-making effectiveness to the appropriateness of the information they receive.

Introduction

Managers in enterprises make decisions in order to achieve the objectives for which their organizations were set up. Taylor III (1986) has defined decision-making as "the process of making a choice between two or more alternatives". This process, according to Simon (1965) comprises "Intelligence, Innovation and Choice". Because decision-making pervades all aspects of management, experts among them Browne (1993) and Griffin (1990) often equate decision-making with management. However, effective decision-making depends on the availability of accurate and timely information. This position was underscored by Davis (1974) when he opined as follows:

The value of information is related to decisions. If there were no choices or decisions, information would be unnecessary.

Other writers like Iselin (1990), Scholtz (1990), Al-Kawasnich (1989), Taring (1989), Dadinska (1989) and Redfern (1988) have also highlighted the importance of information in the decision-making process. It suffices, however, to state that the provision of timely information to the manager relieves him of the burden of making decisions in a vacuum with all the risks and uncertainty attached.

Since decision-making is at the core of management and information is needed to enable a manager make a choice between alternatives, it can be stated that decision-making and information are intertwined. This is a familiar refrain in business enterprises where the goal is profit maximization. In non-business environments like a library, the focus is entirely different but it has become fashionable to apply business techniques in non-business environments. This study is therefore designed to survey the opinion of managers of Nigerian academic libraries about their information environment and the relationship between that environment and decision-making effectiveness in their libraries. It is also envisaged that this study would provide an opportunity for comparing the performance of Nigerian academic library managers in relation to their information environment.

Methodology

A population frame structured according to type, ownership and geographical zone was constructed for Nigerian academic libraries consisting of university, polytechnic and college libraries. From a population of 98 academic libraries (comprising 30 university, 30 polytechnic and 38 college libraries) in the frame, a sample of 42 managers (comprising 13 University Librarians, 11 Polytechnic Librarians and 18 College