

MANAGEMENT OF PROJECTS, THESES AND DISSERTATIONS IN SIX POSTGRADUATE SCHOOLS IN UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the management practices of the postgraduate research works (projects, theses and dissertations) in six postgraduate schools in universities in Nigeria. Four research questions guided the study, e.g. what are the methods and format of acquisition and submission of PG research works?, what is the nature of processing, organising and arrangement of PG research works?, what are the methods of preservation? and what are the challenges to the management of research works in Postgraduate schools? Descriptive survey method was employed and six postgraduate schools of the Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto; Federal University of Technology, Minna; University of Ibadan; Cross River State University of Science and Technology and African University of Science and Technology, Abuja respectively. Custodians of projects, thesis and dissertation form the subject of the study. Structured/closed-ended questionnaire were used in data collection, while simple frequency counts were used in the analysis of data. Results showed that the projects, theses and dissertations were acquired through respective departmental postgraduate co-ordinators and submissions were made in both hard and softcopies. Stamping, compilation of the list, shelving and shelve arrangement and arrangement of research works by departments were the methods used in processing, organising and arranging the research works in Postgraduate schools. The completed research works in the form of Projects, thesis and dissertations submitted to Postgraduate schools were mostly preserved through shelving, air-conditioning and back-up in softcopies. Space and misplacement of copies were the two major challenges to the management of projects, thesis and dissertation in Postgraduate schools. The study recommends among others-there should be legal deposit law specifying the number of hardcopies to be submitted to/and retain by postgraduate schools, library officers and librarians should be employed to carryout stamping, accessioning, cataloguing and classification of the completed and submitted research works respectively.

KEYWORDS: Management, Research works, Projects, Theses, Dissertations, Postgraduate Diploma, Masters, Doctoral degree programmes.

Introduction

Looking at the concept and field of management, one can say that it is very wide, broad and diverse in nature. This means that regardless of any discipline one specialises, he/she needs some elements of management and that is why we have management aspect/department in every organization and discipline, thus there is hospital management, personnel management, records and archive management, university management, hotel management, etc. Every field must have some elements of management to enable it function well. This also goes with the library management. Library management has to do with the mobilization and utilization of both human and material resources towards achieving the stated library's objectives. Library management consists of collection development management as well as personnel management. The collection management is

concerned with the activities ranging from selection, acquisition, technical processing, organisation and preservation. While personnel management consist of managerial activities such as interviewing, recruitment, orientation, job performance, training as well performance appraisal.

Postgraduate research works such as projects, theses and dissertations connotes different meanings to different people. Project is the piece of research work/report submitted for the award of diploma and/or degree certificate. Thesis to some people and in some institutions of higher learning refers to piece of research report submitted for the award of doctoral degree. On the other hand, dissertation refers to research report submitted for the award of master's degree or doctoral degree or vice-versa in universities in Nigeria. Thus, projects, theses and dissertations are pieces of research reports submitted for the award of higher degrees.

However, it should be noted that the management of collection particularly the completed research works is not limited to university libraries alone but also to postgraduate schools. In postgraduate schools, completed, collected and submitted projects, theses and dissertations are usually processed and organised in anticipation for timely and continuous request by postgraduate students, researchers and/or faculty members of the universities in Nigerian. In some cases, couple with the accommodation problem, some projects, theses/dissertations can neither be located, accessed nor seen due to improper processing and organization, misplacement or missing copies. This could be attributed to lack of effective management of these vital information resources in postgraduate schools in universities in Nigeria.

The management of the completed/submitted research works will be incomplete if adequate care and maintenance is not accorded due attention. This is because paper-based materials are prone to several threats such as biological, chemical, human, physical and natural factors which calls for preservation and to a large extent the adoption of digitization as a modern trend of preserving paper-based materials in libraries and information centres (Fadeyi, 2008, Saka, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

One of the functions of universities is to engage on research activities by undergraduate and postgraduate students, researchers and faculty members. One of the units that coordinate the research activities in universities are the postgraduate schools. The outcome of research activities in universities is the production of the pieces of the research reports which are to be used for national development. These pieces of research reports in the form of projects, theses and dissertations are usually collected, assembled, organised and kept for present and future consultations to meet academic, research and information needs of users for national development in terms of educational economic, political and informational activities of a particular country (Saka, Abubakar-Bida & Majinson, 2015). Postgraduate schools are one of the agents of information resource acquisition and conservation; power house for knowledge storage, conservation and dissemination.

Unfortunately, it has been discovered that users visit to Postgraduate schools in Nigerian to consult research works encountered difficulties in accessing, locating and use of research works for their academic, information and research needs. One began to wonder the factors responsible for this phenomenon. Is it that the completed research works are not adequately managed? This study is to find out the management practices in Postgraduate schools as regards projects, theses and dissertations.

Research Questions

The study sought to find answers to the following questions:-

1. What methods and format of acquisition and submission of completed/final research works are used in six postgraduate schools in universities in Nigeria?
2. What is the nature of processing, organisation and arrangement of completed research works in six postgraduate schools in universities in Nigeria?
3. What methods are used in the preservation of completed research works in the six postgraduate schools in universities in Nigeria?

4. What are the challenges to the management of completed research works in the six postgraduate schools in universities in Nigeria?

Review of Related Empirical Studies

Adefunke and Abdul Azzez (2010) conducted a research on collection management in three academic libraries in Lagos. These academic libraries include those of the University of Lagos, Yaba College of Technology and Federal College of Education (Technical) Lagos. Questionnaire and interview schedule were the data collection instruments. Part of the results showed that purchased was the highest/popular method of acquisition, while inadequate funding was the overall weakness in the selection and acquisition process in the academic libraries in Lagos.

Osayuwa-Odigie & Eneh (2011) conducted a study to determine the preservation of non-book materials in university of Benin and Delta State university libraries. Questionnaire was used in data collection. Results showed that majority of the respondents indicated the prevalence of the deterioration of non-book materials in the two university libraries. Exposure to dust and air was the major cause of deterioration to non-book materials in the two university libraries. Periodic routine checks was mostly used preservation method in two university libraries.

Ukwueze and Madumere (2014) studied the management of Government publications in Nnamdi Azikwe Library, university of Nigeria Nsukka. Survey research design was used and 45 librarians constituted the population while questionnaire, observation check list and interview were the instruments used in data collection. The results of the study showed that government publications were acquired through acquisition tour, while the available ones include handbooks, gazettes, reports, statistics etc. Government publications were organised according to classification schemes. On the challenges in the management of government publications, inadequate funds, diversities of classification schemes and improper distribution channels were the major ones. Standardization of the organisation of government publications, provision of adequate funds and training of library personnel were among the strategies to be adopted to enhance the management of government publications in the university library.

Bitagi (2016) conducted a study to find out the availability of information resources for research in Agricultural research institutes in Nigeria. The study delve into types and adequacy of the available information resources being provided by the libraries of ARIs for research by scientists in Nigeria. Inhibiting factors to the provision of information resources for research by scientists in ARIs in Nigeria was also examined. The population of the study was 1,002 scientists out of which 200 were sampled, Questionnaire, observation and observation checklists were used to gather data and analysis was done by descriptive statistics. Results showed that print format (material) were available in the ARI libraries, though this category of information resources were out dated and grossly inadequate. Results further showed that lack of enough qualified librarians to provide, process and make available collection; lack of adequate support from federal government in terms of funding and development of research institutes libraries were among the inhibiting factors to the availability of information resources.

Saka (2013) in a review of digitization projects in university libraries in Nigeria, posits that there are some threats to paper-based materials which include biological, chemical, human, natural threats as well as poor storage facilities. These also causes danger to the physical well-being of projects, theses and dissertations. This calls for the adoption of digitisation which is also a modern trend in the preservation of paper-based materials. The digitisation projects in university libraries in Nigeria include creation of database, theses in hard and electronic copies, institutional digital repositories (IDR) digitisation of abstracts to thesis, retrospective conversion, digitisation of abstracts to theses and dissertations, establishment of institutional digital repository (IDR). In support of the reviews, the researcher adopted interview method to make GSM calls/messages to find out from the stakeholders the software being used in the digitization of projects, theses and dissertations. The response showed that D-space software was used in the digitization and IDR

projects in University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria libraries respectively. There are lot of challenges in the digitisation which include: malfunction of storage and retrieval devices such as disk and CDs, power failure, unskilled manpower, digital divide as well as digital preservation.

In Federal University of Technology Minna, postgraduate schools provide number of mandatory copies of masters and doctoral degree research works to be submitted to the Dean, Postgraduate school of the university. It was mandatory for masters degree student to submit five hardcopies while doctoral degree student to submit seven hardcopies of their completed research works respectively. The distribution should be in the following proportions: one hardcopy for university library, one hardcopy for postgraduate school, one hardcopy for the candidate and one hardcopy for the department respectively. However three hardcopies are to be given to PhD supervisors and one hardcopy for M.Tech supervisor. Extra hardcopies to be signed will attract administrative charges. A CD (softcopy) containing either masters or PhD thesis should be submitted alongside the hardcopies to postgraduate school (FUT Minna postgraduate school, 2015).

From the review of the above empirical studies conducted by Adefunke and Abdul-Azeez (2010), Osayuwa-Odigie and Eneh (2011), Saka (2013), Ukwueze and Madumere (2014) and Bitagi (2016), it is evident that gaps exist between the previous empirical studies and the present study. The empirical studies concentrate on availability and management of government documents, non-book materials as well as availability of information resources in various libraries in Nigeria. The emphasis were on inadequate funds, diversities of classification schemes as well as inadequate librarians and support from federal government were the major obstacles to the management of collection. This study focusses on method of acquisition, format of projects, theses/dissertations, processing, organisation and arrangement of projects, theses and dissertations, preservation and challenges to the management of projects, theses and dissertations in postgraduate schools in Universities in Nigeria.

Methodology

Descriptive survey method was used while six universities with their postgraduate schools were used for the study. These universities include Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto, Federal University of Technology Minna, African University of Science and Technology, Abuja, University of Ibadan and Cross River State University of Science and Technology Calabar respectively. Two of these universities are conventional while the other four are specialised universities. Four of the universities are owned by federal government, one is owned by state government while the other one is owned by private organisation. Each of the six universities represents each of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. On the other hand, the target population or subject of the study consisted of six custodians of the final submitted copies of research works in thesis/project sections of postgraduate schools in the six universities. The custodians are the respondents hence they have ideas on the management of the vital information resources. All the six respondents possess degree in various disciplines. Their wealth of experience with day-to-day acquisition, processing, assembling and maintenance of completed and submitted research works would help the respondents in providing answers to the questionnaire.

Results and Discussion

Highest Educational Qualification of Custodians

There were six (6) custodians to projects, theses and dissertations in the six postgraduate schools in universities in Nigeria. Out of this number, four custodians hold bachelor degree in disciplines other than librarianship, one possessed doctorate degree in different field, while one custodian obtained bachelor degree in librarianship respectively.

Tables 1-4 provides analysis of data obtained and these were followed by interpretation of data and discussion of results respectively.

Table 1: Acquisition, Channels and Format of Submission and Retention of the Projects, Theses/Dissertations

Channels of submission	Frequency	Format of submission	Frequency	Hardcopies submitted in respect of programme	Frequency	Copies retained by PG schools	Frequency of retained copies
Candidates	---	Hard copy only	2	PGD	4, 5, 7	1	3
Departmental PG Coordinator	4	Soft copy only	---	Masters	4, 5, 7	3	1
Candidate Supervisor	1	Both hard and soft copies	4	PhD	4, 5, 7-9	1	2
Faculty/School PG coordinator	1	---	---	---	---	---	---
Total	6	---	6	---	---	---	---

Just like the National Library of Nigeria where legal deposit is used to acquire specified number of publishers, materials from publishers, respective postgraduate schools in universities in Nigeria also specify certain number of hard copies of the completed research works to be submitted by PG students via their supervisor and/or coordinators and departments respectively.

Table 1 contain data on the acquisition and submission of the completed higher degree research works to postgraduate schools. There are three columns: one was on the channels of submission to postgraduate schools, two was on format of submission and three was on the number of hard copies submitted to postgraduate schools by programmes with corresponding frequencies. On the column for channels of submission, it was discovered that four postgraduate schools acquired final copies of projects, theses/dissertations through submission from respective Departmental postgraduate coordinators. On the format of submission, four out of the six postgraduate schools submitted the completed research works in both hard and soft copies. It should be noted that the 4, 5, 7, 7-9 hard copies submitted to PG schools were further distributed to PG students (personal copies), departments, university libraries, while Postgraduate schools retained one and three hard copies respectively in addition to the back-up soft copies. All these are made possible after the endorsement of hard copies by the respective candidates' supervisors, internal examiner, external examiner and Deans Postgraduate schools.

Table 2: Processing, Organization and Arrangement of Projects, Theses/Dissertations

Organization of research works	Frequency	Arrangement of research works	Frequency
Assigning serial numbers		Serial number	---
Stamping the submitted hard copies	6	Author's surname	---
Catalogue and classify	1	Disciplines or courses	2
Compilation of the list of research works submitted to PG schools	6	Programmes (PGD, Masters and PhD)	2
Arrangement on shelves	6	Departments	4
Arrangement in cabinet/boxes	---	Year of the completion of programme	---
----	----	Classification schemes	---

Table 2 is in two columns i.e. processing/organization and arrangement of the final submitted copies. From the data, all the six postgraduate schools processed and organised their collection through assigning accession/serial numbers in their order of arrival in postgraduate schools as well as compilation of the list of submitted copies and arrangement on shelves respectively. No wonder only one postgraduate school claim to have catalogue and classify collection probably it could be the staff with bachelor degree in librarianship who was able to carry out the professional job. From the second column, four of the postgraduate schools arrange their collection according to departments and not by classification schemes, while two postgraduate schools arranged collection by disciplines/courses as well as postgraduate programmes respectively.

Table 3: Preservation of Projects, Theses and Dissertations in postgraduate schools

Preservation Methods	Frequency
Shelving	6
Storage	---
Dusting	2
Spraying of chemicals	1
Regulation of Environmental conditions	2
Air-conditioning	6
Digitization	2
Photocopying	2
Softcopies	5
Creation of databases	2
Institutional Digital Repositories (IDR)	1

It should be noted however that management of collection does not stop at acquisition, processing and organization and infact collection management will be incomplete or meaningless if preservation aspect is not adequately taken care of in the entire library and collection management in libraries and information-related organizations. Data on the table revealed that the six postgraduate schools preserve their collection by shelving provision of air-conditioning and back-up by softcopies of the final completed research works. Spraying of chemicals and institutional digital repository (IDR) was not accorded due regarded which may be attributed to funding issue.

Table 4: Challenges to the management of projects, theses/dissertations in postgraduate school

Challenges	Frequency
Space	3
Facilities	1
Missing copies	1
Deterioration of project, theses and dissertation	1
Manpower	2
Misplacement of Projects, Theses/Dissertations	1
Staff training	1
Absence of e-library	1

From table 4 space and manpower were the two major challenges to the management of submitted research works in the postgraduate schools. Other minor challenges were those of misplacement, missing copies and deterioration of research works which showed that there was proper security measure where put in place, provision of air-conditioning and shelving respectively in postgraduate schools. However, the issue of e-library was a major concern to the university library.

Discussion of results

Research question one sought to find out the methods of acquisition; format of submission and number of copies submitted to postgraduate schools. The results showed that final completed research works were submitted to postgraduate schools via respective departmental postgraduate co-ordinators as this was accounted by the responses from the four postgraduate schools in the universities being studied. Submissions were done in both hard and softcopies, while three postgraduate schools finally retained only one hard copy. Departmental postgraduate coordinators represents the departments at the faculty/school postgraduate board meetings. These findings were contrary to the findings by Adefunke and Abdul Azzez (2010) and Ukwueze and Madumere (2014) as the former reported purchase as the major method of acquiring library collection, while the later researchers discovered that the methods of the acquisition of government publications was through gift, donation and acquisition tour and were in hard copy format.

The second research question sought find out the processing, organisation and arrangement of projects, theses and dissertations in postgraduate schools. The results showed that the six postgraduate schools assigned serial numbers, compiled the list of the submitted hardcopies and arrangement on shelves by departments. However, since five of the custodians lack background in library and information science disciplines, they only assigned serial numbers, compiled the list of submitted research works, and arrangement on shelves by departments as opposed to arranging/organising them according classification schemes. From the background information of the custodians of postgraduate research works majority of them hold degrees certificates in disciplines outside librarianship. This finding contradicts that of Ukwueze and Madumere (2014) who reported that Nnamdi Azikwe library arranged and organised government publications according to classification schemes.

The response to research question three showed that all the six postgraduate schools in the universities in Nigeria preserved projects, theses and dissertations by shelving, provision of air-conditioning, while five of the PG schools provide back-up of soft copies thus preparing for digitization and IDR projects. Although shelving is one of the routing duties in libraries while air conditioning is used to maintain the physical status of the research works in postgraduate schools. This finding is contrary to that of Osayuwa-Odigie and Eneh (2011) and Saka (2013) as the researchers reported periodic routine checks in the university libraries of Benin and Delta State respectively and the use of D-space software in the digitization of theses and dissertation in the libraries of University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Research question four investigated the challenges to the management of projects, theses and dissertations in postgraduate schools in six universities in Nigeria. The result showed that space as well as the misplacement of the completed and submitted copies of the research works were the two major challenges to the management of research works in postgraduate schools. This might be true as projects, theses/dissertations were acquired and pile-up over three decades which have created the problem of space to accommodate both old and newly-acquired projects, theses and dissertations. Furthermore, with the over-crowded nature of projects, theses and dissertation, there is likely-hood that they might be misplaced in the course of re-arranging or re-shelving. This finding is contrary to those of Adefunke and Abdul Azzez (2010), Ukwueze and Madumere (2014) and Bitagi (2016). In their findings, Adefunke and Abdul Azzez (2010) reported funding as the overall weakness to selection and acquisition of information resources in libraries. Ukwueze and Madumere (2014) discovered inadequate funds and diversities of channels while Bitagi (2016) reported lack of enough qualified librarians, funds and support by federal government as challenges to the management and availability of information resources in the libraries of the university of Nigeria Nsukka and Agricultural research institutes in Nigeria respectively.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from the study, the implication is that:-

For projects, theses and dissertations to be submitted through respective Departmental postgraduate coordinators, it signifies that the research works were not only being properly scrutinised but also well-packaged, hence the names of the departments and their postgraduate coordinators are at stake. The hard and soft copies formats being submitted were the representation of the outcome, output and pieces of researches conducted for the award of postgraduate diploma and higher degrees. With the processing, organisation and arrangement of the completed and submitted research works to the various postgraduate schools, was an indication of the measures of bibliographic control which is all about systematic identification and recording of the pieces of the research reports in various discipline.

Through effective preservation of the completed and submitted postgraduate research works was a step towards prolonging the lifespan of these vital information resources. However with the major challenges of space and misplacement of these documents within postgraduate schools, may likely cause information scarcity, information glut thereby having too many information resources but accessing them becomes a difficult task.

Recommendations

Based on the research questions and findings, the study proffer the following recommendations:-

1. There should be legal deposit law specifying the copies of completed research works to be submitted in/ retained by postgraduate schools in universities in Nigeria;
2. The postgraduate schools' board in conjunction with the management of universities in Nigeria should employ librarians or library officers to undertake all technical activities of accessioning, stamping, cataloguing and classification of projects, theses and dissertations in addition to the compilation of the list completed/submitted researches projects, theses and dissertations.
3. Postgraduate schools board in universities in Nigeria should ensure that policy on the preservation of completed/submitted research works is not only put in place but should strictly be enforced so that adequate preservation of project, theses and dissertations is ensured, and;
4. Postgraduate schools' boards in conjunction with the management of universities should not only make provision for adequate accommodation to house the submitted research works but also make provision for adequate manpower to manage the final submitted hard copies of projects, theses/dissertations in postgraduate schools in universities in Nigeria. Part of the accommodation (space) the dedicated/allocated for system unit for e-research works.

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