Research Paper Library Science

Provision of Library and Information/' Resources and Services to meet Prisoners Information Needs in South-East Nigeria

Ozioko Reuben Ejike	Ph.D, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria Nsukka.
Nwabueze Anthonia Uzoamaka	Ph.D, Department Library and Information Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
Eze Jacinta	Ph.D, Enugu State Central Library, Enugu.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to study the provision of library and information resources and services to meet prisoners' information needs in south east Nigeria. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The design of the study was a descriptive survey while the population comprised of all the prisoners in all the prisons in south east Nigeria and the welfare as well as library workers of these prisons are the population. The sample size was 722 including 708 prisoners and 14 library and welfare workers of out of a population of 6404 prisoners and library and welfare workers in the prisons under study, representing 5% of the population. Purposive random sampling technique was used to select the prisons that have libraries. A structure questionnaire titled Provision of Library and Information Resources and Services to meet Prisoners' Information Needs Questionnaire (PLIRSPINQ) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) schedule were the instruments used to generate data for the study. Descriptive method of analysis was used in answering the research questions. The data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation while the data from the Focus Group Discussion was qualitatively analyzed. Findings show that most of the prisoners were male while very few were female; there are few middle aged and very few elderly with majority of them being youths. Findings also showed that the varieties of library resources and services as well as human resources provided are grossly inadequate considering the population of the prisoners. Findings showed that a number of strategies could be used to enhance the provision of library and information resources and services to meet the prisoners' information needs. They include liaising with public libraries, NGOs, religion bodies, legal practitioners, liaising with professional bodies like the library associations, granting the prisoners more access to information and developing new and using existing guidelines to prison library services.

KEYWORDS Library Resources, Library Services, Prisoners, Information Needs.

Introduction

The importance of information in today's world cannot be over emphasized. Information is indispensable for all citizens, including disadvantages groups, for the development and advancement of all aspects of human endeavour. Information has become a primary strategic resource that is transforming the lives of many in the world today; the prisoners are not left out so they too need information for day to day living. (Anyakoha, 2005).

The concept of information as we use it in everyday English plays central role in today's society. What is information depends on the interpretation, needs and skills of the individual receiving the information. Almost every scientific today uses the concept of information within its own context and with regard to specific phenomena (Capurro and Hjorland, 2005).

Information can be send to be one or more statements or facts that are received by a human and that have some form of worth to the recipient. Information according to Taloo (2002) is any stimulus that reduces uncertainty. Uwen (1995) defined information as "data that have been subjected to some processing functions capable of answering a user's query, be it recorded, summarized or simply collected that would help decision making" The presence of information creates option, sets the stage for meaningful decision-making and alternative approaches to solving a problem are examined for final decisions. Information is man's related knowledge in all forms and from all sources, which will help users to make rational decisions. In his view also the knowledge of every subject to man centres on the availability of information.

When people require information to solve certain problems the issue of information needs arises. Laloo (2002) agreed that information need is a difficult concept to define, to isolate and especially to measure. It involves a cognitive process which may operate on different levels of consciousness and hence may not be clear even to the inquirer himself. In order to understand the concept of information need, one has first defined the term "need". But the use of terms like "want", "requirement", and "demand" etc to explain the term "need" further complicates matters. According to Ozioko (2007), it represents an imbalance or lack of adjustment between the present situation or status quo and a new or changed set of condition assumed to be more desirable, more especially, needs may be defined as the difference between what is and what ought to be, hence always implying a gap between the two conditions. In a way to match-make information and need, Dike (1993) being able to identify the purpose of any assignment or task, that is, the information is crucial to its successful completion. The central activity of any information search is delimitation of the topic, query or problem and clarification of the need for information.

Information need, as Miranda and Tarapan of (2008) put it, is a state or process started when one perceives that there is a gap between the information and knowledge available to solve a problem and the actual solution of the problem. According to the Library and Information Science Wiki in Eze (2012) information need is seen as recognition that one's knowledge is inadequate to satisfy a goal. Thus the individual needs information to satisfy or to achieve a particular objective. An individual may require information to satisfy a varie-

ty of needs ranging from educational to just recreational and even spiritual/religious needs.

Prisoners simply put are people who are incarcerated and whose movements are restricted because of the crimes they committed. The prison population in Nigeria is made up of the convicted persons and those awaiting trial (ATPs), but in the advanced countries like the United states, state and federal prisons house convicted inmates who are incarcerated for longer periods than inmates in jails and detention centres (Shirley, 2006).

In accordance with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the idea of imprisonment has shifted from punishment to education, rehabilitation, and constructive use of time. Imprisonment is no longer meant for punishment and hard labour alone: there has been focus towards its education rehabilitation and re-socialization of the prisoners to enable then to adapt back into the society to be useful to themselves and the society at large (Shirley, 2006; IFLA, 2005).

Prisoners have been seen to have the same reading interests and information needs as other people; but with a good number of them having low educational skills, they often experience difficulties in meeting their information needs. They are considered disadvantaged because they lack free access to many things in life, including libraries. (Lehmann, 1999). Ajogwu (2005) enumerated prisoners' information needs as ranging from legal needs, religious, health, educational, vocational, and recreational to financial needs. They also need to acquire further education as well as occupational and vocational skills to help them re-adapt into the society.

Among all the possible ways of providing information to the prisoners, the prison library takes the lead in providing services and materials through which the prisoners can meet their various information needs. The recognition of the place of the prison library in providing for the prisoners' information needs contributed to the development of prison libraries. Changes were fueled by the prison reform movement that advocated rehabilitation over punishment, education for re-entry to the society and the rights of the prisoners. Also, the recognition of the prisoners' right to information is contained in the United Nations (Rule 40) standard Minimal Rules for the treatment of prisoners. This has been there since 1955 and states that every institution shall have an adequately stocked library for use of all categories of prisoners and the prisoners shall be encouraged to use it. Also the charter for the Reader (1994) by UNESCO International Book Committee asserts that all including prisoners are entitled to have access to information and those libraries to provide this access should be located within the prison facility.

In the Nigerian context, prison inmates are made up of convicted persons who are sentenced to save various terms for crimes committed, as well as Awaiting Trial Persons (ATP) who are awaiting trial or court judgement. Emphasis on custodial functions of prisons coupled with rising prison population led to consideration of establishing educative and informative programmes and services to help both the ATPs and the convicted ones when eventually they are freed (Enuku, 2001). According to the Nigerian Congress of Catholic Prisons Pastoral Care (NCCPPC), (2005) report on Nigerian prisons as well as Agomoh and Ogbozor (2006), the functions/objectives of the Nigerian prison include: (a) to keep safe custody of such persons legally detained, (b) to identify the causes of their anti-social behavior during the course of their detention,(c) treat and reform them to become law abiding citizen of a free society and (d) to train them towards their rehabilitation on discharge, generate revenue for the government through prison farms and industries thereby inculcating into them the dignity of labour. This followed what Womboh (1991) lamented that although many prison facilities in Nigeria have provision for library service, their status is still very poor. It has been observed that prisoners in Nigeria do not receive the library and information services they require (Arnnesty International, 2008). If the information needs of the prisoners are not met, the rehabilitation, re-socialization, re-adaptation and overall transformation of the prisoners to become better citizens in the society will not be achieved. It is for this reason that this study is set out to determine the provision of library and information resources to meet prisoners' information needs in south-east Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the characteristics of the prisoners in south-east Nigeria.
2. Examine the library and information resources available for these prisoners
3. Examine the strategies that could be used to enhance the provision of library and information resources to meet the prisoners' information needs.

Research Questions

The study was set to provide answers to the following research question

1. What are the characteristics of prisoners in South-East Nigeria?
2. What are the library and Information's resources available for these prisoners?
3. What are the strategies that could be need to enhance the provision of library and information resources to meet the prisoners information needs

2. Methodology

The design of the study is a descriptive survey while the population comprised of all the prisoners in all the prisons in south east Nigeria and the welfare and library workers of these prisons. According to the data from the Nigerian prison service, there is a total of about prisoners in Nigeria with about 42 welfare and library workers (Nigerian prison service, 2012). The number of prisoners varies or changes all the time as people come in and go out of the prisons. The sample size was 722 including 708 prisoners and 14 welfare and library workers representing 5% of the population. Purposive sampling technique was used to select those prisons that have libraries. These included seven prisons – Nsukka, Enugu, Awka, Onitsha, Abakiliki, Owerri and Umuahia Prison. Questionnaire titled Provision of Library and Information Resources and services to meet Prisoners' Needs Questionnaire (PLIRPNQ) and focus group schedule were the major instruments used to generate data for the study. The instruments were validated through expert opinion. The instruments were administered and collected by the research with the assistance of prison workers who served as field assistants as they could freely interact with the prisoners. The field assistants were guided appropriately on what was to be required to enhance data collection. The assistants were adequately trained on the modalities of administering the questionnaire and conducting the focus group discussion by guiding them through the section to clarify the meanings of the terms and the expected data to be elicited. Descriptive method of analysis was used in answering the research questions. The data from the questionnaire was analysed using mean and standard deviation while the data from the focus group discussion was qualitatively analysed.

3. Results

The results of the study are presented and discussed in line with the specific objectives of the study.

Table 1: Characteristics of the prisoners used for the study from the selected prisons in Nigeria

Characteristics	Population of prisoners in Nigeria	Sample of prisoners	%
Gender			
Male	6221	568	80%
Female	141	140	20%
Age			

15-35yrs		15-35yrs	61%
36-55yrs		200	280%
56 and above		78	11%
Below primary		283	40%
Completed primary		105	15%
Junior secondary school		45	145%
Senior secondary school		98	145%
Higher education complete, incomplete		177	25%

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the prisoners. The table showed that the prison population is made up of more male than female gender (6221 to 141) or (97.8% to 2.2%).

It was also evident from interaction with the prisoners that most of them are youth (15-35years) with few middle aged (36-55 years) and very few elderly (56 and above), most of whom attained that age while in prison.

Table 2: The library and information resources and services available for the prisoner.

Prisons								
		Abakiliki	Awka	Enugu	Nsukka	Onisha	Owerri	Umuhia
1.	Accommodation and furniture	14x 18ft	14x 18ft	16x 20ft	10x 14ft	12x 16ft	12x 16ft	14x 18ft
	Reading room (size)							
	Reading tables	5	3	2	2	2		5
	Chairs	40	15	4	11	12		45
	Shelves	3	3	3	3	2	1	3
	Circulation desk	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2.	Human resources							
	Staff with degree in list	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Diploma in LIS	1		1				
	Welfare workers as Library workers	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
	Staff with previous library experience	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	3	2	3	3	3	3	3
3.	Library collection							
	Fiction	30	97	48	55	25	30	20
	Non-fiction	205	303	159	121	147	115	228
	Textbooks on subjects and magazines and Newspapers	52	313	6	67	2	-	25
	Legal materials	-	1	3	-	-	5	10
	Total stock	287	714	216	243	114	150	283

It in evident from the table that none of the prison libraries have adequate accommodation in terms of standard library building, reading space tables, chairs shelves and circulation desks. In all the prisons studied, the library is usually squeezed inside a small apartment in the welfares sections/building as can be seen from the table.

Two of the prison libraries have single qualified library worker each with diploma in librarianship who still works in their full capacity in other welfare work in the prison, while the rest do not have qualified workers in the library.

It is evident that the prison libraries lack library collections. They do not even have materials on certain subject areas at all. They lack both fiction-novels, story books, science fiction, non fiction, materials and textbooks grossly. The few available ones are outdated books donated by individuals or public libraries long time ago.

Table 3: Mean responses on the strategies that could be used to enhance the provision of library and information resources to meet the prisoners' information needs.

N/S	Strategies	$\overline{X}$	Remarks
1.	Connecting or liaising with public libraries NGOs and others like religious bodies and legal practitioners	3.60	Very high extent
2	Connecting or liaising with professional bodies like library association and stakeholder	3.30	High extent
3	Allowing more information flow from other sources like religious group	3.20	High extent
4	Purchasing of reading materials by the prison authorities	3.15	High extent
5	Mapping out time for the prisoners to make use of the library and resources and services	3.15	High extent
6	Allowing more access to library and information materials (even use of the internet)	3.10	High extent
7	Developing new and using existing guidelines to prison library service	2.95	High extent

The data presented in Table 3 indicated that liasing with public libraries, NGOs, others like religious bodies and legal practitioners will help enhance such provisions to a very high extent thus a mean rating of 360. Others are: liasing with profession at bodies like library associations and stakeholders with a mean of 3.30, purchasing of reading materials by the prison authorities with a mean rating of 3.15 allowing more access to library and information materials with a mean of 3.10 and developing new and using existing guidelines to prison library services with a mean of 2.95 were rated to a high extent.

The prisoners in an interview agreed with the workers on those strategies; in addition, they suggested the need for prisoners' reformation by avoiding censorship, possibly allowing inmates to access internet and make use of newspapers and magazines.

3.1 Discussion

Findings from documentary analysis and observation's from the prisons showed that most of the prisoners were male, while very few were female. The prison population is made up of more males (6221) than females (141) giving a picture of all the Nigerian prisons, the Nigerian prison report of 2009 indicated 2.22% female to 97.78% male; that is 40997 males and 789 females. This report also showed that in south east zone, there were 6152 males and 136 females representing 9784% and 2.16% respectively. From the data gathered in the study, there is slight increase in the number of these prisoners, but the overall proportion remains the same. Ikuteyijo and Agunbiade (2008) and Etuk in Nigerian Congress of Catholic Prisons Pastoral Care (NCCPPC) (2005) also reported that there are far more male than female prisoners in Nigeria Three Prison (Abakaliki, Awka and Nsukka out of the seven studied do not have female prisoners. This may be because male folk especially the youth are more prone to falling into

crime and social vices than the female. This also conforms to international setting as noted by Shirley (2006) in her study of adult prisoners in the United State which revealed that in most cases, male prisoners outnumber female prisoners. The findings also revealed that youth dominate the prisoners' population with few middle aged and very few elderly. This agrees with what Amnesty International (2008) reported that majority of the Nigerian prison inmates are youth within the age of 15-35years. It was also revealed that most of the prisoners are people with low educational level although a good number of them have higher education or dropped out of higher education. This is in line with what Womboh (1991) earlier on indicated that most Nigerian prison inmates are people with poor educational background. These demographic characteristics locked at could possibly affect the kinds of information the prisoners may need. The information needs of male and female prisoners can differ just as the information needs of older adults may differ from those of younger ones.

Findings from observation showed that the prisons and their libraries have some resources though small. The libraries in these prisons do not have separate buildings allotted to them; rather they are squeezed under the welfare department. Although these prisons have book shelves they are not enough and all the shelves were small in size and old fashioned. None of the libraries had a conducive reading room in terms of ventilation, quiet and neatness. Singer (2000) and CILIP (2005) said that the library should provide a haven far inmates; this calls for a conducive library accommodation. All these prisons also have a number of library collections in different areas and of different types-fictions, non-fictions and periodicals like newspapers, and magazines but they are grossly inadequate. It is evident that these libraries do not have adequate information resources to provide for the prisoners' information needs. Bucker (2007) asserted that the size of the collection is to reflect the size of the inmate population before they can meet up with the users' information needs. The library standards according to him state that a prison library book collection should be made up of no less than 5000 titles or have fifteen titles per inmate; up to 2500; whichever is greater to be able to provide adequately for the prisoners information needs. Two of the prison libraries have single library worker each with diploma in librarianship who still work in their full capacity while the rest have but not qualified workers in the libraries. These libraries lack adequate number of qualified library workers such that in some of the prisons the libraries are manned by welfare workers who knew little or nothing in librarianship. Adequate library staff both in number and qualification ensure efficient service delivery for the prisoners to meet up with their information needs. The American library Association library standard s for correctional Institution (2008) clearly noted that the library staff should be made up of a library director, technicians and clerks. The necessity of prison library staff qualifications and staffing levels was also recognized by IFLA (1995) Guideline for library services to prisoners and British guideline for prison libraries.

In view of the inadequacies revealed from the study, there are certain strategies that could be used to enhance the provision of library and information resources and services to meet the prisoners' needs. Results of the study showed that connecting or liasing with public libraries NGOs and other like religious bodies and legal practitioners will help to a very high extent in the provision of library and information resources and services to meet the prisoners' information needs. Wiki (2008), Albertson (2001) and Greenway (2007) sighted instances of how prison libraries get services and resource from public libraries to serve the prisoners. The findings further showed that liasing with professional bodies like library associations and stakeholders allowing more information flow from other sources also help to a high extent in providing for the information needs of prison. This is in line with Omagbemi and Odumewu (2008) who asserted that the library association can engage in readership promotion campaigns in prisons and in providing for the training for the training of prison library personnel.

Purchasing of reading resources by the prison authorities, mapping out time for the prisoners to make use of the library and information resources and allowing more access to library materials all could enhance meeting the information needs of prisoners. On the need to increase access to library and information resources the prisoners themselves lamented on high level of restriction to such access and demanded for improved access to information resources and services. Such accessibility should include installation and use of the internet, provision and use of videos and other electronic information resources. In addition there should be reduction of censorship by the prison authorities for them to have access to a variety of information materials. IFLA (2005) and Shirley (2006) agreed to the need for prison librarians to answer to internet information requested by the prisoners using current information technology.

The findings of the study further showed that developing new and using existing guidelines to prison library service will enhance to a high extent the provision of library and information resources to meet the prisoners' information needs. The IFLA guidelines for instance were developed based on the assumption that all citizens including prisoners are entitled to have access to information. (May rink da Costa, 2003; Lebanon, 2000). The prison library, they said has the main responsibility of providing this information. American Library Association (ALA) also developed the library standards for Adult Correctional Institution (1992) which included both qualitative output measures and quantitative standards in the provision of library and information resources and services for the prisoners. Shirley (2006) maintained that although prison library services vary from place to place, prison libraries should operate services based on acceptable services as contained in the standards. She stressed that prison libraries guidelines and standards are the benchmark for establishing and maintaining prison library services to patrons to ensure that they meet up their information needs.

3.2 Conclusions

Prisoners have a number of information needs, just like the free people including educational, spiritual, health, vocational, legal and financial information needs, meeting these needs will go a long way in fostering the reformation, rehabilitation and restoration of Nigerian prisoners.

However, the Nigerian prison service has not been providing adequate library and information resources to meet the prisoners information needs. It has been NGOs religious groups and concerned individuals who have been trying to provide for these prisoners' information needs, rather than the prison authority which has the primary responsibility. The Nigerian prison service should play a key role in working towards achieving the modern objective of rehabilitation, re-socialization, and reformation of the prisoners through provision of library resources and services.

It was discovered that the prison libraries, though they have some structures and resources on ground, do not have adequate resources and services to provide for these prisoners' information needs while most of the prisoners are ready to make use of these resources when they are provided. It was found that certain factors like poor funding, coupled with strict prison policies militate against the provision of library and information resources and services to meet the prisoners' information needs.

However liaising with NGOs, other libraries like public libraries, improving of funding of prison libraries amongst other things will help enhance the provision of library and information resources and services to meet the prisoners' information needs.

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