



Re-engineering the National Library of Nigeria for Optimal Delivery in the Contemporary ICT Era

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Abstract

It has always been the concern of the National Library of Nigeria (NLN) to provide improved service delivery to the nation. These efforts are often thwarted by many factors, especially lack of fund and leadership zeal. But the last two years has seen the National Library of Nigeria making concerted efforts in devising ways of improving its services to the nation despite the dwindling funding. This paper examines the re-engineering efforts that are taking place in the National Library of Nigeria and how such changes have helped to improve service delivery. The paper also highlights some strategies for successful re-engineering of libraries to include: result-oriented leadership, organizational restructuring, ICT Infrastructure, capacity building, etc. Two major challenges to re-engineering in NLN were identified as employees Attitude to Change and insufficient fund.

Keywords: *National Library of Nigeria, ICT Infrastructure, organizational restructuring*

1.1 Introduction

The major goal of every library is to provide valuable services that satisfy the needs of the user community even with reduced resources and more staff empowerment. The business environment is dynamic therefore organizations including the library must reengineer to adapt to this changes. Failure to do this means you will be left behind and inconsequential in the environment you operate in. Change is inevitable and many organizations including libraries have realised this and are therefore challenged to create programs, services, collections, and adaptive technologies tailored to satisfying the needs of the user community.

The underlying message from the

proponents of re-engineering in the 1990s who are Hammer and Champy (1993) is simply using new technologies to if not radically redesign business processes and in this case the library services in other to achieve optimal delivery.

According to Graves and Martin (1997) re-engineering is reinventing the way one does business, by stepping back and examining values, goals and the system processes used to meet these goals. At the centre of this reinvention is meeting the customer needs and expectations. The motivation for improving service delivery can be manifold – whether in response to demands from citizens and for higher quality or greater accessibility, or due to an internal search for more cost-effective ways of functioning as an

organization. The National Library of Nigeria very much aware of this has for years been struggling to device means of providing improved services to its numerous users and the society.

National Library of Nigeria has continued to evolve more so in the last two years to enhance user experience. Although the funding that it receives has dwindled noticeably in recent times, the NLN has been able to make the most of it. There are noticeable changes in the National Library of Nigeria which has positioned it for a better service delivery. Several factors have really shown that the NLN is subtly if not radically reinventing itself. The conclusion of several authors is that reengineering in organizations is more relevant today than ever before.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

2.1 Leadership for Successful Reengineering

The driving force for any successful reengineering is the leadership. The strong desire and determination of the NLN leadership in encouraging the reinvention of the apex library is anchored in the reality of its mission and vision.

Libraries are being transformed by the willingness, ability and the creativity of their leaders. Successful reengineering in the library, requires visionary leadership, a leader capable of transforming not just a physical environment, but also the beliefs and practices of the workers who provide services in that environment. The central function of leadership is to achieve a collective purpose and leadership has been observed to be the essential precursor and a critical factor in the success of major change initiatives (Baldrige National Quality Program, 2003). Also, the exercise of leadership has been associated with increased job satisfaction, productivity, and organizational commitment among workers (Fox et al., 1999;McNeese-Smith,

1995).

The National Library of Nigeria (NLN) was in dire need of serious revamping before the present leadership came on board. The organization was gradually sinking on its knees in irrelevance and mediocrity in service delivery. Any lily livered leader would have been daunted on given the role of leadership. However, there have been positive leadership responses to the pressures facing the National Library of Nigeria. According to the present (Aina, 2016) the call to serve brought a renewed sense of challenge and professional development. Itemizing his vision for the organization, he stated his desire to position the NLN for optimum service delivery, decrease the paperwork to the barest minimum and the exploitation of IT in library services. Visionary leadership is a means of creating and shaping the future of libraries and librarianship (Mech and McGabe, 1998)

Sweeny (1994) posited that the reengineering leader must be flexible, energetic, wise, empathetic, creative, courageous, principled, and gregarious, determined and possess a sense of humour. The present National Library leadership under Professor LenrieAina has clearly demonstrated the qualities and vibrancy of a visionary leader highlighted above. A leadership that invites staff to engage in creative responses to a strategic vision that promotes increased organizational success, despite existing institutional values or cultures as well as financial limitations. Prof. Aina's clarion call is that the NLN must show in all ramifications that it is the apex library, therefore its core mandate must be pursued vigorously even with the limited funds available. A demonstrable instance is spreading the readership promotion campaign to all the states of the federation and also to expectant mothers which has never happened before. The last two years have witnessed significant changes and developments in the National library of Nigeria. Reengineering

efforts are visible in these areas like the organizational structure, Information and Communication Technology infrastructure and human resources development.

2.3 Organizational Restructuring

Achieving optimal service delivery in National Library Nigeria requires fundamental changes throughout the entire system in the ways work is designed and the personnel are deployed. Tetrevova (n.d) posited that an aspect of corporate reengineering is the alignment of the physical infrastructure of the organization and the redesigning of the work architecture or processes of the organisation. A committee was set up in NLN to examine the current processes and evaluate user experiences to improve services.

One of the first bold steps in trying the reengineer the National Library of Nigeria for optimal services taken was the restructuring of the system, to flatten the organization with wider roles and responsibilities for each member of staff and to enhance productivity. The ongoing development and improvement of library services in the National Library of Nigeria is reliant on the development of a clear library management plan and reorganization of staff resources to match. For work flexibility enlargement and effectiveness, some professional services were merged while some other departments were created. Also, staff restructuring was carried out. Staff competencies and expertise were considered in deploying them to departments.

The National Library of Nigeria's new structure is developed around a customer driven strategy. Restructuring and decentralization of the departments have produced more efficiency in the system and higher productivity in achieving the organizational objective. For instance, decentralizing the former Collection Development and Processing Department (CDPD) and former National Bibliographic

and Control Department (NBCD) to create Legal Deposit Department (LDD), International Standards and Programmes Department (ISPD) and Collection Development and Technical Services Department (CD&TSD) have made the functions of the new departments more focused and their services closer to the customers.

To ensure the services of the National Library of Nigeria are brought closer to the users, more branch offices are been created. Two branch offices have been commissioned in the last two years in Jigawa and Bornu. The older braches have been receiving the much needed attention in architectural facelift, engaging activities and provision of a conducive atmosphere for both the users and staff.

2.4 Provision of ICT Infrastructure

IT infrastructure is comprised of physical assets, intellectual assets, shared services and their linkages. National Libraries all over the world are deploying new technologies in their operations. Technologies have pushed the provision of library services to newer boundaries which have resulted in new services. The power of ICT has brought dramatic changes in service delivery. The growth, integration and sophistication of ICT and the changing service delivery has enabled responsive libraries to work and to restructure their operations to align them to these new technologies.

Investment in information technology can have dramatic impact on both the internal and external operations of the National Library of Nigeria. Realizing the importance of ICT in achieving the organization's mandate; the present leadership is working strenuously to improve the ICT infrastructure in the organization. There is an on-going groundwork to automate the entire National Library of Nigeria processes. So far, some levels of success have been achieved. There is

an appreciable improvement in these ICT systems; hardware, software, power systems and general technical and matching professional competencies and managerial skills. These ICT Infrastructures include the following:

- i) **Improved Internet Access:** Realizing that the internet is a crucial resource for improving the National Library of Nigeria services the Chief Executive Officer quickly reactivated the Internet connection which was deactivated for over three years. Its bandwidth was increased from 2GB to 7GB and as such the Internet faster and accommodates more users. The Wi-Fi technology have also been adopted for a faster and cheaper network connection which allows for a flexible, dynamic and free network without cables. Installing additional wireless access points has also helped to increase the Internet coverage. Functional Internet access has greatly enhanced the service delivery.
- ii) **Acquisition of ICT equipment and Repairs:** Computers and other ICT tools have been acquired and distributed department wide. Computers and other ICT equipment in eleven E-libraries in the state branches have been repaired and networked. This has helped to enhance service delivery. An automation software have been acquired to automate some of the core functions of the NLN like the Cataloguing and Classification, while staff are working to develop an in-house software for the Indexing& Abstracting functions, the online subscription of ISBN/ISSN and also a database for Legal deposit materials. Sooner than later the OPAC will be re-launched and running. This underpinning efforts no doubt is positioning NLN for optimal service delivery.

iii) **Social Media:** The social media is exploited vigorously to boost both internal and external communication. Three different Social Media platforms are maintained; Twitter, Instagram, Facebook are currently maintained in the organization to reach our external customers and to publicize the organizations' programmes and services, while the Whatsapp platform facilitate internal communication of staff in the organization. On this platform, vital information are passed between the staff, management and the Chief Executive Officer.

iv) **Website:** The NLN has a dynamic and vibrant website.

3.1 Capacity Building

Competent staff is essential to service excellence in any organization, and the National library of Nigeria is no exception. Education and re-education of staff is key to any successful reengineering. A UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (2009) argued that governments must manage their public services through human resources management regimes that can best attract a fair share of the best talent, motivate personnel, encourage learning new and effective ways of service delivery and sustain continuous capacity development to keep pace with demands for better, faster and more equitable service delivery.

The National Library of Nigeria is focusing on the workforce empowerment through in house training and continuous professional development via conferences, workshops and higher degrees in other to keep their learning process active. This, in no doubt, has boosted the staff confidence and also have intended impact on service delivery. Open door policy is adopted by the CEO of the National Library of Nigeria in order to engage

a multiple consultation with the staff to sell the vision for improved quality delivery.

3.2 Challenges to Reengineering in NLN

The following have been observed as factors militating against reengineering the National Library of Nigeria

- a) *Employees Attitude to Change:* Employees are the major players of any form of organizational change and therefore resistance by employees is one of the biggest problems to deal with. People by nature do not easily accept and adapt to change. It is generally believed that employee resistance is one of the leading causes for the failure of change initiatives. This is one of the biggest challenges faced in the National Library of Nigeria reengineering efforts. Constant communication between the leadership, management and staff has helped to stop misconceptions.
- b) *Insufficient Fund:* Funding plays a major factor in the success of any organizational project. Dwindling or budget cut seems to have become a serious virus to most government organizations. The budgetary allocation of National Library Nigeria instead of improving has continued to nose dive. Well-meaning vision is useless without the necessary resources to push it through.

Conclusion

Concerted efforts are being made for the National Library of Nigeria to maintain its position as the apex library of the nation. It is therefore pertinent for all staff stakeholders to understand that the NLN is in competition for relevance and therefore the future of the organization is at risk and that the onus lies on all staff to deliver optimally the services demanded by its users. We believe the organization is on the right track for the much needed reinvigoration. The organization must

continue to make the most of whatever funds that gets to her in delivering optimum services. Successful reengineering is not limited to those at the top, staff at all levels must be involved to facilitate the change. Spreading that vision of reengineering requires great faith in the vision, great courage and persistence.

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