Full Length Research Paper

Information needs and study behaviour of non-traditional students with particular reference to university libraries in Kenya

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The purpose of the study was to investigate the information needs and study behaviour of non-traditional university students, university libraries' role in information provision, how it impacts on the academic development of the students, challenges they face and make recommendations on how the university libraries can improve the situation. The non-traditional students face many challenges that include lack of adequate time to study, communication breakdowns, inadequate information resources, lack of support from their employers or sponsors, family commitments and shortage of trained library personnel. Meeting the needs of non-traditional students by the university libraries is essential to the social role of the library. These can only be achieved if university libraries adequately revamp and organize library and information services in recognition of their growing user needs, which include access of information in the comfort of their locations; whenever and wherever they are. Data was collected from the existing sources which included both print and electronic media as well as utilizing the author's professional experience. The study recommended that proper planning for non-traditional students need to be done with the urgency it deserves in line with their growing demand for library and information services across universities. The planning should be done in a way that the traditional students should not have undue advantage over the non-traditional ones.

Key words: Information needs, behaviour, non-traditional students, university libraries.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

In Kenya, a traditional university student is usually between the ages of 18 to 24 years, attends school full time, often single, and does not work full time. In contrast to this, a non-traditional student is over the age of 24 years, usually attends school less than full time, often has a family, and work full time. Cross (1980:3) defined non-traditional student as "an adult who returns to school full or part time while maintaining responsibilities such as employment, family and other responsibilities of adult life. These students also may be referred to as adult students, re-entry students, returning students and adult learners." The major difference between the two student groups is the number of responsibilities outside the classroom (Luzius and Webb, 2005).

Historical background and development of non-traditional students

Non-traditional setting of education system is not a recent phenomenon. Adults have learned outside formal settings for many years; in apprenticeships, on job training, self-

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study and other forms where individuals studied primarily on their own initiatives. In 1878 some "Literary and Scientific Program" was initiated in New York (Knowles, 1975) to provide a four year program of home reading in history and literature carried on in connection with local reading circles. This eventually led to the sponsoring of correspondence courses. From that experience, several generations of correspondence courses and other non-traditional efforts were launched in the world, starting with the United States.

In the 1960s, the Britain Prime Minister Harold Wilson ordered the country's educational officials to determine how education could be opened more widely to adults. In their study of various efforts around the world, the educational leaders focused on the University of Wisconsin's Articulated Instruction Media (AIM) project which linked various teaching techniques with correspondence study. The outcome was the decision to establish a full autonomous Open University to incorporate correspondence education (Moore, 1993). The British Open University system was to be emulated in various other countries, including Canada, Hong Kong, Costa Rica, Israel, Japan, Spain, Pakistan, the United States and Germany. From 1870 to 1970, most of the systems were proprietary and the field was known as correspondence study or 'home study' or 'external studies' (Keegan, 1996) leading to the development of distance education as another form of educational system.

Africa has not been left behind when it comes to the provision of alternatives to traditional higher education. University of South Africa has had to accommodate a large population of students' body in its largest program of its kind in the world. For example, the distance learning University of South Africa has trained more than 80,000 adult basic education practitioners since mid 1980s (MacGregory, 2008).

Status of non-traditional students in Kenya

In Kenya, the number of non-traditional students has been on the increase since the 1990s. With employers raising the academic requirements for job qualifications, many employees have found it necessary to go back to institutions of higher learning to further their studies. They therefore study part-time through distance learning, evening or the school focused programmes. The promulgation of the new constitution in Kenya has added to the need for individuals to further their studies as academic qualifications for certain jobs have been set high. The information needs of these groups of non-traditional students cannot be easily met by the Kenya public university libraries and this has affected their study behaviour. For an individual to use an information resource, several factors must be in place such as knowledge of the existence of the information resource

and access to relevant information resource (Adika, 2003). Most Kenyan university libraries are not fully equipped with the relevant information sources. Hence non-traditional students have to compete with the traditional students for the available limited information sources. This has an adverse effect on the study behaviour of non-traditional students.

Until recently, university education in Kenya revolved around regular degree programs where students who met the cut-off points in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education as determined by the Joint Admissions Board were admitted into public universities. Those who met the minimum university requirements, but fell short of the cut-off points and have financial resources usually joined private universities. It is this category that forms the traditional students in Kenyan universities. The students in this category are usually young, study full time and follow the traditional pattern and regimes of higher education that is built around lectures, discussions and tutorials based on conventional teaching timetable and learning methods. University libraries and other structures have always been based on this model. In other words, services, refectories, libraries, administration and academic life were largely designed to support this traditional form of higher education.

Distance learning was the first nontraditional system of learning to be introduced in Kenya through an Act of Parliament in 1966. However, even though introduced in the early days of Kenya's independence, progress remained slow until in the 1990s when the now popular parallel and part time degree programs also referred to as nontraditional student programs were introduced in public universities. According to the Kenya Economic Survey (2009), 100,649 students were enrolled in public universities in the 2009/10 academic year. Out of these, 34.2% were non-traditional students. At the University of Nairobi, there are 19,934 part-time students compared to 17,054 full-timers (Aduda, 2009), while Kenyatta University had a population of 9,542 part time students. Non-traditional modes of learning need to be supported with nontraditional learning services, such as library services. It is essential to determine the quality of the library services and its contribution to the mission and objectives of the parent organization, taking into account the various user groups and their needs (Nicholas, 1998). The Kenya Commission for Higher Education (CHE) (2007) recommends that a university should provide adequate resources to support distance and open learners who are part of the non-traditional category. One of the challenges of non-traditional students is that until very recently most library collections as well as services were designed for on-campus programs and therefore were not well suited for the needs of non-traditional students. The very characteristics of distant locations of students demand for fresh ways to deliver services, based on constantly evolving technologies, new academic programs, increasing enrolments and learner

needs. In some cases traditional on-campus library services themselves cannot be stretched to meet the library needs of distance students and faculty who face unique challenges in library access and information delivery and therefore host institutions' libraries have the primary responsibility for identifying, developing, co-coordinating, providing and assessing the value and effectiveness of resources and services, designed to meet both the standard and the unique information and skills development needs of the distance learning community (Kavulya, 2004).

Librarians are duty bound to assess the existing library support services for non-traditional modes of learning; its availability, appropriateness, and effectiveness using qualitative, quantitative, outcomes measurement devices as well user profile needs. Revision of existing information collection development and acquisition policies to reflect the profile of needs of non-traditional students is yet another essential area of concern. Marketing and promotion of library support services to the non-traditional community of students also require to be put in place. According to Elisha (2010), marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirement profitably. Identifying means of establishing who the clients and potential clients are and what needs they have and which the service can satisfy them, while examining and monitoring trends to keep up to date with the user's needs, working methods and environment, thus putting client and their needs at the centre of all aspect of the library business. Regular survey of non-traditional students' library usage is important to monitor and evaluate the appropriateness of their use of services and the degree to which needs are identified and met. If university libraries endeavor to accomplish the above issues, they will be moving towards provision of a facilitating environment in support of teaching and learning, and acquisition of lifelong learning skills to all who join universities including the non-traditional students.

University libraries in Kenya have not achieved much in carrying out user studies on non-traditional students to establish their characteristics, information seeking behaviour, what information sources and formats they prefer and what challenges they encounter when seeking information. This has led to the libraries' information resources and services being not in harmony with information needs and seeking behaviour of these type of students. Non-traditional students therefore do not easily access library resources which are vital in their education just as it is to their counterparts studying through the regular modes of studies in the universities (UoN, 2010). They are getting a raw deal in accessing the expected support from these libraries. Lack of this support from libraries have a negative impact on this category of students' grades and subsequent academic qualifi-cations. A sense of hopelessness, being isolated and not catered for by these libraries is likely to make non-traditional students feel disadvantaged compared to their counterparts who study in the regular schedules of the university learning calendars. This study serves to benchmark the prevailing situation within university libraries and suggest achievable systems to cater and provide services to all in the universities regardless of their modes of learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In a study of non-traditional students' adjustment to college, Chartrand (1999) found institutional commitment and the absence of psychological distress as important predictors of intentions to continue in college. Donahue and Wong (1997) stated that it is necessary to develop a greater understanding of the non-traditional students unique goals and needs in an educational system that was originally established to facilitate the growth, training, and education of young adults, while in a study of non-traditional students' perceptions of their library research skills, Leverence (1997) found out that non-traditional students have some anxiety and deficiencies in using the computerized academic library. His findings were validated by Hammond (1994) who found similar results in a study of non-traditional students and the library. Hammond noted that differences were identified in areas relating to technology, perceived value of information literacy, library skills, willingness to pay for services, and use of the library as a study space.

Garcha and Gatten (1990) proposed that formal library instruction designed for non-traditional students needs to account for an individual's lack of academic routine, lack of full-time commitment to academic objectives, and lack of experience in interacting with library staff and library research tools, while Lintner (1997) stated that the homogenous campus of nineteen-to-twenty-four year-olds is slowly becoming a thing of the past. A new group of educational contenders has arrived, poised to influence, impact, and reconfigure the way we look at higher education. College libraries must therefore be prepared to serve the non-traditional student population along with the traditional students. Heery and Morgan (1996:10) suggested that "librarians interested in developing services to non-traditional students must be able to work with others and be committed to learning from others." Wyman (1988) adds to this by stating that getting involved with networks for the non-traditional student is valuable because they offer opportunities for reaching students through orientations, meetings, and informal gatherings.

Library user' needs

Making clients and the satisfaction of their needs the

focus for structuring and the delivery of information services and the application of resources should be key to any library. The information non –traditional student audiences' in universities should be better educated and more informed to make choices that satisfies their needs and demands. They need an information environment that provides multiple information products and services (Elisha, 2010). The concept of quality services can be described as a contract between a library and its customers, based on agreed upon standards of service and delivery. In a university library, the information audience is the ultimate judge of the quality of information products and services offered. The information audience weighs the value of the product and service offered by the library against the time spent and effort involved besides the monetary burden in getting the desired service, and thus, determines the quality. Ideally, the information audience defines the quality of information products and services in terms of stock size, annual budget, physical facilities, staff and type of services. Provision of quality services in part depends on how well various elements function together in a service system. In a university library environment these elements include the library staff who perform the specific service in the service chain, equipment that support these performances and physical environment in which the service provides (Elisha, 2010).

Information needs and study behaviour in university libraries

Information is knowledge and power acquired through experience or study. Information needs and study behaviours are therefore ever present since their users cannot ask for things which they are not aware of or have not experienced. Information is needed because it affects peoples' lives. People need information to obtain answers to specific questions (Nicholas, 2000). Users' information needs arise when a person recognizes a gap in his/her state of knowledge and wishes to resolve that anomaly (an anomalous state of knowledge). Therefore information represents an ordered reality about the nature of the world people live in. It is a cognitive experience that represents gaps in current knowledge of information users and information inherently subjective in the mind of a seeker. A need is a psychological construct, closely related to other constructs such as motivations, beliefs and values. Needs cannot be observable by a researcher or librarian much less by an automated "intelligent agent". Only indicators or signs of needs are observable. Non-traditional students essentially need information for the following five broad functions.

i) Fact finding function, which provides answer to specific questions.

ii) Current awareness functions, which keeps information up to date
iii) Research function, which investigates a new field in-depth
iv) Briefing function, which obtains a background understanding of issues
v) Stimulus functions, which provides ideas to obtain stimulus (Nicholas, 2000).

For accessibility purposes, the information should exist in an accessible format; it should be reliable and relevant in meeting the individual's needs. Therefore, for libraries to play key roles in information dissemination, librarians must develop comprehensive and effective formal information management strategies and procedures of their own. There is also need for information to be effectively managed be accessible by those who need it whenever and wherever they require it. The concept of information needs compels Librarians to recognize the critical importance of equality of access to information (Unwin, 2009).

There has been an increased use of the term "knowledge" rather than "information" due to greater emphasis that has been placed on knowledge sharing. This has been closely allied with the deliberate focus of many involved in knowledge sharing activities on the importance of ' knowledge' as a global common good, in contrast to those who tend to see "information" as a commodity to be bought and sold. However, the ways that 'information' and knowledge are managed at both global and institutional levels have profound importance, and new information communication technologies (ICTs) have played a very significant part in changing how non-traditional students think and perceive of these concepts. Globally, the advent of the World Wide Web (WWW) as a publicly available service on the internet in 1990's created the opportunity for a fundamental shift in the way in which students' accessed information and shared the knowledge that they created. In essence, the web permits non-traditional students to access and contribute to the information stored on computers across the world. The increased use of mobile phones and other smaller devices now also enables access without even the use of a computer. The web is thus a very powerful tool in potentially democratizing and opening up the use of information. However, this is only possible if three conditions are met: non-traditional students have access to devices that enable them to use the web; information relevant to their needs is actually uploaded onto servers with access to the internet; and search engines to enable them find relevant information.

The value of an academic library information system need to be seen in terms of the uses that are made of the information and the subsequent impact of the information on students' activities. Information needs influence the student behavior pattern in seeking and exchanging information and are dependent on ease of identification,

location and access. Information needs, use and study behaviour are quite related to an individual's learning purposes for immediate and future use. Kakai et al. (2004) revealed that non-traditional students seek information mainly to do assignments, write term papers, prepare for exams, and carry out researches. It is possible that even the best system is not used to its full potential especially if there is lack of awareness of the system and invalid perception of the same. This is the situation which the non-traditional students may find themselves in, if they don't participate in the orientation and user education programmes organized by the university library administration.

Motivation for obtaining information, an aspect which triggers information needs and subsequent information-seeking patterns in university education, are of great interest in this study. Most of the times, students' information seeking behaviour involves active or purposeful information seeking as a result of the need to complete assignment, prepare for class discussions, seminars, or write final year research papers (Wilson, 2005). Requirement to prepare and write theses and proposals equally generate the need for information and many non- traditional students reach out to the libraries as a place they rely on and trust to access quality information. Making notes to prepare for supplement lectures also creates the need for searching information among the university non- traditional students regardless of their learning modes (Brophy, 2000).

Preparation for examinations and other forms of academic assessment tests at the universities are yet other activities which generate the need for information for instructing, training or informing others are other and solve day-to-day practical problems. Information sources needed to satisfy needs vary according to the nature of needs. For instance, journals are more effective in providing some kind of up-to-date information. All the studies emphasized that information is not sought for its own sake, but is sought to satisfy a particular need especially in learning related areas or development related concerns.

Librarians tend to focus on disseminating information that they think their non –traditional students need. There is need for them to understand who their students are and what they want. To provide adequate service, librarians need to know-how the nature of programs, location, learning characteristics and expectations of all potential users. This can be done by assessing the needs of the non-traditional learning community for both electronic and traditional library resources, the existing library support, and surveying regularly non-traditional library users and monitoring and evaluating both the appropriateness of their use of services and resources and the degree to which their unique and diverse needs are identified and met. The non-traditional students information user needs assessment will go a long way to assist the institutional efforts in identification, prioritization

and satisfaction of those needs.

LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES FOR NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Information seeking is a basic activity indulged in by all people and manifested through a particular behaviour. It is also an aspect of scholarly work of most interest to academic librarians who strive to develop collections services, and organizational structures that facilitate information seeking. Ssendikadiwa (1996) observed that although the Makerere University catalogue was the most essential library tool in accessing collections, it was the most avoided and least consulted by undergraduate non-traditional students. Considering the rapid changes in information provision in the 21st century with computerized access, digitized information formats, and the plethora of resources on the internet, information needs, and the access and retrieval capabilities of users particularly of those studying in universities through non-traditional modes of learning is a worthy subject for study.

Bolton et al. (1998) undertook extensive research into the experiences of non-traditional postgraduates with library services in the United Kingdom (UK) and found their frustrations caused by lack of proper communication and planning and concluded that the key to providing effective support to non-traditional learners undoubtedly lies in forward planning involving all stakeholders. Too often, a part-time learning course is launched with the unwritten expectations that students will be able to find their own library support (Brophy, 2000). There is considerable experience of some institutions in Britain such as Sheffield Hallan University, which can offer a good example of supporting non –traditional students, including provision of special libraries. Branch (2003) carried out a study on information seeking behaviour of non-traditional undergraduate students at New York State University in Albany. The aim was to survey their use of information sources and impact of information literacy instruction on the usage of information sources. Participants reported that the most information sources for home, work and study were internet, friends, co-workers, family and professionals. He also found out that non-traditional students could not meet their information needs through the above channels, then they would turn to other sources of information such as newspapers, magazines, television, reports, databases, and libraries. Based on these findings, Branch (2003) concluded that all non-traditional students needed skills to help them be efficient and effective in using the information resources.

Koss (1996), a Kent State University researcher, studied the information needs and research skills of non-traditional Master of Business Administration (MBA) students in the first summer session of 1996 in order to find out the types of information resources used when researching business topics for class assignments,

research and individual projects. The results of the study showed that despite numerous resources available to the MBA students, they primarily used current periodicals and ABI/Inform. The most prominent finding was related to the fact that the MBA students took their professors' advice regarding access to business research tools. However, few students were aware of the wide variety of research tools, such as Compaq Disclosure, Lexis/Nexis, and information resources which were provided in the library. As a result they were not able to recommend them to the students. Based on the findings of the study, Koss made two important recommendations. First, librarians should promote non-traditional MBA students' information searching and seeking behaviour skills through library instruction class so that they would be able to better utilize library resources and secondly, they should work with professors in creating and giving instructional sessions.

Chikonzo and Aina (2001) conducted a study to determine the information needs and information sources that were used by non-traditional veterinary students at University of Zimbabwe. The findings revealed that writing assignments and studying for tests or examinations were the primary tasks for which they required information. In descending order, the major sources used to meet these information needs were books, videos, lecture notes, the internet, CD-ROM databases and journals. One unexpected finding was that the students made little use of indices, abstracts and dissertations. The authors suggested that the library needs to employ a more proactive approach in teaching students how to fully exploit the information resources available to them.

At the University of Nairobi, MBA collection situated on second floor of Jomo Kenyatta Memorial library (JKML) has been in operation since 1998. The library is meant for the on-traditional students who use the collection mainly in the evenings. It is stocked with textbooks conveniently selected to suit students and lecturers in business related courses. It is also fitted with ideal reading desks and sufficient chairs. The librarian in charge of the collection has since, established a good working relationship with the students. He understands the non-traditional students' characteristics, for example; they are mature and have other responsibilities of adult life, a part from being students. This calls for flexibility in regulation of library services when necessary. The rationale behind this collection was to set aside books for the non-traditional students enrolled for MBA courses whose classes were always offered in the evenings, weekends and distance learners. This ensures that every time they arrive, they will always find the necessary information resources. Equally, it minimizes the scramble for the same books with other students enrolled for regular mode of studies, which works well so far. Both public and private universities in Kenya are currently rolling out a network of satellite libraries throughout the country

geared to serving the non-traditional students enrolled in non-traditional with a view of bringing services at their doorsteps.

Granger and Benke (1998) asserted that the first step in identifying non-traditional students' information needs is to know "who they are, where they are, what is available to them, their needs and limitations" in relation to the programme of study. The reason behind this is to learn about non-traditional students and understand their circumstances and learning needs such that some elements of the programme do not appear as barriers to their successful study.

With the number of non-traditional education programs and courses being offered growing at an exponential rate, university libraries need to redesign their library support structures to accommodate their student needs. Enhancing the existing services through extending opening schedules to include Sundays as well as subscription to electronic databases would help to diversify the library services. Librarians are doing well by advocating for subscription to electronic journals as a means of overcoming geographical barriers which would otherwise reduce or limit library resources to just the physical building. They have further embraced the idea of forming consortiums in order to overcome the persistent problem of library funding (Brophy, 2000), while Wood and Walther (2000) observed that reference, bibliographic instruction, internet training, full-text database searching and online public access catalogue (OPAC) interface are some of the services that are increasingly being offered to non-traditional students via the internet.

In the UK, for example, a number of academic libraries have developed new services that are in favour of non-traditional students. Effective library services to such students include:

i) Opening hours have been extended in the evenings and weekends.
ii) Collections of materials tailored made to specific user needs of the non-traditional students. This prevents fulltime students (who have better access to the library) taking all the information materials at the expense of non-traditional students.
iii) Have designated librarian to specifically handle non-traditional students' library issues.
iv) Interlibrary loans, reservation requests and renewals encouraged in the same way by non-traditional students are taken by post, fax or phone, to save them a journey to the library. Books can be renewed in the same way.
v) Articles from journals are requested from home or work. The library then sends photocopies to the students. Likewise, books can be posted to students. In this way, the library would have allowed the non-traditional students to use the libraries resources without having to be physically present in the libraries.
vi) Heavily used services which are bookable, such as

Compact disk read only memory (CD-ROM) databases, present a real problem to students (Knowles, 1960). Because they find it difficult to spend time in the library, they are unable to compete with full time students who can book sessions easily. Library staff can offer to take bookings for non-traditional students by phone, save on their time and give them equal opportunity as their fulltime counterparts.

vii) Non–traditional students phone or fax to request that books be reserved for them. This service would save all the time it takes to search for books and instead, merely have to wait for their reserved books to be issued (Heery, 1993). Such arrangements enables the designated library staff to form close contact with non-traditional students, allow them to develop a very good relationship with them and attain a sound understanding of their study and library needs. It also allows library staff to notify academic staff of particular difficulties that those students encounter. This is particularly important where growth of students' population is reducing opportunities for contact between lecturers and students (Ikoja-Odongo and Ocholla, 2003). It also allows library specialists to identify specific problems facing students through provision of remedial or supplementary user education sessions in response to the discussions with students that form the core of a special service for them.

ROLE OF LIBRARIAN IN SERVICE DELIVERY

The delivery of information services to nontraditional students is undisputedly the most pressing challenge a librarian's encounter. Librarianship in this case demands that librarians should recognize that their roles have transformed from being custodial in orientation to cutting edge in nature particularly with respect (MacGregory, 2008) to delivery of information services. Nontraditional librarianship demands that students are placed in the centre of the educational paradigm. There must be a shift from institutional centered programmmes and activities to a focus that centres on practice to help the students to overcome the array of challenges caused by distance and temporal factors. Flexibility must be a cardinal parameter. Non-traditional students must have the ability to access library and information students when, where and how they choose. In response to meeting these requirements (Kakai et al., 2004) reports that the university library must be "responsive and innovative" in order to meet the library and information needs of its students. He further sees nontraditional learning I as new marketplace for the library   profession. In addition to traditional delivery mechanisms librarians must introduce bold and innovative strategies into the delivery processes for tailored towards these students. The strategies must be deployed to deliver the gamut of services that nontraditional   learners require including document delivery; bibliographic instruction; information literacy institution; reference services; interlibrary loans and access to electronic resources.

In traditional librarianship information seekers go to an information service point to access the information they need. Allied top this factor is the need to have an expeditious document delivery services. The institutional of procedures and channels to get information to students quickly must be an important aspect to non- traditional librarianship. There is also need to create   research assistance to act as the intermediary between the information seekers and the information source. The existence of intermediaries links the information source and the information seekers hence represent a new professional paradigm in librarianship.

In order to bridge the gap between the information source and the information seekers it is necessary to use a variety of delivery strategies to take the information to nontraditional students. The use of technology, OPACs, on-line systems and services, networked databases and other information providers as well as (Moore, 1993) other technologically dependent information services are necessary. The low cost of technology, cheap communication charges and widespread access to these facilities makes the deployment of technological based information services an important modality to provide access to information for nontraditional learning. Once these systems of information transfer are available for non- traditional learners it makes it possible to extend their use to on-campus teaching and learning thereby introducing new paradigms in information delivery in library services (Wood and Walther, 2000).

CHALLENGES FACING NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS IN INFORMATION ACCESS

Information needs and study behaviour of non-traditional students are generally the same as those of students undergoing studies through the regular mode of learning. The point of departure is time and styles of accessing library resources. According to Heery (1993), problems facing non-traditional students are not caused by their reluctance to adopt to the traditional system, but rather by the inability of educational institutions to provide appropriate support mechanisms to meet the needs of a significant group of students. However, non-traditional students share a number of problems; for example, shortage of time affects nearly all cadres of non-traditional students (distance learners, evening, correspondence, open learning and school holiday). The shortage of time is attributed to their modes of learning, which are detached, from regular systems of learning. Many of them leave their offices at 5.00 pm after a days' work and rush to class for lectures or to read on their own. Therefore, time management poses a real challenge in fulfilling their academic needs because other responsibilities and commitments cause difficulties. Such students also find it difficult to access library materials due to inadequate study skills. This means that they need

support and encouragement from qualified library staff. Most university libraries in Kenya still follow the traditional ways of operations, despite a growing number of non-traditional students, currently outnumbering traditional students (Robert, 2000). This category of students face a lot of challenges in accessing library services as library managements do not take them into consideration while creating library policies on use and access to information services. Few university libraries in Kenya, if any, have come up with means of meeting needs these non-traditional students. For example, at the University of Nairobi, the School of Business library extended its hours of operations to cater for the needs of non-traditional students. The library opens on Sundays from 12.00 noon to 5.00 pm and Saturdays 8.00 am to 5.00 pm and Sundays. Kenyatta University library operates upto 5.00 pm on Saturdays and half day on Sundays. The problem is the failure of university libraries to adapt their services to the needs of an increasingly diverse non-traditional students' population. The non-traditional students are expected to fit into the system that was meant for the regular students who are fulltime on-campus, hence need for university libraries to adapt to the changing profiles of students (Heery, 1993).

Research done by Kakai et al. (2004) argued that non-traditional students face challenges in utilizing their libraries for their information needs. These is due to lack of skills with the various information technologies, shortage of time due to fulltime employment, lack of information literacy, lack of contact with reference librarians as a result of failure to fit into the library working schedules, reluctance on the part of library staff due to incompetence and poor public relations, shortage of up-to-date relevant information materials, and inability to seek, obtain and evaluate information.

At the University of Malaya (UM), user survey was carried out by Ariyapala and Edzan (2002) indicated that some of the non-traditional students find difficulties in using the online catalogues due to lack of technical know-how, unclear user instruction, guidance and lack of library policy to guide them. The authors recommended that librarians must teach them library systems and services through instruction programs and provide printed instructions. However, the major issues libraries face are how to effectively help the non-traditional students with these challenges while increasing the comfort levels in the library and reducing library anxiety among them. Boadi and Letsolo (2004), in a survey on information needs and information seeking behaviour of part time students at the Institute of extra-mural studies in Lesotho came to the conclusion that information provided for non-traditional learners must be relevant, timely, easily accessible and up-to-date.

DISCUSSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

With developments related to non-traditional modes of learning which have become an integral part of studies in most universities, attention has now been directed at libraries to assess if existing policies accommodates the interests of non-traditional students. This is important because just like their counterparts, non-traditional students require libraries to source for information as the need arises during their studies. The existing library policies appear to be favouring the interests of traditional students and as such, non-traditional students are compelled to fit in, thus creating bias. The Kenya Commission for Higher Education (2007) has spelled the standards and guidelines for university libraries in Kenya. The document captures details such as information resources, organization and access, and library services for all without giving undue favours to selected category of students.

Some libraries have created policies to ensure that resources therein are equally and effectively used and students are treated fairly and equitably and their individual interests are managed for the greater good. For consistency of services, high productivity, and efficiency, libraries should provide guidelines to be followed by those charged with the responsibility of providing services to the students. Libraries should therefore formulate concrete policies to ensure effective and efficient use of their information resources. A library policy is a document that guides the management of the library from the present to the future (NCCE, 2010) and ensures that success of the non traditional learning.

For libraries to offer resources and services appropriate to the academic level and scope of an institution's programmes, their policies and procedures must be planned and followed to the latter. There is need for written policies governing standards of service, particularly where agreements between and among institutions exist. Such policy documents should also include mission, vision statements, account of goals and objectives of the services. Following an extensive needs assessment, where aims and objectives are identified, libraries should ensure that non-traditional students are adequately covered.

Library services in universities will continue being perceived as biased and unfavorable if the information needs of non-traditional students are not anchored in their policy documents and service charters. In this case, the non-traditional students' needs must be known through survey and thereafter get factored in the policy framework which will guide how such interests require to be catered for. User-centered approach will work better than the current design in libraries which appears to be more of service-centered. The prevalence of information services in Kenya which have been designed without the needs of users in mind is one of the factors which would have hindered the use of the information. It is possible that non-traditional students may not be accessing optimum information services in their library for the simple reason that the existing policies are yet to accom-

modate their information needs and interests. This exposes a gap for policy makers to modify or come up with new policies that are inclusive.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Increased proportions of non-traditional students have resulted to a new category of clients who are making different demands on university libraries. Increasing the use of student-centered learning methods in university education has put more stress on coherent development of library and information services which ideally need to be student-centered. Due to lack of proper library user education, the non-traditional students miss out the opportunity to know their library's physical facilities, materials and services (UNESCO, 2005). There has been a misconception that the existing library services are inherently appropriate for all users including the non-traditional students without initiating a mechanism to find out whether the current set-up satisfies all users' needs (Luzius, 2002). There is therefore urgent need to develop customer-centered services as part of the university library management (Lee, 2000).

Universities should embrace the non-traditional students' information needs and study behaviour just like they do for traditional students to avoid academic discrimination. Standards of education will improve when the non-traditional students' information needs and study behaviour are identified and satisfied. This will market the universities and attracting potential non-traditional students. The university libraries need to improve on their network and interlibrary cooperation to be able to meet the needs of this diversified student community wherever they are. The non-traditional students would only get the value for their money if the needs are met through quality and relevant information resources are provided. Universities need to upgrade their students' policies especially on library use to be able to meet their objectives fully. The Kenya Commission for Higher Education should flex its muscle to ensure that the university's academic standards are upheld through the provision of quality information services. The university library staff should be well trained to be able to serve this special category of library users adequately.

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