

## **LEGISLATORS INFORMATION NEED AND USE FOR LEGISLATIVE PROCESSES IN STATES HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY IN NORTH WEST ZONE OF NIGERIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper investigates the information needs and information use by the members of states houses of assembly in Northwest zone of Nigeria; with a view to find out the types of information they use in their legislative processes. Quantitative research methodology using cross-sectional survey design was used for the study. The population of the study consists of all the states houses of assembly members in North West zone of Nigeria. The findings of the study show that only one hundred and thirty-six (136) members have returned their questionnaire and found usable. The study found that members of the state house of assembly have varied information needs, i.e. information for legislative process, information on constituencies projects, information on policy formulation, development etc. The findings further revealed that legislators use information from newspapers, colleagues, television and house deliberations etc. However, they had no time to visit library, internet and other information sources. The study concludes that lack of proper policy on information use, training on how to search for information, lack of adequate infrastructural facilities in the library have been the hindering factors to the use of information by members of state house of assembly in Nigeria. The paper recommends the establishment of policies on information use and also legislators should be encouraged to undergo different computer training in addition, it is important that adequate modern information infrastructural facilities should be provided in legislative libraries in the North West zone of Nigeria.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Legislative process has been the core element of decision making for the development of any country under democratic dispensation especially in the present information and knowledge societies. Information today has been the fourth factor of development apart from land, labour and capital. Today, most of the developmental process cannot be achieved without the use of information being the basic for communication in any modern society. In support of this, Auyo (2011) stated that information has become the basic and essential commodity required for any meaningful decision making, its provision and use is necessary for the development of individual, community and larger societies.

Information exists in everything human being does. Man as a living organism needs information to conduct his daily life, the information he acquires guides him in appreciating the dos and don'ts of life in general. Professionals of different categories require information at different level and for different purpose in order to meet up with different task assigned to them; such professional may include legislators, lawyers and doctors etc. Legislators being lawmakers require information in conducting their legislative functions as all the activities of the legislators are centered towards the availability of information. In view of the above, members of the states assembly required information for their legislative processes, that is why Bartha (2004) emphasized that modern legislative functions demand that legislators should have access and use information for effective decision making on a regular basis if they are to make a meaningful and fruitful deliberations.

To this regards, Information need of legislators can be seen as a psychological feeling for information which is triggered by a strong desire to solve a problem or resolve certain conflict within psycho-social realm or that emerged from one's interaction with his or her environment (Bello, 2006). In view of the above, it could be seen that several factors can determine the information need of legislators in Nigeria such as demographic factors in terms of (age, gender, educational background, working experience to mention but a few). Others could be psychological, political, technological, economic and social factors. Be it whatever, legislators need information particularly for decision making during legislative processes.

Information is an essential element that influences all aspect of human Endeavour. It is considered necessary in the development of man and his society according to Farida (2011) information is that which adds to human knowledge and contribute to human development socially, politically, religiously and economically which is created through human interaction.

Therefore, Legislators are not left out from the influence of information because it enables them to discharge their legislative processes effectively. Information is also important to legislative process because it leads legislators to sound and effective decision. Satisfying the information need of the legislators will greatly enhance the performance of the legislators during the legislative processes because they use the information in all their activities.

It is imperative to state that legislators use information at every point in time during legislative process, they use information during bill presentation, debate, oversight functions, committee meetings as such all this cannot be achieved without the use of information by the legislators. As established by Auyo (2011) that information is basic an essential commodity required for any meaningful decision making, its provision and use is necessary for the development of an individual, communities and larger society. In addition Alemna and Skouby (2000) stated that members of Ghana legislature always use information when preparing for a debate. It is based on this that we can vividly see the significance in the use of information for effective legislative process.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Information need has been viewed by different scholars and different interpretation is given on the concept. Bello (2006) regards information need as “a psychological feeling for information triggered by a strong desire to solve a problem or resolve certain conflict within a psycho-social realm or that emerged from ones interaction with his or her environment”. From the above, it could be deduced that individual always need information because man is always confronted with one problem or the other. Legislators whose main task is to make laws will always need information for effective decision making. The information need is said to be determine by certain factors as stated by Umbur and Igbashal (2011) cited Demekaa (2000) that individual age, gender, educational background, linguistic ability, length of experience, nature of work all affects ones individual information need. Members of states houses of assembly in Nigeria serve in different committees as such each of them needed a specific kind of information at a particular point in time depending on the type of task his or her committee is discharging. The delicacy of the committee will require enough information in handling the responsibility of the committee. Legislator’s information need is necessitated by the nature of their responsibilities. In the states houses of assembly in North West zone of Nigeria, members performs functions such as oversight function, bill presentation, policy formulation committee hearing etc. satisfying their information need is of paramount importance for them to do the above job. However, different type of information is needed such as information on political, legislative, constituency, committees etc. In a study conducted by Abubakar and Haruna (2010) on the information needs of members of Kwara State House of Assembly in Nigeria. The findings reveals that the major information legislators need in the conduct of their legislative process is information on legislative matters. Though legislative information is not the only type of information needed by members of state house of assembly in Nigeria, it is on this note that this paper investigated the information needs of legislators, satisfying the needs is basically through the use of different types of information as such Information is used by the legislators for different purpose in their legislative processes as established by literatures for instance. Catherina (2009) stated that “information has become a critical element in life and society. It is an important part of development.

In developing legislature like that of Nigeria information in all aspect of life needs to be collected to assist the legislators in their day to day processes. With this it is clear that

members of state house of assembly in Nigeria could only be able to effectively discharge their responsibility if they effectively use the information resources at their disposal when performing their legislative duties. Because it has been established by Alemna and Skouby (2000) that members of Ghana legislature always use information when preparing for a debate at the legislature. Making use of information will surely enhance the performance of the members in the state house of assemblies in Nigeria whenever they are at the legislative chamber performing their roles as legislators Auyo (2011) stated that “information is basic and essential commodity required for any meaningful decision making, its provision and use is necessary for the development of an individual, communities and larger societies’. It is vividly clear that for members of states houses of assembly in Nigeria to come up with a meaningful decision making information at different level of the legislature must be used.

### **OBJECTIVE OF STUDY**

- 1- To identify the types of information needs of legislators in Northwest zone of Nigeria.
- 2- To find out how legislators use information for legislative processes.
- 3- To identify the challenges associated with information needs and use of legislators for legislative processes

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study is a quantitative research using a cross sectional survey design. Cross-sectional survey design is more appropriate for the fact that it is easier to conduct than longitudinal because the researcher can collect all the needed data at a time (Leedy and Ellis, 2005). The population of the study is members of the states houses of assembly in the Northwest zone of Nigeria made up of seven states of the zone with a total number of two hundred and eleven (211) members in the state houses of assembly. The sample size is the entire population. A questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was self developed by the researcher using the gaps established by the literature.

### **FINDINGS**

Two hundred and eleven questionnaires were distributed to the state legislators in the 7 states houses of assembly of northwest zone of Nigeria. Out of which 136 (64.7%) copies of the questionnaire were returned and found useable. And 75 (35.3%) were not returned. The researcher made several attempts to reduce the percentage of the unreturned copies of questionnaire but failed due to the fact that some of the legislators were on recess while others were busy with their legislative functions. This reveals that the target population is difficult to handle in terms of responding to the questionnaire though the response rate has not affected the analysis of the study.

Table 1: Respondents' gender

<b>GENDER</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE %</b>
Male	136	100%
Female	-	-

Table 1 shows that the entire respondent in the study area were male 136 representing the total number of questionnaire. This reveals the domination of male into the legislative chamber over the female despite several agitation of gender equality which is being promoted by the developed democracies. The implication of this is that female are still lagging behind in terms of representation at the states houses of assembly in North West zone of Nigeria which has a serious threat in protecting their interest when it comes to legislation on issues bordering them.

This finding contradicts the study conducted by (Ruth, N 2012) in which a very significant number of females serve as members of parliament in Uganda.

#### **AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENT**

Table 2 Age distribution

<b>AGE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE %</b>
30-40 years	43	31.6%
41-50 years	92	67.7%
51-60 years	1	0.7%
60 & above	Nil	Nil

Table 2 indicates the age distribution of the respondent. More than half 92 (67.7%) of the respondent were between the age of 41-50yrs of age. Followed by 43 (31.6%) of the respondent who were between 30-40yrs of age and only 1 (0.7%) had between the age of 51 - 60yrs. This means that majority of the legislators representing various localities were between 41-60years of age, which implies that they are matured and can be able to face all the legislative challenges.

## WORK EXPERIENCE AS LEGISLATORS

Table 3. Working experience

EXPERIENCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
0-4 years	48	35.3%
5-8 years	53	38.9%
9-12 years	22	16.2%
13 and above years	13	9.5%

Table 3 indicates that less than half 53 (38.9%) had between 5-8yrs working experience as legislators. Followed by 48 (35.3%) who were between 1-4yrs. While 22 (16.2%) had between 9- 12yrs and only 13(9.5%) had 13yrs and above. This shows than more than half of the respondent had working experience as legislators in the state assembly, noting that they had between 4-13yrs working experience, as such, legislative processes is not new to them. This implies that their performance during legislative processes are quite appreciated, and meaningful policy formulations can be reached and in near future the North West zone of Nigerian states houses of assemblies can compete with developed democracies of the world. Because members that are been elected to represent the interest of their electorate are matured enough to interpret and scrutinized what is happening in different democracies around the world.

## LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Table 4. Educational qualification

QUALIFICATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
SSCE	Nil	Nil
DIPLOMA	50	36.8%
NCE	25	18.4%
HND/BA/BSc.	53	38.9%
MSc. And above	8	5.9%

Table 4 indicates that less than half of the respondent 53(38.9%) had HND\BA\BSc, followed by 50(36.8%) who had diploma, while 25 (18.4%) had NCE, and only 8 (5.8%) had MSc and above. This mirrors that the entire respondent had attain higher level of educational

qualification. This implies that members of states houses of assembly in North West zone of Nigeria could be up to the task in the discharge of their legislative responsibility because majority of them are literate which has greatly assisted in performing above average during legislative activities.

### **TYPES OF INFORMATION NEED OF THE RESPONDENT**

Table 5 shows the responses of different type of information need of the respondents

<b>TYPES OF INFORMATION NEED</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE %</b>
Political	29	21.3%
Legislative information	66	48.5%
Provision of social amenities	21	15.4%
Entrainment	7	5.2%
Constituencies	13	9.6%

Table 5 shows that almost half 66 (48.5%) of the respondents indicates legislative information as their most needed information. Followed by political information with 29 (21.3%). While information on the provision of social amenities 21 (15.4%), information on constituency and project 13 (9.6%) and information on entertainment 7 (5.2%). It can be seen that the most needed information by legislators was legislative information which is used for decision making. This finding is in line with the view of Folorunsho (2010) who stated that the information need of legislators was on legislative matters this could be attributed to the fact that their major role is to make laws, and information on this matter greatly assists members of state house of assembly in Nigeria in their legislative processes

### **Types of information used by the legislators**

Table 6 shows the type of information used by the legislators.

<b>TYPES OF INFORMATION USED</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE %</b>
Information on internet	38	27.9%
Library resources	9	6.6%
Legislative document	79	58.1%
Information on magazine	10	7.5%

Table 6 shows that more than half 79 (58.1%) indicated that legislative documents was the most used information, followed by internet resources with 38 (27.9%), while journals and articles had 10 (7.4%) and library resources with 9 (6.6%). It can be seen that the most used information resources by legislators is legislative document which were used for decision



making. This further confirms the non usage of the library resources which is in line with the findings of Ximena and Marialyse (1994) and the findings of Big (2009); very few parliamentarians use the library or the information resources of the library. This implies that members of state house of assembly in Nigeria use information in the conduct of legislative functions and it assists them in coming up with a meaningful decision. However, they need to be encouraged to use the library resources and the information on the internet.

### **CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE INFORMATION NEED AND USE OF LEGISLATORS**

Table7. Challenges of information need and use

<b>CHALLENGES</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE %</b>
Insufficient legislative information	42	30.8%
Poor library services	42	30.8%
Lack of internet services	39	28.7%
Inexperience in the use of information	13	9.5%
Vocabulary mismatch	52	38.2%

Table 7 shows the challenges of information to legislators. Less than half 52 (38.2%) indicates vocabulary mismatch followed by 42 (30.8%) indicates poor library services and also insufficient legislative information as their major challenges, followed by 39 (28.7%) lack of internet services while (9.5%) inexperience. From the findings, it is evident that poor library services and insufficient legislative information were the major challenges which are in line with the finding of Big (2009), that parliamentary library in Nigeria is small and grossly ill-stocked, books in the library are not up to date, there are no internet facilities, staff are inadequate and poorly trained, and legislators hardly use the library. This implies that there is gross inadequate information resources at the legislature, as such, its provision for effective decision making is vital and also there is problem of medium used in communicating on the content of some the information resources on this regard, medium of communication on the documents that are made available to the legislators should be made simpler and familiar to the legislators

### **CONCLUSION ANDRECOMMENDATION**

From the finding of this paper on the types of information need and information use of legislators in states houses of assembly in North West zone of Nigeria, it was revealed that

members of state house of assembly information need satisfaction are of paramount importance for a meaningful decision to be achieved. However, the most needed information by the legislators is the legislative information which is found to be relevant in the conduct of legislative processes as such its provision always will enhance the performance of the legislators, though the paper confirms that gross insufficient legislative information and poor library services are the major challenges associated with satisfying the information need of the legislators. The paper further proved that members of state house of assembly use information in the conduct of legislative activities and legislative document was the major information resources used by the legislators during policy formulation at the legislature. One of the major challenges highlighted by the study was the medium of communication use in some of the legislative document which most of the members find it difficult to interpret when reading or in terms of use. The paper recommends that:

1. Legislators should be encouraged to undergo different computer training programs, the legislators should be provided with services on information search on the internet, or on any other electronic sources.
2. The legislature and the legislative library should be furnished with enough information resources.
3. There is a need for the establishment of policies on information use.
4. Finally, medium of communication use in information resources at the legislature should be made simple in such a way that the legislators will be able to understand the content of the document.

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