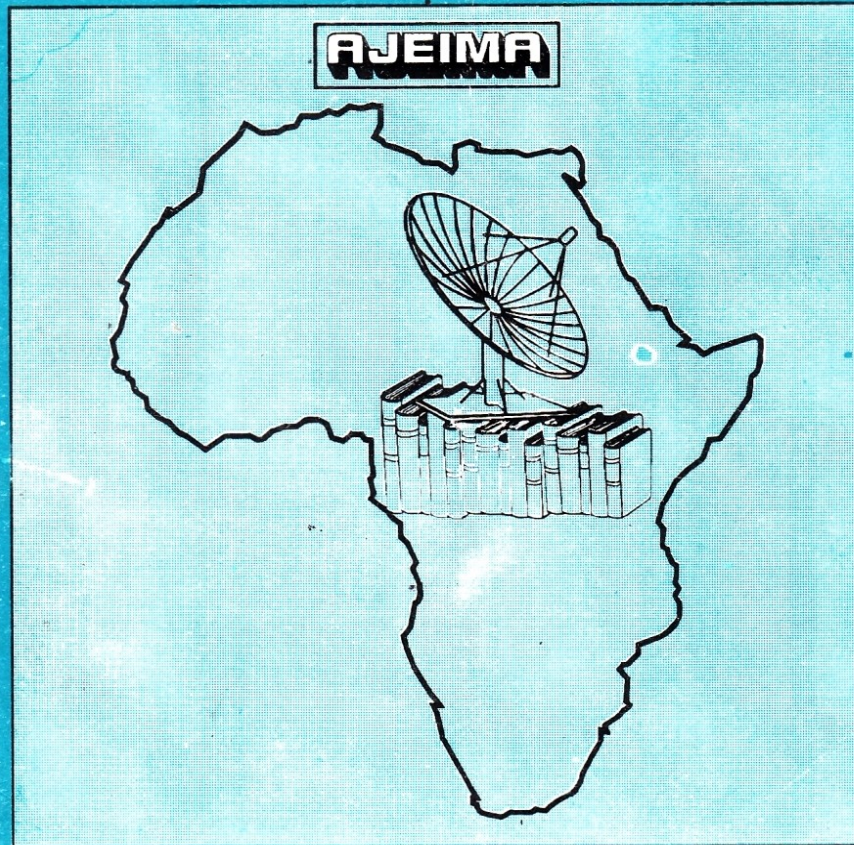


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## UTILIZATION OF INFORMATION SOURCES IN POLICY DECISION-MAKING IN CROSS RIVER STATE

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### ABSTRACT

*This study determined the sources of information utilized by government in policy decision-making in Cross River State. It was a survey of the opinion of four Hundred (400) policy-makers drawn from ministries and parasatals using simple random sampling. A researcher-made instrument "information utilization questionnaire" (IUQ) was the main instrument used in data collection. Analysis revealed that reports of government appointed commissions/committees, gazette, House of Assembly proceedings, technical reports and feasibility studies, Indexes and abstracts, books and contacts as well as services of Gatekeepers of knowledge were identified to be information sources utilized by government policy decision-makers.*

### INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt about the value of information in the society today. This is because in recent times, according to Nkanu (2002), there has been growing desire on the use of information among government officials in Nigeria in general and Cross River State in particular. That, with the level at which the society changes today, it would not be out of place to say that modern policy-makers require information as a necessary tool that is needed for the overall development of the environment within which they operate. In Cross River State civil service system, information utilization culture for effective policy decision making can be enhanced through the proper selection of reliable information sources that are relevant to policy formulation and decision-making. No doubt, it has been observed that in Cross River State, there is a growing desire for information use among government officials. In line with this assertion, Ngurukwem (1998) noted that, this growing desire has forced government to fall back on information for assistance in policy decision-making.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The need for information utilization among government officials in policy decision-making cannot be over stressed because information plays a vital role in the overall development of every aspect of man. The UNESCO inter-governmental conference on the planning of National Documentation, Library and Achieves Infrastructure, according to Esin and Ani (2002), viewed information as an essential part of a nation's resources... not only as a National resources vital for scientific and economic progress, but also as the medium of social communication. Adimorah (1992) emphasized that, the need to provide valid, coherent, non-contradictory, accessible information to help in national

planning has become paramount at this phase of our development. This type of information should not be a one-shot information, but a relevant, complete, reliable, consistent, timely and historic that should be revealed into every facet of our national development planning. Information is used according to Aiyepoku (1982) to describe man's cumulated knowledge in all subjects, in all forms and from all sources that could help its users to make rational decisions. Specially, information can be obtained from technical reports and feasibility studies on proposed development, appointed commissions/committees, government position papers on various issues and subjects, Gazettes which normally report the laws, statutes and decrees of government, hazards, learned journals in which subject specialists communicate the latest knowledge in their areas of specialization, books, newspapers and magazines, government documents of all kinds, whether published for mass circulation and the regular listings of abstracts respectively.

The above constitute information sources that help government officials in their respective disciplines to easily locate information during policy formation, implementation and evaluation. Policy decisions are normally made with special consideration to citizens' either in health, agriculture, education, sports, culture, communication, security etc. This is evident in a study conducted on the use of information by pre-clinical faculty members of the Maiduguri medical college, Nigeria, Nweke (1993) according to Nkanu (1998) was concerned with finding out what kind of information sources were used, how pre-clinical and clinical faculty members' information requirement can be adequately provided. It was discovered in this study that, personally recorded data, contact with colleagues, monographs, textbooks and learned journals were the most commonly used sources of information by pre-clinical faculty members.

This trend corroborates the findings of Aiyepoku (1980) and Aina (1986), that policy-makers ranked scholarly periodicals first, and abstracts and indexes as less frequently consulted than scholarly articles. Equally, on the sources of information consulted, Ochogwu (1993) in a study conducted on information Needs and Resources utilization in selected urban and semi-urban communities in Borno State identifies an average of about 80% of the respondents in four centers consulted books, newspapers and magazines more frequently than the journal literature and story books. In a related study on "The perception and utilization of information by policy-makers in Nigeria, Aiyepoku (1989) confirmed that, on general types of information consulted, what Nigerian librarians and other information processors/disseminators have believed for a long time was that, the most important source of information for the Nigeria policy-maker was the confidential file where the well-known in house memoranda are contained, government documents which are consulted as frequently as in-house memoranda also constitute a crucial source of information to policy-makers. Although, no follow-up questions were to determine which particular types of government documents were consulted so heavily, one could summarize that, official gazettes, Government white papers especially on government appointed commissions of enquiry would be among the most heavily consulted information sources.

In the same study more than 90% reported "personal contacts" as their information sources. This in fact suggests a very heavy dependence on opinion-leaders" and "colleagues" as an important source of information in the state civil service. In his lamentation, he rather feels that, many of these personal contacts would undoubtedly have been playing the role of gatekeepers of knowledge without even realizing it themselves. A considerable proportion of this high percentage may also have involved the uncritical acceptance of 'facts' from other civil servants, especially if they happen to be of higher status. It does not appear particularly healthy for policy-makers to be so heavily dependent on what others have said, bearing in mind the increasingly-complex and variegated nature of the issues handled by them.

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to determine the sources of information utilized by policy-makers in government in Cross River State of Nigeria

#### METHODOLOGY

The research design used for the study was survey approach. The area used for the study was Cross River State of Nigeria. The population was made of senior government officials from Grade Level 08-17 in ministries and parastatals believed to be in decision making positions. A sample size of four hundred (400) senior government officials was used. Of this number, one hundred and eighty (180) respondents were drawn from ministries and Two Hundred and "twenty (220) respondents were drawn from parastatals. The instrument used for the study was a structured information utilization questionnaire (IUQ).

#### ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

##### SOURCES OF INFORMATION UTILIZED IN GOVERNMENT

What are the sources of information utilized in government? The research question was seeking the sources of information utilized in government. In response to items on the questionnaires; Technical reports and feasibility studies, report of government appointed commission/committees, gazettes, indexes and abstracts, books and monographs, services of gatekeepers of knowledge, radio and television, house of Assembly/Senate proceedings, personal contacts and libraries were sources identified ('see table below):

### PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION UTILIZATION IN GOVERNMENT

FACTOR CODE	SOURCE OF INFORMATION	ACTUAL FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%) FREQUENCY
A	Technical report feasibility studies	43	10.91
B	Report of government appointed commissions/committees	62	15.74**
C	Gazettes	59	14.97
D	Indexes and Abstracts	33	8.4
E	Books and monographs	31	7.87
F	Services of gatekeeper of knowledge	20	5.08
G	Newspaper and magazines	29	7.4
H	Radio and Television	16	4.06
I	House of Assembly proceedings	56	14.21
J	Personal contacts	26	6.6
K	Libraries	19	4.82
	TOTAL	394	100%

The respondents were expected to make choices of the sources of information utilized in government which they found most applicable to them. From the analysis done, it was observed that, the most observed sources of information utilized in government were "Reports of government appointed commissions/committees with the percentage value of 15.74%. The second was Gazettes with the percentage value of 14.97%. The third was House of Assembly with the percentage value of 14.21%. The fourth was technical reports and feasibility studies with the percentage value of 10.91%. The fifth indexes and abstracts with the percentage value of 8.4%. The sixth was books and monographs with the percentage value of 7.87%. The seventh was newspaper and magazines with the percentage value of 7.4%. The eighth was personal contacts with the percentage value of 6.8%. The ninth was services of Gatekeepers of knowledge with the percentage value of 5.08%. The tenth was Libraries with the percentage value of 4.82%, and the eleventh was radio and television with the least percentage value of 4.06%.

From the above result, it is enough to prove that policy-makers in Cross River State make due consultation with any available information sources though with high preference to reports of government appointed commissions/committees as well as House of Assembly proceedings, Gazettes and Technical reports and feasibility studies. A critical observation of the above result also confirms that policy-maker equally consult other available source of information though with low preference to indexes and abstracts, books and monographs, newspapers and magazines, personal contacts, services of Gatekeepers of knowledge, libraries and of it all radio and television (see table above). It is noteworthy that libraries are among the least used.

In confirming the utilization of the above information sources for effective policy decision making by Cross River State policy makers, the findings of a related study conducted on "The use of scientific and technical information (STI) for industrial development in Nigeria, "Etim (1992) affirmed that conference proceedings and books/monographs ranked very highly in consultation by Production Managers (PM) with 99.5% and 84.4% respectively. In another related study on "sources of information used by Agriculture Extension workers". Ogunrombi et al (1993) observed that, consultation of such information sources like periodicals and monographs are on the increase. This still corroborates the research findings of Aiyepuku (1980) and Aina (1986) according to Ogunrombi (1993) that, policy-makers ranked scholarly periodicals first and scholarly articles. Adimorahs (1992) also confirms Etim's (1992) view above that, most scientist lists ranked journals first and this supports the observation of Adedigba (1992), Adimorah (1977) and Olaniyan (1988). This equally is in line with Newke's (1993) submissions on what kind of information sources used by preclinical faculty members of the Maiduguri medical college, Nigeria that apart from contact with colleagues monographs and textbooks, learned journal also ranked were the most commonly used.

Policy-makers in Cross River State have the responsibility to study in great detail, the nation's newspapers and magazines and other relevant information sources on a daily basis. Thus the reported frequency of newspapers, magazines, books and monographs, learned journals the above, thesis, dissertation, indexing and abstracting services attracts very low consultation probably because policy-makers are not in the habit of relating very much to these highly specialized types of information sources.

Generally, there is no doubt that, the above result equally confirms the fact that, at no time would a policy-maker formulate and implement any policy decision that most of the above information sources will not be consulted especially those ones often classify as government documents.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The government as well as individuals have many roles to play in policy formation, implementation and evaluation at all levels of our national life. This could be done through gathering and reading available information sources. This implies therefore that, any sources of information consulted should be one that will generate information that will be complete, assessable and reliable as well be able to serve as a relevant source.

Therefore, accredited information sources should be made available and accessibility by relevant agencies, individual and government to policy-makers for effective information to enhance policy formation, implementation and evaluation in government.

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