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# Quality Management Approaches in Academic Libraries: A Pilot Study of a Nigerian University Library

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**Abstract:** The paper reports the findings of a pilot case study in a university library in South-West Nigeria. The study was carried out to investigate the library's quality management approaches and which formed part of a larger project to recommend a common model of quality management for academic libraries in this region. The study involved a semi-structured interview with the university librarian, a focus group involving lower management staff, and documentary analysis. It was found that while the concepts of quality and of quality management were generally understood, there were obvious problems in areas such as customer service and performance measurement.

**Keywords:** Academic libraries, Case study, Framework analysis, Nigeria, Quality management, University libraries.

## 1. Introduction

Nigerian university libraries have gone through changes in the last decade through the introduction of information and communication technology (Nkanu and Okon 2010). These changes have been accompanied by the development of a new system of governance within the university system. These have necessitated the assumption of new roles such as the development of new skills in response to increasing user expectations, and active collaboration between library and faculty members, to ensure effective information literacy programmes (Ogundipe 2005). Okebukola (2006) maintained that a reduction in funding for universities has also resulted in increased demands for quality services by library users, and university libraries have consequently expressed the need for quality assurance mechanisms for effective provision of their services. They have also deployed systems and strategies for managing and providing services to match the growth of their parent institutions. However, a review of the literature reveals a lack of any empirical study of the adoption and application of quality in the management of academic library practices and service delivery, nor any systematic adoption in place as affirmed by Oladele (2010) and Opara (2010).

Nigerian university libraries were established to serve three categories of universities: federal, state and private. The universities are further categorised as first, second or third generation universities, depending on when they were established: 1948 to 1965 for the first category; 1975 for the second; and 1985 to 1998 for the third. The federal and state universities are established through statutes and acts of parliament, while private universities are those licensed to operate by the National Universities Commission (NUC).

This paper presents the findings of a pilot case study conducted in a university library to investigate its quality management approaches. The concept of quality has been defined from different perspectives to suit different situations, meaning that there is no universal definition for it (Haksever and Render (2013) and Souza and Voss (2002). Here, we have adopted the Roberts and Rowley's (2004) definition, i.e., processes and measures that contribute to the management of the organisation's products and services, while quality management (QM) is defined as a set of principles in an organisation's management approach that is supported by practices and techniques. The next section described the approach that has been taken, based on the use of framework analysis; this is followed by the results obtained when this technique was used to analyse interview and focus-group transcripts with library staff, and the paper concludes with a summary of the major findings.

## 2. Methodology

An initial literature review was conducted to provide a theoretical basis for the study, with institutional theory (IT) being chosen from the available organisational theories related to QM implementation as being most appropriate for the study. IT was chosen because it is concerned with actions of individuals and organisations, as noted by Ketchen (2007) and Meyer (2007:790) and how they are affected by institutions built up in much wider environments. It explains how homogeneity in organisations is influenced by environmental pressures with organisations benchmarking each other's managerial practices in order to adapt to each other's environments (Ketchen 2007:578) and (Zsidisin 2005:3403). Academic libraries are considered to be homogeneous since their structures or composition are all basically the same and aimed at providing support for teaching, learning and research to their user communities.

This pilot case study was part of a two-phase PhD project to explore QM approaches in academic libraries in South West Nigeria. The first phase involved an online, quantitative survey of 24 academic libraries within the zone to assess their management and customer service practices in those libraries, with a view to recommending a common QM model for academic libraries in the zone. The second phase of the study, which was conducted in two parts, sought to confirm and build on the results obtained from the quantitative phase of the study. This involved, first, a pilot case study of one of the university libraries studied in the survey and, second, a multiple case study of fifteen university libraries. This paper focuses on the findings of the pilot study: the case was chosen using Thomas's (2011) criteria and the study was conducted to explore in greater detail management practices, quality service procedures and improvement efforts that had been investigated in the online survey.

The chosen case is the main library of a public university in South West Nigeria and has branch libraries attached to it, these including a medical library and thirty other college and faculty libraries. The library system serves a user community of 35,000 undergraduates, graduates and academic staff in ten faculties and a college of medicine. Its collections consist of print and non print resources of core texts, journals, newspapers, rare books, theses and dissertations and special collections, organised in sections in the main and branch libraries. The library adheres to a quality assurance system operated by the university, for the purpose of annual accreditation of academic programmes and in support of the university's vision of attaining the status of a world class institution.

Data were obtained by means of a semi-structured interview, document analysis and a focus group. The interview was conducted with the university librarian (UL) to generate information about the library's vision and mission, the influence of internal and external environmental factors on its development, and improvement efforts in management and effective service delivery in the library. Documentary evidence obtained included the library's strategic engagement plan and the university's quality assurance documentation, and these were analysed to obtain a clear understanding of its strategic objectives and informed knowledge based on self-evaluation. The focus group (FG) afforded participants the opportunity to freely express their views about issues affecting leadership, customer service, library resource management and performance measurement. The focus group comprised six participants from the lower management, drawn from the following units of the library: Acquisitions, Cataloguing, Serials, Circulation, Reference and Media.

The interview and the focus group discussion were both recorded and then analysed using framework analysis (Ritchie, Spencer and O'Connor 2003) with the aid of the NVivo software. Framework analysis was chosen because of its non alignment with a particular epistemological, philosophical or theoretical approach as argued in Gale et al. (2013) and Furber (2010). It is a deductive method of analysis and suitable style for studies in which some of the research questions are preset, thus making it a useful method for analysing data with a priori themes. The framework method is also noted for its effectiveness in managing raw data from qualitative studies and in enabling the identification of patterns within and across groups of participants. Rabiee (2004) points out that the approach can be employed with both individual and focus group interviews.

### **3. Results**

Data for this study was analysed on the basis of the five main procedures involved in framework analysis: familiarisation; identifying a thematic framework for the study; indexing or coding; charting; mapping and interpretation. Table 1 shows a detailed coding of the data, which involved annotating the interview and focus-group transcripts with numerical codes for easy identification, retrieval and comparison.

The next stage of the analysis involved refining and matching the categories and sub-categories with the QM themes that had been identified previously in the online survey, viz leadership, customer focus and satisfaction, human resource management, process management and performance measurement. Table 2 provides an extract of the index showing themes, categories and labelled sub-categories classified under them. The labelling enables the analyst to access individual reference and, more importantly, to identify patterns in the data and contexts in which they arise.

Charting the data is an important part of framework analysis (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002) because it assists in managing and summarising the data (Gale et al., 2013). It involves developing charts for individual cases with themes recorded in the similar order which may either be drawn from a priori research questions or from issues arising from the data. According to Ritchie and Spencer (2002), charting usually involves linking individual cases with specific dimensions of the study that are known to have a significant effect on the patterns identified in the study. Table 3 provides three charts of the pilot case which further categorised the themes under the headings of management practices and procedures, perceptions of service quality, and improvement efforts.

On the basis of these analyses, it was possible to draw the following conclusions on the pilot case library's procedures in relation to quality management.

**Table 1.** Codes derived from interview and focus-group transcripts

<p><b>Library management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Effective alignment with university goals</li> <li>1.2 Emphasis on human capital</li> <li>1.3 Holistic view of the library</li> <li>1.4 We are involved in building leadership in the profession</li> <li>1.5 Management ensures leadership training for staff</li> <li>1.6 Management of library environment</li> <li>1.7 Mission and vision (of the library)</li> <li>1.8 Mission statement for the library</li> <li>1.9 We place high premium on users as part of our</li> </ul>	<p><b>Policy on quality assurance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Elements of quality assurance conferred on the library</li> <li>2.2 Library is central to any programme being accredited</li> <li>2.3 No documentation for quality management</li> <li>2.4 Programme accreditation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Library information resources development/management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1 Access to resources</li> <li>3.2 Content</li> <li>3.3 Digitisation initiative</li> <li>3.4 Foundation for institutional repository</li> <li>3.5 Management of our resources</li> <li>3.6 Physical facilities</li> <li>3.7 Policy on collection development obsolete</li> <li>3.8 Library's cultural influences</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quality in our services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.1 Create enabling environment for users</li> <li>4.2 The digital native</li> <li>4.3 External factors</li> <li>4.4 Information literacy</li> <li>4.5 Internal factors</li> <li>4.6 Internet facility</li> <li>4.7 Produce manpower</li> <li>4.8 Social media usage</li> <li>4.9 Variety of electronic resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>Human resource development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.1 Communication with employees</li> <li>5.2 Employee empowerment</li> <li>5.3 Lower level of managers</li> <li>5.4 Public relation officers</li> <li>5.5 Quality of personnel recruited</li> <li>5.6 Staff training</li> <li>5.7 Teamwork</li> <li>5.8 Information does not flow</li> </ul>	<p><b>Library Customer Service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6.1 A lot needs to be done on automation in circulation area</li> <li>6.2 Changing phases of the library</li> <li>6.3 Communication with users</li> <li>6.4 Environment</li> <li>6.5 Gap in customers service</li> <li>6.6 High stage of library user satisfaction</li> <li>6.7 Increasing user demands</li> <li>6.8 Provide service for physically-challenged users</li> <li>6.9 Look out for the patrons</li> <li>6.10 Staffing as a factor</li> <li>6.11 Unable to access resources without human intervention</li> </ul>
<p><b>Maintaining service quality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7.1 Don't have any system put in place</li> <li>7.2 Don't really have documentation</li> <li>7.3 Not a conscious effort to utilize it</li> <li>7.4 Remodelling of library space</li> </ul>	<p><b>Performance measurement-staff/students</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8.1 Assessment performance is poor from user end.</li> <li>8.2 Different statistics are taken</li> <li>8.3 Opinion poll</li> <li>8.4 platform on our website</li> <li>8.5 Suggestion boxes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Technology and service quality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9.1 Investment in equipment procurement</li> <li>9.2 ICT Infrastructure</li> <li>9.3 Notion of library is changing</li> <li>9.4 Technology is changing rapidly</li> </ul>	<p><b>Financial resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10.1 Budget</li> <li>10.2 Funding</li> <li>10.3 We have control over our budget</li> </ul>

<b>Quality improvement in service delivery</b> 11.1 24 hour library service 11.2 Develop a system of feedback from users 11.3 Directorate of quality assurance 11.4 Investment in equipment procurement 11.5 Staff with more specialized skills	<b>Future plan</b> 12.1 Develop a research library 12.2 Increase human capital of the library 12.3 Increase electronic resources (subscription) 12.4 Develop our parameter for quality evaluation 12.5 Investment in Information resources 12.6 We need to develop a system of feedback from users
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**3.1 Concepts of quality and quality management** The study first sought to know the extent of understanding of the concepts of quality and quality management. Participants' definitions and general understanding of these two concepts are provided in Table 4. The general understanding of the concept of quality in the academic library context that emerged from the data can be summed up as 'user satisfaction', which requires encouraging employees to ensure its realisation through continuous education, training and commitment. Explanation of the concept of quality management also demonstrates its significance as it is considered a way of managing the academic library with optimal capability.

**Table 2:** Matrix of themes, categories and sub-categories from the data

Case Description	Interview Themes	Analytic Content (Categories and sub-categories)
Pilot Case (University Librarian)	Leadership	Library management 1.2 Emphasis on human capital 1.7 Mission and vision (of the library) 1.8 Mission statement for the library 1.9 We place high premium on users as part of our quality 1.10 Strategic plan of the library 10.2 Funding 10.3 We have control over our budget  Policy on quality assurance 2.1 Elements of quality assurance conferred on the library 2.2 Library is central to any programme being passed for accreditation 2.3 No documentation for quality management 2.4 Programme accreditation
Focus group		Library management 1.4 We are involved in building leadership in the profession 1.5 Management ensures leadership training for staff
(University Librarian)	Customer Focus	Quality in our services/ Library customer service 4.4 Information literacy 4.7 Produce manpower 4.8 Social media usage 4.9 Variety of electronic resources 6.4 Environment 6.8 Provide service for physically-challenged users
Focus group		Library customer service 6.1 A lot to be done on automation in the circulation area 6.4 Environment 6.5 Gap in customer service 6.10 Staffing as a factor 6.11 Unable to access resources without human intervention

There was therefore unanimity in the data between the perceptions of the interviewee and the focus group participants. Assessment of the library's management practices was based on the five QM principles (themes) listed previously (viz leadership, customer service, human resource management, process management and

performance measurement), and important views relating to these themes that emerged from the analysis are presented below.

**3.2 Leadership** The two major areas of focus for the library’s strategic plan were human resource development and the ability of the library to manage change in respect of the application of new technologies to meet growing user expectations:

*‘I like placing emphasis on human capital, because information resources would be of no use if there are no human beings to run them. The first thing I did was... have people from different background, develop them, to expose them to the International workshops’.* [UL]

*‘The management of the library is also trying to ensure that we have leadership training even for staff’* [FG-1]

‘Technology has tremendously assisted us in improving on quality services. With technology, our reach, that is beyond the library, to look for information, to assist students has improved tremendously’ [UL]

*‘Technology, is being used, we are trying to get our data base online to have our catalogue online...probably the circulation module should also be effective in another few months. And all that is part of trying to assure quality and to ensure that we have better services’* [FG - 3].

**3.3 Customer focus and satisfaction** The library’s drive for meeting user expectations was explained as ‘providing enabling environment for users and satisfying user needs’ [UL]. The focus group on the other hand gave a general indication of inadequacies in customer services mainly on access, despite availability of resources:

**Table 3:** Matrix of a case chart showing themes under dimensions of quality management

<b>Management Practices and Procedures</b>		
Pilot case	Leadership	Human resource management
University Librarian	1.2 Emphasis on human capital 1.7 Mission and vision (of the library) 1.8 Mission statement for the library 1.9 We place high premium on users as part of our quality 1.10 Strategic plan of the library 10.3 We have control over our budget	5.1 Communication with employees 5.2 Employee empowerment 5.3 Lower level of managers 5.4 Public relation officers 5.5 Quality of personnel recruited 5.6 Staff training 5.7 Teamwork
Focus group	1.4 We are involved in building leadership in the profession 1.5 Management ensures leadership training for staff	5.2 Employee empowerment 5.6 Staff training 5.8 Information does not flow
<b>Quality Service Delivery</b>		
Pilot case	Customer focus	Library resource management
University Librarian	4.1 Create enabling environment for users 4.2 The digital native 4.4 Information literacy 4.5 Internet facility 4.6 Produce manpower 4.7 Social media usage 4.8 Variety of electronic 6.4 Environment 6.8 Provide service for physically-challenged users	3.1 Access to resources 3.5 Management of our resources 3.7 Policy on collection development obsolete 7.1 Don’t have any system put in place 7.2 Don’t really have documentation 7.3 Not a conscious effort to utilize it 7.4 Remodelling of library space 9.2 ICT Infrastructure 9.3 Notion of library is changing 9.4 Technology is changing rapidly
Focus group	6.1 A lot to be done on automation in the circulation area 6.5 Gap in customer service 6.10 Staffing as a factor 6.11 Unable to access resources without human intervention	3.2 Content 3.3 Digitisation initiative 3.8 Library's cultural influences
<b>Improvement Efforts</b>		

Pilot case	Performance measurement
University Librarian	8.4 Platform on our website 8.5 Suggestion boxes 11.1 24 hour library service 11.3 Directorate of quality assurance 11.4 Invest in equipment procurement 11.5 Staff with more specialized skills
Focus group	8.1 Performance assessment is poor from user end 8.2 Different statistics are taken 8.3 Opinion poll 8.4 Platform on our website 8.5 Suggestion boxes

*'Where I am a bit disturbed or I see that there is a gap is in customer services. To me, as a person, we have not yet started... [FG - 2].*

The lack of an effective library literacy programme to aid user access to the vast collection of electronic resources constituted a major limitation to service delivery

*'What they (customers) see when they come, yes they can see the serene environment, they can see our resources, make use of them but they are not yet able to access those resources without human intervention' [FG - 2].*

*'Staffing is also a factor, we don't have sufficient staff to man those strategic positions, so will you meet up service delivery with the users?... there are some periods in the day when customers will come and they will not be served as well as they should' [FG - 4].*

**3.4 Human resource management** The pilot library's commitment to the development of its human resource was emphasised by the university librarian as *'communication with employees'* and *'empowerment'*. This was confirmed from evidence obtained through analysis of the library's strategic plan. *'I told them they should see themselves, as the first public relation officers... we do organize periodic in-house training for them' [UL]*

**Table 4:** Matrix showing pilot case study participants definition and perception of quality and quality management

Case description	Conceptual label	Transcript (contextual definition)	Categories (How notion is understood)
Pilot Case	Quality (in academic library context)	Essence of the services we deliver to our readers (UL)  Meet the information needs of our patrons within a stipulated time frame (UL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A high stage of library user satisfaction [6.6]</li> </ul>
	Quality management (in academic library context)	<p>Situate quality in the context of the vision and mission of your library which should derive from the overall mission and vision statement of the university (UL). A process of managing the library and its resources to the best of the ability of that organization ( FG 2)</p> <p>Ability of the library in question to give the best to the patrons in terms of the services they provide. (FG1)</p> <p>Measures put in place in terms of infrastructure, human resource to provide quality service to client/users of the library. (FG 3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective alignment with university goals [1.1]</li> <li>• Holistic view of the library [1.3]</li> <li>• Totality of quality management of the resources [1.11]</li> <li>• Quality of the personnel recruited [5.5]</li> <li>• Management of library environment [1.6]</li> </ul>

A contrary view to the university librarian's assertion was advanced by the focus group, claiming that there had been an exclusion of lower management staff from the library's general policy decisions pertaining to its development:

*'Information does not flow, information does not come down within the main library, not to talk of those ones in the faculty library'* [FG - 6].

**3.5 Library resource development/management** The data showed that the library enjoyed adequate funding to develop and manage its resources from its stakeholders – the university; the government; and international donor agencies, though the focus group believed that funds could be better managed:

*'We're lucky in this university because we have control over our budget...we enjoy this kind of relative freedom'* [UL]

*'We are talking about funding...what do we do with it. Ordering of priorities, that's a factor'* [FG - 5]

The data also showed that the library's adoption of QM strategy had not followed any systematic procedure:

*'When we started, it was not a conscious effort to utilize it, it was a kind of reaction and that's why we don't really have documentation for that because we were reacting to it'* [UL]

*'For now, we don't have any system put in place but I have been looking around to start with, looking around other libraries, to see how we can develop our parameter for quality evaluation'* [UL].

**3.6 Performance measurement** Feedback from users was indicated as the means of assessing the library's services to the community. These, according to the university librarian mainly came through 'social media' (where he described as a *'platform on our website'* [UL] for interaction with users on Facebook) and through suggestion boxes.

*'We have a platform where we can easily measure the quality of our service, we're on Facebook and we have a platform on our website blog where we listen to the comments of our readers'...we still have a group of readers who are traditionalists, who don't believe they should go to the Facebook, we have boxes for them all, they're free to write their reports'* [UL].

The focus group on the other hand held a contrary view, claiming that user feedback on the library's performance was poor due to the ineffectiveness of the social media platform.

*'Performance assessment is poor from user end, the Facebook page is not interacting and the assessment level from our performance is poor from the user end'* [FG - 2].

They also maintained that suggestion boxes were only functional in some departmental libraries. They however acknowledge that the university librarian had an open-door policy for dealing with user complaints. Internally, assessment with regards to library usage such as readership and retrieval of resources was obtained through *'different statistics approach'* [FG - 3] for such activities, though the focus group indicated that *'the results of these polls are not publicized'* [FG - 5].

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusions**

The federal government of Nigeria policy on education(1998), which was built on the National Universities Commission (NUC) Act of 1974 (The Complete Laws of Nigeria, 2009), stipulated the role of the academic library as being to effectively support their institutions' teaching, learning and research. The functions which included development and management of products and services are the essence of academic library's contribution to the development of Nigerian universities. Evidence from the data indicates the availability of adequate financial resources for procurement and management of up-to-date library resources as expressed by the university librarian and confirmed by the focus group, as the major area of QM application. However, there does not seem to be an appropriate structure on ground to enable adequate delivery of the resources to users.

Issues raised by the focus group include inadequate staffing to cope with user demands and a lack of effective library literacy and bibliographic instruction to enable users to access the library's resources without any 'human intervention' (See index in Table 1). This indicates the library management's inability to match

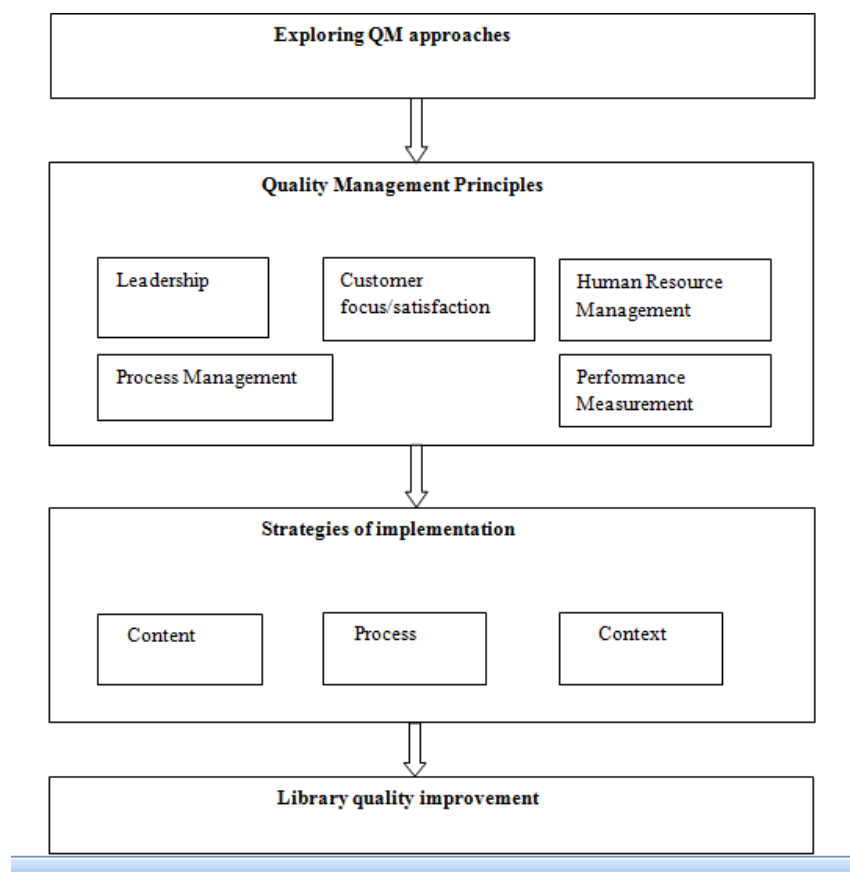


resource acquisition and management with service provision. There is also an indication that QM practices are applied on ad hoc basis with no systematic procedures, and this has contributed to the omission of key issues regarding service provision. For example, the non-availability of a collection development policy is an indication of staff's inability to have a grasp of their workflow for optimal productivity; again, the lack of appropriate measurement and evaluation mechanism, which has affected customer feedback on services, is a confirmation of an earlier result on same library in first phase of study, which indicated that feedback were mainly obtained from suggestion boxes 'occasionally'. Though a justification given for applying QA and ISO tools was that it was mainly meant for meeting requirement of library accreditation for academic programmes, it was nevertheless argued to have assisted in recording successes in some library operations.

The key findings of this study are as follows:

- The concepts of quality and QM are understood in the university library and are being applied in some of its processes.
- The QM practice applied in the university library is not in adherence to formal QM standards which could be used for evaluation of its operations.
- The university library adheres to the Quality Assurance policy of its parent institution, mainly to meet NUC's requirements for the accreditation of academic programmes.
- A gap is identified in the library's customer service, though there is evidence of quality practices in some areas such as human and electronic resource management, and information and communication technology.
- Measurement of the library's performance, both within and outside the university library was not well practised. This is thought to be due to a lack of specific measurement and evaluation mechanisms.
- Resourcing issues such as funding and electricity were identified as major factors that could affect the successful implementation of QM in academic libraries; and
- Though QM is a universal concept, it is generally not yet understood in the Nigerian academic library context by many librarians.

The combination of the interview with the focus group provided a rich source of data and information that threw more light on vital issues regarding the management and development of the case library. The framework analysis method was especially useful for identifying participants' views from categories, themes and dimensions involved in developing the case study data. Implication of institutional theory (IT) on the pilot case was evident from financial contribution of its stakeholders in the development of its resources. The pilot study has thus enabled the researcher to test the conceptual framework in Figure 1 below, and research questions for the main part of the study, which will involve a multiple case study of fifteen university libraries, and for the subsequent analysis and reporting of the resultant findings.



**Figure 2.** Conceptual framework for the main study

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