

# Members' Perception on Information Professional Associations: The Case of Kenya Library Association and Kenya Association of Archivists and Records Managers

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## Abstract:

**Purpose:** This study assessed Kenya Library Association (KLA) and Kenya Association of Records Managers' and Archivists (KARMA) members' perceptions on the performance of their professional associations' with a view to determining members' level of participation in programmes/activities and challenges, if any.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The study used descriptive survey design to collect data from members and get their opinions, suggestions, and attitude about the KLA and KARMA using questionnaires and face-to-face interview. The study used purposeful sampling techniques to sample 80 KLA and 44 KARMA members out of a population of 102 and 54, respectively. A pilot study of 10 respondents at the Association of Government Librarians (AGL) helped refine research instruments. Collected data was cleaned, coded and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program to perform descriptive statistics such as means, percentages and frequency tables.

**Findings:** Findings showed that the majority of respondents' agreed that the associations contribute immensely to the development of the information profession in Kenya. However, the study revealed 58 (60.4%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the programmes and activities of KLA and KARMA; they were not sure if the programmes met their expectations. The majority 72 (75%) were not involved in their associations programmes while 24 (25%) stated that they were involved. When asked to explain the response given, most of those who stated that they were not involved cited arbitrary decisions by the executive board and even misuse of resources by some officials.

**Implication:** This study has implications on the various programmes offered by KLA, KARMA and other information science professional organizations and how they are perceived by members.

**Originality/Value:** It was recommended that KLA and KARMA enhance members' participation in decision making; increase enrolment of new members; improve communication from the secretariat and explore ways of cessation of in-house rivalry and in-fighting among officials.

**Keywords:** Academic and research libraries, Ghana, Library and information science professionals, Staff development.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Professional associations have been an integral part of the professional realm since time immemorial as they transcend all professions. According to the International Federation of Library and Information Associations (IFLA, 2009), strong professional affiliations are perceived as near panacea in the development of the library profession. This however is contingent to having an association with clear objectives, revolutionary programmes and vibrant membership.

Pemberton (1994) points out that the concerns of professional associations are the interests and needs of its individual members such as education, information and image, among others. Library and information service profession is premised on distinctive knowledge that requires continuous updating and development. Fisher (1997) adds that for any profession to excel, it must be backed by diligent inputs from professional associations.

According to Namande and Oyier (2015), professions are perceived as fields of practice defined by sets of organizations directly interacting with one another in a meaningful way. This kind of interactions leads to shared systems of meaning that establishes boundaries between professions, defining their membership, appropriate way of behaviour and the relationship between organizations and society.

Library and information profession throughout the world is fortified by professional associations which take international, regional and national faces. At the International level, there are associations such as International Federation of Library and Information Institutions (IFLA), Commonwealth Library Association (COMMLA), Association of Christian Librarians (ALA), International School Librarians, International Organization for Standardization (ISO), International Organization of Agricultural Information Specialists (IAALD) among others. It is important to note here that all these associations operate under the umbrella of IFLA.

The East African Library Association (EALA) made up of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania was established in 1956. A decade later, the EALA branches devolved into independent national library associations with the Uganda Library Association (ULA) being formed in 1972; Kenya Library Association (KLA) in 1973; Tanzania Library Association in 1974, respectively (Tirong, 2015).

However, the growth and development of professional associations in Africa paints an ironical pattern; the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) is the youngest in Africa yet it is the most vibrant compared to their East African counterparts that have celebrated their golden jubilees.

Professional Associations' in Kenya comprise the Association of Government Librarians (AGL), the Information Communication Technology Association of Kenya (ICTAK) which represent professionals from the field of information communication technology and related stakeholders who provide consultation, execution, sustenance, training, strategic planning and other services. Other associations include Christian Association of Librarians in Africa-Kenya (CALAK) that caters for the interests of Christian librarians in terms of professional growth, education and spiritual nourishment; Kenya Association of Records Managers and Archivists (KARMA) established in 2010 to represent the professional interests of persons working in or interested in records and archives management; Kenya Library and Information Services Consortium (KLISC), among others.

In an ideal situation, membership is pegged on relevant training and obtaining acceptable credentials, having undergone stipulated period of internship under supervision of qualified professionals in some associations. Over and above training, one has to sit and pass an accreditation examination (Otike, 1993).

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Professional associations are key in the growth and advancement of any career. However, there is a challenge in growing and sustaining the number of associations' members. As posited by

Loida and Robin (2012), many associations are perceived as exclusive and difficult groups to become involved in. Ossai-Ugbah (2013), in his study critiqued professional associations in Africa for not being run in a professional manner. Professional associations' in Kenya have witnessed emergence of splinter groups because of fallout with initial associations. This disintegration ends up in turf rivalry instead of working for the professional good of their members. Like KLA, out of over 300 records managers and archivists in the country, less than 50% are members of KARMA. If this trend continues, professional association risk being pushed into oblivion and the members who are supposed to benefit would be denied the opportunity of growth and consequently, this spells doom to professionalism. Therefore, there is need to assess the perception that the membership have on their association so as to address grey areas that affect vibrancy of the association.

## III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

### A. *The Objectives of this Study were to:*

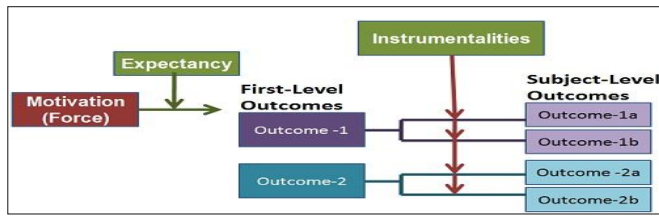
- a. Determine the role of KLA and KARMA to the development of information profession in Kenya.
- b. Assess members' participation in their associations' professional activities.
- c. Assess members' perception of programmes/activities organized by their professional associations.
- d. Determine the challenges facing professional associations in meeting their obligations.

### B. *Research Questions:*

- a. How has KLA and KARMA contributed in the development of information profession in Kenya?
- b. How do members participate in professional activities of KLA and KARMA?
- c. What are the members' perceptions on activities organized by their professional associations?
- d. What are the challenges facing professional associations in meeting their obligations?

## IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by The Expectancy Theory proposed by Victor Vroom of Yale School of Management in 1964 and later refined in 1994 (Vroom, 1994). The theory states that the intensity of a tendency to perform in a particular manner is dependent on the intensity of an expectation that the performance will be followed by a definite outcome and on the appeal of the outcome to the individual (Fig. 1).



Source: Vroom (1964)

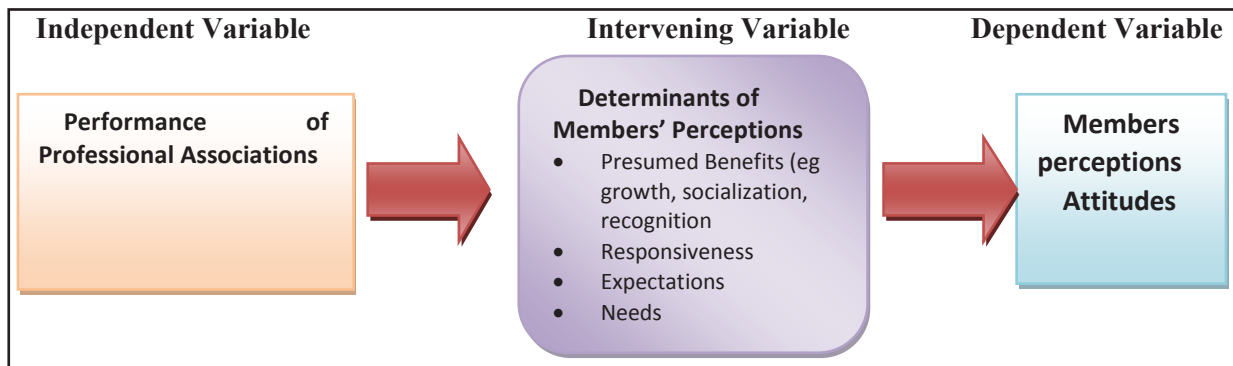
Fig. 1: Vroom's Expectancy Theory

The Expectancy Theory states that employee's motivation is an outcome of how much an individual wants a reward (Valence), the assessment that the likelihood that the effort will lead to expected performance (Expectancy) and the belief that the

performance will lead to reward (Instrumentality). In short, *Valence* is the significance associated by an individual about the expected outcome. It is an expected and not the actual satisfaction that an employee expects to receive after achieving the goals.

## V. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study's conceptual framework is shown in Fig. 2. The independent variable was performance of professional associations which affects members' perception and attitude (dependent variables) about them. The relationship between performance (dependent variable) and perceptions/attitudes (dependent variables) are underpinned by member expectations, needs, and presumed benefits for belonging to the association.



Source: Researchers', 2017

Fig. 2: Conceptual Framework

## VI. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Professional Associations refer to formal organization of professionals or a group of professionals, which are practitioners of a given profession united together by mutual consent to deliberate, determine and act jointly for a common purpose (Sunita, 2007). According to UTICA College (2013) professional associations are organizations composed of members who share a common interest in a given career or field and membership include students, entry-level professionals, and seasoned professionals. In addition to valuable networking, professional associations also provide members with information, services, and products to encourage exploration, awareness, and development of the career field.

The Kenya Library Association changed its identity to the Kenya Association of Library and Information Professionals in 2010 through the review of its founding constitution but retained the acronym (KLA). Promoting and advocating for the Profession is the key role of KLA. This entails building a good image for the profession. The image of any association depends on formidable membership power. In an ideal situation, membership is pegged on relevant training and obtaining acceptable credentials, having undergone stipulated period of internship under supervision of qualified professionals in some

associations. Over and above training one has to sit and pass an accreditation examination (Otike, 1993).

Kenya's first professional association for records managers and archivists, the Kenya Association of Records Managers and Archivists (KARMA), was established in 2010 after several previous attempts to form a professional body for records professionals (Ambira, 2012). According to Ambira, the Kenya civil service has about 300 records officers across the government ministries and departments. However, less than 50 per cent of these have joined the KARMA. The slow recruitment of membership in KARMA poses a challenge to the association on how to grow and eventually marshal a membership that can facilitate the achievement of its objectives.

Ossai-Ugbah (2013) study surveyed the role of professional Library associations and institutions in facilitating access to information in Africa. The study traced the history of library association, its stated objectives, the need to join a professional library association, benefits derived from an association, characteristic of professional library associations and its role in facilitating access to information in Africa. The study however critiqued the professional associations in Africa for run unprofessionally due to obsolete technology inadequate funding.

According to Frank (1997) professional associations contribute significantly to the development of effective leadership. Librarians who are active in professional associations have realistic opportunities to improve or enhance their leadership skills. He further points out that leadership, administration, management, and supervision are interdependent concepts and practices that can be enhanced through active participation in professional associations.

The Canadian Library Association (CLA, 2000) conducted research to evaluate members' opinions about its activities and research role. The study determined the level of member satisfaction with association activities, identifying the most important issues in the profession, the role of each member, and the work priorities of the association. The results found partial satisfaction and determined that informal education and the development of professional knowledge were important activities.

Aslan (1995) examined Turkish Library Association's (TLA) member opinions and expectations about the association's activities and findings revealed insufficient level of satisfaction with the educational and research activities.

Fisher (1997) suggests that professional associations are enriching the library and information science field through their efforts in both research and professional development. He emphasizes that Professional associations can and must have a large role in providing self-assessment tools and opportunities, training resources, and mentoring opportunities through courses, internships, and fellowships.

Morrison (2004) stated that librarians and library associations have an opportunity to play their leadership role in providing open access to information. Open access to library literature is an important way for the advancement of librarianship. Library associations should educate their members about the possibilities in providing open access to their published materials.

Khan and Bhatti (2010) recommended that the Pakistan Library Association should advocate for professional recognition. It should provide training courses for professionals, promote professional collaboration and communication, and maintain a bridge between LIS researchers and practitioners for the better solution of professional problems.

Thomas, Satpathi, and Satpathi (2010) studied the emerging challenges in academic librarianship and the role of library associations in keeping library professionals up to date. It was found out that the majority of librarians need continuing education support. Their study concluded that library associations all over the world, especially in USA and Europe, need to play a dynamic role in keeping librarians abreast of current trends.

Madden (2008) reviewed the current library and information services in UK and the challenges confronted by those associations. It was revealed that the major challenges for library associations in UK include training members with information technologies, marketing and promoting information services, securing sufficient funding, and developing information policies and strategies.

Muswazi (2002) observed that financial and leadership constraints and lack of commitment are major problems faced by the Swaziland Library Association. It was recommended that membership should be surveyed on administrative, leadership, and communication improvements. A strategic plan should be crafted to prioritize legislation and training. An increase in institutional membership subscription rates should be implemented and good working relations with allied professions be established and maintained.

## VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive survey design to collect data from members and get their opinions, suggestions, and attitude about the KLA and KARMA using questionnaires and face-to-face interview as research instruments. The study used purposeful sampling techniques to sample 80 and 44 KLA and KARMA members out of a population of 102 and 54, respectively. A pilot study of 10 respondents at the Association of Government Librarians (AGL) helped refine research instruments. Collected data was cleaned, coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program to perform descriptive statistics such as means, percentages and frequency tables.

## VIII. DATA ANALYSIS

### A. Response Rate

Out of 124 questionnaires distributed to the sample population, 96 were completed and returned representing 77.5% response rate. Responses from questionnaires were supplemented by scheduled interviews with four (4) and two (2) executive board members from KLA and KARMA, respectively.

### B. Distribution of Respondents By Age

As illustrated in Fig. 3, the majority of respondents 43 (44.8%) were aged between 36 and 45 years followed by about one-quarter 24 (25%) aged between 26 and 35 years, and between 46 and 55 years, respectively. Only 5 (5.2%) were above 56 years.



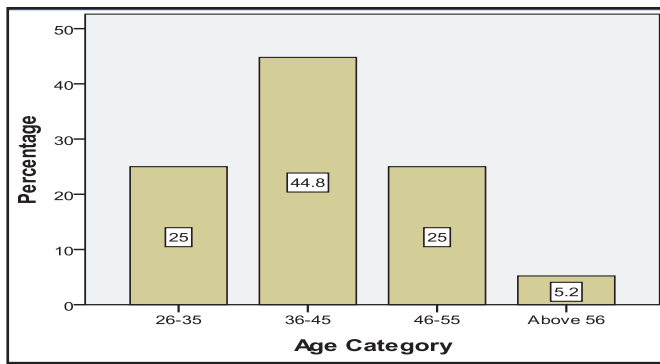


Fig. 3: Distribution of Respondents' By Age

C. Respondents' Areas of Specialization

Since the information profession is multifaceted, the researchers' sought to find out the different categories of professionals' that subscribe to KLA and KARMA. As illustrated in Fig. 4, the majority of the respondents 79 (81.9%) were information and knowledge workers. This category comprised librarians, knowledge managers, archivists and records managers. The second category was that of lecturers 9 (9.6%) followed by research scientists 4 (4.3%). ICT managers and "others" that stood at 2 (2.1 %) each.

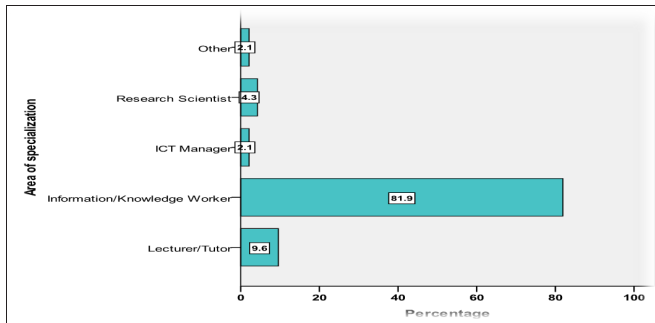


Fig. 4: Areas of Specialization

D. Highest Educational/Professional Qualifications

As shown in Table I, the majority of KLA and KARMA members 42 (43.8%) were masters' degree holders followed by about one-third 29 (30.2%) who were first degree holders.

TABLE I: HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL/PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Highest Educational/ Professional Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
PhD	9	9.4
Masters	42	43.8
Undergraduate	29	30.2
Diploma	12	12.5
Other	4	4.2
Total	96	100.0

About 12 (12.5%) and 9 (9.4%) were diploma and PhD holders, respectively. The "others" category represents those with certificate level and specializations other than library and information sciences.

IX. ROLE OF KLA AND KARMA TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMATION PROFESSION IN KENYA

A. Members Influence on their Associations' Decision Making

It was imperative to understand if the members had a role and were involved in their associations' decision making process. The majority 72 (75%) gave dissenting views while 24 (25%) stated that they were involved. When asked to explain the response given, most of those who stated that they were not involved cited arbitrary decisions by the executive board and even misuse of resources by some officials. Members are therefore minimally involved in activities and decision making processes of their associations.

B. Representation of Professional Interests of the Members

One way of gauging the role of an association in the development of a profession is ascertaining whether the association represents the interests of members. Asked to state if KARMA and KLA articulated their members' professional interests, 25 (26%) strongly agreed and 15 (15.6%) agreed. 40 (41.7%) disagreed, 2 (2.1%) strongly disagreed while 8 (8.3%) were not sure. See Table II for illustration.

TABLE II: REPRESENTATION OF PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF MEMBERS'

	Rating	Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Agree	25	26
	Agree	15	15.6
	Not sure	8	8.3
	Disagree	40	41.7
	Strongly Disagree	2	2.1
	Total		90
Missing	System	6	6.3
Total		96	100

Contributions of Conferences towards Achievement of KLA and KARMA Objectives

The researchers' wanted to find out how conferences contributed towards achievement of KLA and KARMA objectives. This was based on the assumption that the associations' objectives

contribute to the development of the information profession in Kenya. Table III shows the pattern of response when the respondents were asked to confirm whether conferences have helped the associations' achieve their objectives. About one-

quarter of respondents 26 (27.1%) agreed that the conferences have helped the associations to achieve objectives. More than one-half 53 (55.2%) disagreed while 11 (11.5%) were not sure.

TABLE III: CONFERENCES/MEETINGS HAVE HELPED KLA AND KARMA ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES

Rating		Frequency	Percentage
	Agree	26	27.1
	Disagree	53	55.2
	Not sure	11	11.5
	Total	90	93.8
Missing	System	6	6.3
Total		96	100

The above findings revealed that KLA and KARMA play an important role to the development of the information profession. These was in agreement with Bhatti and Chohan (2012); Khan and Bhatti (2010); Frank (1997); Ossai-Ugbah (2013); and Ahmed and Reddy (2015) who posited that associations enhance and promote professionalism and were invaluable to the growth of any discipline.

### X. MEMBERS' PARTICIPATION IN ASSOCIATIONS' PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMMMES

#### A. Participation in KLA and KARMA Committees

The second broad objective of this study was to assess members' participation in KLA and KARMA programmes and activities. The study sought to establish whether or not the members were involved in committee activities of their associations. From Table IV, 59 (61.5%) said they were involved, 19 (19.8%) stated that they did not while 18 (18.8%) pointed out that they did not but are interested in participating.

TABLE IV: PARTICIPATION IN KLA AND KARMA COMMITTEES ACTIVITIES

Have you ever participated in KLA or KARMA committees activities?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	59	61.5
No	19	19.8
No, but wish to participate	18	18.8
Total	96	100

#### B. Cost of Programmes and Seminars

Respondents were asked if the costs for participating in seminars and other associations' activities were reasonable and affordable

and their responses are shown in Table V. This was based on the assumption that affordability determine participation. About 31 (32.3%) strongly agreed that the costs were within affordable range, 3 (3.1%) agreed while 38 (39.6%) disagreed; 7 (7.3%) strongly disagreed and 13 (13.5%) were not sure.

TABLE V: COST OF PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAMMES AND SEMINARS

Rating		Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly Agree	31	32.3
	Agree	3	3.1
	Not sure	13	13.5
	Disagree	38	39.6
	Strongly Disagree	7	7.3
	Total	92	95.8
Missing	System	4	4.2
Total		96	100

### XI. MEMBERS' PERCEPTION OF ACTIVITIES ORGANIZED BY KLA AND KARMA

The third research objective of the study was to determine members' perception of various activities organized by their associations. User perception can affect user confidence and hence subsequent participation in professional activities

#### A. Conferences and Meetings

The respondents were asked to rate the quality of the activities and programs of KLA and KARMA. It emerged that 34 (35.4%) rated the activities (conferences and meetings) as being very good while 58 (60.4%) did not say anything (they were neutral). Only 2 (2.1%) stated that the programs were good. This is illustrated in Table VI.

TABLE VI: RESPONDENTS RATING OF KLA AND KARMA CONFERENCES/MEETINGS

Rating		Frequency	Percentage
	Very Good	34	35.4
	Good	2	2.1
	Neutral	58	60.4
	Total	94	97.9
Missing	System	2	2.1
Total		96	100

*B. Level of Satisfaction with KLA and KARMA Programmes*

The researcher wanted to establish levels of satisfaction of members in their association' programmes' and activities and the results are as depicted in Table VII.

TABLE VII: PROGRAMMES VERSUS MEMBERS EXPECTATION

KLA Programmes meet members needs		Frequency	Percentage
	Strongly agree	17	17.7
	Agree	9	7.3
	Not sure	58	60.4
	Disagree	7	9.3
	Strongly disagree	2	2.1
	Total	93	96.9
Missing	System	3	3.1
Total		96	100

The study revealed 58 (60.4%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the programmes and activities of KLA and KARMA; they were not sure if the programmes met their expectations. Those who indicated that the association did not meet their needs were 9 (11.4%) in general but specifically 7 (9.3%) disagreeing and 2 (2.1%) strongly disagreeing, respectively with the statement that KLA programmes met the members' needs.

*C. Achievement of Objectives*

The study sought to know if the KLA and KARMA had achieved the objectives for which they were established. As shown in Table VIII, the majority of respondents 60 (62.5%) were of the opinion that the objectives have not

TABLE VIII: RESPONDENTS PERCEPTION OF ASSOCIATIONS 'ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

Response		Frequency	Percentage
	Yes	27	28.1
	No	60	62.5
	Total	87	90.6
Missing	System	9	9.4
Total		96	100

met while 27 (28.1%) agreed that they had achieved their objectives. Asked to explain their answer, those who said 'no' attributed it to the fact that apart from seminars and or conferences and MAKTABA awards, nothing more was taking place.

**XII. CHALLENGES FACED BY KLA AND KARMA IN MEETING THEIR OBLIGATIONS**

The fourth research objective of the study was to examine challenges faced by KLA and KARMA professional associations in meeting their obligations. More than one-half 48 (50%) cited was what they termed "arrogant secretariat". Secondly, members complained of their views not being put into consideration when important decisions that borders on finances are made. Thirdly, it was found out that there was a problem with the management of the associations' resources. That the statements read during Annual General Meetings (AGMs) preceding conferences are not normally comprehensive since they are read when members are focused to travel back home and are hardly attentive.

**XIII. CONCLUSION**

The management of the associations are not driven by the interest of the members at heart but their personal gains, an attribute that members frown upon and therefore negative perception about their associations. However, there is a positive mood in KARMA membership and therefore a sense of pride and satisfaction with KARMA by its members compared to KLA where members feel shy to speak their minds and those who are sincere with their conscience clearly showed that KLA's programmes are not meeting their needs.

**XIV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

There is need for the secretariat staff to handle members with dignity and respect. As a way forward such staff need training and retraining on matters of public relations and office management.

1. The executive boards should involve the members of the associations in decision making to for transparency and accountability especially on financial matters.
  2. Special AGMs should be set aside for purposes of budgeting and reading financial statements regarding expenditure to allow members enough time to interrogate them.
  3. Being member based organizations, there is need for the managements to cultivate democratic practices to allow genuine election of leaders as opposed to stage-managed practices which brings on board same leaders every term.
  4. There is need to dawn down incessant wrangles that have characterized the leadership of some associations more especially KLA. This will boost members' confidence and therefore cultivate a positive perception of the associations.
  5. Both KLA and KARMA should accommodate information professionals from all sectors of the economy. As it is now, the associations are seen as being elitist and academic in membership and leadership composition. In addition the caveat that discriminates against people who have below masters qualifications should be done away with: in these associations full members are only those with master's qualifications. Others are regarded either as Para-professionals, associate or student members, a condition that has never been received well by the majority of the specialists with less than master's qualifications.
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