



CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF NON-PROFESSIONAL STAFF OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NORTH EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study assessed the challenges and prospects of staff training and development of non-professional staff of university libraries in North East Nigeria. The study was guided by three (3) specific objectives and research questions. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study comprised all non-professional staff from the thirteen (13) university libraries in study area totaling two hundred and seventy-four (274) but due to security challenges in some part of the study zone, the study covered only one hundred and ninety-four (194) in ten (10) university libraries. The instruments used for data collection was questionnaire and interview. Data were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the staff training programmes were provided to high extent in the university libraries especially orientation programmes. That financial constraint and poor knowledge of ICT facilities are the main problems facing staff training and development programmes. The study also brought to light that adequate funding and adequate provision of training facilities (mostly current) should be provided by the management. The study made some recommendations among which are: The management of university libraries should induce their non-professional staff with finance to encourage them engage more in training programmes, problems of poor funding and lack of computer training/internet literacy should be properly addressed by the management.

Key Words: Challenges, Prospects, Staff Training and Development, Non-professional staff, University Libraries

Introduction

University libraries are the type of academic library that are established in the universities to meet the information needs of the members of the community. University libraries serve students, lecturers, and other users within the parent institutions. University libraries have long been recognized as the 'Hearts' of their universities. To fulfill its mission of supporting the educational objectives of its parent body include teaching, learning, research and cultural development, the libraries have to develop and maintain standard books, journals and audio-visual collections and services (Ode and Ode, 2018). It is a place where collection of materials is organized to provide physical, bibliographical and intellectual accesses to a target group by trained staff, who provide services and programmes related to the information needs of the users. The non-professional staff required in university libraries need to have different competences like professional staff in providing services. University libraries like any other establishments are designed and managed by special groups of people whose job are to combine and utilize the organizational resources of men, money, information items and other resources to achieve organizational objectives. These individuals are regarded as 'staff' of the organization.

The challenges faced by non-professional staff in university libraries cannot be over emphasize because over the years, staff training and development programmes have not received the much-needed attention in different categories on them especially in university libraries staff. Abban (2018) pointed out that there is inadequate funding of libraries by either the government or university management. Most of them in leadership positions do not understand the need for currency of holdings in both collection and human resources hence they lack good policies, guidelines and procedures for provision of adequate fund for training and re-training of library staff. Fasola (2022) pointed out other factors such as lack of planning, lack of interest among library staff, and poor library administration as the challenges facing university libraries.

The way forwards to staff training and development programmes can be achieve by the introduction of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in library

in services delivery has significantly created a change in skills, competencies and attitudes of library personnel in delivering services, thus bringing to fore the need for improvement of the competencies and skills of personnel through adequate training and re-training by relevant programmes. The university libraries personnel in this ICT age to be able to perform effectively and efficiently in discharging their duty, the following strategies of enhancing staff training and development programmes must become imperative to them. There must be well planned staff training and development programmes for the personnel to improve on their traditional method of operation by re-training themselves to avoid being obsolete and their job hijacked by other professionals in this digital era. Mbagwu and Madu-Malachy (2022) Non-professional staff training and retraining is the panacea for the success of any digital university library project. Non-professional staff of the libraries can change their attitude towards training because it will bring out the best in them professionally. Non-professional staff training needs to be adequately funded because organizational development activities cannot achieve inadequate results without training and development. To mobilize the library organization in carrying out their duty of staff training, adequate funds should be made available to them. Abba and Dawha (2009) acknowledged that Nigeria Universities Commission and university authorities should provide funding, qualified and adequate personnel, and a written training policy for the library.

Statement of the problem

Despite the importance of staff training and development programmes in libraries with regards to service delivery and personal professional growth, it is doubtful if staff training and development programmes for non-professional staff are effective in Nigerian institution of higher learning, especially in university libraries. This might have led to the deterioration in the services such as binding services, circulation services, current awareness services, and application of modern information seeking techniques.

In view of the above there is need to assess the non-professional staff training and development in university libraries in North East Nigeria. There is also need to ascertain the problems that affect the programmes and determine ways of improving them. These problems can greatly affect the development of staff potentials and the library in general if not adequately discovered and tackled in the libraries. It is also noted that no study has been conducted on staff training and development for non-professional staff in North East university libraries that is why the study is trying to fill the gap.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to assess staff training and development for non-professional staff in university libraries in North East Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- (1) determine the effectiveness of staff training and development programmes of non-professional staff in the libraries.
- (2) find out the problems affecting staff training and development of non-professional staff in the university libraries.
- (3) determine the strategies for enhancing staff training and development in the university libraries.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study,

1. How effective are the staff training and development programmes of non-professional staff in the libraries?
2. What are the problems affecting staff training and development for non-professional staff in the libraries?
3. What are the strategies for enhancing staff training and development in the libraries?

Literature Review

University Libraries are academic libraries that serve the students, staff, department, faculty members, and researchers at universities level and other higher educational institutions. The university libraries are mandated to clear universal functions supporting teaching, learning and research activities of their institutions (Uzuegbu and Amadi, 2022). University libraries have the objectives of providing very wide spectrum of information resources and services by supporting users with varieties of textbooks, periodicals and reference materials, bibliographic tools and current literatures on all the subjects to students, lecturers and other researchers within the University community. Ashikuzzaman (2013) listed the objectives of university library includes provision of information resources that facilitate teaching, learning and research programs of the university; to provide facilities that support libraries users for intellectual development through individual efforts; to provide information needs of students, lecturers, and other researchers within the university; it serves as conservators of knowledge to the university; to provide extension of knowledge for research purpose to the users; to provide latest knowledge to lecturers in their field of studies for effective teaching and for possible transmission of knowledge. For university libraries to achieve its objectives there must be available both humans and materials resources at their disposal. Over the years, staff training and development programmes have not received the much-needed attention in different categories of libraries especially in university libraries.

Staff can be referring to as people employed by an organization to perform some specific tasks. Staff in an organization as the case maybe are not only for administrative work but cuts across other technical services that an organization may provide for its client. As there are professional staff, there also non-professional staff in the university libraries. A library staff can have such qualities and skills like the ability to communicate positively with people, understand the needs of users, co-operate with individuals, knowledge of library materials and how best to access it, reassess to change methods of working to meet new situations, among others. The competency of library staff in various aspects of library operations in ensuring great achievement of

library operations and library objectives of teaching, learning, research and services (Akpokurerie, 2006). To achieve all these, there is need for staff training programmes for all the staff working in the university libraries including non-professional staff.

Training is a crucial element in ensuring positive users' experiences within the university libraries. Banjoko (2002) viewed training as an organized procedure by which people acquire knowledge or skill for a definite purpose and it is the process of equipping the employees particularly the non-managerial employees with specific skills. It is the systematic process of altering the behaviour, knowledge and/or motivation of employees in a direction to increase the trainer's effectiveness and organizational goal achievement. Azino (2014) stated that training in librarianship can be regarded as organized planning process to staff of the library to learn useful skills technically. It is the process through which non-professional staff learn new skills or techniques thereby achieving a change in behaviour and attitude. Training and development are an activity that changes people's behaviour and increased their productivity. Training and development are essential not only to increase productivity but also to motivate and inspire workers by letting them know how important their jobs are and giving them all the information, they need to perform those jobs of which non-professional library staff are not exempted (Olaniyan and Ojo, 2008).

The non-professional staff are the assistant library officers, senior library assistants, library assistants and library attendants. They do not possess any qualifications in library and information science. Non-professional or support staff constitute the largest force of library tasks and perform tasks that might not be directly related to library activities, such as clerical work but complementary to library tasks (Oberg, 2004). They involved in library tasks such as bibliographic searching, charging and discharging of library materials, filing of cards, and shelving. They also perform routine activities that immensely help in the running affairs of the library.

Staff training and development in general faced numerous challenges in university libraries. Onah (2003) viewed that the of problems of staff training and development centre on the issues of selecting and releasing of staff for training by the authorities of an organization. The process can affect other criteria such as politics,

qualification, years of service, gender, ethnicity and favouritism and the geographical spread of training opportunities among others. This phenomenon runs contrary to the idea of training for efficient management in the sense that staff selected for training may not know the job or cope with the demands of the administrative training course. The author further added the inadequate funding and lack of good leadership also cause serious problems non-professional staff training and development programmes in university libraries. Meggision (2001) also identified some of the problems of staff training and development as: lack of fund for training library staff, discrimination in the selection criteria, lack of more sponsored conferences and organization seminars and workshop, lack of sponsored exchange programmes with other countries for staff to be current and conversant with modern information technology among others.

Similarly, Abba and Dawha (2009) indicated that, inadequate funding was the leading factor which represented 100%, lack of written training and development policies was the next; this also represented 62.5%, followed by lack of personnel which also represented 50% and lastly shortage of staff which was 37.5%. In another discourse Osei (1996) on professional staff training and development in university library argued that there are many problems which militate against professional staff training and development in spite of its dignified objectives. These include the problems of finance, time, individual needs and the inability to fulfill rising expectations. However, Arua (2002) supported that there are periodic problems of in-house training couple with the economic hardship experienced by the country and is seriously affecting many libraries especially university libraries non-professional staff training and development. According to the author, in the face of the present economic hardship, which makes it difficult for authorities to sponsor it library staff to training programmes, conferences, and workshops and restriction in awarding research grants, library authorities should organize periodic in-house seminars to keep the library staff intellectually up-to-date.

The introduction of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in library delivery services has significantly created a change in skills, competencies and attitudes of library personnel, thus bringing to the fore the need for improvement of the

competencies and skills of personnel through adequate training and re-training by relevant programmes. ICT in libraries is a new concept which has changed the trend of library operations. To overcome the low comfort level of technologies. There is need to embark on result-oriented training practices for library staff. By so doing, a lot of confidence will be developed and technophobia in library staff will be arrested. For university libraries personnel to be able to perform effectively and efficiently in this information age, the following strategies of enhancing staff training and development programmes must be put in place. There must be well planned staff training and development programmes for the personnel to improve on their traditional method of operation by retraining themselves to avoid being obsolete and their job hijacked by other professionals in this digital era (Nwalo, 2002). Staff training and re-training is the panacea for the success of any digital university library project. Non-professional staff can change their attitude towards training because it can bring out the best in them professionally.

Non-professional staff training and development must be adequately funded because organizational development activities often have been hindered due to inadequate funds. To mobilize the library organization in carrying out their duty of staff training, adequate funds should be made available to them. Abba and Dawha (2009) acknowledged that Nigeria Universities Commission and university authorities should provide funding, qualified and adequate personnel, and a written training policy for the library; Sponsorship for training should be extended to the majority of the staff professional, para-professional and non-professional staff.

However, Chiware (2007), suggested that the obvious to retaining these skilled librarians and preventing them from looking for a greener pasture abroad is by offering fat salary and good working conditions. He also suggested liaising with these skilled Africa experts Africa in the Diaspora, while they retain their foreign bases, we will be tapping and be using their skills. Effective staff development program tries to create recognizable link between the personal and professional growth of library staff. According to Khan, Idress and Khan (2013), library staff development is the process directed towards the personal and professional growth of employees and other

personnel. Every institution seeks to attain optimum productivity using the available human and material resources. Optimum productivity can scarcely be achieved without a well-planned and implemented staff training and development programmes geared towards improving the status and capabilities of employees. The study on non-professional staff training and development is conducted to filled the gap.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was employed for the study; the population of the study comprised of Two Hundred Seventy four (274) non-professional staff of university libraries in the study area; The sample size for this study was 194; Purposive sampling technique was used and four (4) states out of six (6) states in North-East geopolitical zone was used; the instrument for data collection was interview and questionnaire developed by the researcher; the instrument for data collection was subjected to face validation by some experts in The field; questionnaire were administered researcher and some research assistants; data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, precisely Mean ($\bar{x}$) and Standard Deviation (SD) with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

Results and Discussions

The tables present results from the data analysis in line with the specific objectives and research questions that guided the study:

Research Question 1: What is the effectiveness of staff training and development programmes of non-professional staff in the university libraries?

Table 1: Mean ratings of respondents on effectiveness of staff training and development programme

S/N	Effectiveness	VHE	HE	LE	NE	MEAN	SD	R	D
1	It provides for a skilled workforce	77	94	13	5	3.29	.71	1 st	HE
2	It provides opportunities for staff growth and career development	84	57	20	30	3.02	1.09	2 nd	HE
3	It results in improved efficiency	78	62	23	27	3.01	1.05	3 rd	HE
4	Better exposure and capability to interact with fellow staff and user	57	91	23	20	2.97	.92	4 th	HE
5	It builds confidence in the workers	49	83	44	14	2.88	.88	5 th	HE
6	It gives staff a sense of belonging in the running of library	56	78	33	24	2.87	.98	6 th	HE
7	There is recognition from other organizations	52	74	44	21	2.82	.96	7 th	HE

The result in Table 1 above shows that all items listed from 1-7 with the mean scores above 2.50 which is acceptable, are the effectiveness of staff training and development for non-professional staff in the libraries. Using the principle of real limit of number, it is observed that the provision of a skilled workforce with the mean score 3.29, provision of opportunities for staff growth and career development with the mean score 3.02, improvement of efficiency with the mean score 3.01, Better exposure and capability to interact with fellow staff and user with the mean score 2.97, building confidence in the workers with the mean score 2.88, giving staff a sense of belonging in the running of library with the mean score 2.87 and recognition from other organization with the mean score 2.82 are variables were effective to a high extent as staff training and development programmes.

Also, the overall mean showed that providing a skilled workforce (mean = 3.29) is ranked highest, while recognition from other organizations (Mean = 2.82) is ranked lowest as level of effectiveness of staff training and development programme

Research Question 2: What are the problems affecting staff training and development for non-professional staff in the university libraries?

Table 2: Mean ratings of respondents on Problems affecting staff training and development programmes

S/N	Problems	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	SD	R	D
1	Personal financial constraint	87	89	11	1	3.39	.62	1 st	A
2	Poor knowledge of ICT facilities	97	70	20	4	3.36	.75	2 nd	A
3	The course contents are too advanced	86	77	13	15	3.23	.89	3 rd	A
4	Lack of necessary training facilities	61	102	16	8	3.16	.75	4 th	A
5	Lack of interest by the staff	68	94	17	12	3.14	.82	5 th	A
6	Inadequate time provided	68	93	17	13	3.13	.84	6 th	A
7	Poor funding	57	101	24	9	3.08	.78	7 th	A
8	Gender selection problem	62	91	29	9	3.08	.81	8 th	A
9	Time between one course and another is too far	69	84	21	17	3.07	.91	9 th	A
10	Training will not result in promotion or upgrading	68	85	17	21	3.05	.94	10 ^h	A
11	Lack of entry qualification	60	96	20	15	3.05	.86	11 th	A
12	Discrimination in the selection criteria	79	64	26	22	3.05	1.01	12 th	A
13	Location/distance not convenient	62	91	14	24	3.00	.95	13 th	A
14	Lateness in the release of examination results	52	103	19	17	2.99	.86	14 th	A
15	Favouritism	60	75	44	12	2.96	.89	15 th	A
16	Lateness on the part of lecturers	47	96	31	17	2.91	.87	16 th	A
17	Selection is by number of years of service	54	75	45	17	2.87	.93	17 th	A
18	Lack of sponsored programmes	44	76	40	19	2.81	.93	18 th	A
19	Lack of written policy	47	82	34	28	2.77	.98	19 th	A

The result in Table 2 above shows that all the items listed from 1-19 with mean score above 2.50 which is above acceptable, are hindrance staff training and development programmes in university libraries in North-East. The results of the data analysis reveal that the respondents accepted that all the nineteen (19) listed facts such as Personal Financial Constraint with the mean score 3.39, Poor Knowledge of ICT Facilities with the mean score 3.36, Course contents are too advanced with the mean score 3.23, Lack of training facilities with the mean score 3.16, Lack of interest by the staff with the mean score 3.14 among others are problems associated with staff training and development for non-professional staff in the libraries. Since their mean values

were all above the cut off mean of 2.50 on a four-point scale.

Also, the overall mean showed that Personal financial constraint (mean = 3.39) is ranked highest, while lack of written policy (Mean = 2.77) is ranked lowest as problem affecting staff training and development for non-professional staff in the libraries

Research Question 3: What are the strategies for enhancing staff training and development in the university libraries?

Table 3: Mean ratings of respondents on Strategies for enhancing staff training and development programmes

S/N	Strategies	VA	A	LA	NA	MEAN	SD	R	D
1	The library management should have a written staff training and development policy	50	110	28	3	3.08	.68	1 st	A
2	There should be adequate provision of training facilities (mostly current)	50	103	34	4	3.04	.72	2 nd	A
3	Importance of staff training and development programmes should be made known to management	70	70	35	16	3.02	.94	3 rd	A
4	All staff should be given equal opportunity to participate	49	104	28	10	3.01	.78	4 th	A
5	There should be provision of fund for sponsoring staff training and development programmes in library management	47	89	55		2.96	.73	5 th	A
6	Promotion of staff after participation should be made functional	63	65	38	25	2.87	1.02	6 th	A
7	Creation of avenue for informing and supporting staff on the professional development programmes	59	63	50	19	2.85	.97	7 th	A
8	Libraries should enjoy paid study leave	66	43	57	25	2.79	1.06	8 th	A
9	Staff should be trained for ICT usage	48	81	25	37	2.73	1.04	9 th	A
10	Professional development should be considered during promotional exercises.	57	35	59	40	2.57	1.13	10 th	A

From the result in Table 3 above, the researcher observed that all the strategies mentioned were accepted as a means of improving staff training and development programmes as all the mean scores are above 2.50. Using the principle of real limit of number, it is observed that the respondents indicated that all the ten (10) listed factors such as Library management should have a written staff training and development policy with the mean score 3.08, Adequate provision of training facilities (mostly current) with the mean score 3.04, Importance of staff training and development programmes should be made known to management with the mean score 3.02, All staff should be given equal opportunity to participate with the mean score 3.01 and among others were strategies for enhancing staff training and development in the libraries. Also, the overall mean showed that, the library management should have a written staff training and development policy (mean = 3.06) is ranked highest, while Professional development should be considered during promotional exercises (Mean = 2.57) is ranked lowest as strategies for enhancing staff training and development in the libraries

Recommendations

Finally, it was recommended that;

- I. management of university libraries should support non-professional staff with both moral and financial supports to encourage them participate in training programmes and
- II. all the impediments hindering staff participation in training programmes should be vigorously addressed in order to provide effective service to the users.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there are a lot of challenges affecting non-professional staff training and development programmes as in inadequate funding and poor knowledge of ICT facilities and on the strategies for overcoming barriers to staff training and development programmes. It was also

concluded that there should be adequate provision of fund for sponsoring non-professional staff training and development programmes in the University libraries from the government and university management and also there should provision of computer facilities to the libraries for training.

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