

COGNATE WORK EXPERIENCE, SUBJECT BACKGROUND AND TECHNICAL SKILLS OF CATALOGUERS IN NIGERIAN LIBRARIES

By

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Abstract

The paper investigated the influence of subject background and years of working experience on knowledge usage of various subject classification schemes by Cataloguers in Nigerian Libraries. Copies of a self-designed, pre-tested questionnaire and validated were administered on the delegates that were present at a workshop organized by the Cataloguing, Classification and Indexing Section of the Nigerian Library Association. It was discovered that 59 (90.8%) of the respondents had “very high” skills in descriptive cataloguing and this is followed by 51 (78.5%) having “very high” skills in subject analysis, respectively. These were very good credit to the study because it confirmed that respondents had the prerequisite skills of what it takes to perform credibly well as Cataloguers in terms of organization of information resources. The study further discovered that both subject background ($r = .051$, $N = 65$, $p > .05$) and cognate years of experience ($r = .051$, $N = 65$, $p > .05$) were not in any way influence the professional skills of Cataloguers in Nigerian Libraries. Overall, the reported technical skills of Cataloguers in Nigerian Libraries were found to be high with the Grand Mean = 2.45 on a scale of 3. The paper recommends continued professional development and friendly work environment in the workplace so as to enhance teamwork. Also, members of staff should cultivate the habit of sharing tacit knowledge among themselves as a mechanism of fostering skills acquisition by members of staff as a way of preserving the organizational knowledge.

Key words: Librarian, Cataloguer Librarians, technical skills, subject background, work experience, Subject Classification Schemes

Introduction

By tradition, Librarians are disseminators of knowledge through the organization of information resources and making them available for public use. This is made possible through their professional skills in the selection, acquisition, processing and making the processed information

resources available for both present and future use by the public. Therefore, to perform effectively in these tasks librarians must possess certain prerequisite skills to justify their professional ethics. Literature identified some of these skills to include communication skills, technical skills, customer service skills, community service skills, technological skills, interpersonal skills, teamwork skills, human skills, conceptual skills, general skills, leadership skills, administrative skills, thought process skills. Thus, the Merriam-Webster Thesaurus defined skills as “the faculty of executing well what one has devised”. Skills therefore are the application of technical knowledge and proficiency to achieve a task.

This paper aimed to examine the technical skills of cataloguers in terms of knowledge usage skills of the various subject classification schemes in Nigerian libraries as well as the relationship with the subject background and cognate years of experience of cataloguers in Nigerian libraries.

Literature Review

Acquisition of skills is a very important element to the success of any operation. Skills can be acquired through so many channels which may include formal and informal education. From the Nigerian perspective, a Librarian is anyone who have gone through a formal training programme to obtain a first degree either in librarianship or any other discipline of his/her choice with additional master degree in librarianship. After been employed, the extent to which a librarian acquire additional relevant skills to continuing performing effectively would depends on the kind of mentoring that he/she gets from the more experienced members of staff. Mentoring is a mechanism through which relevant skills can be exchanged between each successive generation or workforce.

The Balance Careers grouped skills into two major categories as soft skills and hard skills. Soft skills consist of skills that are applied to every job. These are otherwise known as the people skills or what is being referred to as tacit knowledge within the knowledge management parlance. According to Kim (2002), this type of knowledge is transfer by tradition and shared experience through job training or apprenticeship. Tacit knowledge ensures task effectiveness and creativity. Example of soft skills may include interpersonal skills and communication skills. On the other hands, the hard skills are what the balance career referred to as the qualifications required doing the job. It is also termed explicit knowledge, it is rule-base thus use to match actions to situation using appropriate laid down guiding rules. It ensures efficiency and maintenance of standard. Examples of these may include staff academic qualification, knowledge of cataloguing principles, cataloguing and classification skills, computer skills, customer service skills, etc. In a nutshell, acquisition of both the soft and hard skills is imperative for the success of any organizations. The match of the two forms of knowledge resulted into the third form referred to as meta-knowledge which is essential in creating and integrating all intellectual resources for higher level of performance, Kim (2002). Stressing the importance of ICT skill, Biddiscombe (2001) cited by Michalis and Rania (2008) opined that ICT skill are necessary for any learning, educational or research procedure in a virtual learning environment, but at the same time, information specialists should maintain some of their traditional skills and qualifications. The finding by Gerolina and Konsta (2008) as cited by Manvume (2013) stated that qualification requirement for modern librarians is a mixture of old and new ones, the synthesis of the two satisfy the requirement needed to organise documents and information in an hybrid environment. Gerolina et al (2015) cited by Manvume (2013) revealed that apart from interpersonal/communication skill that is most required

of librarians irrespective of position, specific skills like competence handling of computers, web knowledge and formal professional experience are frequently demanded skills from librarians. Similarly, Yang (2016) cited by Manvume (2013) also noted that new professional skills and ability to handle electronic resources need to be included in competence assessment of cataloguers/librarians. Brannon et al (2020) confirmed Zhu (2008) findings that required skills/knowledge from cataloguers are management skills, knowledge of cataloguing tools and resources, communication skills, knowledge of internet/digital systems, automated cataloguing systems and computing. While Brannon et al (2020) established addition of knowledge of cataloguing/metadata tools and resources, managerial skills and communication in that orders are skills needed by modern cataloguers to function efficiently. Saka (2016) in a study of influence of continuing professional development and skills acquisition of librarians reported that, “continuing professional development and skills acquired mostly enhanced effective communication and creating harmonious working relationship among co-staff”. In another studied of predisposing factors responsible for backlogs of unprocessed information resources in Nigerian Libraries Adewuyi (2016) reported that some of the environmental factors discovered to be frequently contributing to backlogs in Nigerian libraries as at the time of the study includes problem of identification of the Access Point, problem of interpreting the language of the monograph. The problem if well diagnosed can be traced to problems of identification of access and interpreting the language of the monograph, inadequacy of professional skills in the subject analysis of information resources and thereby adding to the number of backlogs.

Subject background

Subject background is one of the demographic variables that affect employees’ performance in the workplace. A librarian is likely to perform better in terms of books selection responsibility, subject analysis, referencing and information searching in his/her subject discipline than any other subject areas. Sung (2013) defined a “cataloguing librarian as someone who has an MLIS or MLS degree and catalogues without managerial or supervising duties. His or her primary responsibilities are to prepare bibliographic records to represent items acquired by the library and to provide efficient access and retrieval for catalogue users”. She itemised ten qualities that Cataloguing Librarian must possess to guarantee profession quality control as competence, accuracy, efficiency, consistency, adaptability, judgment, problem solving, commitment, research ability and self-discipline. Of these ten qualities, Sung (2013) rated competence as the most important while discharging professional knowledge in terms of making of the technical skills of the Cataloguers. Therefore, acquisition of technical skills is imperative for Cataloguers. The basic cataloguing tools which the cataloguers must be competent in the usage, according to Sung (2013), include the following:

1. Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, 2nd edition (AACR2) and/or Resource Description & Access (RDA)
2. MARC 21 Formats for Bibliographic Data
 1. WebDewey and/or printed Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC)
 2. Library of Congress Classification (LCC)
 3. Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH)
 4. Library of Congress Subject Cataloging Manual (LCSCM)
 5. OCLC Bibliographic Formats and Standards

6. Library of Congress-Program for Cooperative Cataloging Policy Statements (LC-PCC PSs)
7. Library of Congress Name Authorities
8. CONSER Cataloging Manual (for Serials)

However, in the case of Nigeria, librarianship is not regarded as a secondary discipline. By inference, it is not mandatory that a person must have a subject background before obtaining master degree in librarianship. This is why higher schools in Nigeria have library and information science at first degree with special focus on a particular discipline especially in the humanity and education. The limitation of this is that a librarian may be weak in the selection and classification of information resources outside his or her discipline.

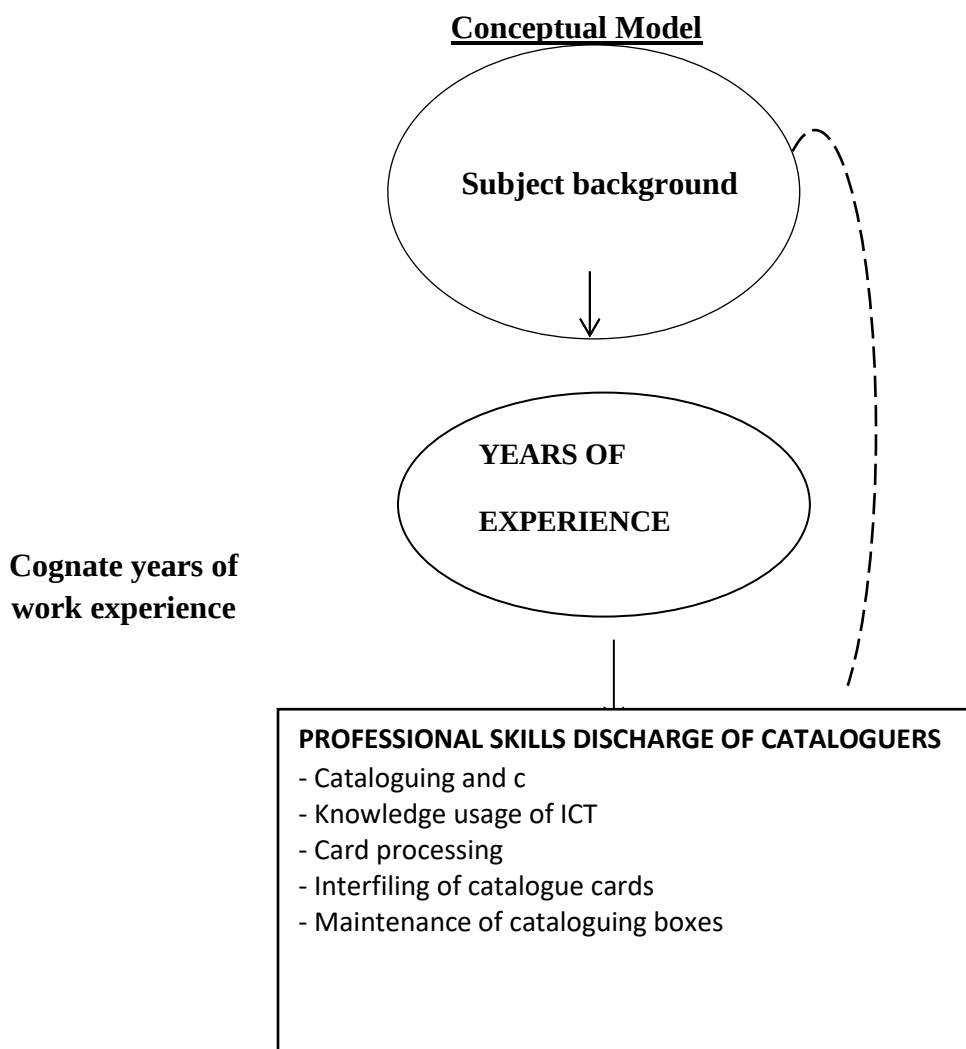
In a study by Petrinic and Urquhart (2007), using the British health librarians as respondents confirmed that those with a science background said that their degree “gave them more confidence with the terminology and general subject background.” In another study, Raszewski (2011) studied “librarians with a health sciences background” using a web-based survey of twenty-nine questions having 274 respondents and reported that their background gave them an advantage in certain aspects of librarianship and therefore suggested that “more attention should be given to second-career librarians with a health sciences background by interviewing these librarians with specific backgrounds, such as nursing or public health”. Similarly, Fikar's (2001) cited by Raszewski (2011) revealed that majority of the studied population by Fikar “felt that their background was beneficial or would be beneficial to their librarianship career”.

From the above, it can be concluded that, having a subject background before obtaining a second degree in librarianship would in no small way be of great importance to the library practice because this will make subject classification of information resources much easier for them and with a level of accuracy. Another quality that librarians in higher institutions of learning must possess is research ability and competencies. Having a subject background will also have a role to play in this regard. To this extent, Sung (2013) stressed that, “the growth and development of the library profession depends on extensive research”. This position was supported with a suggestion that a Cataloguer must continuously “systematically research the subject, terminologies, and language that he or she is not familiar with”. This argument received favourable support in a later study by Ohaji, Chawner and Yoong (2019) while examining “the role of a data librarian in academic and research libraries” and noted that, “a conceptual or theoretical background for a profession has many advantages”, such as opinion of previous researchers with belief and theoretical background “provides principle that underpin practice”.

Years of working experience

The years of working experience is the sum total or cognate experience that a person has acquired in performing a particular task. Work experience provides many benefits, giving you skills and experience that will allow you stand out to potential employers as well as helping you choose the right sector to work in. Having a degree is a tremendous asset when it comes to making yourself more employable, but it's not the only way to stand out to potential employers. Work experience is an important part of becoming ‘workplace-ready’, “building useful skills that cannot be taught in the classroom as well as contacts that students otherwise would not be exposed to,” explains

Avanade UK's general manager." A prospective employer will always look favourably on the effort taken by those who have done work experience, which empowers new talent and gives them an edge to push for the most sought after graduate positions in the field." Below are just some examples of how you can benefit from work experience. Whether you're doing a week-long stint or a year in industry, you'll be gaining skills that will make you much more employable. In their study, Michalis and Rania (2008) affirmed that having a degree in Library Studies and working experience skills should be considered "de facto" for all librarians. Stressing the importance of experience, Chitumbo and Kanyengo (2017) related the inconsistency in the record base of University of Zambia to the inexperience of the contract base cataloguers with inadequate experience and expertise in cataloguing on one hand and the practice of rotating librarians from within the library departments on the other hand. They affirmed that constant changes of staff in cataloguing section do result in inconsistencies and duplication of records in library database.



- **Descriptive cataloguing**
- **Subject analysis/Classification**
- **Knowledge usage of the various subject Classification schemes**
- **Knowledge usage of the Geographical Table**
- **Knowledge usage of the Cutter Table**

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Figure 1: Conceptual model of subject background, cognate years of work experience and technical skills of Cataloguers in Nigerian libraries by Adewuyi, O.W. and Akinni, A.R. (2023)

Justification of the Study

Experience has shown a recorded backlog of unprocessed books in some Nigerian libraries. This is so against the background that accuracy in descriptive cataloguing and subject classification of information resources which are regarded as core professional competences of cataloguer and the so called “science” of librarianship is fast declining. It is against this background that this study is aimed to examine, as a follow-up to the previous study of Adewuyi (2016) on the acquired technical skills of the cataloguer librarians in Nigerian libraries. It is hoped that the outcomes of this study will be of good use to library managers especially in recruiting staff.

Objectives

- 1.To determine the subject background of cataloguers in Nigerian libraries.
2. To determine the cognate years of experience of cataloguers in Nigerian libraries.
- 3.To find out the technical skills of cataloguers in Nigerian libraries.

Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between cognate years of experience and technical skills of cataloguers in Nigerian libraries.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between subject background and technical skills of cataloguers in Nigerian libraries.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between the independent variables (cognate years of experience and subject background) and technical skills of cataloguers in Nigerian libraries.

Research Methodology

Questionnaire was used as instrument of the study and copies of the self-designed, pre-tested and validated questionnaire were administered on the delegates that were present at a workshop organized by the Cataloguing, Classification and Indexing Section of the Nigerian Library Association. The questionnaire consisted of four sections, among them the first one consisted of categorical variables and the last sections consisted of quantitative variables, having close-ended questions on 3-point Likert Scale. Retrieved copies of the questionnaire were screened with a view to determine the usable and thereafter use the Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses. The responses of the respondents were analyzed, using computer software known as Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES OF THE RESPONDENTS

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents by subject background

Subject Background	Frequency	Percentage
Diploma	13	20.0
B.A	12	18.5
B.Social Sc.	1	1.5
B.Sc.	3	4.6
B.Ed	6	9.2
Law	1	1.5
B.A/B.Ed	28	43.1
B. Library and Information Science	1	1.5
Total	65	100.0

Table 1 above showed the subject background of the respondents. It revealed that their subject background cut across all disciplines. This is highly considered very advantageous to the study as one of the key variables of the study believing that it will definitely have influence on the study vis-a-vis the findings.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents by cognate years of experience

Years of Work Experience	Frequency	Percentage
<5 years	13	20.0
5-10 years	17	26.2
11-15 years	9	13.8
16-20 years	6	9.2
21years and above	20	30.8
Total	65	100.0

Table 2 above revealed the cognate years of experience of the respondents. Majority 20 (30.8%) of the respondents have had a cognate years of work experience of 21 years and above. This is followed with 17 (26.2%) of them having a working experience between 5 and 10 years. Respondents' cognate years of experience is highly advantageous to the study and to the classification proficiency of the cataloguers. This is because the older ones with reasonable cognate experience can actually mentor the younger ones with a view to gaining mastery of cataloguing and classification of information resources.

Table 3: Acquired technical skills of Cataloguers in Nigerian Libraries

S/N	Statement	Very High	High	Low	Mean	S.D

1	Ability to engage in accurate descriptive cataloguing skills	59 (90.8%)	4 (6.2%)	2 (3.1%)	2.88	.41
2	Ability to engage in accurate subject analysis skills	51 (78.5%)	7 (10.8%)	7 (10.8%)	2.68	.66
3	Ability to use Library of Congress Classification Scheme effectively	48 (73.8%)	12 (18.5%)	5 (7.7%)	2.66	.62
4	Ability to use Cutter Table effectively	47 (72.3%)	10 (15.4%)	8 (12.3%)	2.60	.70
5	Ability to use geographical location table effectively	38 (58.5%)	17 (26.2%)	10 (15.4%)	2.43	.75
6	Ability to use our library in-house classification scheme effectively	33 (50.8%)	26 (40.0%)	6 (9.2%)	2.42	.66
7	Ability to use Dewey Decimal Classification scheme effectively	38 (60.0%)	12 (18.5%)	14 (21.5%)	2.40	.84
8	Ability to use Moys Classification Scheme effectively	36 (55.4%)	18 (27.7%)	11 (16.9%)	2.36	.76
9	Ability to use Universal Decimal Classification scheme effectively	30 (46.2%)	26 (40.0%)	9 (13.8%)	2.32	.71
10	Ability to operate in a digital library environment effectively	33 (50.8%)	20 (30.8%)	12 (18.5%)	2.32	.77
Grand Mean=2.45						

Table 3 above revealed the professional competence of cataloguers in Nigerian university libraries in terms of knowledge usage of various subject classification schemes while processing information resources. The study found out that 59 (90.8%) had “very high” skills in descriptive cataloguing and this is followed by 51 (78.5%) also having “very high” skills in subject analysis, respectively. It was impressively discovered that 36 (55.4%) of the respondents stated that they “feel more fulfilled and happy when engaging in original classification” while at the same time 33 (50.8%) of them stated that they “prefer to do original classification than online classification”. This implies cataloguers in Nigerian university libraries were very much conscious of developing their professional competence. Most 59 (90.8%) of the respondents claimed to have adequate knowledge for usage of Library of Congress Classification Scheme while 51 (78.5%) of the respondents claimed to have adequate knowledge of usage of the Cutter Table.

However, when usage of the various classification schemes is made, it was discovered that the Library of Congress Classification Scheme is mostly used in Nigerian libraries with the mean core of ($X = 2.88$, $SD.41$) while the Universal Decimal Scheme is the least used, having the mean core of ($X = 2.12$, $SD.72$). An inference can be made thus most of the respondents were from the academic libraries since they are the ones that mostly use the Library of Congress Classification Scheme. Overall, the reported technical skills of Cataloguer Librarians in Nigerian libraries were found to be high with the Grand Mean = 2.45 on a scale of 3.

SECTION B: RESULTS OF HYPOTHESES

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between cognate years of experience and technical skills of Cataloguers in Nigerian Libraries

Table 4: Correlation analysis between technical skills of Cataloguer Librarians and their cognate years of experience in Nigerian Libraries

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Technical skills of Cataloguer Librarians	30.1846	6.6706	65	-.052	.681	Not Sig.
Cognate years of experience	8.7692	4.3867				

Table 4 above showed that there is no significant relationship between the cognate years of experience and technical skills of cataloguers in Nigerian libraries ($r = -.052$, $N = 65$, $p > .05$). The hypothesis is therefore accepted. Hence, it was deduced that cognate years of experiences did not influence the professional skills of cataloguers in Nigerian university libraries.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between Subject background and technical skills of cataloguers in Nigerian libraries

Table 5: Correlation analysis between technical skills of Cataloguers and their subject background in Nigerian Libraries

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Technical skills of Cataloguer Librarians	30.1846	6.6706	65	.051	.686	Not Sig.
Subject background	4.95	3.05				

Table 5 above showed that there is no significant relationship between subject background and technical skills of cataloguers in Nigerian libraries ($r = .051$, $N = 65$, $p > .05$). The hypothesis is therefore accepted. Hence, it could be deduced that subject background of librarians in Nigerian university libraries did not in any way influence professional skills of cataloguers.

Ho3: A combination of the independent variables (Cognate years of experience and Subject background) do not significant influence the dependent variable (Technical skills of Cataloguers) in Nigerian libraries

Table 6: ANOVA showing the joint effect of Cognate years of experience and Subject background on technical skills of Cataloguers in Nigerian Libraries

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.075	.006	-.026	6.7582
A N O V A			

Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	16.067	2	8.033	.176	.839	Not Sig.
Residual	2831.718	62	45.673			
Total	2847.785	64				

Table 6 above showed that the joint effect of the independent variables (Cognate years of experience and Subject background) to the prediction of the dependent variable. i.e. (technical skills of Cataloguers) was not significant. The table also showed a coefficient of multiple correlation ($R = .075$ and a multiple R^2 of $.006$. This means that 6.0% of the variance was accounted for by the predictor variable. The significance of the contribution was tested at $p < .05$. The table also showed that the analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the regression yielded an F-ratio of $.176$ (not significant at 0.05 level). This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was not significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

Table 7: Showing the relative contribution of Cognate years of experience and Subject background on technical skills of Cataloguers in Nigerian Libraries

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Stand. Coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta Contribution		
(Constant)	30.330	2.276		13.324	.000
Cognate years of experience	-8.381E-02	.193	-.055	-.434	.665
Subject background	.119	.278	.054	.429	.670

Table 7 above revealed the relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable expressed in Beta weights. Cognate years of experience ($\beta = -.055$, $p > .05$) had no significant relative contribution and subject background ($\beta = .054$, $p > .05$) also had no significant relative contribution to technical skills of Cataloguer Librarians in Nigerian Libraries.

Summary of Findings

The study attempted to study the relationship between the subject background of cataloguers, their cognate years of experience and their profession skills acquisition vis- a-vis its application to job performance. It was discovered that 59 (90.8%) had “very high” skills in descriptive cataloguing and this is followed by 51 (78.5%) also having “very high” skills in subject analysis, respectively. These were very good credit to the study because it confirmed that respondents had the prerequisite skills to perform credibly well as cataloguers in terms of organization of information resources. With these two qualities, it can be concluded that cataloguers possess adequate technical skills in cataloguing and classification of information resources. The study further revealed that 36 (55.4%) of the respondents confirmed to feel more fulfilled and happier when engaged in original classification as 33 (50.8%) also prefer to do original classification than online classification.

It was revealed that the subject background of the respondents cut across all disciplines, and by extension, acquisition of the higher degrees, especially the final degree is considered of great value to the development and nurturing of librarianship as a profession. Having a reasonable number of the respondents with above twenty-five years cognate experience is highly advantageous to the study and to the classification proficiency of the cataloguers. This is because the older ones with reasonable cognate experience can actually mentor the younger ones with a view to gaining mastery of cataloguing and classification of information resources.

When comparing the usage of the various subject classification schemes, it was discovered that the Library of Congress Classification Scheme is mostly used in Nigerian libraries with the mean core of ($X = 2.88$, $SD.41$) than the other subject classification schemes while the least used one is the Universal Decimal Scheme with the mean core of ($X = 2.12$, $SD.72$). Inferences that can be made from these discoveries are that most of the respondents at the workshop were from the academic libraries because these are the libraries where the Library of Congress Classification Scheme is generally used because of its wider subject coverage.

However, the study revealed that subject background ($r = .051$, $N = 65$, $p > .05$) has no influence on the job performance of cataloguers in Nigerian libraries as at the time of this study. This is a sharp contrast to the finding of Raszewski (2011) in a study of librarians with a health sciences background who discovered that librarians with a health sciences background felt that their subject background gave them an advantage in certain aspects of Librarianship. By inference, it means that subject background had positive influence in the discharge of professional duties by librarians with health sciences study subject background. Also, cognate years of experience ($r = .051$, $N = 65$, $p > .05$) were not in any way influence the job performance of cataloguers in Nigerian libraries. These discoveries have three implications. First, the cataloguers in Nigerian libraries must have probably been recruited based on subject background that cut across various disciplines with a view to ease frequently classification challenges. Secondly, the cataloguers must have probably gone through some reasonable in-house-training by way of “transferred skills or other management skills” as identified the Medical Library Association (2007) cited by Raszewski (2011), especially by the most senior colleagues who had gained reasonable cognate experience in cataloguing and classification of information resources, and which had, in turn empowered the younger ones to have developed high level of professional skills. Thirdly, their reasonable length of service in the Cataloguing Section must have also contributed to their positive job performance.

Overall, the reported technical skills of cataloguers in Nigerian libraries were found to be high with the Grand Mean = 2.45 on a scale of 3.

Conclusion

The paper examined the relationship between cognate years of work experience, subject background and technical skills of cataloguers in Nigerian libraries. Reasonable cognate years of experience in the Cataloguing and Classification Section of the library is very advantageous and imperative for proficiency in cataloguing and classification of information resources.

Recommendations

In the light of the above, the study recommends that:

1. Library Management, especially the big establishments, should continue to place emphasis on subject background of the applicants when recruiting staff in order to improve professional discharge of library services, especially in the areas of book selection and cataloguing of information resources.
2. Staff in the Cataloguing and Classification Section should not be subjected to frequent transfer to other sections within the Library. This will ensure mastery of activities connected to processing of information resources.
3. Adequate mentoring vis-a-vis sharing of tacit knowledge should be encouraged among experienced staff and the younger ones, so as to enhance the knowledge and skills of the latter in the workplace.
4. Teamwork, continuous professional development and friendly work environment should be created by the management.

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