

LIBRARY EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING OF LIBRARIANS FOR THE PROMOTION OF USER- FRIENDLY ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The study accesses the educational development and training of libraries for the promotion of user-friendly academic library in Nigeria. Librarians are continuously expected to update their job knowledge and renew their job related skills to enable them compete effectively in our changing society. These professionals are also expected to acquire extensive education and training to enable them function properly and be productive in their organisations. Delightfully, for librarians to be committed in the promotion of user-friendly in academic libraries like Nigeria, sustained effort must be made by pulling acquired knowledge and skills into practice for quality service delivery, which is now the hall-mark of international best practices.

Keyword: *Library Education; Leadership Development in Librarianship, Training of Librarians; Academic Libraries; Nigeria.*

Introduction

Every community or group of people, whether rural, urban or regimented has need for information in areas that have direct bearing on their existence either as individuals, or as a community. Such areas of need include health, education, recreation, economic development and professional growth among others. With availability of appropriate information and its correct utilization, the lives of the members of such community are improved upon. It is in recognition of this need that government at various levels has set up agencies like mass media, extension worker offices and libraries. This study focuses on educational development and training of libraries for the promotion of user-friendly academic library in Nigeria.

In a general sense, library is defined by Jamil, Tariq and Jamil (2013) as organized collection of published and unpublished books and audiovisuals materials with the aim to service staff members that are able to provide and interpret such materials as required, to meet the informative, research, educational and recreational needs of its users. Although libraries generally speaking share so many common characteristics and qualities, they are none the less, categorized into different types based on the functions performed, the target audience and their locations.

Education is a purposeful activity directed at achieving certain aims, such as transmitting knowledge or fostering skills and character traits. These aims may include the development of understanding, rationality, kindness, and honesty. Education is both the act of teaching knowledge to others and the act of receiving knowledge from someone else. Education also refers to the knowledge received through schooling or instruction and to the institution of teaching as a whole.

According to Watson (2007), an academic library is a library that is attached to tertiary institutions such as Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Monotechnics and serves two complementary roles i.e to support the curriculum and to support the research activities of the universities, faculties and students.

According to Ifidon (2002), the traditional functions of academic libraries includes the following:

- Pursuit, promotion and dissemination of knowledge
- Provision of intellectual leadership
- Manpower development
- Promotion of social and economical modernization
- Promotion of intra and inter-continental and international
- To improve the quality of education at every level of teaching and learning
- Increase the value in information and help in its maximum use through support service among others.

Historically, library education in Nigeria is dated back in the 1953 UNESCO seminar on the development of public libraries in Africa which was held at the then University College, Ibadan. At the end of that seminar it was recommended, among other things, that an institution for the training of librarians in Africa be established. The initial establishment and development of libraries

precipitated the necessity to educate people in the library and information profession. In an profession, no issue is more contentious than the form of professional education and training required of its practitioners (Aguolu and Aguolu, 2002). Professional development is an important component of ongoing library education and is very critical to performance of their role. The library and information science professional is service critical and therefore requires continuous update in knowledge and skills for effective performance of librarian. The efficiency of any library education depends on the caliber of its staff (Adomi & Nwalo, 2013).

Library must disseminate the information it houses and encourages the user to use such materials. Historically, it is noteworthy, that the first library school was established at the university of Ibadan in 1959/1960 academic session with funds provided by the Carnegie corporation of New York of the United State of America. The education and training of librarians as information professionals has therefore remained incontestable and incontrovertible as this has invariably enhanced educational as well as national development. In Nigeria, the need to train librarians and other information professionals led to the establishment of the Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies at the University of Ibadan. The Department which began with a Diploma in Library and now offers Bachelor (Bsc), Masters' (MLS) and Doctorate (Phd) Degrees in Librarianship and other associated programmes like Archival studies. Many other Universities and Polytechnics including public and private institutions across the six geo-political zones now offer library and information science across different levels of education, therefore increasing the needed specialists.

Library education in Nigeria is tied up with the general social and political history of the country. As such, those who aspired to become librarians went to Britain to be qualify for the Associate of the Library Association (ALA). However, with the attainment of independence in 1960, the country witnesses the establishment of tertiary institutions at various levels. The first library school was established at University College Ibadan in 1960. The education system of Nigeria has passed through different phases and stages. With these myriad of changes one ponder if these changes were worthwhile. Although change is expected and inevitable, as all natural phenomena in life, the education system in Nigeria has experienced many challenges and problems in terms of continuity and inconsistency due to restructuring of the system from time to time. Nwagwu and Oyesiku (2019), stressed that Nigeria has experienced growth without development. Nwagwu and Oyesiku, opined that looking at the past and contemporary endeavors in education; one sees an apparent lack in synergy and interactive harmonious relationship between educational growth and educational development. Similarly, Mayowa (2017), who noted that over a decade in Nigeria, the political instability generated a negative effect on the education system. The political unrest plagued not just the education system but the school library system in particular. He further stressed that these difficulties were more pronounced at the foundation levels of education.

Library Education and Training of professional of librarians

Gbaje (2017) posited that training can take many forms that best meets each library needs. Among the methods of training they proffer are: training from library schools, in-house training programme,

outside training opportunities, self-paced training, workshops and seminar. Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) and Ajidahun (2007) outlined other education and training programmes to include: simple orientation, organised visits to other libraries, seminars and conferences, participatory management, internal or in-house training programmes, short courses and formal professional education. Others, according to (Ajidahun 2007), are staff manual for self-development and research/sabbatical leave, continuing education, industrial attachment, formal education programmes leading to certificates, diploma and degrees, on-the-job learning from experienced colleagues, coaching and special project and off-the-job lectures, seminars, discussions and instructions of various types.

Education and training are geared towards improving job performance with the ultimate aim of achieving library set goals and objectives. Education programmes can help librarians to be current with new knowledge and development in their field. This therefore means that, librarians' education and training keeps them more committed on the job. Moreover, Nigerian libraries will function adequately when they have librarians of genuine intellectual quality, supported by first-class professional training from library schools of high quality. This is in line with the thinking of majority of librarians who see training for librarians as provision of practical knowledge, skills and tools to prepare them for the challenges of the future (Nkanu and Eyo, 2016). When one refuses to be updated, one becomes out-dated. Education and training enable librarians to participate more intelligently in the work of the library.

Education and training of librarians are necessity if library and information professionals must remain relevant and retain their place as information providers in the information conscious society. Akintunde (2019) emphasized on the need for librarians to undergo compulsory routine retraining to preempt technological obsolescence and to cope with the unfolding exigencies of the technological age. They are to be continuously exposed to new technologies, regular professional updating and greater control over the information resources (Odini, 2006; Tiamiyu, 2015). Furthermore, Mohammed (2019), affirmed that personnel in the 21st Century organization and establishment of libraries and information centers as one and there is need for education, training, knowledge, skills, ideas, experiences, information and enlightenment to withstand the test of the time.

Education and training in any human society is recognized. Education is different from training, although education might constitute foundation for training. Education and training are two interactive concepts. Education prepares the professional for qualification while training equips him with skills required on-the-job based. Education is a formal way of attending school to acquire (diploma, higher diploma, bachelor, masters and philosophy degrees) to improve one's proficiency. Training is more of an informal approach which is achieved by attending conferences, seminars, workshops, short courses, on-the-job training to update one's knowledge in area for professional practice (Ochogwu, 2016).

Education for Librarians and librarianship

Enters the new work here

The success of every library operations depends largely on librarians in the holding. Whatever maybe the library goals and objectives, without librarians such goals and objectives cannot be achieved. With the relevant skills and knowledge, arising from staff development, librarians can perform their various jobs and roles, more effectively and at a higher level(Ojowhoh, 2016).

Librarians have been described as one of the most valuable assets of library organisations. These are professionals who are holders of Bachelor's degree, Master's degree and PhD degree in their discipline. They are those who are qualified to be registered by the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria(LRCN)to practice in Nigeria. There are however other professionals who are holders of Higher National Diploma (HND) or Ordinary Diploma (ND) either from a university or accredited polytechnic. The scope of library services and practice is changing significantly and is moving parallel with technological developments. Substantial changes are taking place in libraries and information centers as well as products and services offered therein. There is need for education of librarians to keep them in tune with demands of contemporary societies. As it is now, they cannot afford to use the same old methods and strategies of offering services to library clientele and expect them to be retained. Education and training are integral part of vocational or career development and the presence of which determines the success for any establishment or organisations, the absence, on the other hand, spells doom for such establishment or organisations.

On the other hand, librarians are expected to be versatile in all kinds of information handling jobs and management of human and non-human resources in their libraries. The effectiveness of these professionals in the discharge of their services depends on the extent of acquisition of relevant education and training and skills and competencies. They need to be educated and trained by putting quality into practice for effective and efficient service delivery. Areas where librarians can be trained include: library administration, publishing, archives and records management, digitalisation, information technology. Mabawonku (2017) asserted that, in the modern library, the library- and information professionals have profound roles as information specialists, information scientists, knowledge managers, documentalists, media specialists, publishers, archivists, etc.

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professionals must remain relevant and retain their place as information providers in the information conscious society. Akintunde (2006) emphasised the need for librarians to undergo compulsory routine retraining to preempt technological obsolescence and to cope with the unfolding exigencies of the technological age. They are to be continuously exposed to new technologies, regular professional updating and greater control over the information resources. He added that, the personnel who continue to improve in their job knowledge, experience, education, information, ideas and skills acquisition in their work place, will eventually make a better employee and fulfilment about their work and assurance of ensuring the achievement of the objectives, goals and mission of their employers. Librarians working in libraries need education and training by acquiring core competencies, new skills and never to become obsolete at any time in this fast changing environment. For this, they need to shift their focus from traditional library activities of collecting, processing, storing and accessing information to offer customer-centered automated information services, generated by using online, offline databases, e-resources, e-journals, networks and consortia, etc.

Professional librarians require a wide range of skills and knowledge which include; solid bibliographic compellation, cataloguing and classification, indexing, abstracting, technological skills, as well as strong communication and interpersonal abilities to handle both short and long queries. Advances in library technologies have also led to a high demand for professional skills such as database searching and competence in using the internet and other computer networks and systems. A librarians might perform a range of tasks in a library. With one or two librarians and possibly with a clerk can handle's all of the activities of the library. Because of the size of the library, a single librarian might combine clerical and professional tasks. While in a large libraries, the support staffs have taken on many of the tasks previously performed by professionals. Much of this transfer of responsibility has been made possible by the introduction of relatively simple and efficient computer technology, which has permitted supportive staff to accomplish wide range of library operation such as cataloguing and classification, indexing, abstracting which can be done by professional. Moreover, professional librarians usually manage library functions such as circulation and acquisition, support staff or part-time workers often perform the bulk of the actual tasks in these departments.

The patterns of library vary from country to country. Libraries are organized and managed by librarians. Such management includes, acquisition, processed, disseminate, preservation and conservation among others. Likewise librarians examine the needs of the parent body. Librarians work in a variety of settings including academic, public, private, monotechnic, special and school libraries. Most library positions entail master's degrees in library and information science. Librarians in public schools may need to be certified, which often requires a teaching certification. Training of librarians focuses on acquisition of job knowledge, skills and abilities specifically to a particular task or job. Thus, librarians will maintain up-to-date expertise. Also independent reading can help in human development. According to (Azino, 2014), on- the-job training enables a person to learn a job while working at it or doing the particular job. He identified the various types of on-

the-job training methods to include: job rotation, internship, apprenticeship, special or study assignment, and coaching.

In addition, librarians are equipped with knowledge, skills and competencies. They are expected to improve effectiveness, efficiency and excellence leading to total quality service. No matter the parent body, the objective of education and training is to improve the capacity of librarians to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently. It is expected that education and training of librarians must expose them to acquire extensive knowledge to enable them function effectively and be productive. Nkebem (2016) further suggested attending workshops, seminars, conferences, refresher courses, short in-service or vacation courses and belonging to a professional body as a medium of development e.g. the Nigerian Library Association views and write ups about the profession are published or discussed. Also independent reading can help in human development. According to Azino (2014), on-the-job training enables a person to learn a trade while working at it or doing the particular job. Azino identified the various types of on-the-job training methods to include: job rotation, internship, apprenticeship, special or study assignment, and coaching. Azino further stated that, there are various methods employed in libraries for the purpose of capacity building and these are conferences, seminar/workshops, spending time in developed countries libraries for the purpose of skill acquisition, library school courses, on-the-job training, classroom/lecture method, consultants and special training, in-service training and non-credit earning short courses. Furthermore, Azino stated that staff capacity building enhances job performance by upgrading the human intellect and skills for productive employment. Adeniji & Onasote (2006) maintained that library workers training programmes are of different phases; manpower development programmes which enhance staff to perform on the duty: off-the-job and on-the-job training, internal training programme and initial orientation programmes for new employees.

Conclusion

The library is one of the social institutions, so it is always involved in the progress and development of the people as well as of the whole society. For the successful organization of libraries specially trained personnel are required to work in them. This is only done through the library education by efficiency is a professional education which brings efficiency competency, confidence and leadership of personnel. These professionals are also expected to acquire extensive education and training to enable them function properly and be productive in their organizations. For librarians to progress and develop a nation like Nigeria, sustained efforts must be made by pooling acquired knowledge and skills into practice for quality service delivery, which is now the hall-mark of international best practices. Today library education has attained the shape of a full-fledged science subject and now it is called library and information science. These professionals are also expected to acquire extensive education and training to enable them function properly and be productive in their organizations.

Recommendations

- ✓ There should be training and re-training of all staff through workshops, conferences and seminars if there must succeed
- ✓ There should be computer education (training) for all library staff since some of the information materials comes in a microform (i.e CD-ROM, Microchip, flash drive among other) to enable them handle such resources within the electronic section.
- ✓ The parent body of academic library should make a mandatory laws that staff be made to embark on in service training as to boost their professionalism.
- ✓ Parent body should take as a priority for continuing education (in-service) staff should be sponsored for quality service delivery
- ✓ Library educators and students should be encouraged to improvise from their locality to enable them to be creative, innovative and resourceful.
- ✓ Since changes are not constant information technology should remains committed to training and development programmes to enable them remain relevant and actives professionally.

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