

STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF IMO STATE LIBRARY BOARD'S TRAINING PROGRAMME

Synopsis: This article is based on a case study of the Imo State library staff training and development, Owerri, Nigeria. The aim of the proposals is toward increasing effectiveness of the worker on his assigned tasks, enhancing performance and production and creating a favourable atmosphere for promotion.

INTRODUCTION

Imo State is an upspring of the former East Central State of Nigeria. The state was one of the few additional states created by the military administration early in 1976. The Imo State Library system is therefore young. It came into being officially on the 12th November, 1976. There was no planned training programme which could be related to the needs of the Library Board and the community it served.

As far back as 1958/59, the former Eastern Nigeria Library Board provided short-time courses primarily for its own staff, but later in 1960, training facilities were extended to external trainees which included staff from ministries, local government authorities, schools and other interested organizations. The training programme was at that time strictly under the direction of the Deputy Director. Subsequently, a training officer was appointed even though the post was a supernumerary one. In February 1973, that is three years after the Nigerian Civil war, the East Central State Library Board's training programme was reconstructed and reorganized and a section of staff training, development and research was established.

At that time, training of both the library staff and external trainees was conducted and supervised by a training officer and assisted by other senior staff who gave lectures on subjects within the areas of their specialization; for example, the Chief Cataloguer would be asked to talk on the fundamentals of classification and cataloguing.

Meanwhile, the Imo State Library Board as now constituted, in pursuance of its policy to promote and encourage the growth of libraries and librarianship in Imo State through professional advice to individuals, institutions and other organizations interested in library work, will continue to accept candidates with suitable educational qualifications for short-time training in library work.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF TRAINING

No library can or is reasonably expected to provide a perfect water-tight training programme for its staff and other patrons. There is therefore the pressing need for library staff to undergo continually some form of training. The aims and objectives¹ of training are therefore:

- (i) To enhance efficiency and performance.
- (ii) To give staff a feeling of achievement in their work.

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- (iii) To familiarize staff with new techniques of library operations thereby offering them the opportunity to increase their general knowledge and understanding of the operations in a technological world e.g. the operation of a computer in a library.
- (iv) To provide staff the opportunities for further advancement and self-development which will make it possible for them to rise successfully within their library system.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

In-service training is a planned process of aiding employers to gain effectiveness in their present and future work assignments by providing planned, organized and systematic instruction and practice on the job.

The objective of any in-service training is to increase the general efficiency of the library which conducts it.

In planning a training programme for its staff, the Imo State Library Board, Owerri, had in mind the training of both its own staff and staff from other establishments. The courses were divided into A and B, each held annually at the State Central Library:

- (i) **Course A:** This course provided training for persons with lower educational qualifications suitable for staffing small libraries of government departments, local councils, schools and other educational establishments wishing to build up organized book collections.

The course lasted for a period of three months (i.e. from March to May) each year, and training was "on-the-job" coupled with oral instructions on the practical application of the basic library techniques and routine processes consisting of instructions on the elementary organization and administration of small libraries; basic classification and cataloguing procedures; assistance to readers and how to answer library user's queries. However, the outline syllabus was patterned as shown below.

(a) **Syllabus:** This syllabus was designed to cover a period of twelve weeks. There were three lectures each week i.e. Monday, Wednesday and Friday commencing at 9 a.m. Each lecture lasted one hour. The outline syllabus² was as follows:

PART 1. Introduction: Aims and objectives of the training. What a library is - indicating the various types of libraries and the qualities required of a good library assistant. Attitude to work and need for good public relations in library, generally. Explanation of library rules and regulations.

PART 2. Acquisition of library materials: Simple accessioning and invoicing. Selecting and ordering of books and periodicals, and keeping records of them. Parts of a book. Care and preservation of books and periodicals. How to keep simple acquisition records etc.

PART 3. Technical Processing of Library Materials: Basic principles of classification and cataloguing. Kinds of catalogues and their differences. The contents of a catalogue. Catalogue filing rules including alphabetization. How to compile booklists, etc.

PART 4. The Use of Library: Book issue methods and practice (e.g. the Browne System, photocopying system etc). Readers services. General office procedures and the use of simple office equipment. Preparation of reports and statistics. Statistics and their use in libraries.

PART 5. Reference Work: Kinds and examples of common bibliographical tools (e.g. encyclopaedias, dictionaries, directories, atlases, gazettes etc). Enquiry techniques. How to use bibliographical tools in answering queries. Assistance to readers.

The Library Board provided workshop facilities for practical work. The programme was arranged so that trainees would spend the entire period of the course at the State Central Library, Owerri, and not allowed to return to their places of work until the end of the training.

The Library Board did not charge fees for the course. It is however necessary to add that sponsoring authorities were responsible for payment of salaries, allowances, etc. of their trainees while the course lasted at Owerri. Trainees were responsible for arranging their own accommodation.

During the course, trainees were attached in rotation to various departments/sections of the

library to enable them see things for themselves and gain practical experience.

(b) **Basic Educational Qualification Requirement:** The basic educational qualification for acceptance for course A was either the West African School Certificate (WAEC) with five passes including credit in English language; or the General Certificate of Education (GCE) in five subjects including English language; or the Teachers' Grade 2 Certificate with merit in five subjects including English language.

(ii). **Course B:** Course B was designed for the library's own staff, and was to encourage continuous self-development which was basic for effective and efficient service and gave satisfaction to individual members of staff in their daily work. The aim of the course was therefore to train the Library Board's staff for improved service and leadership. Course B lasted for a longer period than course A. A duration of six months (March to September) each year was implemented. However, course B was divided into three parts:

(a) Orientation (Induction) Course.

(b) On-the-job training.

(c) Refresher/Retraining (or Continuation training).

(a) **Orientation (Induction) course:** This course was intended for newly employed library staff. The new recruits were usually introduced to the library - what the library is, what it is for; how it is organised and administered; who is responsible for what; and what is the place of the new recruit in the organizational set up. In other words, the aim was to introduce the new staff to local practice and familiarize them with the operations in all the departments of the library.

Attempts were also made to explain details of pay, what deductions were to be made; conditions of work and future prospects; hours of work, holidays, sick leave, shift duty; benefits and personnel regulations.

Similarly, a brief summary of the history and development of the library system, the purpose and the organization were given. A check list of points to be covered were helpful and any more information required by trainees were referred to the **Staff Training Manual** which was made available to each of them.

(b) **On-the-job Training:** On-the-job training is a mixture of theory and practical work, that is, learning of tasks and routines by doing, and supervised by members of the senior staff and the training officer.

This course was designed for the benefit of Library Assistants and other non-professional staff. It was aimed at increasing effectiveness of the worker on his assigned job and lifting him for promotion. On-the-job training also enhances performance and production.

During this course, foundation was laid for those eligible to take up librarianship as a career and who were prepared to pursue a course in an institution of higher learning.

At the end of each course, it was considered necessary, at least as a means of evaluation, to examine the course participants on what they had learnt, and **Certificate of Proficiency** issued to the successful ones. The test was patterned in the same way as the **Civil Service Confirmation and Promotion Test**, except that the questions set were based on library work. Those who passed the test with say, 60% and above were advanced to a higher grade. The test took place once or twice each year.

(c) **Refresher/Re-training (Continuation)**

Training: Training courses are not an end to staff development but are the means to a continuous process. Training is therefore not something done at any one period of time and done away with, rather it is carried on throughout one's life time. The purpose of refresher course or retraining is to widen the experience of staff in their work situation, especially when new techniques or innovations are introduced.

The staff, both professional and non-professional, benefit greatly by this process by way of attending seminars, conferences, workshops, short-time courses and summer schools.

CASE FOR CERTIFICATION

It has already been mentioned above that certificates of proficiency were issued to successful course participants at the end of each course. The need to award the certificate was to motivate and reward them for work well done. The certificate itself had no educational value as such but served as an evidence that a trainee has satisfactorily participated in a course. Certification should therefore be regarded as a form of motivation and reward.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion based on the Imo State Library Board's training experience, one can now easily appreciate the pressing need for Public Libraries and indeed other libraries to have systematically planned staff training and developing programme. Larger public libraries, for example, should not only train their own staff but should extend this facility to external organizations. Where this is done, care must be taken to ensure that a minimum standard is maintained.

Finally, staff should be allowed to participate actively in matters relating to their condition of employment, library policies, and on how best services could be improved.

REFERENCES

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