



Assessment of Staff Development Needs in University Libraries: A Study of Federal Universities in Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study aimed to assess the staff development needs in the Federal University libraries in Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study identified the key staff development needs of staff in federal university libraries in Delta State, assessed the extent of staff satisfaction with their development in federal university libraries in Delta State, and identified the factors that inhibit the training and development of staff in federal university libraries in Delta State. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised 64 male and female staff of the library in the three Federal Universities in Delta State and the total enumeration sampling technique was used to select the 64 library staff as respondents. The questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The results of this study revealed that the staff in federal university libraries in Delta State needs development on technological proficiency, customer service, communication skills, leadership and management, collection development and management, cataloguing, and classification as well as marketing and promotion of library resources. Also, the study found that the extent to which the staff of federal university libraries in Delta State are satisfied with their development is low. Finally, the study revealed that budgetary constraints, poor organizational cultures, limited training and development opportunities, and poor management support are the major factors inhibiting staff development in federal university libraries in Delta State. Recommendations for effective training and development of library personnel to ensure that the library meets the needs of its users were provided.

Keywords: Assessment, Staff Development, University Libraries, Training and development, Federal Universities

1.1 Introduction

The hallmark of any organization is its human resources which must be developed to meet the knowledge management demands of the current era. The library in particular has a lot to do to remain relevant in this information and knowledge-driven society. Besides, the

academic library requires competent staff capable of rendering information services required by the library clientele. This capability can only be attained with adequate manpower training and development. Training is an integral part of the work and development of any organization be it, large or

small (Khan, Khan, & Khan (2011). Staff development covers a broad range of activities designed to provide staff with the knowledge and skills that are directly related to their role and responsibilities in the library. Staff development is seen by Awogbami et al. (2021) as one of the roots of achieving commitment and high productivity. Staff development programs are processes designed to improve job understanding, promote more effective job performance, and establish future goals for career growth. Staff development programs help staff understand their responsibilities toward the attainment of the goals, mission, and vision statement of the library. Staff development involves every opportunity available to new and experienced staff. These activities are designed to improve the quality of service delivered and enable individuals to grow professionally.

Manpower training and development is germane to effective information service delivery in the library. According to Adeniji et al. (2012), library buildings and large collections without skilled professionals can be described as glorified emptied warehouses. Manpower training and development help the staff to gain the knowledge needed for effective service delivery. To be sustainable, staff training should be designed to ensure the dual benefit of the library system and the users. In recent times, the library's environment has changed as technology and the electronic information explosion now have a major impact on society as a whole and libraries in particular. These changes call for continuous training and development of library staff since this is required to acquire new skills and competencies needed to cope with the expanding frontiers of knowledge. It is therefore important for heads of libraries to take continuing professional training and development of its staff seriously to ensure quality service delivery to students and faculties.

It is worth noting that the whole essence of training and manpower development is to enhance the knowledge stocks in the library. Scholars have argued that the management of knowledge is key to knowledge sharing among staff and library users (Opele & Okunoye, 2019; Awogami et al., 2020). Hence, it is vital to assess the staff development needs of librarians in university libraries as this will enable the library management to decipher which area of knowledge and what area of professional practice the staff of the library has a knowledge deficit. A need According to Bhatti and Nadeem (2014) is not a want or a desire. It is a gap between “what is” and “what has to be.” Needs assessment is used for identifying gaps and to provide information for a decision on whether the gaps could be addressed through training. The assessment is part of a planning process focusing on identifying and solving performance problems (Bhatti & Nadeem, 2014). For library managers to be able to pinpoint the training and developmental needs of their staff, there is a need for proper training and development needs assessment. This is to ensure that each staff of the library gets the necessary training and development that is required for their professional development and job effectiveness.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In the dynamic and evolving landscape of higher education, university libraries play a pivotal role in supporting the academic and research endeavors of the institution. It is glaring that staff development is a very important aspect of any organization for improved performance and the attainment of organizational goals. Federal university libraries in Delta State just like every other university libraries around the globe aspires to maintain a robust and contemporary library system that aligns with the changing needs of its academic community. To achieve this, it is imperative to conduct a comprehensive

assessment of the staff development needs within the university libraries, ensuring that library personnel possess the requisite skills, knowledge, and competencies to effectively navigate the challenges posed by technological advancements, evolving pedagogical approaches, and shifting user expectations. Also, the low level of ICT and digital skills among library staff which is evident in their low level of adoption and usage of modern technologies for library services has put a question mark on the professional capacity of librarians to excel in the technology-driven era. Thus, it has become imperative to assess the staff development needs of librarians in federal university libraries in Delta State to ascertain their training and professional development deficit and to facilitate the library management's decision-making process with regard to the training of staff and identify areas of training needs for enhanced service delivery.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study is focused on assessing the staff development needs in federal university libraries in Delta State. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Identify some of the key staff development needs of staff in federal university libraries in Delta State;
2. Assess the extent of staff satisfaction with their development in federal university libraries in Delta State; and
3. Identify the factors that inhibit the training and development of staff in federal university libraries in Delta State.

1.4 Research Questions

The research intends to answer these research questions:

1. What are the key staff development needs of staff in federal university libraries in Delta State?
2. What is the extent of staff satisfaction

with their development in federal university libraries in Delta State?

3. What are the factors inhibiting the development of staff in federal university libraries in Delta State?

2.1 Literature Review

The review of literature in this study was done in line with research questions guiding the study.

2.3 Staff Development Needs of Librarians in University Libraries

Staff development needs in academic libraries encompass a diverse range of skills and knowledge areas crucial for librarians to effectively navigate the evolving landscape of information services. Academic library professionals require continuous training in technological proficiency, including digital literacy and library management systems, to adapt to the changing nature of resources (Iwuchukwu & Echedom, 2020). Moreover, a focus on information literacy and research skills is essential for providing valuable support to students and faculty. Collection development and management training, encompassing acquisitions, cataloging, and awareness of open access initiatives, is vital for maintaining relevant and diverse collections. Additionally, fostering strong customer service and communication skills, promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, and staying abreast of emerging trends and technologies are integral aspects of staff development. Leadership and management training, legal and ethical considerations, as well as a commitment to ongoing assessment and evaluation, contribute to a well-rounded approach that equips academic library staff to meet the dynamic needs of their institutions and users.

According to a 2017 survey from the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), three-quarters of academic libraries have increased their investments in staff

development over the past five years, with most of the costs being taken on by the libraries themselves (Budd & Spicher, 2017). In addition, more than half of all academic libraries have offered new training topics to employees to improve the overall customer service and technical competencies of their staff (Budd & Spicher, 2017). The survey also indicates that several areas deemed to be important to librarians' professional development need further establishment or improvement, including knowledge of emerging technologies, existing and evolving library trends, budgeting, collection development, database management, assessment, and marketing, (Bud & Spicher, 2017).

In a study conducted by University libraries, research on the capabilities of library staff in the digitization of library resources, it was revealed that staff development needs were identified by all libraries included in the study as needing improvement (Butarenko & Thompson, 2014). The survey concluded that academic library staff need to be properly trained to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving digital environment while ensuring quality standards and also meeting the archiving needs of the library (Butarenko & Thompson, 2014). Moreover, libraries recognize the importance of providing staff with new digital literacy competencies and the necessary training needed to ensure that they are properly equipped to provide users with up-to-date access to content in a digital age (Butarenko & Thompson, 2014).

2.4 The extent of Staffs' Satisfaction with their Development in University Libraries

The extent of librarians' satisfaction with their development in university libraries is a multifaceted reflection of their professional growth and fulfillment within the academic environment. This satisfaction hinges on various factors, including the

adequacy of training programs, opportunities for skill enhancement, and support for continuous learning. Librarians seek ongoing development to keep pace with technological advancements, evolving information needs, and emerging trends in academia. Additionally, a positive work culture that promotes collaboration values diversity, and provides avenues for leadership and career progression significantly contributes to the overall satisfaction of librarians with their developmental experiences in university libraries (Obichere, 2013). Regular assessments of professional needs, effective communication channels, and a commitment to addressing individual and collective growth aspirations play pivotal roles in determining the level of satisfaction among librarians in their developmental journey within university settings.

Commenting on the extent of librarians' satisfaction with their development in university libraries, a recent survey of library staff in UK higher education libraries conducted by Royle and Dempsie (2013) suggests that librarians have largely positive feelings with regard to their professional development and satisfaction in the university library setting. Participants reported general satisfaction with the level of support for training and development, with 90% indicating that were satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and type of training provided to them (Royle & Dempsie, 2013). Furthermore, of those surveyed, 87% reported feeling supported in their professional development by their line managers, indicating that the university library setting had to a large extent provided proper guidance to librarians. Kenney and Simmons (2012) further confirm these findings, with their own survey of librarians which indicated that 88.1% of all respondents reported feeling comfortable with their current level of professional development. Also, investigations such as the ones conducted by

Royle and Dempsie (2013) and Kenney and Simmons (2012) strongly suggest that librarians are mostly satisfied with their development in the university library setting. Furthermore, their findings provide evidence to suggest that university libraries provide adequate support for their librarians in terms of professional development. This is a positive sign for university libraries as it demonstrates that their commitment to the development and welfare of their staff is deemed satisfactory by those, they are responsible for providing for.

2.5 Factors Inhibiting the Development of Librarians in University Libraries

Several factors inhibit the training and development of librarians in university libraries. Budgetary constraints often limit the allocation of resources for comprehensive professional development programs, hindering opportunities for skill enhancement and staying current with emerging trends. Insufficient time and heavy workloads can impede librarians' ability to participate in training activities, leading to a potential gap between evolving job requirements and their skill sets (Iwuchukwu & Echedom, 2020). Organizational cultures that do not prioritize continuous learning may contribute to a lack of motivation or support for professional development initiatives. Additionally, a lack of clear communication channels and feedback mechanisms can hinder the identification of specific training needs.

Curry (2019) surveyed 149 librarians employed at post-secondary institutions in the United States and Canada and found that librarian development programs were frequently underfunded and lacked the support of senior-level management. Furthermore, the study found that librarians need better access to career opportunities, mentoring, and professional development opportunities. Anunobi (2013) observed that staff capacity development in Nigerian

university libraries was challenged by inadequate finance to send staff on training, and where training had been provided; there were no facilities to implement the acquired skills. Other challenges according to Anunobi include trained librarians migrating to other institutions upon completion of training. There are also limited opportunities because training outside the country is more expensive than training within the country. This is why there are limited numbers of people who are sent for training at the same time which may pose a problem in skills development (Obi, 2013).

Ugwuanyi and Ejikeme (2011) stated various challenges of staff training and development one of which is staff resistance to change. According to them, many members of staff in academic and research libraries tend to resist the introduction and use of ICTs because they have not been adequately trained to appreciate their usefulness in this technological age. This may be a result of a lack of interest, lack of knowledge of what to teach, limited opportunities for skill acquisition, and, selection of the right ICT technology. An unreliable power supply is also an impediment to achieving the manpower goals of the new era, together with constant changes in software and hardware. Others include a poor responsive attitude on the part of management; neglect from authority and non-availability of budget allocation for training programs for library personnel as factors blocking the full realization of personnel training programs in academic libraries.

3.1 Research Method

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The total population for this study comprises 64 staff of the three federal university libraries in Delta State. The University libraries under study are Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun, Federal Maritime University

Okerenkoko and Admiraty University of Nigeria, Ibuzor, Delta State, Nigeria. The total enumeration sampling technique was adopted for this study due to the manageable size of the population. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. This was constructed by the researcher and considered appropriate because it is one of the most reliable instruments for collecting data from the respondents. A total of 64 copies of the questionnaire were administered and 59

were duly completed and found useable, therefore there was a 92% response rate. The data collected for this study was analyzed using simple percentage/frequency counts and weighted mean.

4.1 Data Analysis and Presentation

Research Question 1: What are the key staff development needs in federal university libraries in Delta State?

Table 1: Key Staff Development Needs in University Library

| S/N | Items | Agree | % | Disagree | % |
|-----|--|-------|-----|----------|----|
| 1 | Technological proficiency training | 59 | 100 | 00 | 00 |
| 2 | Customer services training | 42 | 71 | 17 | 29 |
| 3 | Communication skills training | 46 | 78 | 13 | 22 |
| 4 | Leadership and management training | 59 | 100 | 00 | 00 |
| 5 | Collection development and management training | 59 | 100 | 00 | 00 |
| 6 | Database management training | 59 | 100 | 00 | 00 |
| 7 | Cataloguing and Classification Training | 59 | 100 | 00 | 00 |
| 8 | Marketing and promotion of library resources training | 40 | 68 | 19 | 32 |
| 9 | Educational development i.e., acquisition of higher degrees (M.Sc, Ph.D.) etc. | 59 | 100 | 00 | 00 |

Table 1 revealed that 59(100%) representing all the respondents unanimously agreed that they need development in areas such as technological proficiency, leadership and management, collection development and management, cataloguing and classification, marketing and promotion of library resources as well as educational development relating to the acquisition of higher degrees such as M.Sc. And Ph.D. Also, 42(71%), 46(78%), and 40(68%) representing the majority of the respondents agreed that they need

development in the area of customer services, communication skills, marketing and promotion of library resources. This means that the staff in federal university libraries in Delta state needs development on technological proficiency, customer service, communication skills, leadership and management, collection development and management, cataloguing, and classification, marketing and promotion of library resources as well as educational development relating to the acquisition of higher degrees.

Research Question 2: What is the extent of staff satisfaction with their development in Federal University libraries in Delta State?

Table 2: Extent of Staff Satisfaction with Their Development

| S/N | Statement | VHE | HE | LE | VLE | Weighed Mean |
|-----------------------|---|-----|----|----|-----|--------------|
| 1 | I am satisfied with technological skill development | 5 | 11 | 24 | 17 | 2.00 |
| 2 | I am satisfied with customer service training and development | 6 | 18 | 19 | 14 | 2.65 |
| 3 | I am satisfied with communication skills training and development | 8 | 14 | 24 | 13 | 2.29 |
| 4 | I am satisfied with leadership and management training | 6 | 10 | 24 | 19 | 2.10 |
| 5 | I am satisfied with collection development and management training | 5 | 12 | 18 | 24 | 2.23 |
| 6 | I am satisfied with database management training and development | 6 | 11 | 14 | 28 | 2.17 |
| 7 | I am satisfied with cataloguing and classification training development | 4 | 7 | 18 | 30 | 1.98 |
| 8 | I am satisfied with the marketing and promotion of library resources training | 7 | 17 | 19 | 16 | 2.56 |
| 9 | I am satisfied with my educational development on the job. | 5 | 12 | 18 | 24 | 2.23 |
| Weighed Mean | | | | | | 2.24 |
| Criterion Mean | | | | | | 2.50 |

Table 2 revealed a weighted mean of 2.24 which is lesser than the criterion mean of 2.50. It can be concluded that the extent to which the staff of federal university libraries in Delta State are satisfied with their professional development is low. The majority of them are clearly not satisfied with their technological

skill development, customer service training and development, communication skills training and development, leadership and management training and development, marketing and promotion of library resources training as well as their educational development.

Research Question 3: What are the factors inhibiting the development of staff federal university libraries in Delta State?

Table 3: Factors Inhibiting Staff Development in University Libraries

| S/N | Items | Agree | % | Disagree | % |
|-----|--|-------|-----|----------|----|
| 1 | Budgetary constraints | 50 | 85 | 9 | 15 |
| 2 | Lack of time | 12 | 20 | 47 | 80 |
| 3 | Heavy workloads | 16 | 27 | 43 | 73 |
| 4 | Poor organizational cultures | 51 | 86 | 8 | 14 |
| 5 | Limited training and development opportunities | 59 | 100 | 00 | 00 |
| 6 | Staff resistant to training and development | 5 | 8 | 54 | 92 |
| 7 | Poor interest in training | 3 | 5 | 56 | 95 |
| 8 | Poor management support | 53 | 89 | 6 | 11 |

Table 3 revealed that 59(100%) representing all the respondents unanimously agreed that limited training and development opportunities are factors inhibiting staff development in federal university libraries in Delta State. Also, 50(85%) agreed with budgetary constraints, 51(86%) agreed with poor organizational cultures while 53(89%) agreed with poor management support are factors inhibiting staff development in federal university libraries in Delta State. However, a good number of the respondents disagree to lack of time, heavy workloads, staff resistant to change, and poor interest in training as factors inhibiting staff development in federal university libraries in Delta State. This means that budgetary constraints, poor organizational cultures, limited training and development opportunities, and poor management support are the major factors inhibiting staff development in federal university libraries in Delta State.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

This study found that the staff in federal university libraries in Delta State needs development on technological proficiency, customer service, communication skills, leadership and management, collection development and management, cataloguing and classification, marketing and promotion of library resources as well as educational development relating to. This finding is in agreement with that of Bud and Spicher (2017) who found that the areas where librarians needs to improve on their professional development include knowledge of emerging technologies, existing and evolving library trends, budgeting, collection development, database management, assessment, and marketing.

This study further uncovered that the extent to which the staff in federal university libraries in Delta State are satisfied with their development is low. This finding is in sharp contrast to the study by Royle and Dempsie (2013) who found that librarians have positive feelings with regard to their professional development and satisfaction in the university library setting as they reported general satisfaction with the level of support for training

and development, with 90% indicating that were satisfied or very satisfied with the amount and type of training provided to them. Also, this study found that budgetary constraints, poor organizational cultures, limited training and development opportunities, and poor management support are the major factors inhibiting staff development in federal university libraries in Delta State. This finding agrees with the one by Curry (2019) who found that librarian development programs were frequently underfunded and lacked the support of senior-level management. Furthermore, the study found that librarians need better access to career opportunities, mentoring, and professional development opportunities.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have shown that there is a need for staff development in federal university libraries in Delta State to enable library personnel to possess the requisite skills, knowledge, and competencies to effectively navigate the challenges posed by technological advancements, evolving pedagogical approaches, and shifting user expectations. The survey conducted in this study also revealed that the staff in federal university libraries in Delta State needs development on technological proficiency, customer service, communication skills, leadership and management, collection development and management, and educational development among others. On the other hand, the survey revealed that the extent to which the staff in federal university libraries in Delta State are satisfied with their development is low. The study further revealed that budgetary constraints, poor organizational cultures, limited training and development opportunities, and poor management support are the major factors inhibiting staff development in federal university libraries in Delta State. This study has demonstrated the importance of training and development of library personnel to ensure that the library meets the needs of its users.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following have been recommended:

1. Federal university libraries in Delta State should implement effective measures that will ensure adequate provision of resources to support the training and development programs of the library staff.
2. The library should create a conducive environment to encourage continuous learning and provide individual and collective growth opportunities.
3. The library should also ensure proper communication channels, effective feedback mechanisms, regular assessment of needs, and mentoring opportunities that will provide adequate support for the staff.

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