

Human Capacity Building in Nigerian University Libraries: An Imperative for Academic Libraries' Contribution towards National Development

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Abstract

The place of the academic library in national development cannot be underestimated. Despite its central role in nurturing tomorrow's leaders, it preserves for posterity a country's intellectual heritage in the form of indigenous resources and provides for education and research. This responsibility was carried out with print until the turn of century which ushered in ICT. Consequently, the intellectual heritage becomes ubiquitous without being bound to space and time. Further to that, the role of academic libraries still remains the same fundamentally but is changed in the ways and means of actualisation. By implication, the human capacity needed for such changing roles changed. Hence, a survey was carried out to determine the efforts of Nigerian university libraries towards ensuring staff capacity with focus on the availability of policy for staff development in Nigerian university libraries, the extent of the policy implementation, the challenges to these efforts and ways of ensuring sustainable policy development and implementation. Questionnaire responses from twelve federal university libraries show that they have well developed staff capacity development policies which are implemented especially in the areas of justification for training, responsibility for training, category of staff to be trained, type of training, method of training, documentation of training, as well as

the location of training. Finance and lack of professional collaboration are considered the major challenges to effective capacity building needed for the libraries to assume their rightful place in national development. Recommendations are made based on the findings.

Keywords

Capacity building, academic libraries, national development, staffing, Nigeria

Introduction

Progression in the life of a human being termed growth and development is determined by inherent and environmental factors. One important environmental factor – formal education, with its apex as the university brings about complete citizenry who contribute to a nation's development. The university library plays a significant role in university education through its function of processing and dissemination of information. The turn of 21st century brought the information society characterised by changes in information resources packaging to electronic form, citizenry who need information in varying format and pedagogical changes in education delivery from chalkboard/paper platform to e-learning. Consequently, university library operations and services are expected to shift from the traditional print format so as to remain relevant. To ensure continuing relevance in the services of university community which is a very important catalyst of national development, university libraries must ensure that their staff possess the necessary competences for the 21st century information services. This can be achieved through university library staff capacity development.

Despite the changes and expected follow up in information service delivery, the rate at which the new information services are developed and provided leaves much to be desired, especially in the area of automation, institutional repositories and digital libraries. One important driving force for the expected service delivery is competency enhancement. Based on that, the study sought to determine the efforts of Nigerian university libraries towards ensuring staff capacity needed for national development.

Literature Review

In his book, Nyerere (1974) argued that though development is measured in terms of productivity for economic growth, it is all about development of people which tools include improved roads, buildings, increased crop output, etc. Along that line, UNESCO (2000) and Lundu (1995) presented human development as the yardstick of development. This involves the increase in people's opportunities to acquire knowledge and access resources needed for a healthy, gainful and dignified life. To achieve this, emphasis should be on the human sustainable development as presented in the global development strategies such as the World Bank, Millennium Development Goals and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Goals (United Nations, 2002).

Sustainable development has been defined as a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (International Institute for Sustainable Development and World Business Council for Sustainable Development, n.d). It has been advanced that the network of challenges to sustainable development ranging from severe poverty and disease control to climate change and ecosystem vulnerability can be addressed through knowledge and skills from a range of disciplines (International Commission on Education for Sustainable Development, 2008). Expertise from these disciplines is mostly drawn from one important agent of development – the university, whose functions among others include the pursuit, promotion and dissemination of knowledge, person-power development and provision of intellectual leadership (Ifidon & Okoli, 2002). Achievement of these

functions is dependent on the support provided by the university library through the provision of materials for teaching, learning, research, and personal development (Nok, 2006).

Libraries are also of immense benefit to the development of a nation. On economic terms, Keyes (1995) and Griffith & King (1993) found that libraries produced 51.5% annual return on investment while McGlure et al. (2000) using cost benefit analysis found that the benefits derived from library services outweigh the cost of providing them. United Nations Economic and Social Council (2003:2) reaffirmed that “where library services are non-existent, the costs in terms of lost long-term productivity are infinitely high.” Furthermore, they summarised library's roles in sustainable development as harnessing information and knowledge by applying its professional processing, storage and dissemination competencies in the information and knowledge world; assisting learners (Information literacy) which is crucial in the development of intellectual capacity for a community. Libraries also play the role: of social inclusion, cohesion participation and empowerment (CILIP, 2002); as civic centre and community information services (Mcchue et al., 2000; Walzer & Gruidi, 1996); as essential element of physical development (Albenese, 2001; CILIP, 2002 and McClure et al., 2000). United Nations Economic and Social Council (2003) emphasised that libraries generally empower citizens through the provision of access to information of all kinds needed to improve their skills thereby becoming responsible and informed participants in democracies. As a result of these benefits and others, they agreed that the library plays a significant role in bridging the digital divide. For libraries, making information available reduces information poverty which is often the basis for economic poverty.

Mindful of the changes in the university system environment which demands increased investment in electronic infrastructure and connectivity as well as e-learning (Rosenberg, 2005) which aids in bridging the digital divide, the way, manner and platform of library support to university system have changed. Further to the changes is the agitation from employees, students and other users; evolving technologies and the transparency with which information is communicated and the need for the state – of the-art services (Kigongo-Bukenya,

1999). Lei (1996) also noted that the developments in computing and telecommunication presented library staff with the environment of providing users with information resources in various formats.

Given the changing library responsibility to universities in particular and for national development in general, it is pertinent that libraries in universities should be fully equipped to discharge their duties, thereby ensuring sustainable development. One important way of doing this is by enhancing critical competencies of the workforce so as to respond to the emerging demands of users (World Business Council for Sustainable Development, n.d). This confirms the position of McNamara (n.d) that workforce enhancement by way of training is necessary when performance appraisal indicates that improvement is needed, as part of professional development programmes, as part of succession planning, and to test or pilot the operation of a new performance management system. Further justification for enhancing competences by Nigerian university libraries as indicated by Ajidahun (2007) and Oketunji (2001) is to increase use of ICT for automation, repositories and digital libraries.

Training has been described by Chandan (2000) as a short term process which uses systematic and organised procedure to enhance the knowledge and skills of personnel. Training is needed for managerial and non-manual staff of any profession (Ajidahun, 2007) though very essential for non-manual staff who constitute a large portion of the total employees in an academic library (Mort, 1982; Kao, 1998 & Zhang, 2004). Training has been described to be of immense benefit to employers in general and library staff in particular due to the following benefits:

- Enhanced productivity (Chandan, 2000; Yesufu, 2000);
- Improved job performance and management efficiency (Ojiambo, 1992; Stoner, 2002);
- Reduction in cost of production;
- Fast decision, morale boosting; and
- Reduced supervision, personnel growth and organizational stability (Silver 1981; Ojiambo, 1992; Chandan, 2000; Stoner, 2002).
- McNamara (n.d) also noted that the benefits of training include increased strategies and

products, increased efficiencies in process resulting in financial gain, increased capacity to adopt new technologies and methods, as well as reduced employee turnover.

One effective way of ensuring training of employees, especially in the library, is through the development of a training policy. Brandt (2002) described a training policy as a written purpose, scope and composition of a programme which shows a detailed perspective of administrators limited to how much training programmes to be undertaken, staff members' boundaries and expectations, and staff participation. He noted that a training policy should contain:

- a mission statement and/or purpose;
- goals that indicate the direction a policy takes;
- objectives of what will be undertaken; and
- the overall guiding principles,

Responsibility for training should be handled by a section of the organisation like the personnel, human resources or staff development units; or be considered as a separate unit of its own (Brandt, 2002). The method/technique and areas of training of library staff have been identified by many authors. Rosenberg (2005) noted that the method of training should be diversified and made appropriate to the training needs of individual libraries. Some of the identified methods/techniques include conferences, continuing education courses, on the job training, seminars and workshops, vestibule training, case studies, case histories, self study, electronic teaching media, simulation games and role playing. Others include internship, apprenticeship, modeling, study visits to developed libraries, and industrial attachment (Lei, 1996; Rosenberg, 2005; Burton & Thaku, 1997; Ajidahun, 2007; Silver, 1981; Akhigbe, 1997; Ugbokwe, 1998).

The areas in which library staff could be trained depending on the need, include management leadership and communication, computer skills and e-mail management; CD-ROM use and information technology skills, management of IT skills in library, electronic publishing, personnel management skills and programmes that will lead to fulfilling the role of librarians in the education process (Ajidahun, 2007;

Workforce Economy, 2001; Kao, 1998). Considering the place of libraries and librarians in sustainable development of the nation, the changing environment and citizens' demands, especially the university community which libraries serve, as well as the need to leverage librarians' skills so as to justify their roles in national development, it becomes pertinent to determine the efforts of Nigerian university libraries to ensure staff relevance in the national development. One way of doing this is through the study of human capacity development implementation in Nigerian university libraries. Specifically the study sought to:

- a. find out the availability of policies for staff development in Nigerian university libraries;
- b. determine the extent of the policy implementation;
- c. ascertain the challenges to staff training policy implementation, and
- d. find ways to enhance staff capacity implementation.

Research Design and Method

The study adopted a survey research design which

utilised a questionnaire to collect data from all 23 federal university libraries in Nigeria excluding the newly established nine universities. The questionnaire was sent by e-mail and the university librarians were telephoned as a follow up. The self-administered questionnaire consisted of two parts: A – the Library profile; and B – Extent of staff training and development.

Though it was difficult to convince the university libraries to respond to the questionnaire, twelve university libraries (52.2%) completed and returned their questionnaire. Others did not return the questionnaire. It is likely that those who did not return may not have training policy or some are of the view that the data will be prying into their library capacity development privacy. Conviction to continue the analysis was based on the fact that the returned questionnaires represented all four generations of Nigerian university libraries, as well as the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, namely: North East, North West, North Central, South East, South West and South-South. The list of university libraries which returned their questionnaire is presented in Table 1.

The results are organised to reflect the objectives of the research which include the

Table 1: Nigerian Federal University Libraries whose Data was used for the Analysis

Generation	Name of Library	Year Established	Location
1 st	❖ Kenneth Dike Library University of Ibadan.	1948	South West
	❖ Kashim Ibrahim Library Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.	1960	North West
	❖ Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria.	1960	South East
	❖ Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Ile-Ife.	1962	South West
	❖ University of Lagos Lagos, Library	1962	South West
2 nd	❖ John Harris Library, University of Benin	1970	South-South
	❖ University of Jos Library	1972	North Central
	❖ Abdullahi Fodiyo Library, Usman Danfodiyo University Sokoto	1975	North East
3 rd	❖ Federal University of Technology Owerri Library	1981	South East
	❖ University of Abuja Library	1988	North Central
4 th	❖ Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka	1992	South East
	❖ National Open University of Nigeria Library, Lagos	2002	South West

availability of staff capacity development policies, the extent of policy implementation, the challenges to the implementation and the ways of enhancing staff capacity development. Frequency counts, percentages, ratio and graphs were used to analyse the results. Where decisions are required based on score, 50% and above are interpreted to be positive.

Results and Interpretation

The results and their interpretations are presented below, based on the specific purpose of the research.

Availability of Staff Capacity Development Policy

The result shows that there were 1,767 staff working in the 12 federal university libraries. Figure 1 shows that 365 (21%) were professionals; 432 (24%) were paraprofessionals; 358 (20%) were senior non-professionals, while 612 (35%) were junior non-professionals. Professionals here represent university graduates of library and information science. This implies that the studied federal university libraries in Nigeria have the greatest number of their staff as junior non-professionals. Surprisingly, the professional staff responsible for the real professional duties had the second least representation with 21%. The paraprofessionals (Ordinary National Diploma and Higher National Diploma holders in Library and Information Science) also had low representation (24%). The duty of non-professional senior staff (20%) calls for a further study to justify their number.

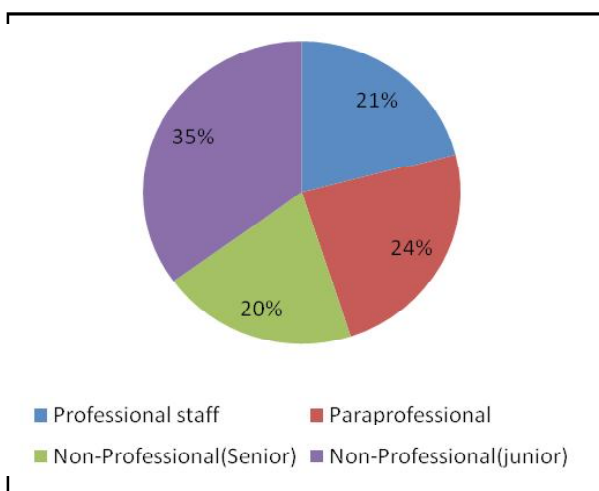


Figure 1: Staff distribution in Nigerian federal university libraries

The result shows that 10 (83%) of the twelve libraries which responded to the questionnaire had staff development policies while 2 (17%) had none. This means that the studied Nigerian university libraries have staff development policies.

Content of the policy

Responses on the content of the policy are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Responses on the content of University Library Staff Development Policy

Policy Content	Responses n = 10	%
Statement of Aims & Objectives of Training	9	90
Details of Responsibility for Training	8	80
Statement of the Various Types of Training	8	80
Information on Procedure & Records of Training	8	80
Information on the Training Follow-up	6	60

The result considering the 50% bench mark shows that Nigerian libraries that responded to the questionnaire have well developed policy. Further response on the content of library policy are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Expanded content of library staff development policy

Policy Content	Responses n= 10	%
Justification for Training	8	80
Type of Staff to be Trained	8	80
Type of Training to be Provided	9	90
The Place or Location of Training	6	60
The Length of Training	8	80
The Financial Support to be Provided	6	60

The result further shows that other detailed information concerning staff capacity is contained in the policies of all the libraries that responded as the responses are above 50%. It is therefore apparent that federal university libraries in Nigeria that responded have well developed staff capacity development policy containing the statement of objectives, statement of responsibility, the type of staff to be trained, the type of training to be provided, location of the training, as well as the financial support to be provided for staff.

Extent of Staff Capacity Development Implementation

All the ten university libraries indicated that they implemented the policy to ensure capacity development of staff. The two libraries which did not have capacity development policy further indicated that they engaged their staff on training.

Responsibility

Their responses on the unit responsible for staff capacity development indicated that greater number of the libraries five (41.7%) had their training located in a distinct unit called Research, Development and Statistics, four (33.3%) had it as part of the Office of the University Librarian. The other three libraries had the responsibility under the ICT unit, Circulation & Cataloging; and Readers Services & Automation Units respectively. Having a distinct unit for staff capacity development is a sign of a focused effort.

Justification for Training

As part of policy implementation efforts, the libraries were required to indicate their justification for staff training. The result presented in figure 2 shows that all the reasons presented spur libraries to initiate capacity building for staff. Though technology (100%) was given prime attention, the libraries gave the scheduled period for training a score of 53.3%.

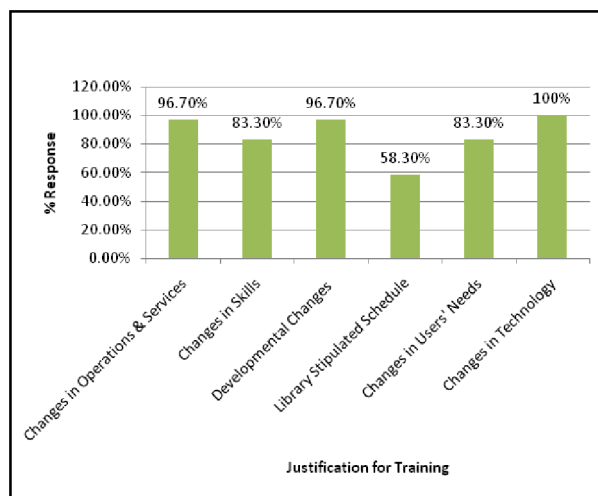


Figure 2: Justification for staff capacity development in Nigerian federal university libraries

Type of Staff and Training

In terms of the implementation, the libraries were required to indicate the number of training sessions, the type of staff, as well as the type of training provided in the last ten years. Ten years ago was considered the turn of 21st century which ushered in the information society. Only six libraries of the twelve had full documentation of the number of training sessions their staff had engaged in. The staff of the six libraries had been exposed to 11.25 training sessions for ten years resulting in an average of 112.50 training sessions per year and 187.5 per library. The distribution of the trainings for the various categories of staff is presented in Figure 3. It shows expectedly that greater percentage (46.13%) of the training was provided for the professional staff. Paraprofessionals who play the next professional role received 19.55% of the training. As the category that does the house keeping job in the library, it is not surprising that 17.77% of the training was provided for the non-professional junior staff more than the 16.53% provided for the non-professional senior staff.

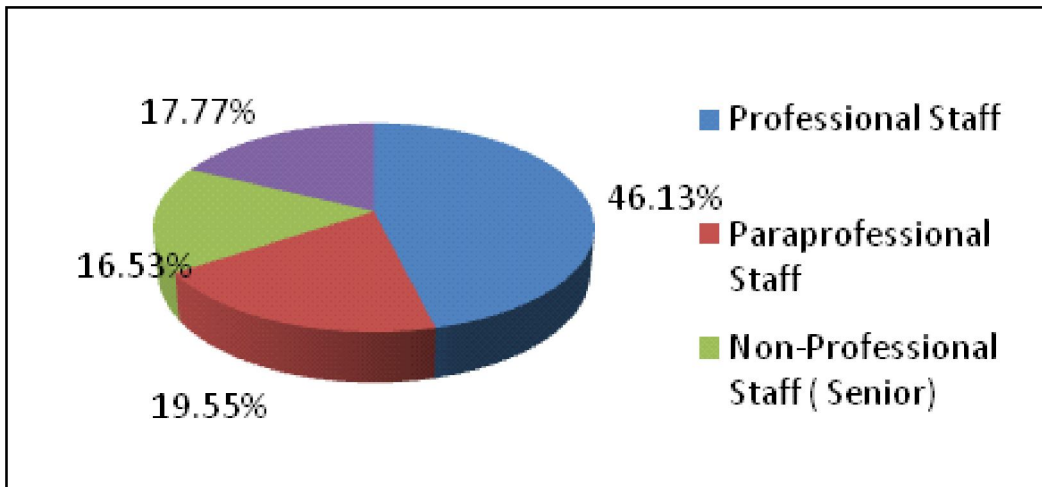


Figure 3: Distribution of staff training by category in six Nigerian federal Universities libraries for a period of 10 years. n=6

The ratio of the various categories of staff to the number of training for the past ten years is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Ratio of various categories of library staff to the number of training for the ten years in six universities

Staff category	Number of Staff	Number of Trainings in Ten Years	Ratio of Staff to Training
Professional	155	519	1:3.3
Para- professionals	103	220	1:2.1
Non- Professionals (Senior)	139	186	1:1.3
Non- Professionals (Junior)	383	200	1:0.5

Table 4 shows that apart from the junior non-professional staff, all the staff in the libraries had opportunities of not less than one training session in the past ten years. However, the professional and the paraprofessional staff had as many as three and two training sessions in ten years respectively.

Types of Training

The libraries were required to indicate the types of training they had exposed their staff to in the past ten years. Their responses are presented in figure 4. It shows that the libraries rely more on formal training, workshops and conference in the development of staff capacity. The easily accessible capacity development method of in-house training narrowly scored above the benchmark. Exchange was not considered as a popular method adopted by the library since it received 25% response.

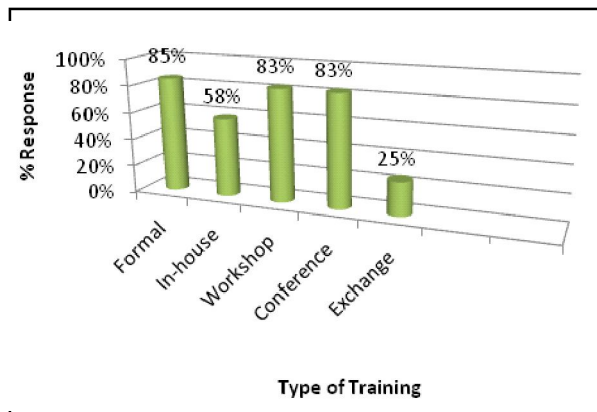


Figure 4: Nigerian university libraries response to types of trainings provided for staff. n=10

Location of the training

The responses of the libraries as regards location of training show that 93.3% of the trainings took place in Nigeria while only 6.7% was provided outside Nigeria. This confirms the low response to exchange programmes which in most cases take place outside Nigeria.

Areas of the training

The libraries were asked to indicate the areas of training to which their staff were exposed to. The result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Responses to areas of training provided to Nigeria university libraries staff n=10

Training areas	% Response
ICT in libraries	100
Automation	91.7
Preservation	75
Library Security	66.7
Reference Services	58.3
Electronic thesis/Dissertation/ Institutional Repository	58.3
Collection Development	50
Library Administration	41.7
Web 2.0	41.7
Serial Management	25

The result showed that all the libraries have exposed their staff to training on ICT. They had been exposed to trainings on automation, preservation and library security, having attracted responses of 91.7%, 75% and 66.7% respectively. Though 58.3% of the libraries had exposed their staff to training on reference services and electronic thesis/dissertation/institutional repositories, which are very important to library operations and services needed for development, it is of concern that Web 2.0 which translates to Library 2.0 services and library administration has not attracted the interest of these libraries as regards training.

Challenges to Staff Capacity Development Policy Implementation

The result showed that staff capacity development in Nigerian university libraries was challenged by inadequate finance to send staff on training (100%). Where training had been provided, 50% indicated that there are no facilities to implement the acquired skills. Other challenges included trained staff migrating to other institutions on completion of training (41.7%), source of training being difficult to come by (25%), lack of awareness of the importance of the training and difficulties choosing the beneficial training from the commercially motivated training outfit which scored 8.3% each respectively.

Ways of enhancing library staff capacity development policy implementation

Ways of enhancing library staff capacity development policy implementation was sought from the libraries. The result shows that all the libraries (100%) were agreeable that libraries should organise in-house training for its staff and source for linkages, as well as exchange programme (91.7%). Eighty three point three percent (83.3%) of the libraries indicated that staff capacity development policy implementation would be enhanced if universities set funds aside for annual training of the staff, provide adequate facilities to enable trained staff to implement the acquired skills, and if trained staff provide a report of their training to the university authority. As a way of encouraging staff capacity development policy implementation, 67% of the libraries indicated that professional bodies should periodically re-certify university libraries through compulsory training.

Discussion of Findings

Though literature has revealed that university libraries play an important role in a nation's sustainable development, it has also demonstrated that this role can be performed effectively if library staff are equipped through capacity development with a view to meeting the demands of the present information society.

The result of the research has revealed that professional library staff that are responsible for the professional duties of the library are not well represented in the university libraries. This suggests that professional operations and services will be handled by the non-professionals, thereby supporting the findings of Mort (1992) and Kao (1998) that the non-professional staff whom they termed support staff constitute 2/3 of total staff in academic libraries, and they need to be trained since they possess little or no professional skills for effective library operations.

The availability of staff capacity development policies in 80% of the libraries that responded implies that they are aware of its importance of the role played by the library in national development, as well as for the smooth running of a system (Brandt, 2002). The results of the research further demonstrate that Nigerian federal university libraries

that responded have well developed training policy as presented in the content of a library training policy by Brandt (2002) and Ajidahun (2007).

Provision of a separate unit to handle staff capacity development, by 41.7% of university libraries further confirms the importance attached to staff capacity development, and reinforces the suggestion by Brandt (2002) for a separate training unit for library staff training. It may not be out of place to argue that university libraries which have their training activities subsumed into other units may not give prime attention to staff capacity development.

The responses on the reason for training further justify the importance of library staff capacity development imperatives for natural development. This confirms the suggestion by Ajidahun (2007), Nzotta (1984), Kigongo-Bukenya (1999) and Sawaya, et al. (2009) on the justification for library staff training. Again, the low response (53.3%) to libraries regarding staff capacity at a stipulated period confirmed that training is not scheduled but only happens when necessary.

The unavailability of complete records of training in 50% of the libraries that responded suggests that the libraries are not implementing the records of training regarding the training policy as suggested by Brandt (2002). It also suggests that less attention is paid to statistics which is important for decision making and policy formulation.

Though an average of 112.5 staff training per year and 18.75 per library suggests a good performance the ratio of training to the categories of staff shows a very low capacity development. Apparently from the result, the provision of approximately three training sessions per professional staff in ten years and one for a non-professional staff (Table 4) is grossly inadequate, given the role they play in national development, as well as environmental changes which increase the degradation of library skills (Ajidahun, 2007; Ojiamba, 1992).

It is worrisome that the university libraries do not explore the cheap opportunity provided by in-house training considering its low rating. This is contrary to suggestion by Rosenberg (2005) that African libraries should exploit the benefits of in-house training of staff. Their reliance on formal training, workshops and conferences could be

attributed to the sponsorship opportunities provided by Education Trust Fund to Nigerian universities. The low utilisation of exchange programmes for capacity development is an indication that Nigerian university libraries are not utilising the global networking opportunity for collaboration.

Though the areas of training follow the suggestion of World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2005) that workforce skills must be enhanced to respond to changing demands of the society and the way people live and work, it is worrisome that training for library administration and Web 2.0 needed for interactive libraries was neglected.

The 100% affirmation on the inadequate finance as a major challenge to staff capacity development policy implementation underscores the central role finance plays in staff capacity development policy implementation and provision of facilities for acquired skills implementation. Unutilised skill does not translate to development. Staff migration upon acquisition of skills suggests that the condition of service for library staff needs to be looked into at the universities.

Conclusion

From the survey to determine the staff capacity development efforts in Nigerian federal university libraries as way of ensuring that libraries take their rightful place in the national development, it was evident that federal university libraries in Nigeria that responded to the survey have well developed staff capacity development policies which are implemented in the following ways: many have the research, development and statistics units being responsible for capacity development; the justification for every training session was based on changes in technology and skills needed to satisfy the needs of the society rather than as a periodic event. Records of training sessions as required by the policy were not kept thereby jeopardising the availability of statistics for decision making and policy formulation; the number of training sessions provided for staff of different categories for the past ten years

are grossly inadequate, though professional and paraprofessional staff benefitted more than others; staff were exposed more to formal training, workshops and conferences in Nigeria to the detriment of cheap in-house training and international exchange programme; and though the libraries expose staff to trainings for societal needs, library administration and Web 2.0 needed for today's effectiveness were not given the prominence they deserve.

Despite the extent of the policy implementation, finance needed to sponsor training as well as acquire state-of-the-art facilities to utilise acquired skills has been identified as the major challenge to library staff capacity development in Nigeria. Enhanced library staff capacity development needed for national development can be achieved if libraries utilise the cheap opportunity provided by in-house training, sources for available linkages and exchange programmes through professional networking and encouragement of staff to provide report of the training received, as well as funding bodies setting funds aside for trainings.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- Nigerian university libraries should ensure the availability of staff capacity development policy as a way of ensuring staff competency enhancement;
- University libraries should ensure that policy content is implemented and documented effectively to aid decision-making and policy formulation;
- University libraries should maximise the use of in-house training and professional networking to attract linkages/exchange programmes as a way of enhancing staff development; and
- Given the role libraries play in national development, funding bodies should set funds aside for staff capacity development and facilities enhancement in university libraries.

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