

Research article

The Influence of ICT Capacity Building (Workshop) on Professional Development of Librarians in Federal University Library, Lafia.

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Abstract

This study is about the influence of information and communication technology capacity building on professional development of librarians, the background of the study was discussed as well as the problems. It's also aimed at determining whether the training received from the library schools was sufficient for capacity building on professional development of librarianship. Secondary data was explored to discuss the ICT application in libraries, information services in libraries, capacity building in librarianship. Finally, summary, conclusions and recommendations was drawn.

Keyword: ICT, Professional Development, Institutional Repository, Librarianship, Library.

I. Introduction

In a new librarian, occupational training begins from the moment he/she steps into the profession. Formal classroom instruction covers primarily generalized knowledge about the fundamental concepts and theories of library systems an operation. Individual library, however, exhibits its own unique identity composed of

organizational structure, types and arrangement of Resources, clientele characteristics and needs and international relations that all form the work place culture. New hires, whether fresh school with a recent curriculum, or with the advantage of years of practical experience, face the need of becoming familiar with the new institutional identity. Professional development opportunities can help the new librarian put theoretical knowledge into practice, apply generalized concepts to specific responsibilities and become familiar with given job situations.

Academic librarians are evaluated for their performance in scholarship as well as librarianship and the requirements of the individual institution and the publishing industry may prompt no small measure of anxiety for new librarians. Where institutions require that librarians pursue successful research and publication in order to achieve promotion and tenure, there is an unofficial consensus that many librarians are ill-prepared either by lack of training or release time to successfully complete this requirement (Sapon-White, 2004). Programs designed to familiarize Librarians with institutional expectations and to de-mystify the writing and submission process can have a positive impact on institutional morale and individual achievement.

By virtue of being in the business of supplying information organization and retrieval services, academic libraries are untimely tied to the constant and rapid technological changes characterizing the information age. The “push” factor for the individual librarian is the expectation and mandate that he or she both maintain expert knowledge of new product and services and at the same time participate in publishing and professional growth activities (Flatley and Weber, 2004).

The only way of ensuring professional development of librarians is through capacity Building. Capacity building is any action that improves the effectiveness of individuals, organizations, networks, or systems, including organizational and financial stability, program service delivery, program quality and growth. The concept of “capacity building” is a popular phrase in development discourse. It is one of the most urgent challenges facing Sub-Saharan African today. It is indeed a challenge of the 21st century as technological and markets are being revolutionized, compelling Africa to seek for the right kind of professionally competent people and institutions to meet the challenge. It must be realized that government non-state actors and (foreign) donors all tend to invoke capacity problems to explain why policies fail to deliver or why aid is not generating sustainable impacts.

“Capacity” can be defined as abilities, skills, understandings, attitudes, values, relationships, behaviors, motivations, resources and conclusions that enable individuals, organizations, network/sectors and broader social systems to carry out functions and achieve their development objectives over time (Bolger, 2000). According to Umar (2004), a number of professional development activities and programmes have been created; however, nearly all these activities and programmes revolve around continuing professional education. Continuing education plays an important part in professional development. Training and re-training, staff exchanges, links with similar and related profession etc are other activities professionals undertake to develop themselves. Professional development helps build confidence through knowledge, experience and skills necessary to practice effectively. Salisu, (2002)

regretfully observes that even in developed countries, complete professional preparation is not possible in a formal educational setting.

II. Background Information on Federal University Library, Lafia

Federal University Library, Lafia is the main University Library and its main purpose is to serve the entire University community. Federal University Lafia was established in 2011, the University Library took off in the year 2012 when academic sections i.e. 2011/2012 section began, The collection housed by Federal University Library, Lafia consist of about 4,507 volumes of books i.e. text books 2,050 and ceased bound volumes of periodicals donated from USA and the numbers of journals titles held in Federal University Library, Lafia is about 2,457 (i.e. few current and many ceased titles donated from USA mainly on science subjects) while the E-library contain 10 functional laptop computer donated from NITDA and 10 desktop computer with 8 lying unused in the Library. With a few exceptions, the books stock is arranged on open shelves. The books are not borrowed out to students because of its limitless of the titles, only on special request some lecturers are allowed to use any of the titles on week end and to be returned back to the library the following Monday morning. The arrangement is in classified order; this method enables the reader to browse through books which are related by subject to those on the shelves. There are measures and procedures for managing and controlling the library in order to serve users better. Many of the measure and procedures adopted to meet users needs and interest will succeed depending on the extent of users' cooperation with the library staff and the management. On the part of the library staff they are always willing to and ready to explain to users simple and complex procedures that may either puzzle them or make them unnecessarily irksome in the attempt to meet their needs and satisfy their interest. Though many few time selfish patrons do make things difficult for the rest of the patrons and the staff by mutilation and making life difficult for other patrons and posterity.

The library was established to cater for the academic or educational needs of students and staff in terms of teaching and research. From it starting, its existence experienced serious accommodation problems for both the staff and stock. The Library serves eleven departments of the faculties of Arts, Social Sciences and Sciences. The Library does not engage in inter library loan and cooperation. The total Library collections for 2011/2014 were 6,540 reading materials in the University Library with a capacity of 50 readers.

The university library has always been at the centre of research and scholarship playing a major role in acquiring, processing and leading library materials and responding to patrons inquires. Today, online database and internet searchers are a common feature among staff and students of the university. Most of the library management is striving to upgrade the IT skills of their staff to enable them cope with challenges of information age. Today, online and CD-ROM searches are a common feature among staff and students of the university.

III. Statement of the Problem

Professional development for academic librarians fulfills a need for the continuing acquisitions of knowledge and competencies that has not been met by “technical imperative” (the rapid technological change that characterizes contemporary academic libraries) and by the element that librarians share with other professionals, that they are compensated for what they know as well as for what they do. One essential component of the academic librarian’s knowledge base according to Bitrus, (2012) is the world of scholarship. The library and information sciences degree does a competent job of preparing librarians for the role of service providers in assisting patrons with the process of completing their scholarship tasks. As individuals, however, librarians may be less well served by formal training for the scholarship demands of their own research and publication, particularly in faculty status settings. Professional development programs work well to foster both specific skill-sets and the more diffuse aspects of process.

While professional development is frequently practice, or task-oriented, it is an equally effective forum for imparting discipline-specific theory and institutional culture and goals. The core of professional development consists of two elements, the process and what is achieved via the process, the knowledge and skills pertaining to a given profession. The professional development literature reflects this dual nature focusing primarily on delivery (process) or content.

Professional development benefits both the individual and the institution. For the individual, the ongoing process of acquiring new information and skills promotes job competencies for performance upgrades and promotion. On the psychological level, heightened competency may reduce job-related stress and increase interest, promoting job satisfaction (Block, 2001). Due to its persistent and lasting nature, professional development is known also as “life-long learning”. In Chinese, it is the process which means “one is never too old to learn” or keep on learning as long as you live”. An active professional development program offers the institution a corporate strategy for dealing with change (Shaughnessy, 1992). Employee competency and satisfaction underwrite the improvement of library services.

Most of the library staff employed today into the Library has no practical experience in workplace ethics and of course as Academic Librarians they require serious coaching. More so, with the advent of the information age coupled with the ever changing technological landscape, it has become imperative that librarians stay abreast with these developments. Perhaps the use of Information and Communication Technology-based Capacity Building Workshops will help Librarians develop professionally to meet these developments. Abdulsalami and Achebe (2012)

IV. Academic Libraries

A well established library is essential for the academic institution. As a focal point for teaching, learning and research, it is expected to provide standard information resource. Today, academic libraries are struggling to

keep their place as the major source of inquiry in the face of emerging digital technology. Digital technology has revolutionized not only the way information is packaged, processed, stored and disseminated but also how users seek and access information. Academic libraries no longer restrict themselves to print services such as collection development, cataloguing and classification, circulation and reference services, current awareness, selective dissemination and other bibliographic services, but have extended their efforts to interdisciplinary concept and computer software and hardware and telecommunication engineering and technology Abdulsalami and Achebe (2012). As observed by Campbell (2006), “numerous creative and useful services have evolved within academic libraries in the digital age providing quality learning opinion creating metadata offering virtual references services, teaching information literacy, choosing resources and managing resource licenses, collecting and digitizing archival materials and maintaining digital repositories”. Federal University being an academic library has also put all the right technology in place to welcome this digital age, it has started converting most of its cataloguing into the digital form, it has also acquired the Virtual Library Software that it is using to convert its collections, it is in line with this development that the aforementioned study is deemed related to this study.

Academic libraries presently are faced with not only the decision on what books and journals to acquire to satisfy faculty and students but also on how to remain relevant in the digital era, mindful of low budgets and resentment on the part of institutional administrators. There is also the issue of library users opting for alternate, more convenient and “qualitative” sources of information (the Internet) Abdulsalami and Achebe (2012). As Lombardi (2000) notes, users will prefer more computer content more computer indices, digitized finding aids, digital repositories of articles, online access to newspapers etc. Libraries also struggle with when, how, who and where to begin digitalization efforts, while keeping in mind that hesitation in the digitization of institutional archives will result in relinquishing the function to another institutional repository host. The consequence is repositioning of academic libraries resources, operations, services and skills. Resources today occur in hybridized form: print and electronic and therefore services provided and skills possessed by professionals in these libraries should reflect that trend.

Libraries have always served as access points for information. Services have evolved from the days of closed stacks, through shelf browsing and card catalogues, punch cards and OPACS to the concept of open access and institutional repositories (Cisse, 2004). This historic migration has tried to satisfying the changing needs of library users, including ease of access, interaction richness, low interaction and low cost. Federal University Library, Lafia is presently planning to digitize its repository using the Dbase software. This implies that it is gearing up to meeting the information needs of its users, the study by Cisse (2004) is then related to this study as it proposed the development of institutional repositories and the concept of open access.

More so, Crow (2002) describes as institutional repositories as “digital collections capturing and preserving the intellectual output of a single or multi-university community”. An institutional repository is a way of reducing the cost of scholarly publication and increasing visibility and access to scholarly research from faculty and students

of academic institutions by hosting them in the institutions, professional societies or third-party provider's website. The institutional repository is a sort of mirror image of print institutional archives and in some academic institutions is being maintained by the institution's library. While academic libraries were at the center of providing access to print archives, the institutional repository has given them the responsibility of providing access and also interoperability functions (standardizing metadata formats and metadata harvesting). In Nigerian academic institutions, a leadership role in digitizing and providing universal access is demonstrated by the university of Jos library staff and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Academic libraries must provide access to both print and electronic resources to serve users and to increase the visibility of their institutions and as a measure of prestige (National Universities Commission, 2007).

V. ICT Application in Libraries

The proliferation of Internet access both within and outside Nigerian university campuses made it possible for libraries to provide on-line information services to users, access to electronic theses and dissertation and subscribed online databases. However, most Nigerian university libraries do not provide online information literacy instruction, online reference services, remote access to online catalogue, weblog, online document delivery (Gbaje, 2007). Libraries like the University of Nigerian Library have taken the provision of the information services with ICT applications in different sections of the library, the staff still need to acquire some skills in electronic presentation/navigation, web awareness and technical skills (Ugwu, 2009).

The availability of ICT according to Bitrus, (2012), has made it possible for digital libraries to have many kinds of information resources than the traditional library. It is possible to have scholarly materials, websites, multimedia presentation, quantitative data, working papers etc. The provision of these resources as earlier stated requires different types of services. The provision of ICT has some effect on different services in the library. The reference libraries in the past, except for telephone calls considered only face-to-face interaction. Librarians gave personal help to users who made use of the collections to satisfy their information needs. Today, services to users of a library in the developed world can be on-site or off-site (Martell, 2003). The availability of information in machine-readable form has decreased the involvement of libraries and librarians in satisfying many information needs. For example, CD-ROMS now allow individuals to own/carry collections of information sources with them instead of travelling to conventional libraries to seek the services of librarians. With the breakthrough of the Internet academic/research libraries in the developed world have begun creating organized map to selected resources on the Internet. The so-called maps linked the searcher to set of finite sites of respectable quality, organized around a recognizable theme (Martell, 2003). With creation of such pathways, users navigate the Internet to source for required information. By so doing, they reduce the reference services offered by the library.

Libraries offer interlibrary loan (ILL) services to help users obtain information that are not available in their libraries. ILL is a long cooperative effort which involved borrowing and lending books, audiovisuals, journal

issues to other libraries for use by library clientele. With the provision of ICT, ILL can now be done through electronic network. Networks are established as a means of sharing common resources, such as hardware, software, data etc among several users (Ajayi, 1999). Libraries that exist within a distance of one kilometer or less can use Local Area Network (LAN) can be used for libraries in a country or continent within distances of one thousand kilometers. For example, the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) facilitates interlibrary loan through a network of 38,000 libraries (Lett, 2003). In the past ILL could be done through document delivery which is a process of delivering journal articles or photocopies of other documents. But now the rapid growth of scanning digitizing technologies provides new methods, retrieval and delivery of such journal articles and other documents of off-site users. The provision of ICT in libraries has also affected other routine operations of LIS. The roles of technical services staff (which include processes for acquisition, cataloguing and classification and development of collection) have expanded to include development and maintenance of databases. Public services libraries are expected to answer questions about downloading and manipulating files to assist users with software application.

VI. Information Services in Libraries

Information Services are aids that assist information and library users on how and where to find the information needed, these services are mainly offered online by libraries. These services provide the interface for internally and externally hosted information resources creating a seamless user environment (ALA, 2005). This implies the creation of a user environment by libraries where users will locate the information they need from computers and with ease by the push of a computer button. The advent of electronic information services has created a new set of demands for information providers. These services include new references models, new means for information delivery and demands for user and personnel education in the uses of the new resources and technologies. It has also prompted a re-examination of the rights and responsibilities of information providers, intermediaries and end users example, American Library Association, 2000).

A number of services are now offered online that were provided in person or through other print means. Online include electronic reference and electronic document delivery systems. These services have been expended to include automated information delivery and built according to various interoperable standards. Electronic information services that have been various organizational database management needs (including registrations, membership renewals) and other functions. The advent of electronic information services has also prompted new interest in artificial intelligence systems to facilitate the delivery of information services. These range from natural language processing (Jacquemin, 2001) to the creation of content (Bringsjords and Ferrucci, 1999).

Sharma (2009) identifies e-resource to include journal, data archives, manuscripts, maps, books, magazines, theses, newspapers, e-mail, research reports and bibliographic databases. Ibrahim (2004) adds library websites, online catalogues and online reference works, while Aramide and Bolarinwa (2010), mention A-V resources, instructional audio tapes, instructional video tapes VCD/DVD, radio, television, multimedia projectors, e-

resource-electronic databases e.g. JSTOR, ERIC, e-documents, Internet/e-mail facility, CD-ROMS computers, telephone facility (GSM/Landline), VSAT, Printers and digital cameras.

Omotayo (2010), Thanuskodi (2010), Sharma (2009), Borrego (2007) and Ibrahim (2004) have all reported that e-journals are the most used among the arrays of available electronic resources. As reported by Omotayo (2010) 22 (9%), 67 (37%), 102 (42%), 34 (14%) and 20 (8%) of the total population of 245 used electronic journals daily, weekly, monthly, bi-monthly and occasionally respectively. A majority use e-journals monthly, while 52% of total population in Borrego, et al (2007) stated that they use electronic journals exclusively or mainly.

Thanuskodi (2001) identified and tested ten e-journal sources: High wire Press MeBio World, Ingeta, All Health Net, Blackwell Synergy, Medind, Science Direct, LWW Online, Springer Link and Health Inter Network India and found that the respondents preferred the High wire Press CD-ROM database with a mean score of 4.15 on a 5 point rating scale. According to Sharma (2009), the second highest preference in terms of e-resources usage after e-journals is the Web and e-mail with 30 (57.69%) and 41 (78.84%) among teachers, whereas 23 (77%) and 18 (60%) among research scholars use them respectively. Salaam and Adegboro (2010) discovered that search engines are an essential electronic resource for students of private universities in Ogun State, 51 (46%) of the total population of 111 using them very frequently.

In the study by Bar-Ilan, Peritz and Wolman (2003) most respondents (69%) stated that they used databases and electronic journals for both teaching and research, compared with 24% who used them exclusively for research and only 1% who used them exclusively for teaching.

Academic at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife use electronic resources mostly for literature search in research and professional growth (Omotayo, 2010). Kumar and Kumar (2008), however, highlighted six reasons for using electronic information sources. Users in the study use electronic sources in support of their study (70%) and teaching (59%). One-third of respondents used the sources for project work. Eight-eight percent of medical sciences users accessed electronic information sources for study, followed by engineering (67%) and management studies (55%).

VII. Capacity Building

The terms capacity has many different meaning and interpretations depending on who uses it and in what context. To begin with, capacity building as a concept is closely related to education, training and human resources development. This conventional concept has changed over recent years towards a broader and more holistic view, covering both institutional and country base initiatives. The workshop on Capacity Building in Land Administration for Developing Countries held at ITC, The Netherlands, November 2000 (Groot and Van der Molen, 2000) adopted the following definition on capacity building:

“The development of knowledge, skills and attitudes in individuals and groups of people relevant in design, development, management and maintenance of institutional and operational infrastructures and processes that is locally meaningful”. This is a broader approach while still focusing mainly on staff development.

It can be argued that the concept of Capacity Building should be viewed in a wider context to include the ways and means by which the overall goals are achieved. This study proposes the use of ICT based Workshop for Capacity Building. A recent UN publication on Capacity Assessment and Development (UNDP, 1998) offers this basic definition:

“Capacity can be defined as the ability of individuals and organizational or organizational units to perform functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably”.

This definition has three important aspects: (i) it ensures that human resources and the way in which they are utilized are central to capacity development; and (ii) it requires that the overall context within which organizations undertake their functions will also be a key consideration in strategies for capacity development. Capacity is the power of something – a system and organization, a person, to perform and produce properly. In this UNDP context, capacity is seen as two-dimensional: Capacity Assessment and Capacity Development.

Capacity Assessment or diagnosis is an essential basis for the formulation of coherent strategies for capacity development. This is a structured and analytical process whereby the various dimensions of capacity are assessed within the broader systems context as well as evaluated for specific entities and individuals within the system. *Capacity development* is a concept which is broader than institutional development since it includes an emphasis on the overall system, environment and context with which individuals, organizations and societies operate and interact. Even if the focus of concern is a specific capacity of an organization to perform a particular function, there must nevertheless always be a consideration of the overall policy environment and the coherences of specific actions with macro-level conditions. Capacity development does not, of course, imply that there is no capacity in existence; it also includes retaining/strengthening existing capacities of people and organizations to perform their tasks Abdulsalami and Achebe (2012). The OECS has defined Capacity Development as:

... the process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and societies increase their abilities to (i) performance functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives and (ii) understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner”.

This definition is adopted by various donors and fully in line with the UN definitions of capacity above. Taking this approach, capacity, as such is seen as a development outcome in itself and distinct from other

programme outcome such as technical and professional competence in certain fields. Measures such as education and training becomes a means to an end while the end itself is the capacity to achieve the identified development objectives over time-such as to establish and maintain national land administration infrastructure for sustainable development (Enemark, 2002).

VIII. Conclusion

Presently, ICT has received great thoughtfulness across various industries and substantial positive effect on Library profitability, circulation work transactions, patronage, services delivery and customer's services among other. Investment in information and communication technology should form an important component in the overall strategy of library operation to ensure effective performance about ICT role in attaining effectiveness, efficiency and productivity. Since then a large number of studies have emerged both at the relationship between ICT and firm performance. Firm-level studies have argued than an explanation for the so-called "productivity paradox" attributed to an insufficient response of organizational changes to adapt to changing environment, to make better use of knowledge, technology and human resources, to respond to new demands for ICT effectiveness.

IX. Recommendations

Based on the study, the following are recommended.

1. It is recommended that more attention has to be directed towards the use of Information and Communication Technology in the public sector especially library.
2. Appropriate policies should be put in place to ensure regular organization of ICT based workshops in the libraries as this will foster a better understanding of the technology of the staff of the library. These policies should include training of all cadres of staff since some of the workshops are reserved for only senior staff.
3. Loans/hire purchase could be given to the library staff for purchase of ICT facilities by either the parent organization or firms.
4. Constant capacity building workshops should be embark by professional bodies like the NLA, LRCN and Library Consultancy etc. for staff acquisition of library ICT skills.
5. The library schools should constantly review their curriculum to meet the modernization of the information age, while emphasis lay on practical capacity building.

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