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Assessment of Personnel Training Needs in the Ibrahim Babangida Library, Federal University of Technology, Yola, Nigeria

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Introduction

A Personnel Training Scheme (PTS) is one that seeks to improve work performance. Such a scheme may take forms such as on-the-job, informal, and formal educational training. Slee (1997:89) explains that it is a systematic approach to staff development and continuing education that is often a programme of learning opportunities, with the aim of ensuring that workers continue to acquire and adapt their skills and knowledge to a changing environment. The roles and challenges for information professionals are ever greater, what Kigongo-Bukenya (1999) describes as the need to be "contingent". This implies that their skills must be the "best fit" for the ever-changing needs of an information society.

Employees require training for various purposes. Jain (1989) and Rowley (1995) assert that lack of training results in a lack of ability to use existing knowledge, which causes ineffective services, a lack of customer satisfaction, and lower productivity. Pugh (1984) maintains that training will foster an increase in professionalism and better management methods, whereas lack of training can cause frustration and lack of job satisfaction. Well-trained individuals know the scope and expectations of their jobs and will be able to add building blocks to their expertise as they progress through their careers.

The library profession has become aware of the need for continuous training, because of the increasing variety of information formats and increasing dependence on automated systems. The changing nature of library users and the demand for managers with appropriate skills have added to the need for training. These developments and pressures have had a profound impact on academic librarianship. University libraries have been significantly influenced by these transformations. Abifarin (1997) opines that staff is an important factor in motivation. If we are able to engage people through training, the impact on them and the library is immeasurable. The National Universities Commission (NUC) (1996:51-52) in its draft manual on university management emphasizes the significance of staff training and development in university libraries, by stressing that:

The librarian should ensure regular training development of all his staff. He should encourage illiterate staff, if any, to go for adult literacy classes to ensure their retention and progress in a 'book' institution such as the university library. The Librarian should encourage all his staff, where appropriate, to go for higher education. Library Assistants for library diploma; graduates for

master's and doctorate degrees; short course for administrative and secretarial staff. Sponsorship for any training should be based on good performance of the staff. The Librarian should encourage his staff to participate in continuing education programmes. The staff should be sponsored for conferences, seminars and workshops. They should be encouraged to participate actively by presenting papers at these gatherings. The library staff seminar papers usually help the staff for these external outings.

The manual also notes that:

There is so much professional expertise available locally and internationally that the Librarian should tap these sources for training his staff. Through staff exchange between his staff and those of other institution, his staff should be able to gain additional experience and knowledge from hands on experience in other Library situation.

The Ibrahim Babangida Library, Federal University of Technology, Yola (IBL, FUTY) was established along with the institution by the then civilian administration of Alhaji Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari (President of Nigeria at that time) in 1981. It did not inherit any material (books or journals) to start with. The library began providing services to the university community from its temporary building in April 1983. When the university was merged with the University of Maiduguri in 1984, the library became a college Library under the authority, supervision, and control of Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri. When the University was granted autonomy in 1988, the library became a full-fledge university library. The institutional history could lead to an interesting study of the personnel training needs of librarians, which vary markedly. The task of planning training programmes that respond to individual requirements is clearly complex.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are to assess:

- On-the-job training needs
- Informal training needs
- Formal training needs
- Factors militating against training in the library.

Review of the Literature

The concept of on-the-job training (OJT) programmes are explained by Campbell (1990) as an employee's normal work situation being designed to impart knowledge directly related to job performance. Siele (1990) describes OJT as training given in the workplace, where the trainer plays the role of supervisor. He emphasizes that OJT supplements all other forms of training, with the advantage of being provided to more people than is possible in other forms of training.

For the purposes of this study, OJT is defined as personnel training programmes that are acquired through orientation, induction, job-rotation, and internal training programmes, where the trainer plays the role of supervisor. The purpose is to improve working skills, efficiency, and productivity. Ondari-Okemwa (2000) points out that OJT is a critical and challenging task that has come to be identified with the future goals of many organizations. He observes that organizations want employees who perform to expectations, achieving the goals and objectives of the organization.

Simmons-Welburn and Welburn (2003) surveyed organizational entry and sensemaking of new professional employees in academic libraries. They address the issue of socialization of new employees. Nearly all libraries surveyed had formal orientation for newcomers. Edoka (2000) states that orientation enables new employees to start work smoothly in a library.

Posner (1990) reports on a study of an organization that uses job rotation to keep its staff from getting bored. The study revealed that nearly twenty percent of the employees made lateral job switches during a two-year period. The management believes the job rotation programme has helped cut turnover from twenty five percent to less than seven percent a year.

Internal training programmes, according to Ocheibi and Lawal (2002), can help non-professionals working in academic libraries to understand library procedures and help them provide improved and quality service. Integrated with these is instruction in language development so that staff can express themselves clearly and correctly and can easily interpret instructions.

Olorunsola (2000) reports on a study of staff opinion on job rotation at the University of Ilorin library. The reaction to the idea of job rotation was generally positive. The study suggests that managers should consider the introduction of job rotation in the library and indicates an approach that can be used when it is introduced.

Jain (1999) presents the findings of the study of OJT in Botswana National Library Service. The study found out that information technology was one of the main needs identified.

Agaja (1999) explains that continuing education for librarians in Nigerian university libraries usually takes place through conferences, workshops, seminars, or in-service training. He further states that seminars provide opportunities to a group of academic libraries who meet to discuss problems or topical issues on recent developments in the Nigerian library scene.

Jain (1999) argues that informal or practical training can be acquired at the job site or through workshops, to equip personnel with enhanced skills to provide more efficient services to the customer. Agaja (1999) maintains that although conferences and workshops have the same basic objective of professional continuing education, they differ in their approach. While a conference emphasizes an in-depth discussion of a subject, a workshop handles it theoretically and practically. He further stresses that conferences are more frequently organized than workshops in Nigeria.

Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) noted the issue of professional education and training required of practitioners is contentious in every profession. They add that Libraries are embedded in the cultural process and are part of the foundation of a civilized life. Providing access to the records of civilization and culture requires well-educated librarians with appropriate knowledge. They stress the idea that modern technology has improved information handling, facilitated learning and research, and brought new perspectives on the librarian's role.

Smith (2002) examines the pattern of staff development activity in Australian libraries, finding a commitment to staff development that is strategic. Many of the libraries studied have formal policies and organized staff development programmes.

Kirkpatrick (1998) surveyed the information technology training of academic library staff in the libraries of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. The survey looked at training methods and whether differences existed between the training that professional and paraprofessional staff received.

Methodology

The survey research method was adopted for this study. The target population is the 40 employees in IBL, FUTY, which consists of 9 professional librarians, 5 para-professionals, and 26 support staff. A questionnaire was used for data collection. The researcher personally administered the copies of the questionnaire to library employees. The administration of the questionnaire took two weeks to complete including follow-ups. This led to complete retrieval of all the copies of the questionnaire from the

respondents. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics: frequency counts and percentages.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic information

N = 40

	Background Information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender Male Female	21 19	52.5 47.5
	Total	40	100
2.	Age 16 – 25 years 26 – 35 years 36 – 45 years 46 and above	07 10 12 11	17.5 25 30 27.5
	Total	40	100
3.	Marital Status Married Single	35 5	87.5 12.5
	Total	40	100
4.	Qualification Supportive staff Para-professional Professional librarians	29 2 9	17.5 5 22.5
	Total	40	100
5.	Working Experience 1 – 5 years 6 – 10 years 11 – 15 years 16 – 20 years 21 years and above	15 12 6 2 5	37.5 30 15 12.5 5
	Total	40	100

Table 2: OJT needs

Types of OJT programmes	Responses					
	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Job orientation	38	95	2	5	40	100
Job induction	30	75	10	25	40	100
Job rotation	30	75	10	25	40	100
Internal training	32	80	8	20	40	100

Nearly all respondents agreed that they need job orientation programmes. A large number were in favor of internal training programmes, while job induction and job rotation is indicated by three quarters.

Table 3: Informal training needs

N = 40

Types of informal training programmes	Responses					
	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Conferences	37	92.5	3	7.5	40	100
Workshops	30	75	10	25	40	100
Seminars	31	77.5	9	22.5	40	100
Computer training programme	30	75	10	25	40	100

More than 90 percent of respondents agree on the need to attend professional conferences, while more than three-quarters are interested in seminars. A nearly equal number favor professionally-organized library associations workshops and computer training programmes.

Table 4: Formal educational training needs

N = 40

Types of formal education	Responses					
	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Diploma in Library Sciences (DLS)	24	60	16	40	40	100
Bachelor in Library Science	29	72.5	11	27.5	40	100
Masters in Library Science (MLS)	8	20	32	80	40	100
Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Library Science (PhD)	3	7.5	37	92.5	40	100

Sixty percent of respondents indicated that they need DLS to enhance their ability to cope with changes and challenges facing the IBL. Bachelor in Library Science (BLS) is indicated by nearly three quarters, and Masters in Library Science (MLS) by 20 percent. Less than 10 percent of respondents indicated the need for a PhD. The reasons for seeking formal education such as MLS and PhD may be

connected to academic status. Degrees held have been an issue in promotion for academic librarians. At the same time support staff and paraprofessionals want to become academic staff; hence, the need to acquire formal education in librarianship.

Table 5: Factors militating against training

Types of OJT Programmes	Responses					
	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Inadequate funding	40	100	-	-	-	-
Lack of qualification	20	50	5	12.5	10	25
Shortage of personnel	15	37.5	15	37.5	5	12.5
Lack of written training policy	25	62.5	3	7.5	12	30

All respondents strongly agreed that funding is a factor that militates against training, while half strongly agree that lack of qualifications is a factor. More than one third agree that shortage of personnel is a militating factor. More than three fifths agree that lack of written training policy is a factor. In response to objectives four of the study, one can conclude on the basis of the results that the four factors analyzed acted as impediments to training in IBL, FUTY.

Findings and Conclusion

Major findings of the study:

1. OJT programmes are needed by a large majority (81.2 percent) of personnel in IBL, FUTY.

2. Informal training programmes are needed by a large majority of (80 percent).

3. Formal educational training programmes are required by 40 percent of respondents.

4. Funding is the major factor inhibiting training, with a response rate of 100 percent.

This study on assessment of training needs is important to the library's effort to provide services to the university community. On the bases of the findings it is pertinent to conclude that training is fundamental to the acquisition of skills and knowledge required for the provision of effective and efficient library services.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made:

1. IBL personnel should be given the opportunities to undergo OJT.

2. Informal training programmes should be provided affordably to enable employees to acquire the skill and knowledge necessary for the provision of efficient and effective library services.

3. Employees should be encouraged to pursue formal educational programmes to acquire the knowledge to cope with the task of providing better information services for teaching and research.

4. The NUC and FUTY authorities should provide funding, qualified and adequate personnel, and a written training policy for the library.

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