

Research Article

## Education and Training of Information Professionals for National Integration and Development in Nigeria: The Path Not Yet Trodden

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**Abstract** This study examined the education and training of library and information professionals for national integration and development in Nigeria. It surveyed five academic libraries in Cross River State to determine the levels of the competencies especially in IT/ICT based knowledge to deliver requisite services, the support given to professionals for continuing education programmes and the regularity of these trainings given to them to update knowledge and skills. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire designed for librarians in the institutions under study. It was discovered that a high proportion of professionals lacked the basic IT/ICT skills to deliver the mandate and that institutional support for training was inadequate and equally irregular. Recognizing the important role information professional play in acquiring, organizing and disseminating information for education and development, the study recommends that training of information professionals should be given a front position by both institutions and government.

**Keywords** *Academic libraries; Education and training; Library and information professionals; National integration and national development*

### 1. Introduction

A couple of studies have been carried out by both scholars and researchers to show the important role education and training play in enhancing national development goals and objectives. Ibaba (2009) & Mbashir and Alabi (2013) have all underscored the link between education and development and equally argued that education can be a viable vehicle for national integration in Nigeria. While Ibaba recognized the need to reform curriculum to enhance national consciousness and unity, Mbashir and Alabi (2013) stressed the significant role of information services with particular reference to education and development in a nation noting that for education and development to effectively and efficiently flourish, information services must be appraised.

Most fundamental to Nigeria as a nation are the issues of transformation, integration and development. Our emphasis and concern here dwells more on development where development is defined as a multi-dimensional process involving change in structure, attitude and institutions as well as acceleration of economic growth, reduction of inequality and eradication of poverty amongst others (UNESCO, 2010).

On their part, Alabi and Sani (2013) echoed the opinion of Julius Nyerere who holds the view that there can be no real transformation without human development. Thus the increase of peoples'

chances to acquire knowledge and have access to resources that would enable them live healthy, gainful and dignified life is important. They note that development efforts should be aligned with the current regional and global development strategies like the millennium development goals which lay emphasis on human development and stability. These also note that libraries can provide direct as well as play a catalytic role in development initiatives.

It is recognized that the human resources factor is very critical to the success of information gathering, processing and dissemination. Education and training of information professionals is given prominence in the information cycle because the library as an organization and its services are dynamic. Today, the environment for libraries in general and their services in a global competitive world is rapidly changing occasioned by advances in information communication technologies (ICTs). More than ever before, there is a growing need to constantly educate, equip, train and retrain information professionals to keep them abreast with not only new knowledge and skills required for their jobs but also to reposition them to be responsive to the development aspirations in the overall national development goals.

According to Adomi and Nwalo (2003) the efficiency of any library system and services depend on the caliber of its staff. In the global context, the trend now is a shift in the provision of information services from traditional models to electronics, digital and web-based formats. Along these lines Hayes (1998) remarked that libraries must move from resources centered; institutionalized and physically bound resources and services to electronic/network-based. This has implications for information professionals in libraries and information centres. While Youngok (2006) stressed the need for the development and acquisition of new skills and competencies, other issues raised by Mallspur and Naik border on how librarians working in academic and research institutions libraries react to these technological changes. Further concerns on this subject also border on how not only the personnel react to the change but what institutions are doing to reposition their personnel through education and training to contend with emerging changes. Are library professionals equipped to deliver services expected of them? How can they be positioned to deliver their mandate? Are there institutional policies and programmes to tackle or handle professional development in this digital/hi-tech environment?

### 1.1. Objectives of the Study

The key objectives of undertaking the study were to:

1. To determine the level of computer/ICT competences and skills possessed by the library and information professionals.
2. To determine the level of institutional support given to these professionals for training and continuing education.
3. To determine the regularity of training and continuing education programmes provided to keep them abreast and in tune with current trends.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. Do these professionals possess the adequate computer and IT skills relevant to providing requisite services?
2. Do the institutions have adequate support and logistics for training and continuing education for library professionals?

3. How regular are trainings and continuing education programmes carried out to update and keep professionals abreast with new trends in their profession and practice?

## 1.2. Review of Literature

Information professionals just as personnel of any organization are managed to achieve established organizational goals and to develop and maintain a quality of workforce that will improve organizational performance (Ezeali and Esiagu, 2009). This can only be attained through education and training. Prytherch (1998) defines training as a process of developing the skills, awareness and experience of staff while Cole (1996) sees it as preparation for occupation or for specific skill and so it is job oriented and not personal.

Mizell (2010) sees professional development as any type of educational experiences related to an individuals' work in all fields. He noted that this can occur in a formal or informal context such as discussion with work colleagues, observation of a colleague's work and other learning from peers.

There are other names for professional development such as staff development, in-service training and continuing education. The main purpose is to improve learning and knowledge in the workplace. Mizell (2010) and Kennedy (2017) justify these trainings by observing and stating that college and university programmes alone cannot provide the extensive range of experiences necessary for graduates to become effective in public or (out of school). To them, the emphasis is on Continued Professional Development (CPD), than solely in training and qualification; which value lies in learning what is going on in the wider profession and to note developments in specific fields of interest.

Mireles (2014) and Jenkins (2015) summarize the following amongst others as reasons for professional development: (a) to learn something that you can immediately implement, (b) to expand skills and learn more about your job, (c) to meet "thought-leaders" with the industry or topic of conference-ask question and share ideas, (d) Engage in evidence based practice and current awareness and (e) Networking and other unexpected benefits of conferencing/lifelong learning.

Concern for the education and training of library and information professionals in line with the new information order has attracted enormous focus from researchers and scholars. There is an avalanche of literature in this field. Library and information service is a growing and relatively new discipline in Nigeria. For now, less than 21% of Nigerian universities offer programme of studies in L.I.S and so the pool from where to draw core professionals is low. Igun (2006) argued that the 21<sup>st</sup> century library is synonymous with digital library services. Therefore to have an edge in this era, digital education has become indispensable.

Library schools and institutions have a very crucial role to play in both formal and informal training of students and practitioners in order to make them relevant in the society as agents of transformation. Ilorah, Nwofor and Onwudinjo (2007) investigated the place of university libraries in e-learning in three (3) universities - Nnamdi Azikiwe, Akwa, Anambra State University, Uli and Madonna University, Okija. They found that technologies for e-learning such as computers, internet facilities and multi-media equipment were lacking and also that requisite professionals with basic IT skills were also scarce.

Olorunsola et al. (2010) analysed newspaper advertisements concerning employer's expectations for library position in Nigeria. With particular reference to academic libraries, employers placed high premium and demanded for librarians with (i) Competence in general ICT skills (ii) Computer literacy (iii) Evidence of research publication (iv) Knowledge of modern trends in library automation (v) Introduction to telecommunication (vi) Website design and creation amongst others. This has a lot of

implications for library educators especially in the areas of curriculum reviews to meet current market demands.

We had underscored the fact that library and information science (LIS) is a growing and relatively new discipline in Nigeria. As a new discipline problems facing the discipline include:

- Crises in nomenclature of certificates and degrees offered.
- Variance in content and programmes offered and the lack of a standard curriculum in line with global realities and emerging technologies.

Various efforts have been made and are still being made by individual institutions to review their curriculum to reflect charges. Aina (2014) proposed a redesigned library and information science (LIS) curriculum for local and global job market using the University of Ilorin as a case study. He identified some of the inadequacies of the Nigeria University (NUC) Benchmarks for LIS programmes and suggested reviews that will merge irrelevant and duplicated courses and infuse appropriate ones that will enable the training of a complete librarian capable of functioning in both the library and non-library organizations locally and globally. This study revealed that the NUC benchmark was defective, out of tune with current trends in the profession and so needs revisions. His review reduced 37 courses in the NUC benchmark to 25 courses and infused critical areas in (1) information storage and retrieval (2) database design management (3) internet and virtual libraries and (4) information literacy amongst other.

On methods of education and on the 21<sup>st</sup> century retraining of professionals in the field. Agada, Okpanachi and Ashaver (2016) investigated training of sectional heads of university libraries in Benue, Enugu and Kogi states in Nigeria. The findings revealed that ICT skills (86.21%), change management skills (86.21%) and technical management skills (75.86%) ranked very prominently on the scale of skills needed. On methods of training, it also revealed that conferences, seminars and classroom methods were equally rated highly.

Baro et al. (2012) investigated the achievement of libraries from the workshop on e-library services by the LRCN in collaboration with United States mission, Nigeria using structured interview of participants in the workshop. The study revealed that participants found the workshop useful as it exposed them to practical hands-on skills. In areas as database searching, use of various search engines, use of social media and knowledge of planning for e-libraries. Participant expressed desire for the regular mounting of such workshops for at least twice a year to avoid relapse in the acquired skills. Unfortunately, despite the relevance of these courses, they are seldom organized in libraries neither are librarians afforded the opportunities to attend them elsewhere.

In a related work, Onohwakpor (2012) investigated ICT literacy skill level of professional librarians in Delta State university library, Abraka, Nigeria. The study was conducted among 20 academic librarians, 16 senior librarians and 19 assistant librarians in the university main campus using questionnaire instrument and interviews. Analysis of the results revealed that most of the professional librarians had low level of ICT skills required for them to function effectively. It also showed that basic resources, services and tools that enhance the librarians ICT skills were not available in the library.

Igun (2006) argued that the 21<sup>st</sup> century library is synonymous with digital library services. Thus, to have an edge in this era, digital education has become an urgent enterprise. Various scholars, researchers and employers alike have expressed worries over the education and training of core professionals in the country and as well as their capacities to meet the challenges of the new information era. Chiware (2007), Rahman et al. (2008) and Fadehan and Ali (2009) in their various studies of training of librarians in African university and Bangladesh decried that these institutions

lacked or were ill-prepared to face the execution of digital library services. They revealed that majority of these lacked well-equipped computers laboratories for students and that the professional status of the staff was low especially in (a) computer competences, (b) experience in IT trends (c) proficiency in electronic databases (d) knowledge of online resources and use of IT in library management (Olorunsola et al., 2010).

Olorunsola et al. (2010) and Chikonso (2013) in their assessment of training needs of information professionals in Zimbabwe and Nigeria summarized the challenges and common trends that generally affect training of critical professionals as they observed as follows:

- Most library schools are still inadequate in terms of standards and quality to meet the high intake for higher education.
- Lack of adequate LIS educators especially ICT based skills.
- Despite the need for continuing education, continuing education for LIS educator is problematic, because either the programmes are not always readily available or if available, are not affordable.
- Institutions due to lack of funding rarely sponsor staff training.

It can therefore, arising from the above be comfortable or correct to infer that professionals churned out from these institutions are ill-equipped to cope with current trends with new technologies and ICT-based information services. Updating skills and knowledge of library practitioners should be the utmost concern of library schools in the country. It is suggested in the literature that these schools should encourage formal training sessions and support those in the field to make them relevant and up to date. Issues of funding, ICT infrastructural facilities and inadequacy of computers have been underscored.

## 2. Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The study was carried out in five tertiary education libraries in Cross River State - University of Calabar, Cross River University of Technology Calabar, the Federal College of Education Obudu, the College of Education Akamkpa and the College of Health Technology Calabar. The population of the study comprised all the librarians in these institutions totaling fifty-three (53). Those who possessed at least a first degree in library science were considered as librarians. A structured questionnaire was designed to collect both demographic data of the respondents and as well as their responses to the items under investigation. Out of 53 questionnaires distributed, 17 from the University of Calabar, 14 from Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, 5 from Federal College Education, Obudu, 3 from College of Education Akamkpa and 3 from the College of Health Technology were filled and returned representing a response rate of 79.24%. Data collected was analysed using frequency counts and percentages.

From the above table, five institutions were involved in the study, with 17 (40.4%) from the University of Calabar, 14(33.3%) from CRUTECH, Calabar, 5 (11.5%) from F.C.E Obudu and 3 (7.4%) each respectively from C.O.E Akamkpa and College of Health, Calabar. Also 27 (64.28%) were males, while 15 (35.72) were females. In terms of educational qualification, 19 (45.22%) had Bachelor's Degree, 16 (36.09%) Master's Degree and 7 (11.66%) had Doctorate Degree. In terms of their working experience, non-had worked for less than 5 years, 3 (7.14%) between 5 and 10 years, 9 (21.42%) between 16 and 20 years, 13 (30.75%) between 21 and 25 years and 2 (4.76%) between 26 and 30 years. The sample was considered heterogeneous for an inferential study of this nature since a significant number of over 60% have had experiences when computers and ICTs application have become prevalent in tertiary institution in the country.

### 3. Results

**Table 1:** Demographic description of study sample

Demographic	Category	Frequency	%
Institution	Unical, Calabar	17	40.4
	Crutech, Calabar	14	33.3
	COE, Akamkpa	5	11.5
	FCE, Obudu	3	7.4
	College of Health Technology, Calabar	3	7.4
	Total	42	100.00
Gender	Male	27	64.28
	Female	15	35.72
	Total	42	100.0
Level of education	Bachelor Degree	18	45.23
	Master Degree	16	36.09
	Doctorate Degree	7	16.66
	Total	42	100.00
Years of working experience	Below 5 years	-	-
	6 – 10 years	3	7.14
	11 – 15 years	9	21.42
	16 – 20 years	15	35.71
	21 – 25 years	13	30.95
	26 – 30 years	2	4.76
	31 and above years	-	-
Total	42	100.00	
Highest level of education attained	Bachelor's Degree	17	56.7
	Master's Degree	6	20.0

For each variable investigated, categorical statements were made and respondents were requested to state their levels of agreement as strongly agree (SA), tend to agree (TA), tend to disagree (TD), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). The item if positively worded was rated high and the scoring reversed if the item is negatively worded. Frequently counts and percentages were used to analyze the data.

The frequency analysis of the responses to the items is as presented below:

From Table 2, only 2 (4.7%) of the respondents agreed that they had certificates/degrees in ICT related fields, 3 (7.1%) tend to agree while 37 (88%) disagreed. On the statement that librarians do not need the IT/ICT related skills, all the respondents 42 (100%) disagreed with the statement. To the statement that knowledge and competencies in computer and ICT related skills was an asset to librarians on their jobs, 2 (4.7%) strongly agreed, 20 (47.6%) agreed, 14 (33.3%) tended to agree while only 6 (14.2%) tended to disagree. On the statement that respondents cannot rely on their current IT related skills to function effectively, 12 (28.5%) strongly agreed, 21 (50%) agreed while only 3 (7.1%) and 1 (2.3%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. All the respondents 42 (100%) tended to disagree and strongly disagreed. There was also no disagreement to the statement that librarians need extra competencies and training in ICT to function effectively on their job as 3 (7.14%) strongly agreed, 22 (52.38%) agreed and 17 (40.47%) tended to agree. From these finding it is clear that ICT competencies of librarians are low and much training is required to reverse the trend.



**Table 2:** Analysis of responses to items on the level of computer/ICT based competences

Items no.	Items content	Statistics	Responses					
			SA	A	TA	TD	D	SD
1	I have a certificate/degree in computer/ICT competencies.	n	-	2	3	15	17	5
		%	-	4.7	7.1	35.7	40.4	11.9
2	I do not require extra competences and skills in computer/ICT application.	n	-	-	-	16	26	-
		%	-	-	-	38.09	61.9	-
3	My knowledge of computer/ICT skills is an asset in my job.	n	2	20	14	6	-	-
		%	4.7	47.6	33.3	14.2	-	-

**Table 3:** Analysis of responses to items on institutional support for staff development and continuity education

Items no.	Items content	Statistics	Responses					
			SA	A	TA	TD	D	SD
1	My institution/library has a policy on staff development and training especially in IT/ICT skills.	n	-	4	8	11	11	8
		%	-	9.5	19	26.1	26.1	19
2	My institution has a dedicated fund/programme for staff development and sponsorship.	n	4	4	2	13	12	7
		%	9.5	9.5	4.7	30.9	28.5	16.6
3	Support to attend conferences, workshop and training does not exist in my institution.	n	2	3	2	14	13	8
		%	4.7	7.1	4.7	33.3	30.9	19
4	Funds budgeted to support development and training is promptly released.	n	4	7	8	8	10	5
		%	9.5	16.6	19	19	23.8	11.9
5	I have not received any kind of support in the past 3 years.	n	4	4	5	13	14	2
		%	9.5	9.5	11.9	30.9	33.3	4.7
6	Priority is given to staff development especially in IT skills in my library.	n	3	4	5	11	14	5
		%	7.1	9.5	11.9	26.1	33.3	11.9
7	My institution is not doing enough in supporting staff development and continuity education to acquire new skills and keep abreast with trends.	n	3	4	5	14	11	5
		%	7.1	9.5	11.9	33.3	26.1	11.9

From Table 3, 30 (71.4%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that their institutions/libraries had definite policies on staff development and training especially on IT/ICT related competencies while only 12 (28.57%) agreed that there were such policies. To the statement that my institution has a dedicated fund/programme for staff development 4 (9.5%) strongly agreed, 4 (9.5%) agreed, 2 (4.7%) tended to agree while 13 (30.9%) tended to disagree, 12 (28.5%) disagreed and 7 (6.6%) disagreed with the statement while only 10 (23.80%) agreed. To the statement that sponsorship/support to attend conferences, workshops and training does not exist, 2 (4.7%) strongly agreed, 3 (7.1%) agreed, 2 (4.7%) tended to agree while 14 (33.3%) tended to disagree, 13 (30.9%) disagreed and 8 (19%) strongly disagreed. On whether funds budgeted to sponsor or support development and continuity education programmes are promptly released, only 19 (45.23%) strongly agreed, agreed or tended to agree, while 23 (54.76%) tended to disagree, disagreed or strongly disagreed.

To the statement that the staff has not received any sponsorship and support in the past 3 years 13 (30.95%) agreed while 29 (69.04%) disagreed. On whether priority is given to the library 3 (7.1%) strongly agreed, 4 (9.5%) agreed and 5 (11.9%) tended to agree while 11 (26.11%) tended to disagree, 14 (33.3%) disagreed and 5 (11.9%) strongly disagreed. On the question on whether the

institution was doing enough in supporting staff development and continuing education 30 (71.42%) disagreed with the statement while only 12 (28.57%) agreed. This response where 29 (69.04%) rejected the statement that the staff has not attended any training in the past 3 years is critical and worrisome. What is obviously clear and can be inferred from these response is a pointer to the fact that there seem to be no defined development policies and neither is due attention given to IT and ICT competencies as they deserve.

**Table 4:** Analysis of responses to items on the regularity of continuing education and training programmes for staff

Items no.	Items content	Statistics	Responses					
			SA	A	TA	TD	D	SD
1	Sponsorship and support to attend conference, workshops and seminar on ICT and related competencies is a regular exercise.	n	-	-	3	27	12	-
		%	-	-	7.4	64.2	28.5	-
2	I am not satisfied with the regularity of staff development programmes of my institution.	n	15	16	8	3	-	-
		%	35.09	38.09	19.4	7.14	-	-
3	But for my institutions regular support I would not have attended any retraining programme nor acquired any new skills.	n	-	-	8	8	18	8
		%	-	-	19.04	19.04	42.85	19.04
4	Staff development and continuing education is an annual exercise in my library.	n	-	-	8	8	18	8
		%	-	-	19.04	19.04	42.85	19.04
5	Training and development programme are irregular.	n	8	21	8	3	2	-
		%	19.04	50	19.04	7.14	4.7	-
6	Scheduled plans for continuing education and trainings in relevant skills in my library are just occasional.	n	8	24	5	5	-	-
		%	19.04	57.14	11.90	11.90	-	-
7	I cannot vouch for regular staff development and training in my library.	n	6	17	8	11	-	-
		%	14.28	40.47	19.04	26.19	-	-

From Table 4, all the respondents disagreed with the statement that sponsorship and support to attend conference, workshop and seminars on ICT related competencies was a regular feature in their libraries. Majority of the respondents 39 (92.85%) also agreed that they were not satisfied with the regularity of staff development programme of their institutions while only 3 (7.14%) disagreed, though not strongly. Also from the study only 8 (19.04%) tended to agree that but for regular institutional support they would never have had a chance to acquire new skills and competences through their retraining programmes. The majority of 34 (80.95%) disagreed with the above statement that the institutions training had significantly impacted or made a difference to their retraining. Also in this response only 8 (19.04%) respondents agreed that training programmes were regular while 34 (80.95%) again disagreed that they were regular. To the statement that these programmes were an annual event, again only 8 (19.04%) tended to agree, while 8 (19.04%) tended to disagree, 18 (42.85%) disagreed and 8 (19.04) strongly disagreed.

To the statement that scheduled plans for continuing education and training in relevant IT competencies in the library was an occasional event there was no dissention as majority of 34 (80.95%) agreed that it was just an occasional event while 8 (19.04%) tended to disagree. Finally, responses to the item on individuals vouching for regular training in their libraries, 31 (73.80%) indicated that they cannot vouch for regular training from their libraries while 11 (26.19%) tended to disagree.



#### 4. Conclusion

Continuing education and training of core professionals is needed to promote the acquisition of technical and requisite IT/ICT skills required to work in this digital age. Such professionals would have the ability to identify and select from the avalanche of sources available physically and electronically and disseminate same thereby promoting national development and integration. The focus here is promoting areas of human culture, citizenship, integration and development. The record of advances in society and the interpretation of their content through personalized services is the responsibility of librarians and the services they provide.

Librarians play a very key role in education, national development and integration as gatekeepers to information and knowledge. Thus in order to achieve development and integration it is necessary to train core professionals and equip them with relevant capacities in order to achieve set national goals and objectives.

#### Summary of Findings

- There is a general consensus or agreement from the respondents that conferences, workshops and all forms of continuing education programmes are necessary to upgrade staff competencies especially in IT/ICT related fields. The study revealed that these trainings were not adequately provided for, nor were they given due attention they deserve in our institutions and libraries. Staff development programmes were not adequately planned for as a high percentage of the respondents indicated that there were no scheduled policies and plans for the programmes. The study equally showed a high level of dissatisfaction with the planning and implementation of continuing education and training programmes.
- Equally revealing from the study is the fact that a high percentage of librarians lacked basic certificates, degrees and competencies in IT/ICT related fields. It is worrisome to reveal that 37(88%) of respondents indicated that they had neither certificates nor any background on IT/ICT fields.
- Also revealing from this study is the fact that institutions are not doing enough in articulating policies, drawing up and purposefully programming staff development programme/continuing education and neither are they supportive enough by giving priorities to them. That 73% of the respondents indicated that they cannot vouch for the regularity of is quite critical.

#### Recommendations

In the light of the above the following recommendations are made:

- Institutions, organizations and other corporate bodies owning libraries must sponsor and continuously support core and para-professionals in the field with continuing education and training to equip them with skills to effectively deliver services needed in line with new innovation and change.
- In line with Aina (2010) recommendations, library schools and all institutions involved in training of professionals need to re-examine and review their curricula especially for ICT relate courses. He emphasized that efforts should focus on how to close the gap between what the library schools are doing and what is going on in the workplace- a balance between theory and practice.

- Training received from library schools in the country is not yet satisfactory. The issue of IT-based personnel and equipping of the schools with computer labs and other technologies for practical and hands-on experiences must be addressed.
- For library professionals to be able to cope with the changing trend in teaching, learning and research to meet the nation's development goals and needs capacity building and relevant development activities must be carried out in a regular and continuous basis.
- Management of various institutions is encouraged to articulate clear policies on staff development allocate dedicated funds from their budgets for training and development.
- In line with Asante and Alemna (2015) suggestion all library staff should be encouraged to be registered members of professional bodies, Nigerian Library Association (NLA), Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) and IT or Academic and Research Library Section (ARLS) of NLA so as to benefit from activities of the association professional training and development activities.

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