

## CONTINUOUS EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF LIBRARIAN'S FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

**Kakiri, Inemotimi flint<sup>1</sup>, Oyadonghan, Joyce Chinyere<sup>2</sup> and Tonworio spiff<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Library Department, Niger Delta University Email Address: inemotimi@yahoo.com

<sup>2</sup>University Librarian Niger Delta University Email Address: joyceoyan@yahoo.com

<sup>3</sup>Library department, Institute of Tourism and hospitality Bayelsa state

Email Address: Tonspiff78@yahoo.co.uk

### ABSTRACT

This paper focused on continuous education and training of librarians for effective service delivery to library users. Continuous education and training is essential for all professions and it is absolutely important in the information environment where rapid changes brought about by the emergence of ICT is altering the scope, knowledge base, and methodology of the profession. Continuous education is the formal or informal education given to librarians geared towards building on and updating previously acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes with a view to meeting up with emerging trends and practices in the profession. Training is the formal and structured programme given to librarians that is aimed at enhancing their job related skills, knowledge base and proficiency on the job. This paper examined the concept of continuous education and training, methods of continuous education and training, the importance of continuous education and training and the challenges of continuous education and training. It was concluded that Librarians through which information services are rendered to the academic community needs to be continuously trained to meet up with the advancement in information delivery services and practices especially in this information and communication era. Among the recommendation made was that library management should institute continuous education and training programmes as this will enhance the proficiency of the librarian in information service delivery.

**KEYWORDS:** Continuous Education, Training, Academic librarian, Service Delivery

### INTRODUCTION

In this information and communication (ICT) Technology age, competitive information service environment requires that staff should be continuously trained in order to provide effective and efficient services to users. Besides, keeping up with today's constant change in the information service environment though a challenging task, but one that every librarian must assiduously carryout in order to be relevant in this ICT age. The information age is characterized by challenges of information explosion; dynamic and rapid changes in information sources and infrastructures; users' sophistication; dwindling library budgets; and the increasing needs for the justification of information services by employees or organisations (okoje&Omotoso, 2013).This implies that

librarian have a special responsibility to keep themselves abreast with the emerging trends, practices and challenges in this era of “information revolution”.

Trained and competent staff is imperative to excellent service delivery in libraries, especially in this digital era, in which library users need fast and accurate information. Library users expect librarians to provide services on timely basis to cater for their formal and informal information needs. Hence it is imperative for Libraries to adjust their services and facilities to create supportive environment for these digital based users. ICT has expanded the traditional role of the library and library personnel. Modern ICT tools, especially the internet and web-based technologies provide librarians an opportunity to offer library users access to a variety of value-added information services. Such services include: Web-based Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC); electronic-based inter-library loan, document delivery services and facilities for accessing information amongst others.

Chaudhary (2001) stated that the drastic changes occasioned by the revolution in the information and communication technology are forcing library and information scientists to adopt futuristic approaches. The role of future libraries will be decided largely by the dedication and proficiency of their personnel or work force. Thus continuous education and training of librarian should be a matter of primary concern.

### **CONCEPT OF CONTINUOUS EDUCATION**

Continuous education is essential for all professions and it is absolutely important in the information environment where rapid changes brought about by the emergence of ICT is altering the scope, knowledge base, and methodology of the profession. The concept of continuous education has been severally defined by authorities in the area of education, management and allied disciplines. Tahir (2000) defined continuous education as that subset of adult education that seeks to positively link the needs and aspirations of individuals with educational activities, for development of their potentials and for the socioeconomic and political development of a nation. Osuji (2001) opines that continuing education is strictly, an adult education concept which stresses the provision of educational opportunities for adults after cessation of formal schooling. Osuji, opined that it involves the education and re-education, training and re-training opportunities made available to people out-of school such as young school leavers, the employed and unemployed and so on in order to cope with new situations of life. ILFI (2016) defined continuous education to include all education and training activities that are relevant to an employee’s professional knowledge and skills and to the specific needs of his or her job.

Hussain ,Alhassan and Kamba(2013) described Continuous education as a form of education activity organized and run outside the formal school system at times parallel to it but often times go beyond the preview of the school system. It is an educational activity fashioned out to help beneficiaries or participants make up for or save lost grounds as well as for those who did not attend school at all or started but dropped out owing to some reasons. The authors argued that continuous education is a post-initial education and observed that the word continuing can only mean a carrying forward or an extension of an activity rather than a starting of it.

In a Nut Shell, Continuous education can be defined as the formal or informal education given to librarians geared towards building on and updating previously acquired knowledge, skills and

attitudes with a view to meeting up with emerging trends and practices in the profession. Hence, continues education aims at ensuring the continuous relevance of librarians in the profession especially in this competitive information age.

### **WHAT IS TRAINING?**

Library personnel are esteemed resources of any given library or information centre. The success or failure of the institution in terms of information service delivery rely greatly on the efficiency of the library personnel, hence the need for training of librarians. Training is considered as a critical tool for enhancing job-related skills and performance. Training according to Goldstein & Ford (2002) is an organised method of learning and development which expand the efficiency of individual, groups, and organization. Jehanzeb and Bashir (2013) stated that training is a planned educational component and with exceptional methods for sharing the culture of the organization, which moves from one job skills to understand the workplace skill, developing leadership, innovative thinking and problem solving techniques. Atema and Kakiri (2016) opined that adequate training of employees is part and parcel of every organization because capacity building of workforce has been observed to be a source of getting competitive edge in the business world. Training is defined here as the formal and structured programme given to librarians that is aimed at enhancing their job related skills, knowledge base and proficiency on the job.

### **CONTINUOUS EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF LIBRARIANS**

The major focus of continuing education and training according to Hussain, Alhassan and Kamba (2013) is the provision of educational opportunities for all categories of individuals irrespective of whatever failure was earlier recorded thereby ensuring continuity in education, ensuring the continued relevance of the individuals in the society; ensuring the provision or access to education for all citizens; and helping retrieve the economic wastage that early –school leavers would have constituted.

In Nigeria presently, the practice of continuous education and training has been broadened to include the provision of educational activities that will meet the needs of illiterates, the drop-out, the underprivileged, educationally disadvantaged, the oppressed, the unserved, different categories of professionals, the down-trodden, and the back ward. Thus, continuing education and training offers a wide range of training or education meeting the needs of all shades of people; it therefore serves as the best means or instrument of democratizing education or equalizing access to education irrespective of age, sex or social affiliation (Hussain, Alhassan, and Kamba ,2013). Dasgupta and Satpathi (2006) states that Continuing education and training programmes, on one hand refresh and update the specialized knowledge of the professionals and on the other, broadens their horizon in related fields, which actually leads to better job satisfaction. It also encourages creativity and provides a stimulus to keep the professionals intellectually alive.

### **METHODS OF CONTINUOUS EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF LIBRARIANS**

A number of methods of continuous education and training have been identified in the literatures. However, Dasgupta and Satpathi (2006) opined that for librarians this include both formal and informal learning situations which amongst others are:

**1. In-house training:** this is a form of continuous education and training given to librarians in a

given library which aims at either refreshing or exposing librarians to new concepts, methods and practices in the profession geared towards effective job performance. In-service education can be used to improve knowledge, technical and professional skills, and professional behaviours and attitudes. The aims of in-service training include: Improving the quality of library services. Updating and familiarizing librarians with relevant scientific matters, Improving the professional abilities and skills of librarians. Giving updated LIS knowledge (Dastgerdi, 2009).

**2. Exchange/Collaborative programmes:** exchange is a form of continuous education and training programme which offers participant the opportunity of exchanging information, ideas, or knowledge through formal or informal training sections. ASERL (2017) states that each exchange include significant time on-site at the partner libraries-typically about two weeks. The aim of exchange programmes is to update the professional knowledge of librarians. The Association for Information and Image Management (2016) defined collaboration as “a working practice whereby individuals or organizations work together to a common purpose to achieve set objectives”.

**3. Workshops, Conferences and Seminars:** this is a type of continuing education and training offered by professional organizations and bodies aimed at up-dating or topping up the knowledge, skills and expertise of practicing members of the concerned (Hussain, Alhassan &Kamba, 2013).A typical example is the annual conference by the Nigerian Library Association.

**4. Short time professional courses:** this are carefully planned refresher courses targeted at enhancing the professional growth of the librarian and keeping him/her up-to-date in information providing techniques. Collaborating this statement Akinpelu (2002) maintained that other professional bodies such as Medical, Engineering, Nursing, Accounting, and the Teaching Professions offer short time professional courses for its members. To encourage the attendance of short time professional courses library administrators must be supportive and provide opportunities in the form of study leaves, sabbaticals and released time for continuing education of their staff. Whereas the staff must judiciously use of the time given to them by their respective organizations or libraries.

**5. Formal education:** these are formal education programmes provided by organized educational institutions that leads to the award of degrees, certificates or Diploma in the specific fields. Dasgupta and Satpathi (2006) stressed that the librarian and information scientist should always be eager to improve on previously acquired knowledge and skills in order to cope with the emerging trends in information service delivery and upward professional mobility.

**6. Staff mentoring programme:** A major portion of organizational knowledge is exchanged through staff mentoring programmes. Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2017) defined a Mentor as someone who teach or give advice or guidance to a less experienced person. Dastgerdi (2009) states that knowledge transferred this way is not usually recordable or controllable. The International Librarians Network (ILN) facilitates a peer mentoring program aimed at helping librarians develop international networks (ILN,2013)

## **IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUOUS EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF LIBRARIANS**

Continuous education and training has become essential for every librarian especially in this digital

ere in order to render effective services delivery. Hussain, Alhassan and Kamba (2013) and Chaudhary (2001) identified the following as some of the imperative for continuous education and training for librarians:

1. The evolution of new sophisticated information technologies that have brought in unprecedented changes to the routine practices of librarian's and information professionals and the upsurge of publication require special training and education on the part the librarians in order to cope up with the specialized needs of the growing information society.
2. Continuous education and training will equip the librarians with the necessary skills, competence and self-confidence for effective service delivery.
3. It will keep the librarian abreast of new knowledge required to perform responsibly in a given unit or section of the library i.e. new trends in cataloguing and classification of information material such as OPAC.
4. To help the librarians better understand the evolving work environment, various human characteristics, and a clear promotion track.
5. Continuous education and training enhances the librarian's aptitude and job related skills which results in improved organizational performance as well as ensures the librarians Horizontal or Vertical mobility in the workplace.

### **CHALLENGES OF CONTINUOUS EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF LIBRARIANS**

The implementation of librarian's continuous education and training is faced with myriad of challenges. Adomi and Famola (2012), Otsupius (2012) and Hussian, Alhassan and Kamba (2013) highlighted the following as some of the challenges of continuous education and training:

1. Monetary: High cost involved in embarking on a training and development programme by the employee (Academic Librarian).
2. Mentality: Not all the employees understand the need of training and development.
3. Lack of regulatory body to protect the interest of the learner: However the costs of CET programmes keep escalating.
4. Inadequate sponsorship to continuous education and training programmes by organizations or library management.
5. Favouritism in the selection of candidates for sponsorship to continuous education and training programmes by organization.
6. Lack of practical components in the programmes in-line with staff routine task needs.
7. Absenteeism to classes by most CET students as a result of social related factors such as marriages, association meetings, family responsibility and problems.
8. Poor implementation of staff development policies in organizations.
9. Hoarding of information about programmes by colleagues/library management.
10. Inconsistency in academic calendar by some institutions offering CET services to Academic Librarian's due to unavoidable occurrences such as strike action.

### **CONCLUSION**

Libraries are very important at complementing and enhancing the teaching, learning and research work of any University. They help in providing information services that will satisfy the information needs of the given institution. Librarians who are the channels through which these services are rendered need to be continuously trained to meet up with the advancement in information delivery services and practices especially in this information and communication era.

## RECOMMENDATION

1. Efforts should be made by respective library management to institute continuous education and training programmes as this will enhance the proficiency of the librarian in information service delivery and the organizations effectiveness towards achieving set goals.
2. There should be a periodic continuous education and training needs assessment of academic Library staff organized by the respective library management this will guide the managers of the library to instituted practical components in the programmes in-line with staff routine task needs.

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