

## **ASSESSING HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

This paper titled, Assessing the Human Resource Development in Academic Libraries in Nigeria aims at, examining the significance of training and employee development in academic libraries. The paper therefore: identified the Human resources employed in academic libraries in Nigeria, identified the types of training mostly available to academic library employees and examined the significance of human resource development in academic libraries in Nigeria. This study adopted qualitative research design, which is more detailed in presenting a phenomenon or information about a thing and elicits more information on the current status of a person, situation or an object. Both primary (observations, personal experiences and opinions) and secondary sources (existing literatures) were used. while content analysis was used to analyze the generated data effectively without manipulation or distortion. This study revealed the categories of staff employed in academic library, the various types of training mostly available and the significance of human resource development. It was concluded that human resource development is indispensable in the organizations generally and library specifically as it enhances productivity, skill development, efficiency and effectiveness. Also, it was recommended that the management should regularly provide adequate fund for training and development of all categories of library staff and a standard training policy in academic libraries to encourage a balanced staff development programmes should be put in place.

**Keywords:** Significance, Human Resource, Training and Development.

### **Introduction**

An academic library is a library that is attached to a higher educational institution to support teaching, learning and research. This library is established in tertiary institutions such as universities, polytechnic institutions, colleges of education, colleges of agriculture, colleges of technology and also research institutes. The main purpose of an academic library lies in the preservation and access to knowledge and information alongside supporting the mission of the parent institutions which is teaching and research. Academic libraries are at the forefront of

providing information services to their respective communities which comprises of students, lecturers, and researchers in order to support their teaching, learning and research needs. Scholars have emphasized on the crucial role of academic libraries in research and scholarship in institutions of higher learning. Many a times academic libraries are referred to as the heart or nerve centres of institutions of higher learning where all academic activities revolved. Also, an academic library in any institution of higher learning is seen as the bedrock upon which any university is built. As asserted by Ekere (2014), academic library plays an important role in complimenting research through the provision of facilities and appropriate information resources in various formats (including print and non-print).

According to Onanuga, Ilori and Kusoro (2020), provision of relevant information sources and services for library users is generally seen as the reason for existence of the library and the purpose of a library is defeated if its users do not use the resources and services it provides. On this note, it is imperative for academic libraries to always factor in measures of recruiting, training, developing, retaining the best personnel or human resource in the library for achieving organizational goals and continual relevance. Human resource as used here simply refer to a group of persons employed by the library to drive the aim of the library. Human resources (HR) is the set of people who make up the workforce of an organization, business sector, industry, or economy. A narrower concept is human capital, the knowledge and skills which the individuals command. Similar terms include manpower, labor, labor-power, or personnel. The Human Resources department (HR department, sometimes just called "Human Resource") of an organization performs human resource management, overseeing various aspects of employment, such as compliance with labor law and employment standards, interviewing and selection, performance management, administration of employee benefits, organizing of employee files with the required documents for future reference, and some aspects of recruitment (also known as talent acquisition), talent management, staff wellbeing, and employee offboarding. In an academic library, the human resource is otherwise referred to as the professional librarians, library officers and other library staff. The development of the human resource is very key in the service delivery of the library, (Bappah, 2025).

In Library Administration, human resources development has remained a crucial key to productivity. It is necessary for all forms of library whether academic, special, and public, school, private or media library to imbibe the culture of human resources development to achieve amazing results in library services, administration and development. This informs the level of effective performance in any library where human resource development is given prior and needed attention. For this reason, Dike (2024: 34) asserts that, training and employee development are tools to enhance effective growth and development in modern library management technique.

Human resources development otherwise referred to as manpower training and development itself, is a process of increasing the skill of employees in an organization. Ajica (2022:3), regarded it as a strategy adopted to ensure an increase in the performance, efficiency of employee with integrated and systematic teaching and learning processes targeted at achieving organizational objectives and employees personal goals.

Human resources development is the building up of employees: managerial, scientific, engineering, technical craft and other skills that position them better to perform their assigned roles in the library. That is, human resources development is the effective education or training of people in an organization leading to growth and maturation from a lower found education level to tertiary level. It also includes development of leadership skills and knowledge in commerce, industry and public services, (Ali and Caleb 2023). Both Ajica (2022) and Ali and Caleb (2023) agree that, human resources development are the overall activities made to improve the quality and productivity of the personnel resources of an organization. Looking at the above views of human resources development, it can be submitted that human resources development focus on people with the aim to helping them to: learn, improve their values, perception, attitude and general behavioral patterns.

In Nigerian libraries, there have been considerable evidences of human resources development and the University of Abuja library is a prove to this. This has been made possible with the efforts of the Federal Government of Nigeria through its own institution the Industrial Training Fund (ITF). The ITF has overtime promoted and encouraged employee training and development since the institution's center objective is to promote and encourage the acquisition

of skills with a view to generate a pool of indigenous trained – manpower sufficient to meet the needs of the economy. Observation has shown that there is a considerable evidence of human resources development in most academic libraries, in University of Abuja library for instance, human resources development affect both senior and junior members of staff but most a-times junior staff.

### **Research Questions**

Basically, the present study is guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the Human resources employed in academic libraries in Nigeria?
- ii. What are the types of training mostly available to academic library employees?
- iii. To what extent is human resource development significant to academic libraries in Nigeria?

### **Literature Review**

There are several units in academic libraries manned by various people with the responsibilities of performing various functions. Such people given such responsibilities are referred to as human resources or library employees. Some of the responsibilities assigned to such employees range from: acquisition of library materials, processing of the materials and making the materials available and accessible to the library users. Given that these roles require intensive skills and the ever-changing nature of our contemporary society, there is need for constant and effective training of these employees. Prospective employee should be adequately trained before being assigned a function to perform, in order to equip him with the necessary skills peculiar to the role and job conditions of a particular organization. In this fast-changing society, the training in the use of new gadgets and machines is very essential, (Mittal 2021).

Human resource is not only unique and valuable, it is an organization most important resource. It is only logical for every library with a high reaching goal to improve the skills of their employees through human resource development. Training and development as inferred above are both targeted at improving employee's skill and abilities. Employee's training is one process of teaching operating and technical employees how to do their present jobs more

effectively and efficiently. While, management development is the process of preparing managers and other professional to assume increased responsibility in both present and future position. Development is concerned more with changes in attitudes, behaviour and employee potential than with immediate skill. It relates more to career development than job development. It is a learning activity concentrating on the future need of an organization, (Appleby, 2020).

A company's human resource is among its most important assets and the skills motivation of its workers can be crucial to success. We all need to recognize that training is not a luxury, but necessity. Training is an integral part of core organizational strategy rather than an adhoc operational issue. That is, the role of training is not seen exclusively in instrumental terms but also as an important employee motivation contributing to recruitment and retention opportunities, (Ashton and Felstead, 2021).

## **Methodology**

This study adopted a qualitative research design, devoid of figure and numbers as its nature of collecting and analyzing data. It established answers to the *whys* and *hows* of the phenomenon. It is used to describe what is in existence in respect to conditions or variables that are found in a given situation. This was achieved through the researcher's observations and experience, as seen in phenomenology, case study, studies and literature review by other researchers. The underlying reason for adopting the qualitative approach is to gain a richly detailed understanding of human resource developments in Academic libraries. Both primary and secondary sources of data collection were found useful and adopted as the sources of data collection for the current study. For the primary sources, the researcher made use of observations, personal experiences and opinions and consulted and used existing literatures as the secondary source. The generated data was effectively analyzed without manipulation or distortion. The researcher implored the content analysis method as an instrument for analysis data. This method of data analysis was considered and used because of its friendly approach, which permeates analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step models, without any form of quantification.

## **Human Resources Employed in the Library**

This section is based on the existing literature consulted, observations and personal experiences of the researcher. The diverse sections and departments of academic libraries in Nigeria, its structure and nature of services offered requires a robust, diverse and competent human resource to carry out the task of the library. Some of such staff required for effective and efficient service delivery in the library include:

### **Professional staff**

The professional staff are those who have undertaken training in library and information science and acquired Bachelor degree, Masters or Doctorate degree(s) in the field and with good number of years of practical experience in the library job. Staff in this cadre are referred to as Professional librarians and they include Heads of libraries like University Librarians, Polytechnic Librarians, College Librarians, Director of Library Services, Special librarians etc, others are Deputy Librarians, Chief Librarians, Principal Librarians, Senior Librarians, Librarians I, Librarians II and Assistant Librarians. Being members of the library profession, they are also saddled with management responsibilities within the library. They also help in delegating responsibilities to other cadres of staff. Some of their duties are; developing acquisition policies and systems for the library, planning services to the public and participating in their delivery. This category of staff plays leadership roles and also provide specialized services, (Adaora, 2024).

### **Para-professionals/Library Officers**

Library officers are the staff who possess National Diploma (ND) or Higher National Diploma (HND) in Library Science. They are called para-professionals. Among these are holders of other degrees outside library science and whose works supplement the jobs of the librarians (Akanwa, 2016). This category of staff in libraries includes the Principal Library Officers, Senior Library Officers, Higher Library Officers, Library Officers and the Library Supervisors. Para professional library staff assist professional library staff in some intellectual tasks such as reference services, cataloguing, and current awareness services. They coordinate the duties of library assistants and carry out the duties assigned to them by the librarians. This category of staff should be granted opportunity for further study to achieve increased efficiency. Some of

their duties include charging and discharging of library materials, cataloguing, filing shelf list cards, accessioning, checking bibliographic details of information materials among others, (Aina, 2004).

#### **Library Assistants –**

They are staff employed in the library who possess O’level qualifications that is the West African School Certificate or its equivalent. They are required in the library to perform such routine duties as accessioning of books, filing of catalogue cards, shelving, shelf-reading etc. They should be trained to relate well with members of the public as they come in contact with them more frequently than the other cadres. Due to the fact that these library staff are the ones that the clients come in contact with more often, they regard and refer to them as librarians (Edoka, 2000). These cadres of staff include Assistant Library Officers, Senior Library Assistants and Library Attendants.

#### **Administrative Staff**

Specialist staff like the accountants, human resources managers, IT professionals, secretaries, messengers etc, are required in libraries. Such specialist or member of staff should possess the requisite qualifications in their areas of specialization. For example in public libraries, financial matters such as budget preparation and pay rolling of staff are carried out by the accountant. This cadre of staff are obtainable mostly in public libraries.

**Maintenance Staff** – In the library, members of staff such as drivers, cleaners, gardeners, security personnel, porters etc also have important roles to play in ensuring the smooth operation of library services. They should therefore be seen as an integral part of staff composition of the library. The listed category of staff should possess a minimum qualification of Primary School Leaving Certificate, while the drivers should hold in addition the requisite driving trade test certificate. None of these categories of library staff should be overlooked as they all work in chain to achieve a singular aim of rendering quality services.

### **The Types of Human Resource Developments Available to Academic Libraries in Nigeria**

Academic library staff should be exposed to a variety of training types and categories. The type of training made available to an individual staff or section of staff should be based on: identified weakness of the employee, relevance to the job task, abilities, experience, educational background, and location. The entire idea of human resource development should however be focused on an increase in productivity and improved skill of the employee that will lead to effective performance. Adaora (2024), identified some of such types of training an academic library employee can be exposed to, to include:

**Study visits:** This is a planned visit which requires library staff to visit other libraries and acquaint themselves with the operations of these libraries. Library personnel with theoretical knowledge of library and information science may broaden and update their knowledge by understudying computer operations in other information and automated library systems.

**In-service training:** Staff can be introduced to an automated library system and to the varieties of software that can be used for the development and management of an automated library. The training will help staff to update their knowledge for professional competence. Training and development are meant for refining or moving the information skills and approaches of the library professional work in different libraries.

**On-the-job training:** This kind of training includes cross-training, which moves the trainee from one department or unit to another. It can be an ongoing process that does not disrupt normal library operations or it can take the form of orientation, induction and internal training programs where the trainer plays the role of supervisor. A staff can be posted from reference section to the cataloguing section or other sections. This means that staff will not work in section for a very long time. As a staff works in various departments or sections, he gets acquainted with what is done there.

**Training programs by International Organizations:** Different international organizations have available human development programs in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. They have put in place training programs that have been of assistance to staff of libraries. Examples of such organizations are the Carnegie Foundation, Ford Foundation etc.

**Institutional training programs:** Institutions of higher learning are expected to play a vital role in the training and re-training of their library staff. In many of the academic institutions in this



country, especially the universities, part-time and full time courses of study and correspondence or distance learning programs are offered (Adeniji, 2010). This idea was earlier on supported by Mathis in Eze (2012) who asserts that many professions require periodic postgraduate study in order to maintain certification for practice. Many universities, polytechnics and colleges offer diploma and degree courses for intending library workers and librarians. This training can be sponsored by the institution where the staff works through TETFund or by the staff himself (self-sponsored).

**Conferences, Seminars and Workshops:** Professional growth of librarians can be attained through conferences, seminars and workshops. The primary purpose of conferences, workshops and seminars is the application of expected knowledge in typical problem situation in organization. The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), African Library and Information Associations and Institutions (AFLIA), Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN), Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and its various sections organize conferences, seminars and workshops annually for the professional development of library staff.

**Short Courses:** Any course – whether one week, three-months or more in a special skill can be effective in developing a staff. These short courses are normally not restricted to librarianship. Courses in management, automation and public relations are good examples of short courses which are valuable to librarians. These courses can be taken in capacity building institutions such as Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM) among others.

**Mentoring:** This involves the establishment of relationship between two professionals, with the more experienced (mentor) facilitating the transition to maturity of the less experienced (mentee) in terms of professional/career development.

**Personal Efforts:** The library staff can decide to develop themselves whether sponsored or not. Through reading literature, one can learn some tips on enhancing one's job competency. Similarly, informal interactions with colleagues can be an invaluable source of human resource development.

### **The Significance of Human Resource Development in Academic Libraries in Nigeria**

Human resource development is essentially significant in academic libraries where scholars continuously engage library materials for research and other purposes. It is important to develop academic library employees in other to enhance:

- i. Survival and stability in Nigerian Libraries.
- ii. Competency of the employees
- iii. Identify competency gaps of employees and train them to perform their present and future role effectively and create conditions to help employees bridge these gaps through development.
- iv. Step up the “morals” or motivation of the employees to promote team building and collaboration climate.
- v. Increase the commitment of library staff.
- vi. Boast innovativeness and initiative of the employees in order to show reactivity.
- vii. Spark quality and productivity in Nigerian Academic libraries.

Academic libraries will practically be ineffective if the library employees are removed from its system, but it is most horrible when there are library employees who cannot perform satisfactorily their responsibilities as a result of lack of training or development. This is because resources will be committed to waste without the aim being achieved. This emphasized the reasons why human resource development in academic libraries is very important. On the whole, human resource development programs are motivational tools aimed at achieving success in the library activities. It is also important to note that, the knowledge obtained while in school is not enough for one to be effective given the changing trends in library practice. Human resource development programmes will help the library staff update their knowledge, in order to manage change; these can be “changes that improve the effectiveness of the organization or that enhance the relationships of groups or individuals. As the human resources of the library are developed, they put in what they learn in their duties and it leads to organizational development.

The world is gradually digitalized in our time, as a result of this transformation, a lot of sophisticated machines and tools are utilized. Training library staff on the use of these tools will

help them manipulate them effectively and help in longevity. Sound and well programmed human resources development efforts assure to a large extent effective utilization of employee's talent and potentials towards achievement of both individual and organizational goals. It also enhances positive collaboration between the staff and the clients thereby guiding the clients on what they expect from the library. The library staff fosters a culture of service in support of the users of the library. The library provides security and maintenance to the library facilities, resources, equipment, furniture and even personal belongings of the library users. This brings about encouragement for effective use of the library by the students. That is why Ajidahun (2007) opines that development programme is an integral part of vocational or career development and it is fast becoming a global pervasive phenomenon in any establishment, the absence of which spells doom for such an institution and the presence of which determine the success of any organization. The library no doubt cannot do without adequate training of her staff to be dynamic enough to cope with the changing needs of the public who make up her user population.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

- 1 There should be a standard training policy in academic libraries to encourage a balanced staff development programmes.
- 2 There is need for academic libraries to have a training officer who will coordinate the training and development of staff much more frequently.
- 3 Management should provide adequate fund for training and development of staff, more-so, staff should be endorsed or sponsored for training, this will go a long way in encouraging them to be more effective and efficient in-service delivery.
- 4 In planning a development program, emphasis should be laid on the various forms of this programmes such as: study visits, in-service training, on-the-job training, training programs by international organizations, institutional training programs, conferences, seminars and workshops, short courses, mentoring, personal efforts.

### Conclusion

It was concluded that, human resource development is an indispensable tool in the library organization and should be given prompt attention by the library management. Also, human resource development was noted to be significant to academic libraries since it enhances productivity, skill development, efficiency and effectiveness and achievement of organizational goals and objectives.

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