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# STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA.

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#### **Abstract**

The study examined the relationship between staff development programmes and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri. The study was guided by three research questions and three null hypotheses. A census study technique was adopted to cover the entire population of 42 library staff. A correlation research design was adopted for study, while rating scale was used as data collection instrument. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson (r) statistics to answer the research questions. The hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics of simple linear correlation at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that there is a positive relationship between inservice training in use for staff development and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri; that there is a positive very high extent of relationship between mentoring programmes in use for staff development and service delivery and also that there is a positive very low extent of relationship between the extent of practice of continuing education programme and service delivery. The researcher recommended that Public library management in Nigeria should go beyond the conventional methods of providing in-service training for library staff and look towards the virtual aspect of staff development as this is the best way to acquire and share knowledge globally; that public libraries should effectively evaluate their mentoring programmes and provide them with feedbacks in order to ascertain their effectiveness in terms of the impact of the programmes job performance (service delivery) of the library staff and also that public library management should, as a matter of necessity, place more emphasis on staff acquisition of skills and knowledge in Information and Communication Technology and other related areas to enable them cope with the challenges occasioned by ICT integration in library services and operations.

**Keywords**: Staff development, Service delivery, Public libraries, In-service training, Mentoring, Continuing education.

#### Introduction

Human resources is one of the important and valuable asset in public libraries. This is because they contribute immensely to the success or failure of public library activities towards promoting learning and research. Human resources in public libraries, according to Alain (2013) are the professionals, para-professionals and non-professionals who may be unskilled personnel. These human resources co-ordinate and process other material resources to enhance effective service delivery. The importance of library personnel in providing essential services to users calls for their adequate training and development especially in public libraries. Consequently, human resources/personnel in every public library or organisation play vital role to its functional existence and effective operations.

A public library is a library established with public tax for unrestricted use by the masses. It is regarded as the local gateway to knowledge, providing a basic condition for lifelong, independent, decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups (IFLA/UNESCO, 2015). The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (2011) also defines the public library as an organisation established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government or through some other forms of community organizations. It further opines that a public library provides access to knowledge, information and works of the imagination through a range of services and is equally available to all members of the community, regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, physical and mental limitations, economic and employment statuses and educational attainments. In the light of this development occasioned by the information age, the leadership role that the public library is expected to play can only be realized by having the adequate number of employees and sound training programmes towards ensuring well-trained personnel. It is only the human resources who work in these libraries that provide services which users of the library need to achieve their aims of going to the library. The achievement of library goals according to Onwubiko (2004) is fundamentally dependent upon the effective training and development of its human resources.

As part of their manpower development strategies, public libraries usually make provision for retraining of all categories of staff in their annual budgets. Librarians in public libraries in Nigeria benefit from the provision as they sometimes receive training under the in-service training programmes (Agaja, 2019). Aitken (2014) defines in -service training as the on-going training of practicing professionals, which is typically arranged by the boards that employ them. Similarly, Egwim, Oguike and Edom (2020) see in-service training as a staff development programme that is deliberate and continuous involving the identification and discussion of present and anticipated needs of individual staff for furthering their jobs satisfaction and carer prospects. In-service training courses are one of the most available programmes that are used to improve the quantity and quality level of the staff services in various organizations, including libraries and information centers.

Public libraries are now encouraging their professionals, para-professionals and non-professional staff through the in-service programme to acquire undergraduate and post-graduate qualifications wherever possible. A number of serving personnel have been granted study leave to acquire post-graduate qualifications in Library and Information Science (MLIS). Similarly, a number of librarians have been sponsored to acquire doctorate degree in librarianship and the process is called continuing education (Nkebem, 2009). According to Ifidon (2005), this type of development programme prepares library trainees after completion of senior library assistant's programme to be qualified and integrated into the post of library officer. For librarians, continuous learning is critical to renewing the expertise and skills needed to assist and deliver various services to members of the public in the new information age.

In public libraries in Nigeria, it has been observed that there is lack of training and development programmes for staff and as a result of this, most librarians in public libraries face the challenges in their assimilation, isolation, work satisfaction and stress. As a result of these, the competencies an service delivery of librarians in public libraries are not as effective as they should be, as a result of these, it is therefore very expedient to ascertain the relationship between staff development programmes and service delivery in public libraries.

# **Scope of the Study**

The study is focused on staff development programmes and service delivery in public libraries with emphasis on Imo State Public Library, Owerri. The study covers in-service training, mentoring and continuing education programmes as a means of enhancing staff development and preparing librarians to provide effective service delivery to library patrons.

# **Research Questions**

The following research questions are posed to guide the study:

- 1. What is the relationship between in-service training and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri?
- 2. What is the relationship between mentoring programmes and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri?
- 3. What is the relationship between continuing education programme and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri?

# **Hypotheses**

This study is anchored on the following null hypotheses:

- Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between in-service training and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri.
- Ho<sub>2</sub>: The relationship between mentoring programmes and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri is not significant.
- Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between continuing education programme and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri.

#### **Literature Review**

There are enormous research works conducted in the area of staff development programmes in different sectors globally, and to be successful in the current rapidly changing world, there is need to maximize the productivity of all our resources (physical, financial, information and human). According to Robert and Mitchell (2015), human beings need to learn skills and develop new abilities, to respond to these challenges in our lives, our careers and our organizations. According to the authors, staff development is defined as an organized learning activity arranged within an organization in order to improve performance and/or personal growth for the purpose of improving the job, the individual and or the organization. Staff development is a dynamic and continuous process encompassing individuals, organizations and societies.

Staff development is used as a potential means of achieving personnel growth by exposing them to different types of organizational work techniques and encouraging them to work more purposefully. Ajao (2011) believed that a well trained and motivated staff achieves self-actualization, and is satisfied with his job and puts in his best to justify the investment on him. Onwubiko (2004) also maintained that training is designed to improve skills on the present job, development programmes are designed to educate employees beyond the requirement of their present position so that they will be prepared for promotion and be able to take a broader view of their roles in the organization. Most employees learn fast through in-service training.

According to Aitken, (2014) in -service training is an on-going training of practicing professionals, which is typically arranged by the boards that employ them. Cooper and Payne (2018) stressed in their study that on-the-job training exposes employees to new experiences and techniques of performing tasks. Librarians in public libraries in Nigeria sometimes receive training under their in-service training programmes (Agaja, 2019). Librarians who receive in-service training are likely to show better output towards their job than those who do not receive in-service training and the more a librarian gets more experience in terms of new skills and knowledge acquired, the likelihood of such librarian showing a positive and favourable job performance (Nkebem, 2009). Agaja (2019) further posited that librarianship is being gradually accepted as a dynamic profession whose members should constantly seek for

new and better ways of information acquisition, storage and dissemination through planned interactions among professional colleagues, as well as participation in short and long term courses in the country. Mansoori and Pashootanizade (2017) were of the view that, considering the information and communication technologies in the libraries and a change in the users' information search behaviour as well as the emergence of new expectations, librarians should be prepared to communicate with different groups to offer more appropriate services. Librarians can also dev3lop professionally on the job through mentoring.

Mentoring is an essential part of librarians' professional success and career growth. Ugwuanyi and Ejikeme (2011) posited that librarians need to continue to learn, to update and to refresh their knowledge to prevent the onset of professional alienation in performance and to also adjust to the culture and change prevalent in the new information environment. Mentoring provides the structural and attitudinal context in which continuing professional development can occur in a number of ways. There are various mentoring programmes that exist in different types of library organizations which can take various dimensions depending on the structure, function and content. Sodipe and Madukoma (2013) categorized these programmes into two: traditional form which is informal in nature and the formal mentoring which assumes different forms such as: peer, group and electronic mentoring.

The importance of mentoring programme are too numerous. In academic libraries it can boost individuals' team commitment and permit them to gain greater insight into the library's workings and help to increase communication within the library (Ekechukwu & Horsfall, 2015). It also helps to change organizational culture to better level, gives an individual the chance to meet different people within the library network, and improves levels of performance success. However, mentoring is not complete without mentoring evaluation and feedback. Librarians' mentoring in public libraries is an innovation to empower and improve quality service delivery to users. Again, continuing education is another strategy that prepares and helps librarians particularly in public libraries to provide effective service delivery to clienteles

Most public libraries in Nigeria have encouraged their library staff to acquire postgraduate qualifications wherever possible. A number of serving personnel have been granted study leaves to acquire undergraduate degrees and postgraduate library qualifications such as Masters in Library Science (MLS). Similarly, a number of librarians have been sponsored to acquire doctorate degree in librarianship (Nkebem, 2009). According to Ifidon (2005), this type of development programme prepares library trainees after completion of senior library assistant's programme to be qualified and integrated into the post of library officer. For this purpose, study leave and study fellowship may be available to library staff members. In addition to senior library assistants who wish to study for the two years diploma programme, assistant librarians with a first degree in any discipline other than librarianship or other serving professional staff member who wants to attain higher professional or academic qualifications may also benefit from study leave and study fellowship. This process is called continuing education (Nkebem, 2009).

Continuing education has never been as important as it is today. The on-going revolution in information technology demands changes not only in what we learn, but also in how we learn in the classroom and beyond. Ramaiah and Moorthy (2012) define continuing education as the provision of opportunities for workers (library staff) to continue their learning. Keeping up with the explosion in information and technology challenges requires those in the workforce to continually renew their skills and expand their knowledge. Studeart and Moran (2017) assert that continuing education is a very important career development in any library organization. Furthermore, the authors state that librarians/library staff both in state, national, international undergo training on managerial skills and that many library-related institutions provide continuing education courses. Alemna (2018) observed that the rapid rate of development, both within and outside the library profession, continues to make it difficult, if not impossible, for a librarian to rely on his basic training for any appreciable length of time during his professional career. Factors such as the impact of new technology, the information explosion and new policies and methods for the

organization and provision of information have made it absolutely essential for librarians to engage actively in continuing education programmes if they are to remain professionally up-to-date and, more importantly, if they are to provide services that meet the challenges imposed on them by these new developments.

Again, Gabcanova (2012) advocated for continuous education for library staff and evaluation of such development programmes to see if they are achieving its purpose. For librarians, continuous learning is critical to renewing the expertise and skills needed to teach and assist members of the public in the new information age (Nkebem, 2009). One aspect is to make professional continuing education for librarians an integral part of public library development and the other is to pursue concerted efforts aimed at its realization. It is in recognition of this observation that Aboyade (2006) stated that in order to promote continuing education of their staff, academic librarians should take certain actions such as: arranging to have regular professional meetings or training sessions within their libraries; sponsoring their staff for relevant courses whenever they are available; granting periodic study leave to staff and rewarding those who undertake further studies with promotion or an increment in salaries, especially if they display superior or improved skills as a result of some further education.

# Methodology

A linear correlation design was adopted to carry out this study. This is considered appropriate for the study because the purpose of the study is to ascertain the relationship that exists between staff development programmes and service delivery. According to Nwankwo (2013), correlation design is used in a situation where the researcher seeks to establish relationship between two or more variable and data from such variable in ratio or interval scale. A census study technique was employed to cover the entire population of forty two (42) library personnel at Imo State Public Library, Owerri. The data collected using rating scale were analyzed using Pearson (r) statistics to answer the research questions, while the t-test statistics of simple linear correlation was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

# **Data Analyses and Presentation.**

The results of the analyses were presented in tables and interpreted. The results were presented based on the research questions and hypotheses.

**Research Question One:** What is the relationship between in-service training and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri?

Table 1
Coefficients of Correlation and Determination between In-service Training and Service Delivery

n	r	$r^2$
42	0.947	0.8968

Table 1 shows that the coefficient of correlation between in-service training and service delivery is 0.947. This coefficient is positive showing that as in-service training in use for staff development increases, their extent of service delivery also increases. The coefficient of correlation is also within the range  $0.81 \le r \le 1.00$  for very high extent of relationship. This shows that there is a positively very high extent of relationship between in-service training and extent of service delivery. The coefficient of determination between in-service training and extent of service delivery is 0.8968. This indicates that 89.68% of variations in the extent of service delivery by library personnel is explained by variations in in-service training.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between in-service training and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri.

Table 2
Calculated and Critical t-Values for Testing the Significance or Otherwise of the Coefficient of Correlation

t <sub>cal</sub>	df	p	α	t <sub>crit</sub>	Decision
48.530	41	0.000	0.05	1.960	H <sub>01</sub> is rejected

Results of data analysis presented in Table 2 shows that the coefficient of correlation between in-service training and service delivery is significant. Therefore, null hypothesis one which states that there is no significant relationship between inservice training in and service delivery is rejected. This is because, the calculated t-value of 48.530 is greater than the critical or tabulated t-value of 1.960 ( $t_{Cal} > t_{Crit}$ ). Also, the p-value of 0.000 is less than the significant or probability value of 0.05. It can therefore, be inferred that there is significant relationship between in-service training and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri.

**Research Question Two:** What is the relationship between mentoring programme and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri?

Table 3

Coefficients of Correlation and Determination between Mentoring Programmes and Service Delivery

n	r	$r^2$
42	0.874	0.7639

Table 3 shows that the coefficient of correlation between mentoring programmes and service delivery is 0.874. That the coefficient is positive indicates that as the mentoring programmes increases, extent of service delivery also increases. The coefficient of correlation is also within the range  $0.81 \le r \le 1.00$  for very high extent of relationship. This shows that there is a positively very high extent of relationship between mentoring programmes in use for staff development and service delivery. The coefficient of determination between mentoring programmes and service delivery is 0.7639. This indicates that 76.39% of variations in the extent of service delivery is explained by the variations in the mentoring programmes in use for staff development. This left 23.61% of the variations in the extent of service delivery unexplained.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is relationship between mentoring programmes and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri is not significant.

Table 4

Calculated and Critical t-Values for Testing the Significance or Otherwise of the Coefficient of Correlation

tcal	df	p	α	terit	Decision
27.572	41	0.000	0.05	1.960	H <sub>03</sub> is rejected

Results of data analysis presented in Table 4 shows that the coefficient of correlation between mentoring programmes and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri is significant, hence the rejection of the null hypothesis. This is because; the calculated t-value of 27.572 is greater than the critical or tabulated t-value of 1.960 (that is  $t_{Cal} > t_{Crit}$ ). Also, the p-value of 0.000 is less than the significant or probability value of 0.05. Therefore, it is concluded that there is significant relationship between mentoring programmes and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri.

**Research Question Three:** What is the relationship between continuing education programme and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri?

Table 5
Coefficients of Correlation and Determination between the extent of Practice of Continuing Education Programme and Service Delivery

n	r	$r^2$
42	0.170	0.0289

Table 5 shows that the coefficient of correlation between the extent of practice of continuing education programme for staff and service delivery is 0.170. That the coefficient is positive indicates that as the extent of practice of continuing education programme for library personnel increases, service delivery also increases. The coefficient of correlation is also within the range of  $0.01 \le r \le 0.20$  for very low extent of relationship. This shows that there is a positively very low extent of relationship between continuing education programme and service delivery in Imo

State Public Library, Owerri. The coefficient of determination between continuing education programme and service delivery is 0.0289. This indicates that 2.89% of variations in the level of service delivery by library personnel are explained by the variations in the extent of practice of continuing education programme for them. This left 97.11% of the variations in the extent of practice of continuing education programme for staff and service delivery unexplained due to other factors or sampling error.

**Hypothesis three:** There is no significant relationship between continuing education programme for staff and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri.

Table 6
Calculated and Critical t-Values for Testing the Significance or Otherwise of the Coefficient of Correlation

tcal	df	p	α	tcrit	Decision
2.840	41	0.000	0.05	1.960	H <sub>04</sub> is rejected

Results of data analysis presented in Table 6 shows that the coefficient of correlation between continuing education programme and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri is significant, so the null hypothesis is rejected. This is because, the calculated t-value of 2.840 is greater than the critical or tabulated t-value of 1.960 (that is  $t_{Cal} > t_{Crit}$ ). Also, the p-value of 0.000 is less than the significant or probability value of 0.05. Based on this, it is concluded that there is significant relationship between continuing education programme and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri.

## **Discussion of Findings**

Result of the data analysis indicated that there is a positive relationship between in-service training and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri. This can be seen from the result of correlation coefficient which is 0.81. One can therefore state that providing in-service training such as staff orientations, induction course, conferences and seminars for the professional development of the staff would enhance

service delivery in the public library studied. This study has lent credence to the finding by Agaja (2019) that librarianship is being gradually accepted as a dynamic profession whose members should constantly seek for new and better ways of information acquisition, storage and dissemination through participation in short and long term courses such as on-the-job training, conferences, workshops, and seminars etc. as means of training for efficient development. The finding of this study also agrees with the findings by Mansoori and Pashootanizade (2017) that considering the information and communication technologies in the libraries and a change in the users' information search behaviour and the emergence of new expectations, librarians should be prepared to communicate with different groups to offer more appropriate services.

Again the result of data analysis also showed that there was a significant positive relationship between mentoring and service delivery. This implies that as the mentoring programmes in use for staff development increases, the extent of service delivery also increases. Invariably the level of mentoring for staff development influenced service delivery in public libraries. This explains that there is significant relationship between mentoring programmes in use for staff development and service delivery in Imo State Public Library, Owerri. This therefore is an indication that the skills required to be efficient on the job could often times be acquired through mentoring relationship between experienced librarians and less experienced library staff. This finding corroborates the findings of Ekechukwu and Horsfall (2015) who found that mentoring programme in public libraries boosts individuals' team commitment, permits them to gain greater insight into the library's workings and helps to increase communication within the library. Lending credence to this finding, South Eastern Library Association (2009) stated that mentoring relationship in the library is usually encouraged in order to provide a method of introducing and encouraging young librarians and other library personnel to work together for enhanced service delivery.

The finding of this study also revealed that there is a positively very low extent of relationship between continuing education programme and service delivery. That the coefficient is positive indicates that, as the extent of practice of continuing education programme for library personnel increases, their level of service delivery also increases. This finding has affirmed the earlier finding by Nkebem (2009) that a number of serving library personnel have been granted study leaves to acquire undergraduate and postgraduate library qualifications such as Bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees in library science. Also in line with this finding, Gabcanova (2012) advocated for continuing education for library staff and evaluation of such development programme to see if it is achieving its purpose.

#### Conclusion

Public libraries are very important to the society and therefore need to be stocked with information resources that enhance research. For this to be achieved, personnel in the library have to be equipped with the needed skills and competencies to enhance their functions and provision of effective services that will impact positively on the lives of the users. This calls for regular acquisition of knowledge and skills among all categories of library staff through staff development programmes. Staff development programmes such as in-service training, mentoring and continuing education are keys to effective job performance and should be carried out on regular basis to keep personnel in public libraries in Nigeria abreast of new trends if they are to succeed and deliver quality services to users. This if adequately planned and executed, would go a long way in bringing out the best from the library staff and enhance their efficiency and productivity in the public library.

#### Recommendations

Based on these findings, the researchers recommend that:

1. Public library management in Nigeria should go beyond the conventional methods of providing in-service training for library staff and look towards the virtual aspect of staff development as this is the best way to acquire and share knowledge globally. The knowledge derived from this programme by public

- library staff will prepare them to tackle present and future challenges on their jobs.
- 2. Public libraries should plan their mentoring programmes in such a manner that there will be regular feedback form the participants both mentors and the mentees. This feedback strategy will help both participants in the mentorship programme as well as the library management to always re-strategize to improve their mentoring programmes with a view to having effective results.
- 3. Public libraries should encourage their staff to undertake continuing education programmes offered in various tertiary institutions to improve their qualifications and knowledge. Acquisition of relevant qualifications and enhanced knowledge in the field of librarianship will help them to perform their functions effectively as well as provide adequate and prompt services to library clienteles.

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