

## **CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR EFFECTIVE LIBRARY SERVICES IN SPECIAL LIBRARIES IN BENUE STATE - NIGERIA**

**Aboh Samuel Otsonu, Faga Asom, Abubakar Zuwaira and Odu Alice Olijje**

University Library, Federal University, Lafia. P.O.Box 366 Lafia Nasarawa State

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study was designed to examine the challenges as well as to find the remedies to staff development for effective library services in special libraries in Benue state of Nigeria. The study was guided by three research questions in line with the objectives of the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for this study was 25 library staff from the 2 special libraries in Benue state. Data were collected using questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed using percentage and mean scores. The findings revealed that, Lecture method, Job Rotation, Coaching Method, Mentorship, mention among others were accepted as methods used for staff development in special libraries. The result also shows the problems associated with staff development in the special libraries to include lack of fund for developing library programmes, poor budgetary allocation to special libraries, lack of more sponsored programmes for staff development, discrimination against library staff by the management of parents' organizations and lack of due process in staff selection for trainings. The study also recommended establishment of a well written staff development policy, placement of non-qualified personnel to head libraries should be checkmated by regulatory bodies, discrimination against library staff by parent organizations should be discouraged and provision of adequate training facilities. The study concluded that staff development may not be the magical approach for enhancing effective library services even though the attitudes of staff is significant but special libraries in Benue state need to improve their services to meet the growing demand for information in the modern era despite all odds.*

**KEYWORDS:** Staff Development, Library Service, Library Programme, Library, Nigeria

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Special libraries are those information organizations sponsored by private companies, government agencies, not-for-profit organizations, or professional bodies. The Special Libraries

Interest Working Group (SIWG) states that "Special Libraries contribute to specific professional or academic groups whose information needs are defined by particular subject and activities." These libraries provide a variety of information services to meet the needs of a specialized population, providing staff and researchers with the information they need to carry out their tasks. Staff, is virtually the most important resource in the operation of the library. Hawkins (1995) defines staff to mean the people employed by an organization as the case may be, not only for administrative work but cut across other technical services that an organization may provide for clientele.

According to Ballantyne, Lebel and Rugard (2002), staff development is the process by which individuals, groups, or organizations, institutions and society develop abilities

(individually and collectively), to perform functions, solve problems, set and achieve objectives. They involve acquiring skill and knowledge, Mabawonku (2001) posits that they enable one to be “aware of new possibilities and empowered by gaining new skills upgrading their old skills”. The status quo of staff development is aimed at addressing the weaknesses of workers in order to be able to carry out their expected functions efficiently. In accordance to that, Webb, Gannon-Leary and Bent (2007), claim that staff development is very important in boosting research activities. How well staff is developed determine what he can offer, this implies that once a staff feels appreciated and challenged through training opportunities he feels satisfied towards his job and perform better. Therefore, special library should equip her staff so that they can be challenged to function optimally in order to make library itself become an excellent service centre. In line with that Akpokurerie (2006) agrees that competent library staff in various aspects of library operations or services ensure the achievement of library objectives, which have to do with bibliographic, reference, and research activities. Contrary to the above assertion, beyond the statutory role of providing information services, the state of affairs stem from the fact that the government is yet to see the libraries and information as important commodities for commerce and industries. These channels have the capability to boost the economic, social and educational development of libraries staff, this neglect affect the services they render.

Moreover, the rising demand in information generation, access and dissemination; the technological discovery of the modern time has changed the libraries functions and procedures beyond the old system of operation. It has brought more challenges to the library staff, more so, users’ needs for information increase due to the state of the arts in libraries. The above informed the reasons for an appraisal of the challenges and remedies confronting staff development programmes in special libraries in Benue state of Nigeria

### **Statement of the Problem**

Special library is maintained by its parent body and it provides information resources and services which are of direct relevance to the interest and activities of that body. Hence, special libraries provide services that are tailored towards the specific needs of their parent organizations. For special libraries to carry out their functions efficiently, the need for staff development will then not be over-emphasize as staff development help individual staff acquire knowledge, skills or awareness or group of staff to work more effectively. However, the danger of poor staff development in special libraries especially as it affects library services result in low productivity and efficiency. Others are decline in patronage, underutilization of library materials, obsolesce, incompetent and indolent staff will fill the library. Hence the study which is out to investigate the challenges of staff development with a view to suggesting ways for improvement and ensure effective special library services particularly in Benue state of Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of this research is to investigate staff development for special library service delivery in Benue state - Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Ascertain the methods used in staff development in the special libraries in Benue state of Nigeria.
2. Determine the problems associated with staff development in the special libraries in

Benue state - Nigeria.

3. Identify strategies for improving staff development for effective library service in the special libraries in Benue state - Nigeria.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Development as a concept is a holistic term thus, Okoye (2008), defines development from human perspective to mean a multi-faceted phenomenon, which can be manifested through attainment of matured skill and creativity, independence, high level of personal discipline, enjoyment of rule of law and acquisition of power with commensurate responsibilities, expectations and privileges. This infers that development means an improvement on the existing structures as well as devising new areas of interest with higher responsibilities. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), posit that development connotes growth plus change and change may be social, cultural, educational or economic status which may be qualitative and quantitative. Aguolu and Aguolu have approached development not from physical growth but from the aspect of economic advancement to raise staff profile for efficiency.

Methods and types of staff development in organizations especially in the special library occur in various ways which must have its relevance to the organization. Onah (2003) identifies staff development to be in two forms namely: Formal and Informal. That staff can undergo such programme hence they are set to achieve certain goals and objectives within the organization. This includes orientation programmes, induction programmes, on-the-job training, in-service training, job rotation. Justifying the needs for staff development, Craig (1976) lists nine (9) reasons for staff development to include: Increase in productivity; improvement in the quality of work and morale; development of new skills, knowledge, understanding and attitude; correct use of new tools, machines, process methods or modification thereof; reduction of waste, accident, turn-over, and other overhead costs; fighting of obsolescence in skills, technologies, methods, products, market and capital management; bringing incumbent to a level of performance for the job; development of replacements, preparing people for advancement, improving manpower development and ensuring continuity of leadership and the survival and growth of library/organization. Despite the benefits of staff development, its implementation is not without challenges

The implementation of staff development poses a number of challenges to information professionals in providing effective library services. In developing countries, especially in Nigeria, staff development in special libraries are relegated to the background. According to Onah (2003) the problems of staff development are connected to the inability of the authority in addressing the issue of selecting and releasing staff for training by the organization. He emphasized that in a bureaucracy where merit forms only a part of the system of recruiting and promoting civil servants instead of being the ultimate, the process of selecting staff development is bound to be affected by non-merit criteria. He maintains that in Nigeria, the process has been affected by other criteria such as political, qualification, years of service, gender, ethnicity and favouritism, and the geo-political spread of development opportunities (quota system based). This phenomenon is contrary to the principles of development by its merit to enhance efficient management in the sense that some staffs selected for staff programmes may not know the job or cope with the tasks of administrative development course. He concluded that apart from problems of funds, the library as an organization as well

as special libraries faces lack of good leadership as a problem that is affecting staff development courses.

However these challenges according to Billings (1995) can be improved through the provision of adequate infrastructure in the training institutions that will permeate effective training for staff development across the country is necessary. Similarly Ajibero (1990) observes that there is no good staff development policy in our library schools. He went on to recommend a comprehensive and viable staff development policy as well as linkages with foreign library schools. Chandan (2000), observes that special libraries should make provisions in terms of policies and designing programmes that will carry along the non-management staff, this will make them have sense of belonging as well grow in the job with efficiency.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The design adopted for this study is a descriptive survey research method. The research which covers the two special libraries in Benue state of Nigeria has a population of 25 respondents. This population comprises of all the staff members of the two special libraries under study with Federal Medical Center Makurdi having 8 while the Benue State University Medical Library has 17. The instrument used for data collection was structure questionnaire. The instrument which is made up of two parts has 62 items designed to elicit information to address research questions for the study. The instruments were administered to the respondents face to face and collected immediately. The data collected was analyzed using statistical frequency, percentage and mean score.

### Data Analysis

Data collected from the questionnaire is presented and analyzed using frequency table, simple percentage and mean. The presentation and analysis were done in line with the three objectives which guides this study as follows.

### Research Question One: What are the methods used in staff development in the special libraries in Benue state - Nigeria?

**Table 1: Percentage distributions of respondents on methods used for staff development in special libraries**

SN	Methods	NO		Yes		D
		Freq	%	Freq	%	
1	Lecture Method	19	14.6%	111	85.4%	Accepted
2	Job Rotation	31	23.8%	99	76.2%	Accepted
3	Linkage Programmes	95	73.1%	35	26.9%	Rejected
4	Coaching Method	41	31.5%	89	68.5%	Accepted
5	Mentorship	38	29.2%	92	70.8%	Accepted
6	Audio-Visual Method	62	47.7%	68	52.3%	Accepted
7	Demonstration Method	33	25.4%	97	74.6%	Accepted
8	Discussion Method	19	14.6%	111	85.4%	Accepted
9	Education Excursion	77	59.2%	53	40.8%	Rejected
10	Power Point Presentation	71	54.6%	59	45.4%	Rejected

Data presented in table 3 above is percentage distribution of methods used for staff development in special libraries. Analysis from the table above indicates that items such as Lecture method, Job Rotation, Coaching Method, Mentorship, mention but a few were accepted as methods used for staff development in special libraries, their percentages were greater than 50% acceptance level. Nevertheless, items like Linkage Programmes, Education Excursion and Power Point Presentation were less than 50% which were rejected by the respondents as the methods not used for staff development in special libraries. Finally, lecture method and discussion method which were rated 85.4% respectively had the highest acceptance by the respondents. However, it was agreed that the ten items in the table are all used in staff development in special libraries.

### Research Question Two: What are the problems associated with Staff Development in the selected special libraries in North Central Nigeria?

**Table 4: Mean ratings of respondents on Problems associated with staff development in library**

SN	Problems	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	R	D
1	Lack of fund for developing library programmes	93	30	4	3	3.64	.66	1 <sup>ST</sup>	SA
2	Poor budgetary allocation to Special libraries	83	39	6	2	3.56	.66	2 <sup>ND</sup>	SA
3	Lack of more sponsored programmes for staff development	65	58	5	1	3.45	.61	3 <sup>RD</sup>	A
4	Lack of complete top management support	58	53	13	6	3.25	.82	4 <sup>TH</sup>	A
5	Corruption	52	56	14	7	3.19	.84	5 <sup>TH</sup>	A
6	Lack of necessary training facilities	38	74	13	5	3.12	.73	6 <sup>TH</sup>	A
7	Poor knowledge of ICT facilities	45	59	20	6	3.10	.82	7 <sup>TH</sup>	A
8	Discrimination against special libraries staff by the parent organizations	48	57	11	14	3.07	.94	8 <sup>TH</sup>	A
9	Lack of good leadership	52	41	29	8	3.05	.93	9 <sup>TH</sup>	A
10	lack of due process in staff selection for trainings	42	61	19	8	3.05	.85	10 <sup>TH</sup>	A
11	Lack of staff promotion after participation in training programmes	45	57	15	13	3.03	.93	11 <sup>TH</sup>	A
12	Negative attitudes to work	28	56	27	19	2.72	.97	12 <sup>TH</sup>	A

The data presented in table 2 above reveals mean ratings of respondents on problems associated with staff development in special libraries. Using the criterion mean of 2.50, accepted that the breakdown of data from items 1to12 are lack of funds for developing programmes, poor budgetary allocations for special libraries, lack of more sponsored programmes for staff, lack of complete top management support, corruption and so on are

problems associated with staff development in libraries. This is because their mean values which ranged from 2.72 to 3.64 were greater than the criterion mean adopted in the study. Furthermore, the overall mean showed that lack of fund for developing library programmes with mean value of 3.64 is ranked highest. On the other hand, the standard deviation indicated in the table shows that scores within Negative attitudes to work (.97) had the greatest dispersion as compared to other items. This infers that the problems mentioned above are obviously impeding staff development in the selected special libraries.

### **Research Question Three: What are the strategies for improving Staff Development for effective library services in the selected special libraries in North Central Nigeria?**

**Table 3: Mean ratings of respondents on strategies for improving staff development for effective library services.**

		SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	R	D
1	Improved funding for sponsoring library staff programmes	99	29	1	1	3.74	.51	1 <sup>ST</sup>	A
2	Special library staff should be given the opportunity to upgrade their ICT skills	91	38	1	0	3.69	.48	2 <sup>ND</sup>	A
3	Budgetary allocation should be made available timely	87	40	3	0	3.65	.53	3 <sup>RD</sup>	A
4	Professional development should be considered for staff promotion	82	46	2	0	3.62	.52	4 <sup>TH</sup>	A
5	There should be adequate provision of training facilities	82	44	3	0	3.61	.53	5 <sup>TH</sup>	A
6	Establishment of a good written staff development policy b	80	47	3	0	3.59	.54	6 <sup>TH</sup>	A
7	Corrupt tendencies be discouraged and punished	80	43	7	0	3.56	.60	7 <sup>TH</sup>	A
8	Equal participation in staff development	72	55	3	0	3.53	.55	8 <sup>TH</sup>	A
9	Libraries should enjoy paid study leave to improve themselves	75	49	4	1	3.53	.60	9 <sup>TH</sup>	A
10	Importance of staff development should be made known to the management	70	58	1	1	3.52	.56	10 <sup>TH</sup>	A
11	Staff selection for training should be based on merit	65	53	8	4	3.38	.74	11 <sup>TH</sup>	A

The data presented in table 3 shows the mean ratings of respondents on strategies for improving staff development for effective library services. Using the criterion mean of 2.50, the analysis of data shows that the respondents agreed that all the eleven items listed were approaches for improving staff development for effective library services. More so, the table indicates from the overall mean that, improved funding for sponsoring library staff programmes has the highest mean rating of 3.74. On the other hand, staff selection for training should be based on merit was ranked lowest mean with 3.38.

Furthermore, the standard deviation indicated in the table shows that, the scores within staff selection for training should be based on merit (.74) had the greatest thinning out as compared to other items in the table as analyzed. The researcher deduced that library managers should intensify their efforts in improving adequate staff development programmes to enhance effective library services.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings are discussed in line with the research questions under the following sub-headings:

#### **Methods used for Staff Development in Special Libraries**

Analysis of data reveals that majority of the methods used for staff development include: Lecture method, discussion method, job rotation respectively were highly rated. Whereas, power point presentation, education excursion and linkage programmes are rejected or seldom used. However, this study disagrees with Cole (1996) who asserted that methods of staff development differ from one organization to another. Researcher came up with different opinions on the methods of staff development libraries can use. He describes these as education excursion, apprentice system, under-study method etc which according to the researchers are designed to update special libraries staff for greater efficiency and effective services.

#### **Problems Associated with Staff Development in Libraries**

Result of data analyzed shows that there is a high level of agreement on the various problems associated with staff development in libraries. The study indicates that the major factors affecting the implementation of staff development are: lack of fund for developing library programmes, poor budgetary allocation to special libraries, lack of more sponsored programmes for staff development were ranked very high in the data.. This is in consonance with Meggision (2001) who identified lack of fund for developing staff, discrimination against special libraries staff parent organization, lack of good leadership, lack of due process in staff selection for trainings and lack of more sponsored conferences and organized seminars. The researchers accepted that these problems exist and that if not eliminated will adversely affect special libraries services in Benue state of Nigeria.

#### **Strategies for improving staff development for effective library services**

The findings revealed that special library staff should be given the opportunity to upgrade their ICT skills, budgetary allocation should be made available timely, professional development should be considered for staff promotion and there should be adequate provision for training facilities. Others are establishment of good written staff development policy among others. The finding of this study agree with the finding of CFBIR (2002), explains that libraries that spend money, time and effort to develop and sponsor trainings are rewarded with quality personnel who are capable of greater achievement and are available for greater responsibilities. Similarly, Ajibero (1990) recommended a comprehensive and viable staff development policy. The researchers opines that this will permeate consistency, justify equity and promote merit in workplace especially during staff selection for development.

## CONCLUSION

Good staff development increase the quality of services rendered for greater productivity in organizations. Additionally, special library can become more buoyant, relevant and attractive to users as a result of the services they are enjoying. Staff can only develop confidence and expertise from training or learning experience such as workshops, seminars, conferences, study fellowships, in-service training etc they have attended. Therefore, the key driver through which effective library services can be achieved is through systematic planning and consistent staff development

## RECOMMENDATION

1. There should be constant review of staff development that will reflect on all aspects of the profession.
2. There should be increased funding for library staff development programmes.
3. There should be provision of adequate training facilities in order to enhance staff development and effective library services.
4. Libraries should have a well written staff development policy that will serve as a working tool for equal selection and participation of all staff

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