Effectiveness of staff professional development programmes among librarians in Academic Libraries: A case of Mzumbe University Library and Sokoine University of Agriculture Library

Anna Kimaro

Sokoine University of Agriculture, Morogoro, Tanzania

Abstract

This study assessed the effectiveness of staff development programmes in academic libraries of Tanzania. Specifically, the study focused on the effectiveness of staff development practices in academic libraries. It also sought to ascertain the challenges hindering the effectiveness of staff development practices in academic libraries in Tanzania. The study involved Mzumbe University Library and Sokoine University of Agriculture Library respectively. Data collection was through questionnaires and interview.

The findings of the study revealed that training needs revolved around activities that the respondents did on a continual basis; such as cataloging and classification, data entry, library software skills, communication skills as well as Information and Communication Technology. The majority of staff needed training to improve their work performance. However, such opportunities were limited due to various reasons, the major one being insufficient or lack of funds for professional development. The findings also revealed that the skills and knowledge acquired did reflect the training needs or the gaps in staff skills and knowledge in relation to their activities, training was positively related to improvement in job performance and provision of services. The study also revealed various challenges hindering the effectiveness of staff development programmes at the surveyed libraries, including lack of funds to support staff development, lack of time to attend training, inadequate staff and few times mismatch between training and needs. This study recommends increasing of budgetary allocation to support staff development, employment of more staff, seeking more support from donors, and basing training on training needs assessment.

Keywords: Professional staff development programmes, Academic Libraries, Academic Librarians

1.0 Introduction:

Many library staff are not exposed to staff development opportunities which could enrich their understanding on different current issues in library sector. Failure to enhance continuing education among library staff is one of the reasons for slow progress of libraries in Tanzania, as staff lack the opportunity to keep abreast the various

changes and developments in their field that are essential in improving the quality of service provision

Staff needs the opportunity to keep abreast the various changes and developments in their field that are essential in improving the quality of service provision.

A scrutiny by Corcoran (2014) involving libraries in Ireland revealed that libraries and information resources were constantly changing and developing, resulting into a need for staff development and yet difficult budget situations. To offset the situation, the author called for strategic planning as well as effecting changes in work flow brought about by changing technology. In coping with changes brought about by technological developments, there was a need to train staff in new areas of their profession so that they could provide better services to users, and yet limited budgets was an impediment. As such, the need for knowledgeable and skilled managers with the ability to maneuver the complexities of organizational life is considered inevitable

Studies on continuing education in Tanzania have focused on IT continuing education in academic libraries as well as the need for staff development programs for librarians and information professional.

A study on training and teamwork among librarians in British libraries and found that although there was strong support and good leadership, there was also poor communication, hence the need to offer librarians courses on communication, cooperation and negotiation, while the needs of each institution. . A study was conducted on small, specialised libraries in Colorado, assessing their effectiveness and competencies . The study findings revealed that the specialised libraries faced various challenges in their attempt to keep up with ever-changing trends, which was a result of limited time that their staff devoted to

training. The author asserted the importance of competences as a tool for identifying training needs, in a bid to ensure that time set aside for training was not wasted on skills that were unnecessary or unrelated to the requirements of the job.

A scrutiny involving libraries in Ireland revealed that libraries and information resources were constantly changing and developing, resulting into a need for staff development and yet difficult budget situations. To offset the situation, the author called for strategic planning as well as effecting changes in workflow brought about by changing technology. In coping with changes brought about by technological developments, there was a need to train staff in new areas of their profession so that they could provide better services to users, and yet limited budgets was an impediment. The author concluded that the need for knowledgeable and skilled managers with the ability to manoeuvre the complexities of organisational life was inevitable .

That is in line with a study conducted in the US which found that library management education was deficient in the US, making it necessary for librarians to look for staff development programs opportunities in the library management area, better preparing them for entry into future high leadership positions .

A study which was carried out at the University of Science and Technology Library in Kumasi, Ghana revealed that staff development programs improved performance of library staff at the university. The programs also improved effectiveness in work as well as interpersonal relations among staff .The main problem on staff development that this paper intend to discuss is how important staff development important in development of academic libraries and how effectively is it implemented.

1.1 Objective of the study

The objective of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of staff professional development among staff in academic libraries in Tanzania.

1.1.1 Specific Objectives

1. To investigate the need of staff professional development among staff in academic libraries in Tanzania

2. To investigate the problems hindering staff professional development among staff in academic libraries in Tanzania

3. To investigate the effectiveness of staff professional development among staff in academic libraries in Tanzania

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Need for staff development in academic libraries

A study by Muhhamad rafiq(2017,Continuing Education (CE) of LIS Professionals: Need Analysis & Role of LIS Schools, revealed that Continuing professional education is a lifelong learning and is indispensable for professional growth and instrumental for sustaining one's competence. Publication explosion, evolution of new sophisticated information technologies, and highly educated population require special training and education on the part of the librarians to cope with the specialized needs of the growing information society. Our population is increasingly becoming better educated. It is obvious that corresponding to the quality of education, demand for library services also increases. In an educated society library users demand high level personalized services. All these goals can only be achieved while we keep ourselves up-to-date in information providing techniques, which could be achieved through continuing professional education

2.2 Effectiveness of staff development strategies in academic libraries

Focused on designing effective in-service training for librarians in Pakistan it was revealed that ICT was the area that was most demanding among librarians with regard to training needs. Other areas that required training were management and leadership, teaching and training, communication, attitudinal development and subject or domain knowledge.

There are a number of studies on effectiveness of staff development strategies in libraries. For example, a study by King revealed that training on ICT for public library staff in the UK was beneficial. However, there were concerns about the training environment and contents as there was a demand for inclusion of ICT troubleshooting and problem solving rather than generic skills in the programs so as to match the type of queries normally encountered in libraries.

A study by Osei carried out at the University of Science and Technology Library in Kumasi, Ghana and revealed that staff development programs improved performance of library staff at the university. The programs also improved effectiveness in work as well as interpersonal relations among staff.

Professional staff development implemented at Purdue University in Indiana provided various advantages to both the employer and employee as the employer befitted due to an increase in efficiency among library staff while the employees' job satisfaction levels Castelyn,increased as the training helped them understand their job well and attain security.) Survey of 74 academic and public libraries with the aim of evaluating a chat reference training programme at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and revealed that following the training that was initiated by the process of

creating the chat reference programme, which was followed by planning, creating, producing and implementing the training, various training errors were noted, which necessitated making improvements on future training.

Comparing to traditional library training (cataloguing training being an example), the digital library training environment changed the way training was developed and initiated, unlike the former which was generic, with "one size fitting all approach". According to Joint, a new 'training culture' that involves more self-directed learning "allows untrained staff to construct knowledge by making errors, recognizing those errors and evolving strategies for recovering from those errors".

Library staff took advantage of professional development opportunities, believing that in-service training would positively affect their professional development, facilitating their job mobility. In the process, the institutions befitted as staff become more competent in the provision of library services.

In summary, the above literature review touched the needs for training, it is important to know what are the areas needed for training so as at the end you can measure if the needs were met ,and if needs were meet it means the program is effective not only that but also the literature covered the effectiveness of different staff programs in the world by measuring how it improves work performance, the outcomes of staff development programmes in general.

3.0 Methodology

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative research designs. The study was conducted in Morogoro region, involving Mzumbe University and Sokoine University of Agriculture, the reasons for the choice of study area is, number one: these two institutions are highly reputable academic institutions and number two they have been operating for a long time.

The study population comprised librarians (librarians holding managerial positions and non-management staff) These were chosen because they perform various activities in the library which require them to use skills and knowledge need of staff development programs to update their skills and knowledge from time to time in response to changing needs.

The sample size for this study was 38 library staff, (19 from the Mzumbe University and 19 from Sokoine University of Agriculture).

This study involved both primary data collection and secondary data collection. Questionnaires were distributed to both administrative staff of the library and academic Librarians. Questionnaires were distributed to respondents in order to get information relevant for the study. They contained both close and open-ended questions.

4.0 Result and Discussion

This chapter presents and discusses the findings based on research objectives. Specifically, the study aimed at assessing effectiveness of staff professional development in academic libraries. The study involved Sokoine University of Agriculture and Mzumbe University. Data for this study were collected using questionnaires that were administered to non- management library staff, interviews conducted with librarians and training officers, and observation. This chapter begins by presenting the demographic characteristics of the respondents, followed by the major findings as obtained from the field.

Effectiveness of staff professional development programmes among librarians in Academic Libraries: A case of Mzumbe University Library and Sokoine University of Agriculture Library

4.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The researcher sought information pertaining to respondents' sex, designation, marital status, working experience, level of education and nature of employment, variables considered important in interpretation of the data for this study. This information is presented in the following subsection

4.2.1 Sex of Respondents

This study involved both male and female respondents as presented, out of the 38 respondents who filled and returned the questionnaires, 16 (42.1%) were male while 22 (57.9%) were female. This implies that both men and women participate effectively in formal employment in Academic institutions such as libraries.

4.2.2 Age Range of Respondents

Age is an important variable in social science research. The distribution of respondents by age is presented, shows that 13(34.2%) respondents were aged between 20-29 years, 14(36.8%) were between 30 and 39 years, 9 (23.7%) were between 40-49 years while 2 were 50 years and above. The majority of the respondents were aged between 20 and 40 while very few were 50 years and above. In the Tanzania public service, the statutory compulsory retirement age is 60 years, which means that the same applies to the two surveyed academic libraries.

4.2.3 Marital Status of Respondents

The respondents were asked about their marital status as presented ,shows that 20 (52.6%) respondents were married, 16 (42.1%) respondents were single while two (5.3%) respondents were widowed, the majority of the respondents were married, while fewer were single. Very few were widowed.

4.2.4 Designation of the Respondents

The distribution of respondents by designation is presented, indicates that 15(39.5%) respondents were librarians, 17(44.7%) were assistant librarians, 6(15.8%) were library assistants. This implies that the majority of the respondents held positions that demanded professional qualifications, namely assistant librarianship and librarianship.

4.2.5 Working Experience

The distribution of respondents by working experience is presented ,shows that 14(36.8%) respondents had been working at the libraries for less than five years, 13(34.2%) had been working for between 5 to 10 years and 11(28.9%) had been working for more than ten years, the majority of respondents had a working experience of five and more years.

4.2.6 Level of Education

The findings shows that 17(52.6%) had diplomas, 15(39.5%) had bachelor's degrees while 3(7.9%) had Master's degree level qualifications. As seen in Table 6, majority of them possessed diploma and undergraduate degree qualifications, while a few of them possessed Master's degree.

The researcher established during interviews that priority in recruitment was often given to job seekers with professional qualifications coupled with long working experience due to limited employment opportunities in the public sector. The researcher was also told that some staff with professional qualifications were firstly recruited as diploma holder and degree holder and then upgraded to professionalism over time due to changing job demands.

4.3 Staff Training Needs

The objective of this study was to measure effectiveness of staff professional development but first there was a need to

establish the respondents' training needs as presented in the following subsections.

4.3.1 Daily Activities performed by respondents

In order to get information related to training needs, it was important to know the daily activities of the respondents because training needs are linked with the types of activities done.The findings shows that 9 (23.7%) of the respondents were doing cataloguing and classification, 10 (26.3%) were doing data entry, 7(18.4%) were doing acquisition of materials, 7 (18.4%) were doing circulation of materials, 24(63.2%) were doing shelving, 20 (52.6%) were doing check point duties, 6(15.8%) were conducting user education programs while 4(10.5%) respondents were providing reference services, majority of the respondents were involved in shelving and checkpoint duties. These two activities are basic activities in the sense that shelving is intended to ensure that reading materials are always placed at their proper places for the user to access them while check point duties are meant to ensure that only eligible users get access to the library and security of the reading materials and other resources. However, check point duties may not require a person with professional skills in librarianship and so security officials may do it while shelving may be effectively done by anyone with skills and knowledge on the major classification schemes, such as the Library of Congress Classification Scheme (LCC) and especially the Dewey Classification Scheme (DDC).

The findings, indicate that fewer respondents engaged in other types of activities, specifically cataloguing and classification, data entry, acquisition of materials, circulation of materials, user education and reference services. These are among the core activities of libraries which, together with shelving, can be effectively done by professional staff with formal or informal training. Due to division of labor in libraries, some staff may never acquire some skills because they are not related to their daily activities. One example is data entry as well as cataloguing and classification, which is a core library activity.

4.3.2 Need for Further Training to improve job performance

The respondents were also asked to indicate whether they needed further training. This information was considered important because training is important in increasing efficiency and the quality of services.

The findings show that 37 (97.4%) of the respondents answered "Yes" when asked if they had a need for further training while one (2.6%) respondent stated "No". This implies that majority of respondents in the surveyed organizations had a gap in their knowledge and skills.

4.3.3 Types of Training Needed

The respondents were also asked to indicate the type of training they needed. The finding shows that 7(18.4%) of respondents indicated that they needed training on cataloguing and classification, 10(26.3%) indicated that they needed training on data entry, 13(34.2%) indicated they needed training on ICT, 4(10.5%) and 7(18.4%) needed training on communication skills and library software skills respectively, while 3(7.8%) respondents indicated they needed training in circulation. A study on training needs for staff in academic libraries revealed that there was a need to train staff in that area to enable them respond effectively to user's queries on the use Internet facilities offered by the library due to the advancement in computer application in libraries. There was also the need for ensuring that training was conducted on a

continuous basis so as to keep abreast with changes in technology.

Continuing education in Library Management: Challenges and opportunities. training on a number of areas, such as management, communication, information technology, managing interpersonal relations at the workplace, networking and explanation, as well as analysis of information, entailing customisation of information products. Other skills needed related to subject expertise on specialised information provision as well as advanced reference services, the major result in the study for this section is that most of respondents needed training on Information Communication Technologies

4.4 Level of Access to staff development programmes

The second objective of this study was to establish the level of access to staff development programmes among library staff. The aim was to determine the extent to which they got access to staff development programmes, given its importance in improving staff performance. The following subsections present the findings.

4.4.1 Having Attended any Training Since Employed

Respondent when asked to indicate if they had attended any training since employed.

The findings shows that 34(89.5%) respondents indicated that they had attended training after they had got employed while 4(10.5%) indicated that they had never attended any training since getting employed. Majority of respondents, therefore, indicated that they had attended some training since employed. However, some respondents indicated that they had never attended any training.

4.4.2 Type of Training Programme Attended

The respondents were about the type of training programme that they had attended. The findings have also shown that staff had opportunities to pursue degree programmes. The researcher was told during interview with some librarians that over the years, "job requirements for various professions have been changing, due to technological developments as well as increasing unemployment. This required staff to upgrade their qualifications so that they could maintain their positions or qualify for employment. In most cases a degree was considered one of the options due to availability of training programmes in library science at some universities, such as Makerere University , Tumaini University, University of Dar es salaam, and Mzumbe university . (undergraduate degree) and the University of Dar es Salaam (Master's and PhD degrees and later undergraduate degree). The researcher was further told that to pursue such programmes, financial support was mainly from the employer, but where such an opportunity was lacking, some staff opted for self-initiatives through undertaking distance education programmes, specifically enrolling at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) that offered various degree and non-degree programmes that cover librarianship as well"

The researcher was also told that "some staff were more eager to upgrade their skills than others, some took opportunities to upgrade their skills whenever there was opportunity and looked for opportunity even when it seemed there was none". Nevertheless, there were some others who were not interested in upgrading their skills for fear of the possibility of failure which could result in them losing their current job. To summarize the above, results from the study revealed that despite several challenges faced by library staff but still some have managed to

attend two types of staff development programs which are : Degree level program and master's level program

4.5 Effectiveness of staff development programmes

With regard to assessing effectiveness of staff development programmes in academic libraries, the respondents were asked to indicate whether training programmes had a positive impact on their work efficiency. The findings shows that, 27 (71.1%) of the respondents indicated that training attended had a positive effect on their job performance while 7 (18.4%) respondents indicated the opposite. There were also 4 (10.5%) respondents who did not give any comment. The findings, therefore, show that majority of respondents had been benefiting from various training opportunities.

However, the findings show that some respondents, though few, were of the opinion that they did not benefit from training as far as improvement of their job performance was concerned. During informal discussion with some key respondents, it was revealed that training was not always based on assessment of training needs. That was the major reason that training beneficiaries gained knowledge on aspects that did not always relate to what they practiced in their day to day activities. Another reason was that in many cases training is provided by donors, who have priority on what should be taught, the teaching materials as well as the facilitators. Involvement of beneficiaries was limited and so after the training was over training beneficiaries realized that they had acquired skills which did not tally with their work demands or environment.

The respondents were further asked to give opinion, if the staff development programmes, practices and guidelines or policies employed were effective. The findings revealed that 7 (18.4%) of the respondents answered "Yes" while 31(81.6%) of the respondents answered "No". The findings, therefore, revealed that majority of respondents considered staff development practices and strategies in use to be ineffective. Informal discussion with respondents provided various explanations, the major one being that the training provided did not focus on training needs, which consequently resulted into acquisition of skills which not reflect the gap in relation to what staff were supposed to do well at the workplace.

4.6 Challenges Hindering Effectiveness of Staff development programs in Academic Libraries

The fourth objective sought to find out challenges hindering effectiveness of staff development practices academic libraries. The following subsections present the findings.

4.6.1 Challenges Impeding Effectiveness of staff development programmes

The respondents were first asked to indicate if there were any challenges that hindered effectiveness of staff development at the respective institutions. The findings revealed that 37 (97.4%) of the respondents indicated that there were issues with conducting staff development programmes while only one (2.6%) respondent indicated that there were no challenges.

Furthermore respondents highlighted major challenges that hindered effectiveness of staff development program

The findings show that 28(73.7%) respondents indicated the challenges as unavailability of funds to support staff development, 7 (18.4%) indicated lack of time to attend training, 3 (7.9%) indicated inadequacy of staff, while 2 (5.3%) respondents indicated mismatch between training and needs. focusing on professional staff development in academic libraries at

the University of Science and Technology (UST) Library revealed that,although staff development was beneficial in creating of a more ever-changing library staff, were the major,lack of funds, time, personal needs and inability to deal with rising expectations.

4.6.2 Measures to Improve Effectiveness of staff development programs in Academic Libraries

After identifying the challenges, the respondents were further asked to provide suggestions on strategies to adopt to address those challenges to improve staff development initiatives at the respective organizations.

Suggestions on Measures to improve effectiveness of staff development programmes

The findings shows that 24 (63.2%) respondents suggested increasing budgetary allocation to support staff development, 10 (26.3%) suggested employment of more staff, 9 (23.7%) suggested seeking support from donors while 4 (10.5%) recommended basing training on training needs assessment. Three (7.9) respondents gave no comment, majority of the respondents suggested increasing budgetary allocation to support staff development.

Other studies have recommended the same on increase budget, seeking support from donors and basing training on training needs assessment such as: focused on the challenges and opportunities of continuing education in libraries suggested that library employees should first have an inbound desire to acquire new knowledge and skills. In other words, the desire to gain new skills should be from within; staff should be self-motivated, also highlighted various factors influencing the selection of continuing education programmes, such as the programme's reputation, quality, outcome,

relevance of content, opportunities for networking and the presenter's credentials, stressing that the importance of the factors varied across different institutions, individual employees, economic conditions and job expectations.

Henderson (2006) focused on staff development among library staff and suggested that after each training workshop, there should be follow-up review sessions as well as mentoring. Training sessions should involve smaller groups, be scheduled more frequently and for a longer period of time and be accompanied with elaborated hand-outs for use as reference materials in the future.

Conducted a study in Canada and suggested that public libraries should partner with private organisations in a bid to obtain funding for training of library staff or the public. Partnerships would make it possible for public libraries to share their resources and services, benefiting their patrons, as notable in Australia.

5.0 Conclusion

The findings of the study have indicated that staff professional development programs are very crucial to the respondents in order to improve their performance. This was spurred in part by technological developments which have a positive effect on the provision of library services, King revealed that training on ICT for public library staff in the UK was beneficial. However, there were concerns about the training environment and contents as there was a demand for inclusion of ICT troubleshooting and problem solving rather than generic skills in the programs so as to match the type of queries normally encountered in libraries. However, the study revealed that staff professional development programmes in use were ineffective due to

various factors such as limited opportunities for continuing education and such opportunities being offered without consideration of training needs. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that opportunities for staff professional development programs are provided, and that any training provided should be based on training needs. To this effect, there is a need to ensure that funds for supporting staff professional development programmes are available, as well as having guidelines that effectively provide guidance on issues of staff professional development programmes so as to ensure effective use of resources in favour of staff professional development programmes and improvement of staff performance. A study by Osei (1996) carried out at the University of Science and Technology Library in Kumasi, Ghana and revealed that staff development programmes improved performance of library staff at the university. The programmes also improved effectiveness in work as well as interpersonal relations among staff.

There is also a need to address various other issues raised, such as unavailability of funds to support staff development, lack of time to attend training, inadequacy of staff, and failure of training provided to match training needs. To that effect, there is a need to ensure that staff development and staff development are given priority in planning by allocating enough funds for that purpose. There should be priority to staff recruitment so that service provision may not be adversely affected when some have to attend professional training. Similarly, there should be academic institutions offering master degree programmes, at least one in each major zone in Tanzania, to allow staff in remotely located regions to attend training. On a study of: Training and development for Librarians: Why bother? The author suggested on CPD policy formulation because establishing guidelines for staff

development issues will assist in decision making in relation to staff development and it would motivate staff in remote regions of the country to pursue various programmes instead of relying on the only University of Dar es salaam offering master's degree in Information studies located in Dar es salaam. There is also a need to. That would help in avoiding potential conflicts and, ensuring effective utilization of resources. Lastly, there is a need for librarians to find ways of generation or raising funds instead of depending on the government or donors. Among the options for consideration are writing of funding proposals to would be donors, starting and well managing various projects and ensuring effective budgeting.

References:

1. Appleton. (2018).Training and development for Librarians: Why bother? University of London. United Kingdom.

2. Arif, M. & Mahmood, K. (2012). The Changing Role of Librarians in the Digital World: Adoption of Web 2.0 Technologies in Pakistani Libraries. *The Electronic Library,* 30**,** 469-479.

3. Aziagba, P. C. (2009). Staff development as motivation for paraprofessionals: A case study in Southern Nigeria. Chinese Librarianship: an International Electronic Journal, 27. URL: http://www.iclc.us/cliej/cl27aziagba.pdf,

4. Castelyn, M. (1999).Training and developing staff: The training functions in libraries. Purdue University.Indiana.URl:www.unesco

.Org/webworld/ramp/html/r8722e/r8 722Eoy.htm

5. Castelyn, M. (2007) Training *and Developing Staff: The training functions in libraries.* UNESCO: New York. pp 1-5.

6. Corcoran, G. (2014) "Keeping ahead of the curve: Academic librarians and continuing professional development in Ireland", Library Management, Vol. 35 Iss: 3, pp.175 - 198http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/LM-06-2013-004*)*

7. Hall, M. (1997). Training and Teamwork in British University Libraries. British Library Research and Innovation Report. British Library publishing. Division. British: www.amazon.com.>Training-Team,

8. Joint, N. (2003). Digital directions: Staff development and training in the digital library environment. *Library Review. 52*, 417-421. http://librarystaffdevelopment.blogsp ot.com/.

9. King, S. (2006) "Effectiveness of ICT training for public library staff in the UK: staff views", The Electronic Library, Vol. 24 Iss: 2, pp.265 - http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/026404706 10649281http://librarystaffdevelopm ent.blogspot.com/

10. Lai, H. (2011). Information Literacy Training in Public Libraries: A Case from Canada. Educational Technology & Society

11. Mattenson.L. (2013).Continuing education in Library Management:

Challenges and opportunities. School of Library and Information Science, Kent State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA.

12. Osei,H. (1996). Professional staff development in academic libraries: The University of Science and Technology Library, Kumasi. *Librarian Career Development. 4,* 31-36.http://librarystaffdevelopment.blo gspot.com/.

13. Tucker, J.C. (2003). Developing a chat reference training program. *Internet Reference Services Quarterly. 8,* 11-25. http://librarystaffdevelopment.blogsp ot.com/

14. Van Wert, L. (2004) .Competencies and staff development in special libraries.Coloradolibraries,30(2),10-14.Url:Librarystaffdevelopment.blog spot.com>