THE TRAINING OF NON-PROFESSIONAL STAFF IN
NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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The study, carried out in 1985 through a questionnaire, examines the extent of training of non-professional staff in thirteen Nigerian federal university libraries. Of the thirteen universities, only four can be said to operate meaningful training programmes. They are Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Universities of Lagos, Maiduguri and Sokoto. The first three universities possess prospectuses and well-defined aims and objectives within the framework of the total university junior staff development arrangements. The quality of library services rendered by the library junior workers in most Nigerian universities and also the future of these library staff who are unable to progress academically on their own, have been questioned.

INTRODUCTION

Of the three components that comprise all libraries i.e., physical facilities, a collection of library resources and personnel, personnel seems to me to be as equally important in bringing a library to life and in making it a dynamic and vital force to the community it serves as the other components. The personnel are expected to be dedicated to the philosophy of service. They are expected to be guided by the belief that their services will improve the quality of life and make the beneficiaries active participating members of the society. Library staff operate under this basic principle. However, the non-professional staff, in view of the level of education and method of recruitment, require some training to make them perform their duties reasonably well.

Most of the professional staff can be argued to have little time for training staff in the variety of skills needed in a library. "Supervisors teach the routines needed in a particular area and are then reluctant to rotate their staff to given them wider experience."[1] This perhaps, limits the usefulness and the awareness of the non-professional staff.

Studying privately for the West African School Certificate or the General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations can be very difficult for some staff. Yet, they need additional qualifications for promotion purposes.

This group of library workers are expected to relate more to the readers in many cases and are expected to perform to the optimum. If they have to perform very well, they should be able to know why they should perform their jobs and perform them well. In fact, oftentimes, the readers refer to them as 'librarians.' It is from them the readers and the general public largely conceive what the image of a librarian is in this country and in most parts of the world.

The Kaduna polytechnic, Kaduna, provides a course for Senior Library Assistants. The course is designated Assistant Library Officers Course. Although the course has its problems for academic libraries, it certainly has its academic importance in filling the gap where internal training programmes do not exist.

The programme might not take into consideration the differences in practice among libraries of various types and locations. For instance, it is required that to plan a programme, there must be a familiarity with the routines used in all libraries sending staff to the course. It would, therefore, be unrealistic to standardize the procedures used in all these libraries. This is why the Kaduna course cannot be said to satisfy all libraries.
On the other hand, internal training programme ensures that no staff jumps the queue to rush himself through a course to come back to boss his seniors who are not as 'smart' or as 'privileged' as himself. This happens mainly in establishments where administrative procedures are not very well stream-lined.

DEVELOPMENT OF TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR NON-PROFESSIONALS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

There have been some early attempts to train non-professional staff. John Harris, in order to improve the skills of his junior Nigerian staff, organised the first formal in-service training course at the Ibadan University College Library in August 1950. This programme was entitled, "Training course for Native Authority Librarians, and was attended by thirty Native Authority Library Attendants, and fifteen Attendants and Assistants from the University College Library."[2] It was the earliest attempt at training non-professional staff in Nigeria in general, and in a university library in particular. The training helped in the understanding of the concept of the library and it helped participants in upgrading library services in their various locations.

The Unesco Seminar held in the University of Ibadan in 1953 culminated in the inauguration of the West African Library Association (WALA) in 1954 with John Harris as the President. Thus, the training of non-professional staff on an in-service basis was stopped at the University of Ibadan by John Harris because he had to pay greater attention to professional training.

In the mid 1960s, Ronald Cave of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, was said to have prepared some library staff for the Library Association examinations. However, the impact of the training in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, lasted till 1975/76 Session when the last batch of junior serving staff sat for the Library Association examinations on their own.

It was during this period i.e. 1975/76 Session, the concept of an internal training programme to give another means of evaluation for promotion and to encourage staff to learn about the total operations of the library, was developed in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Miss Lorna Reevely, a member of the Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO), was appointed a Training Officer. It was at this time that the University of Lagos thought of a training programme as part of the continuing education courses in the University.

METHODOLOGY

So far, there are three generations of federal universities in Nigeria. The first (6 Universities) were those established before 1970 are: the Universities of Benin, Ibadan, Ife, Lagos, Nigeria and the Ahmadu Bello University. The second (seven Universities) established in 1975 are Bayero University, Universities of Calabar, Ilorin, Jos, Maiduguri, Port Harcourt and Sokoto. The third generation, (seven Universities) are: Federal Universities of Technology - Akure, Minna, Owerri and Abeokuta, Bauchi, Makurdi and Yola, last four have been reduced and merged with adjacent federal universities. (At the time of going to the press arrangements were being made to demerge or to return them to their original autonomous status).

There are seven Universities established by some state governments. These are Anambra State University of Technology, Enugu, Bendel State University, Ekpoma; Cross River State University, Uyo; Imo State University of Technology, Okigwe; Lagos State University, Lagos; Ogun State University, Ago-Iwoye; and Rivers State University of Technology, Port-Harcourt. All the seven universities were established after 1975. In fact, one could regard these as the fourth generation of Universities in Nigeria.

The 13 Federal Universities from first and second generation were studied for the purpose of this study. These Universities were the ones that have had more than ten years to settle down and to develop an internal training programme for non-professional staff.

The study was carried out by administering questionnaires to the subject (13 Federal Universities) through post.

The questionnaires sought to examine the following major characteristics:

a. Age of the training programme - since when was the programme established?

b. The spread of the training i.e. does the programme provide for the three levels of staff that require it, eg. Library Attendants, Library Assistants, and for the Library Assistants?
c. Duration of the course and the number of contact hours etc.

d. The syllab.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study came up with the following findings:

a) Of the 13 University Libraries assessed, the University of Benin and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, did not respond. The remaining 11 have training programmes of one sort or another except the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ille-Ife), which has not got an instructional programme at all (Table 1).

b) The older Universities of Ibadan and Lagos, and the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, established training programmes for their non-professional staff before 1979. Of the seven new universities that responded, only the Universities of Sokoto and Port Harcourt established their programmes before 1980, i.e., five years after the establishment of the institutions.

The older the University, the more confident it becomes in approaching problems like training of junior staff. A new university would require more time to settle down. It is not surprising therefore that Ibadan (Est. 1948), Zaria (Est. 1962) and Lagos (Est. 1962) had training programme functioning before 1979. University of Ibadan however, has not gone beyond a refresher course type of programme which lasts for six weeks only and there is no elaborate prospectus.

The major problem area in university establishment is in the junior cadre. Some staff are employed with the First School Leaving Certificate and others with Secondary School Certificate. The first category are employed as Library Attendants II on USS 1 (N1560-N1776) and they, in most cases, cannot be advanced beyond Library Attendant I on USS 2 (N1620-N1908) without ‘additional qualifications.’ There has not been any reason for this posture other than that the jobs they perform are not skilled. It is this problem that necessitated the arrangement for training programmes especially when it has become difficult to promote long-serving and efficient staff.

The Secondary School Leavers who could not pass their examinations are also employed as Library Attendant I on USS 2 (N1620-N1908). Most of them are certainly better than the First School Leaving Certificate candidates. But they are also not usually considered for promotion until they have shown evidence of additional qualifications.

Even when Secondary School candidates are employed, some of them require some urging to make progress. It is as a result of all these handicaps that training programmes became necessary.

c) Only two of the respondents, i.e., Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and University of Maiduguri indicated that their programmes were organized for the Library Attendants, Assistants and the Senior Library Assistants. No respondent indicated that there was a programme for Assistant Library Officers. This is understandable because at this level, candidates are expected to be aspiring for training in the library school at the diploma level.

Three Universities, Ibadan, Sokoto and Calabar have training programmes for Library Attendants and Assistants. Three universities also have training programmes for Library Assistants only. The institutions are the Universities of Jos and Lagos and Bayero University. The University of Port-Harcourt has a programme for Library Attendants only. The University of Ilorin organises a programme grouping all categories of non-professional staff. The Ilorin, Ibadan, Jos and Port-Harcourt courses appear more like a 'refresher course' than a training programme, since they last for not more than six weeks and can easily be accommodated in the long break.

d) Out of the 11 respondents, only three - Universities of Maiduguri and Sokoto and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, have their courses for a period of one year. Lagos, Bayero and Calabar have their courses lasting up to six months, although Calabar has since withdrawn the course because of lack of funds. Others, four of them, have their courses lasting from two to six weeks.

e) Most of the courses have four to five contact hours per week and some teaching is done after working hours. In this case, teachers are remunerated for work done outside working hours.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No.</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Inception of Programme</th>
<th>Spread of Programme to junior library Positions</th>
<th>Duration of Programme</th>
<th>Is Prospectus for Programme available?</th>
<th>No. of Contact Hours per week</th>
<th>Total No. of Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A.B.U., Zaria</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Lib. Attendant/ Lib. Assistant/ Senior Lib. Asst.</td>
<td>one year</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>four hours</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Bayero University Kano</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Library Assistant</td>
<td>½ year</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Calabar</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Lib. Attendant/ Lib. Assistant</td>
<td>½ year</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>four hours</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Ibadan</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Lib. Attendant/ Lib. Assistant</td>
<td>six week</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ife</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Ilorin</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Grouped programme for Lib. Attd. &amp; Assistants</td>
<td>four weeks</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>five hours</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Jos</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Lib. Assistant</td>
<td>two weeks</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Lib. Assistant</td>
<td>½ year</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>five hours</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Port Harcourt</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Lib. Attendant</td>
<td>two weeks</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Sokoto</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Lib. Attendant/ Lib. Assistant</td>
<td>one to two years</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>43</td>
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</table>
although the library has to fight its way through to get their teachers paid. Ahmadu Bello University and University of Maiduguri offered their programmes without remunerations in the first few years of the programmes.

f) Five universities have prospectuses for their courses. Bayero claimed that she has but did not attach a copy to the questionnaire. Zaria and Maiduguri have full-time training officers. However, they have some other library assignments too. Lagos runs its courses as part of the Continuing Education Centre programme, using librarians as teachers.

g) Very few libraries cater for training at different levels of:

- Library Attendant
- Library Assistant
- Senior Library Assistant

The finding in the spread of programme to these levels is not encouraging. A possible explanation is that once a candidate has been promoted or appointed to the rank of Library Assistant, he can be advanced to Assistant Library Officers position in most libraries. The respondents’ coverage of Library Attendant’s training are more, i.e. 8.

h) The more contact hours there are in a programme the more workload a candidate is expected to carry. Therefore, courses that are taught in two weeks with four contact hours per week have less workload than courses that would last for fifty-two weeks with the same number of contact hours per week. The Universities in Zaria, Maiduguri and Sokoto are, therefore, more likely to be better qualitatively. They have courses lasting up to one year and more. The course outline in the University of Lagos is very impressive, so also are the quality of staff who teach on the programme.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRAMME IN LAGOS, MAIDUGURI AND ZARIA

Since the Universities of Lagos and Maiduguri and the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, have well structured programmes, it is pertinent to take a closer look at them and analyse them critically.

The University of Lagos has outlined its courses into 23 headings. When grouped, they fall into six major categories of Administration, Readers’ Services, Collection Development, Cataloguing, Special Collection and Serials. Computer applications in libraries has been introduced into the programme at the University of Lagos. This is done with a view to familiarizing participants with modern technological development and its applicability to library operations.

In the early days of the programme at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, the six categories of library work as contained in that of Lagos were emphasized. The media was sadly not mentioned at all. This was probably because there were no media facilities then.

The current programme at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria is even better and the University of Maiduguri seems to imitate.[3,4] Heartily enough, the non-book materials have been treated at every appropriate stage of the courses, but for reasons the writer is unable to explain, the Serials have been grossly omitted. Junior staff also work in the Serials Division or Section as they do in other parts of the library. It is unimaginable that both Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and the University of Maiduguri would have dropped this course in the period of their enthusiastic re-development of their programmes.

However, the teaching of functional English and Human Relations as a two-hour-course per week throughout the duration of the programme at Ahmadu Bello University and University of Maiduguri is a welcome innovation yet this is absent in the Lagos Programme. What should be done, therefore, is for the Universities concerned to have a second look at their programmes to inject what is possibly useful to them. Perhaps, the Lagos programme may not need the English language course after all, because their course is meant for Library Assistants and it is assumed that they would not hire Library Assistant without requisite number of passes including English language at the General Certificate of Education (GCE) or West African School Certificate (WASC).

If the University of Lagos decides to expend their programme to the level of Assistant Library Officers like Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and the University of Maiduguri, then English Language and Human Relations should be taught.

Another fact is that the Zaria and Maiduguri programmes gloss over Special Collections
which can easily be noted in that of Lagos because of the former’s broad groupings from which detail course schemes were to be worked out. The broad courses of:

Library Organisation,
Cataloguing and Classification, and
Reference Service

with a rider that “functional English and Human Relations course” (though this was well spelt out) are not enough. There is, therefore, a need for constant review of programmes.

THE JOURNEY SO FAR

The Zaria programme is easy to evaluate, both from the number of staff so far trained, and the quality of their output. The advantage of the Ahmadu Bello University programme was that it had a full-time staff for two years to plan and execute the programme using senior library staff as teachers. The full-time staff was determined to see that the programme succeeded. When she left, two Heads of Divisions coordinated the programme consecutively until a full-time Training Officer was appointed. The presence of a full-time staff gave impetus to the programme and it accounted for its success.

The students appreciated that they were not only learning something, but that they had a chance in life once more. They therefore, took up the challenge and were determined to succeed. The quality of the products in Zaria, in the opinion of the writer, is very impressive.

The University of Maiduguri programme has now been given the required backing from the authority. There is a full-time Training Officer in the Education and Information Division. It is expected that the quality of the products will now improve. The Lagos and Sokoto Universities seemed to make some strides. The rest of the universities covered by this study need to expand the scope of their training in terms of developing prospectuses, spreading the courses, extending the duration of programmes as well as the number of contact hours.

As far as the writer knows, it is the policy of most Nigerian universities not to sponsor non-professional staff for a degree programme. But there is provision for sponsorship for deserving staff for a diploma course. This arrangement allows for a gradual progression of a non-professional staff to be trained for a sub-professional position and thereafter, such a staff can be sponsored for a degree programme.

Perhaps, this arrangement does not adequately cater for “flyers” who could have conveniently been trained for a degree programme. But judging from the criteria for obtaining sponsorship, which include the following:

a) Candidates must have served for a required number of years usually not less than two years;

b) Candidates’ appointments should have been confirmed (and this takes place after two years or more),

c) Candidates should have gained admission into institutions recognized by the University concerned.

It is difficult for ‘flyers’ to wait to fulfil all the criteria before going for a training.

CONCLUSION

The need for training of non-professional staff has been identified and a description of what constitutes training programmes in some university libraries has been made. It is envisaged that other university libraries not covered by this study (there are thirteen of them) would have something to borrow from the training programmes described in this paper in developing their own programmes.

The point that should be stressed is that developing an internal training programme is probably the quickest means of developing the essential skills and ensuring the promotion of non-professional and less privileged junior staff. It is also a means of developing an attitude towards academic or some basic education to be build upon later.

In some Nigerian university libraries where there are no internal training programmes, the library authorities find it difficult to determine what to do with their staff in terms of promotion. This problem is still a subject of discussion in the Committee of University Librarians. The implications of this study are, therefore:

a) Nigerian university libraries understand the need for training their non-professional staff, yet many of them have not taken the training of this category of staff very seriously.
TRAINING LIBRARY STAFF IN NIGERIA

b) The writer feels strongly that there is need for the harmonisation of the programmes, recognising that there will be local modification in their applications.

c) The writer, therefore, calls on the Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (CULNU) to set up a Committee on the harmonisation of training programmes in university libraries as a matter of urgency.

REFERENCES


3. Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria: Kashim Ibrahim Library Junior Staff Training Programme: Prospectus, 1982 (Mimeographed).

TRAINING OF NON-PROFESSIONAL STAFF IN THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

QUESTIONNAIRE

(Non-professional staff refers to Library Attendants/Library Assistants/Senior Library Assistants and Assistant Library Officers.)

(Training programme refers to a well developed instructional programme for non-professionals.)

Please tick or cancel appropriate columns in this questionnaire.

1. Has your library a training programme? Yes/No.

2. For how long does the programme last: 6 months, 1 year, 1½ years or 2 years?

3. a) Do you have an instructional prospectus? Yes/No. 

   b) If 'Yes' please enclosed a copy.

4. At what level do you operate the courses:

   Library Attendants ( )
   Library Assistants ( )
   Senior Library Assistants ( )
   Assistant Library Officers ( )

5. Please indicate the cadre of staff that attend each course,
   e.g., Library Assistants’ course attended by Library Attendants.

   Library Attendants’ course
   Library Assistants’ course
   Senior Library Assistants’ course
   Assistant Library Officers’ course

6. When did the training programme start?

7. Number of graduants at each level in the past five years and percentage of passes:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library Attendants’ course</td>
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<td>Library Assistants’ course</td>
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<td>Sr. Lib. Assistants’ course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asst. Lib. Officers’ course</td>
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</table>
8. a) Is there a full-time Training Officer? Yes/No.
b) If ‘Yes’ what is his/her position?
c) If ‘No’ who takes charge of the programme?

9. a) How many teachers teach in the programme?
b) Are the teachers paid when they teach outside working hours? Yes/No.

10. Please, indicate in brief what the objectives of the programme are:
   a) 
   b) 
   c) 
   d) 
   e) 

11. a) Have non-professional staff been sponsored for a degree programme by the library? Yes/No.
b) If ‘Yes’ how many have been sponsored in the last five (5) years?
c) If ‘No’ why?

12. a) Have non-professional staff been sponsored for the Diploma programme? Yes/No.
b) If ‘Yes’ how many?
c) If ‘No’ why?

Thank you for finding time to fill the questionnaire.