Impact And Challenges Of Commonwealth Scholarship, Mortenson Center For International Library Program, Galilee International Management Institute And Carnegie Continuing Professional Development Programmes On Beneficiaries: The Nigerian Participants' Experience

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Abstract:

Formal or informal skills acquisition programmes play a critical role in professional development. Recently a number of international funding agencies have taken the centre stage in funding and creating professional development opportunities. Based on the experience from the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC), the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs, the Galilee International Management Institute and various Carnegie programmes a study was designed to highlight the structure/format and the objectives of the programmes with a view to determining the benefits and the impact of these programmes on the participants and their institutions. A questionnaire was administered to participants of the named programmes. The findings were that the CPD programmes were relevant and adequate; as the participants had improved their knowledge, skills and attitude, they were able to share cultural values, and networked and collaborated among themselves and host countries. The knowledge gained from the programmes has been ploughed back into their professional work which has resulted in improved service delivery at work, commitment, positive attitudes and collaboration. The study therefore recommends that all librarians should endeavour to

attend some of these training events since they are life-changing, and professional associations should endeavour to provide platforms for implementation of the acquired competencies, and the opportunity for more professionals to attend such programmes.

Introduction

Skills acquisition programmes are vital for professional development especially in this age of information overload, and innovations as well as changes in professions and service delivery. This makes it necessary for the professionals in institutions of higher education to acquire skills and knowledge in order to blend the traditional library practices learnt in the library schools. A curriculum designed for library professional training in developing countries is usually centred on preparing them with the knowledge and skills necessary for performing the traditional roles of the library (Ukachi and Onuoha, 2013). The ability of librarians to innovate and render 21st century library services depends on the extent to which they are exposed to Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Jones and Robinson, in Gosine-Boodoo and McNish (2009), described Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as the maintenance and enhancement of the knowledge, expertise and competence of professionals throughout their careers according to a plan formulated with regard to the needs of the professional, employer, the professions and society. In affirmation, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (ACRL, 2000) noted that CPD is essential for academic librarian to keep current with skills, knowledge and competencies in rapidly changing time. Furthermore, Murphy, Cross and McGuire (2006) observed that governments of developed countries, like individuals and employers, were recognizing that continually educating and developing professionals provides economies with employable, innovative and productive knowledge workers, which results in national prosperity. It seems that the continuous pursuit of value-laden knowledge can lead to sustained benefits for participants, employers and the wider community (Gosine-Boodoo and McNish 2009)

Some professional associations have initiated competency development programmes needed to keep their members abreast of current trends and innovations in the profession. Specialised groups are also identified for helping interest groups develop along their own lines of interest. This is quite prevalent in the Nigerian Library Association where specialized groups such as the sections for information technology, cataloguing and classification, academic libraries and school libraries were formed to organize programmes like workshops needed to train professionals. These training programmes are however fraught with challenges.

International and funding agencies have also embarked on various supportive activities geared towards professional development opportunities for mid-career professionals in developing countries. Part of the focus of such activities includes reducing inequality, promoting sustainable development, strengthening capacity building, improving skills for better service delivery and encouraging socio-cultural development. Some of the bodies that are involved in development programmes for library professional development in Nigeria include the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC), the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs, the Galilee International Management Institute and the Carnegie Continuing Professional Development programme.

The Commonwealth Professional Fellowship started in 2002 and is the newest of the seven programmes offered by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC) (2014). Its aim is to provide mid-career professionals in different sectors with the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills and in turn for them to provide catalytic effects in the work place (Commonwealth Scholarship Commission 2014). The programme focuses on sectors like agriculture/ fisheries/forestry, economic growth, education, engineering/science/technology, the environment, governance, and public health. Since its inception librarians have participated in the fellowship programme (http://cscuk.dfid.gov.uk/apply/professional-fellowships/)

The Mortenson Center for International Library Programs started in 1989. It has had 45 participants from Nigeria. The objectives of the Mortenson Center Program are:
to offer a unique, excellent, non-degree professional development program for librarians around the world; to meet the demand of foundations, governments and library communities for high-quality training designed for a region or country; to represent the university library and the University of Illinois at international conferences and governmental meetings about library; to engage colleagues from the university library and from libraries in the United States in well designed and implemented international activities. (The Mortenson Center for International Library Programs http://www.library.illinois.edu/mortenson/)

The Galilee International Management Institute is aimed at
bridging the gap between transitional developed nations through education and capacity building programmes. In this era of globalization, the power of education and the exchange of ideas are the keys to social and economic collaboration among people. The Institute strives to promote cooperation on both global and regional levels. (The Galilee International Management Institute http://www.galilcol.ac.il/)
Since the inception of this programme Nigerians have being participating.

The Carnegie Professional Development Programme in Africa is hosted by the Department of Information Science, University of Pretoria, South Africa, and sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. It offers four-week residential Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes for qualified librarians from Sub-Saharan Africa, for the period 2014 – 2016. The aims of the programme are to empower the next generation of library and information professionals within Sub-Saharan African countries with hands-on skills to apply current and emerging information and communication technologies (ICTs); build capacity amongst library and information services (LIS) professionals to support and enable researches. Since its inception in 2014, they have hosted two groups and twelve Nigerians have participated in the programme. (School of Information Technology, University of Pretoria http://wiki.lib.sun.ac.za/images/3/34/Carnegie-cpd.pdf)

Despite these efforts to ensure competitive career development and library service delivery through international programmes in developing countries like Nigeria, no study has been carried out to determine the impact on the individual participants and their institutions nor the challenges before, during and after the training interventions. It is imperative to examine what these programmes have achieved for Nigerian participants and their institutions. This paper therefore reports on an empirical investigation into the outlined issues, on which no work has yet been done.

Objectives of the Study
The study was guided by four objectives, namely to:
1. Determine the objectives of , relevance to, and adequacy of the programmes for the needs of the participants ;

2. Identify the benefits of the professional development programmes for the participants;

3. Determine the impact of the programmes on the participants and benefiting institutions

4. Determine the challenges faced by participants before and during the training as well as in the course of implementing acquired competencies; and

5. Make recommendations based on the experience of the participants.

Literature Review

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is of great importance to the development of any individual, profession or organization. It contributes to the development of staff and improvement of teaching, learning and research. Professional development can be described as a process by which professionals develop themselves to update and widen their knowledge, skills, develop their personal and professional qualities to maintain competence required to perform their professional practice. CPD is a multi-faceted, life-long experience, which can take place inside and outside the workplace and which often moves beyond the professional and into the realm of a teacher's personal life (Hayes 2014). Prince and Barrett (2014) have suggested that CPD is an autonomous activity, undertaken by the individual, but the most effective CPD happens through collaboration and sharing of learning experience. There must be collaboration and sharing which results in better service delivery as Day has pointed out: "Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom" (Day 1990: 10).

Du Boulay (1999) has emphasised that through CPD we can achieve personal and professional growth, develop, acquire, and refine the skills needed for new roles and responsibilities. Continuing professional development is often used synonymously with professional development, continuing professional education, life-long learning and knowledge translation. According to Trewet and Fjortoft CPD is defined as a "self-directed, ongoing, systematic, and outcomes focused approach to learning and professional development" (Trewet and Fjortoft 2013: 217). Philips, Piza and Ingham have defined CPD as "a process of planned activities based on performance review and setting of explicit targets for good clinical practice with the aim of improving actual quality of patient care. It is an approach to improve skills and professional knowledge" (Philips, Piza and Ingham 2011: 387*).* Goodall, Day, Lindsay et al. agree that that CPD contributes to professional and personal development. They have further defined it as "all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which constitute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom" (Goodall, Day, Lindsay Muijs and Harris, 2005 :2*).*

Experience and observations have shown that while profound changes and innovations in current library services have taken place, many practicing librarians are not sufficiently skilled to effectively adjust to the present work environment. In effect, CPD becomes not only necessary but a condition for career development and best practices in service delivery. It seems that continuous pursuit of value-laden knowledge can lead to sustained benefits for participants, employers and the wider community (Gosine-Boodoo and McNish 2009: 207). The authors further enumerate reasons for which professionals are motivated to embark on development programmes: to learn new skills required as a result of technological changes; for personal development; for updating qualifications and for career advancement. Reskilling of LIS professionals is important because they do not have sufficient skills to operate effectively in a digital era; there are changes in user needs, environmental changes and wider horizons of

employment opportunity (Anunobi and Ukwoma 2009: 249). In other words, continuing professional development is also part of lifelong learning; a means of gaining career security and personal development, and of assuring the public that individual professionals are up-to-date; it is a means by which professional associations can verify competence; and it is a way of providing employers with a competent and adaptable workforce (Friedman and Philips 2010: 365). It is for reasons based on these factors and the inherent benefits that accrue from such programmes that many professionals embark on CPD especially when a programme is organized by international organizations that have the facilities and skilled personnel.

It is expected that every CPD programme will have benefits which will be implemented as well as development programmes that should lead to increase in knowledge and skills. The Institute of Hospitality (2011) identified the benefits of CPD as: enhancing career development; increasing confidence and competency in professional abilities; enhancing motivation and job satisfaction; improving the profile of the participants and institutions; knowledge and skills development; more committed and dedicated participants to their profession; and talent recognition.

It is therefore necessary for staff to participate in CPD programmes to enable them remain competent, knowledgeable, relevant and productive in their chosen profession. Other benefits of CPD programmes include; links with the host country, increase in collaboration and networking. The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSP) (2014:10) identified from their survey that many of the participants have secured work, social and academic contact in United Kingdom, published some articles, and secured additional funding for research/projects and initiatives. The benefits of CPD are wide and varied and sometimes unexpected; it increases confidence and self-esteem of participants (Davies and Preston 2002). There are other social and economic benefits derived from CPD programmes and the benefits therefore justify the efforts of donor agencies and international organizations to support developing countries, especially information service providers, to participate in CPD programmes. Such a move is an indirect approach to supporting sustainable development towards the achievement of millennium development goals.

Though participation is a step towards reaping the benefits of CPD programmes, the influence /effect or impact the programme has on individual participants as well as the institutions benefiting from the programme has a far reaching consequence. The impact of any CPD can be measured based on how the programme has affected and influenced the participants' personal and professional life as well as the employer institution.

To measure impact, evaluation studies are carried out (Davies and Preston 2002: 244). Responses from the survey on the evaluation of the Commonwealth Fellowship Programme by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC) (2014) from 2008-2011 indicated that professional fellowships provided individuals with chances to: enhance their work skills and knowledge they would have not otherwise had gained; further academic and professional qualifications; contribute to their career advancement; contribute to institutional capacity building. Day, Stackhouse and Geddes (2009:1-28) affirmed that the scholarships programme increased analytical and technical skills of participants; that participants learned techniques for managing people and projects; accessed equipment and expertise not available in their home country; advanced their careers; and maintained links with contacts or institutions in the UK. The programme also contributes to the participants' socioeconomic development, and reveals

the culture of the host country. In addition, Burchell, Dyson and Rees (2002: 219) stated that the impact of a programme could be seen from the pattern in which learning and development relates to changes within the classroom or school. The impact of CPD includes greater confidence, collaborative working, greater commitment to changing practice and enhanced knowledge (Cordingley, Bell, Rundell and Evans, 2003:1-119). Other impacts of the CPD programme are that it makes the instructors/staff more effective and develops staff confidence to try new things.

Despite efforts by LIS professionals to update themselves with relevant knowledge and skills, they are faced with many challenges. Anunobi and Ukwoma (2009: 254) identified poor infrastructure, funding, lack of application of the acquired skills and sporadic changes in LIS skills, as factors affects professional development programmes. Other challenges affecting utilization of acquired skills, as discovered by Ukachi and Onuoha (2013: 270) are: unstable Internet access because of low bandwidth; lack of computing facilities to put skills into practice in the library; irregular power supply; and isolation from the operational areas where these skills could be put to use. Mathers, Mitchell and Hunn (2012: 1-62) identified the following barriers; time/workload; and funding issues (opportunity cost in time out and / or financial cost of courses and protected time in consultant contracts.)

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research method. The population consists of Nigerian participants who have attended some international development programmes. A questionnaire was designed and sent through email to identified participants of the four programmes. A total of 18 participants responded representing three from the Commonwealth programmes, six from the Galilee International Management Institute (GIMI), three from Mortenson and six from the Carnegie professional development programmes. The latter was followed up with telephone discussions. There are eleven items covering the objectives, relevance, adequacy and benefits of the attended programmes, as well as the personal and institutional impact and the challenges of the programmes. Data from the questionnaire and interview discussions were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings
The discussion of the findings was organized according to the specific objectives of the study.

**Objectives, Relevance and Adequacy of the Programmes**
Responses from participants in these CPD programmes showed that their objectives were educational benefits; learning skills important to library development; developing leadership skills; and collaboration, networking, and interaction with professionals from the host country. The last is very necessary to create a synergy among the participants, institutions and country at large. The objectives also include exposure to the diverse cultures of the participants and those of the host country through organised visits to cultural sites of the host country, libraries and archives.

Participants stated that the programmes were organized to enhance their technological development-through development of skills and competencies in modern library technologies for effective service delivery; working in a real time environment using different types of library technology; management of the university library for online education (e.g. Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs),) which is where much emphasis is being laid globally, while the profession has moved towards e-learning platforms. The programmes are also a forum for socio-economic development of the participants.

The CPD programmes have a mix of participants including librarians, IT professionals, lecturers, administrators, an agriculturist and a journalist. This implies that the need for CPD cut across all professional groups.

On the relevance of the programme, 83 per cent of the respondents indicated that the CPD programme they attended was very relevant; only 17 per cent of those who attended the GIMI stated that it was very irrelevant, and the explanation was that this was due to the focus of the content on online education, for which facilities for deployment are not yet available in Nigeria. This is contrary to the other three programmes with their emphasis on competency and skills development for effective service delivery.

*Figure 1. Percentage Response on relevance of the CPD programme*
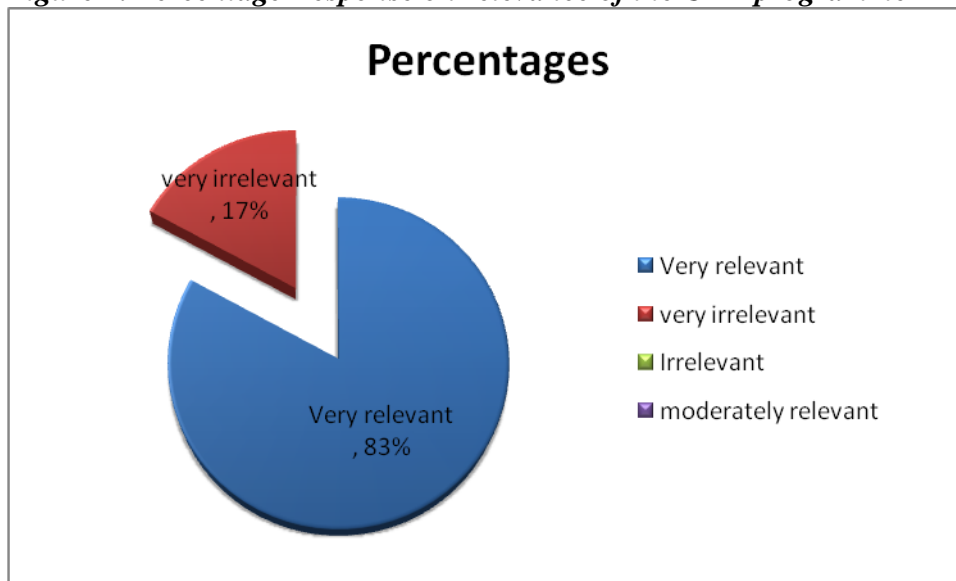
Regarding the adequacy of the programmes in meeting the needs of the participants and the benefiting institutions, 78 per cent of the respondents indicated that the programmes were very adequate and 22 per cent responded that they were moderately adequate (Figure 2).

Fig. 2: Percentage Response on Adequacy of the CPD programmes

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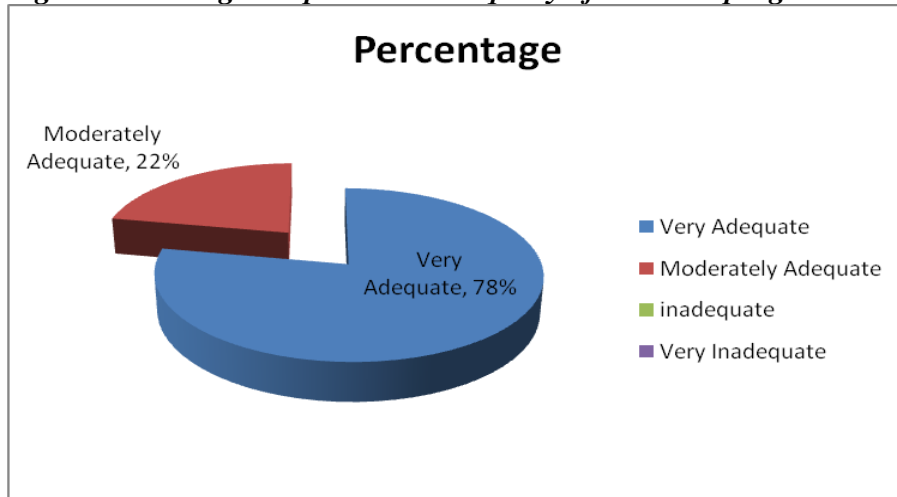
Fig. 3: Adequacy of each of the CPD programmes
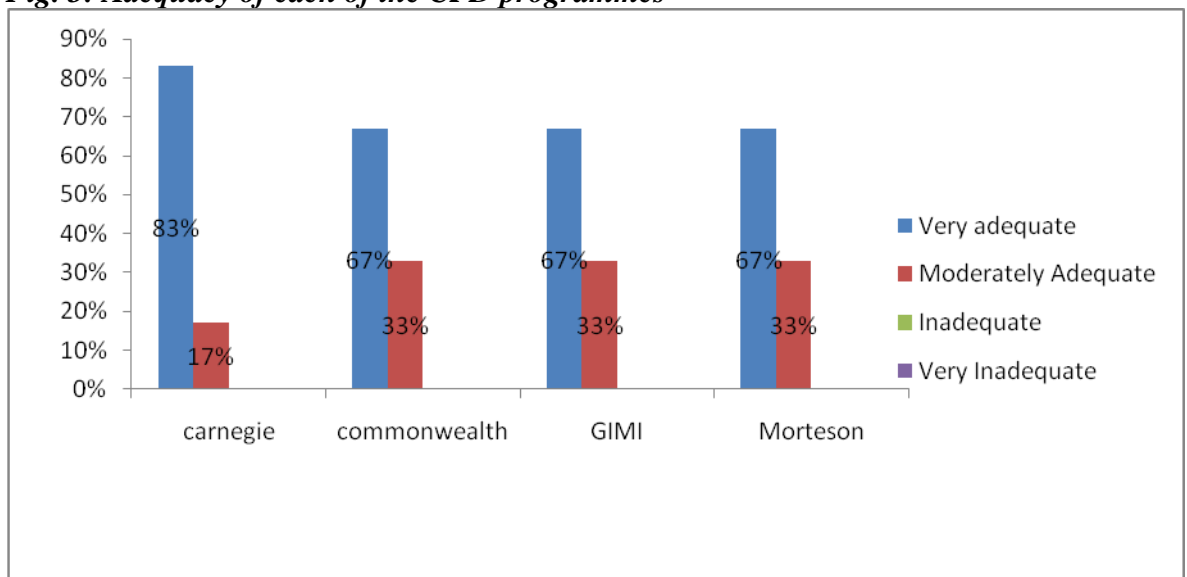
On the adequacy of each of the programmes as indicated by the participants in these programmes, 83 per cent of the participants of the Carnegie programme stated that it was very adequate and 67 per cent of participants of the Commonwealth Programme, 67 per cent of GIMI and 67 per cent of participants in the Mortenson program, indicated that it was very adequate, as shown in fig 3.

Impact of the professional development programmes on the participants and host institutions

The participants were of the opinion that the programmes had benefitted them as well as their employers. The programmes provided participants with understanding and appreciation of the reasons for professional advancement and success (reflected in library operations and services delivery based on diligence and commitment that professionals inject into their work). The programmes exposed participants to the socio-cultural platform of the country visited and to fellow participants, and this gave rise to new perceptions and attitudinal changes; the programmes also gave participants the opportunity to visit international organizations associated with the library profession, such as the American Library Association (ALA) and OCLC.

Other benefits of the programmes include expansion of professional networks and collaboration; advancement of the participants' competencies in the area of leadership; adoption of ICT for library operations and services such as digital literacy, use of RFID, e-resources management, the workings of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), use of social network in library services, as well as the awakened zeal to pursue librarianship as a career. According to a participant "It helped me to build network bridges hence increasing my network capabilities with participants, consolidated my Curriculum Vitae and made it the envy of my peers. I saw IT in library from a very new dimension and learnt about digitization from a very new perspective." The benefits corroborate the statements of Davies and Preston (2002), the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (2014) and the Institute of Hospitality (2011). They also confirm the views of. Day, Stackhouse and Geddes (2009) and the CSC (2014) that CPD programmes are opportunities for social and academic contacts.

These benefits could be appreciated from the percentage ratings of the competencies acquired by the participants, as 94 per cent of the respondents confirmed that the three elements of competencies, namely knowledge, skills and attitudinal change, were provided for in the contents of the programmes. The rating of the various elements of the programme is presented in figure 4. It shows that Knowledge acquisition was rated highest (89%), followed by change of professional attitude (67%) and skill (44%). This outcome implies that the programme has succeeded in providing the participants with more knowledge and change of attitude than skills. In fact the implementation of the acquired competencies for the benefit of library services and employers is likely to be faced with challenges.

Fig 4: Percentage rating of the various competency elements acquired during the CPD programme
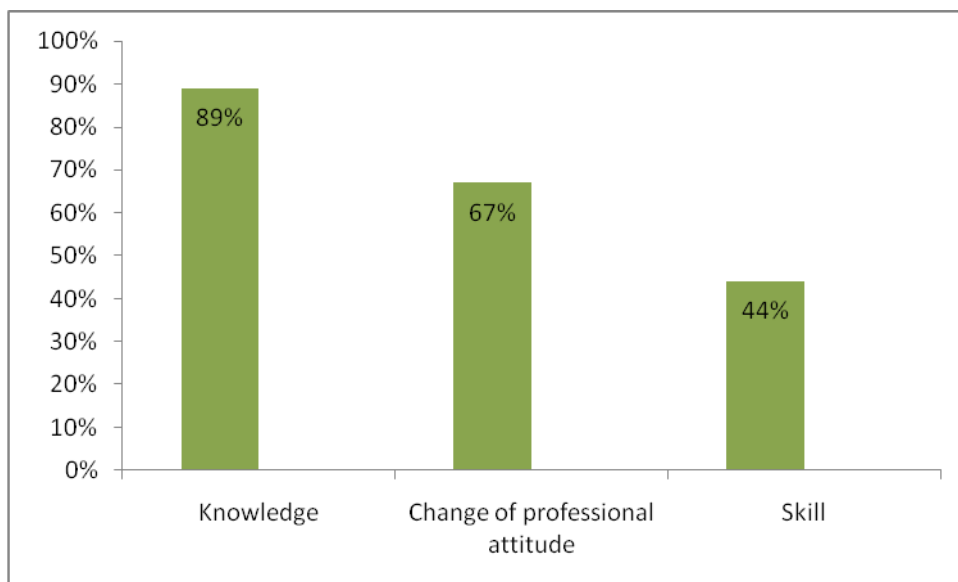
Some participants noted that some programmes lacked state of the art content such as website design and hosting, modern trends in organization of knowledge, and advanced practical information technology.

Impact of the programmes on beneficiaries and parent institutions

The participants noted that the programmes impacted positively on IT competencies which they apply in their own work as well as transferring these to other professionals through training (i.e. act as resource persons), mentoring and networking. Leadership competencies have helped some participants in leadership positions to achieve effective human resource management in libraries and related institutions.

Many participants adapted the acquired competencies to lead digitization projects, social media services and other state of the art services in their institutions. Digitization and institutional repository projects introduced by some participants have advanced the visibility of their institutions thereby enhancing their webometric ranking. The experience shared with colleagues has persuaded library staff to become computer literate as well as repositioned the participants' library towards ICT compliance in all divisions. This is in line with the views of Gosine-Boodoo and McNish (2009) that such programmes result in personal development and career advancements.

Many participants have introduced library staff development and information literacy programmes to transfer knowledge gained to colleagues at institutional level. Some institutions expanded their acquisitions with learning materials and documents, and back issues of journal titles received from resource promotion and donations.

The confidence gained by participants has increased their ability to carry out research and participate in conferences, workshops and training, which continue to raise the prestige of the participants and the employers. The rapid rise on the career ladder of the participants gave them opportunities to assume leadership and management positions. Such development though it has impacted positively on the participants, has caused some institutions to lose their high quality staff whose curriculum vitae have made them extremely marketable.

Challenges of the programmes

Despite the benefits and impacts of the programmes, some challenges were encountered in the course of the participants' preparation for attendance. Some participants were unable to secure sponsorship, hence were faced with the difficulty of raising funds. This corroborates the observation of Mathers, Mitchell and Hun (2012) that financial constraints are one of the challenges to CPD. There was also some difficulty in obtaining entry visas into the country hosting the programmes.

The majority of participants were initially apprehensive about whom to meet at the point of arrival, the trainers, the environment and locating the venue. In addition, one participant said "As a University Librarian, I had the challenge of logistics to ensure that the administration of the Library does not suffer during my absence."

In the course of the training the participants were challenged by changes in weather conditions, socio-cultural issues such as food, and language barriers as a result of difference in accents. Participants were not given sufficient time for practical training and professional networking. Insufficient computer literacy skill was an obstacle for some participants, in light of the fact that most of the training applied computer skills in one form or the other.

Administrative responsibilities have prevented some participants in management positions from providing adequate training to staff based in the programmes attended. The participants

stated ~~posited~~ that the implementation of competencies acquired is challenged by inadequate infrastructure and insufficient funding to support innovative projects. This confirms the point of view of Anunobi & Ukwoma (2009) and Ukachi & Onuoha (2013) that poor infrastructure and lack of application of acquired skills challenges continuing professional development.   It was also observed that some of the programmes had overloaded content which could not be covered within the stipulated period.

Conclusion

Continuous evolution of knowledge demands that professionals should constantly advance their competencies for relevance especially in the knowledge era. Many international communities have created bridges for the knowledge gap between the developed and developing countries by designing and providing support for continuing development programmes. The survey of the objectives, adequacy, relevance, benefits and impact of these programmes to Nigerian library and information science professional participants provided conclusive evidence that participants were fully enriched educationally, socio-culturally and professionally. Despite the minor expected challenges, they returned to their employers with innovative knowledge, skills and complete attitudinal change towards their own careers and other participants across the globe. Competencies from the programmes were introduced in the work place for improved service delivery and development. It is therefore imperative that for librarians to be proactive in this age of information "torrents", innovations and changes in learning processes, they must attend CPD programmes to be relevant in their profession.

Recommendations

There is no denying that the four programmes have expanded the frontiers of library and information professionals, the professional associations and the employers of the participants. However, based on the findings it is appropriate that the following recommendations are made:

Professional associations in Nigeria should set funds aside to support at least one member to attend CPD, This will enable them to adapt the best global library and information professional practice at all times.

A Library and Information "centre of excellence" could be established in Nigeria by sponsoring organizations to serve as focal point for training of other library and information science professionals by the participants of these international programmes.

Organizers of CPD must ensure that adequate coverage is made of the three areas of competency -- knowledge, skills, and attitudinal change.
The programme should be organized to make room for social activities and professional networking.

Where possible, the treat of a meal of the home country will serve as a morale booster and a day to be looked forward to.

Alumni reunions could be organized for participants every ten years. This would be a very good opportunity to learn how participants have fared since the programme.

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