



On-The-Job Training of Academic Librarians in English Speaking Sub-Saharan Africa: the Intervention of Carnegie Corporation

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Abstract

This study investigated on-the-job training of academic librarians in five English speaking Sub-Saharan African countries of Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa. The needs to discover training gaps and appropriate methodology for making academic librarians to be up-to-date for better job performance made this study imperative. Structured questionnaire deployed on Google form was the instrument for data collection from 154 respondents off a population of 266 academic librarians. Data analysis was carried out using simple percentages with charts illustrations. Results from data analysis showed that academic librarians in Sub-Saharan Africa attend on-the-job training programmes. However, most of the trainings do not meet their needs for better job performance. There is the need for more relevant on-the-job training programmes like the continuing professional development (CPD) programme sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, United States of America.

Keywords: *Academic librarians, On-the-job training, Continuing professional development, Carnegie Corporation, Sub-Saharan Africa,*

1.1 Introduction

The dynamism of the library and information science profession, coupled with the emergence of new information space, has brought challenges to practitioners of the profession. It is therefore incumbent on librarians and information professionals in Sub-Saharan Africa to re-assess their roles and responsibilities, completely accepting the fact that there is a need to realign competencies with the requirements of the electronic age. In alignment with this requirement is the fact that continuing professional development and on-the-job

training stay as major components of the practice of librarianship. There are many impediments to regular and effective on-the-job training of academic librarians in developing countries most especially African countries. The commonest among these impediments is lack of fund.

Librarians in academic institutions not only require adequate skills to provide services to library patrons; they also need appropriate skills to function effectively as academics. Application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in academic libraries has come with new ways of service provisions in the library. The use of

Integrated Library Management (ILM) software, development of digital institutional repositories and application of mobile technology are some of the changing areas that academic librarians need to up their skills in order to be effective and efficient as librarians in the current dispensation. As academics, librarians in higher institutions of Sub-Saharan Africa need to develop their skills in research writing, teaching and presentation. Regular on-the-job training of academic librarians in Sub-Saharan Africa is therefore a requirement that should always be on the front burner when issues concerning how to meet the goals of setting up of academic libraries are discussed (Wikinson and Lewis, 2006).

The Carnegie Corporation of New York was established in 1911 by an American called Andrew Carnegie who lived from 1835 to 1919. The objective of the Corporation is “to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding” (Carnegie Corporation, 2016). Substantial chunk of grants that are given by the Carnegie Corporation are for the development of the field of library and information science and part of it committed to on-the-job training of academic librarians.

Librarianship is a very dynamic profession, hence the challenge of keeping abreast of new developments in the profession by academic librarians. This is why regular on-the-job trainings for academic librarians are needed. Exposure to on-the-job trainings by academic librarians have been improving their skills and help them to reach desired organizational goals, giving more reasons for such trainings to be undertaken (Usoroh, Umoren and Ibang, 2015).

1.2 Problem Statement

On-the-job trainings for academic librarians is a professional step in advancing knowledge in the library profession through attending conferences or workshops, and

different seminars so as to increase the basic skills needed to cope with today's information technology (Aiyegunle, 2010). The needs to discover training gaps and appropriate methodology for making academic librarians to be up-to-date for better effectiveness and efficiency have generated a lot of interests among researchers in the field of library and information science. Studies have been carried out on the need for continuous training of librarians, most especially academic librarians; it seems however that the interventions of non-governmental international organizations, such as the Carnegie Corporation, in English speaking Sub-Saharan Africa have not been investigated.

This study is to investigate on-the-job training among academic librarians in Sub-Saharan Africa with specific emphasis on the intervention of Carnegie Corporation of United State of America through the continuing professional development (CPD) programme of Department of Information Science, University of Pretoria.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to evaluate issues concerning on-the-job training for academic librarians in English speaking Sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically, the study is to:

- (i) examine types of on-the-job training attended by academic librarians;
- (ii) determine the frequency of on-the-job training attendance by academic librarians;
- (iii) examine the perception of academic librarians about on-the-job trainings;
- (iv) determine if Carnegie CPD programme met their expectations;
- (v) examine the impact of Carnegie CPD programme on the job of academic librarians;
- (vi) examine the relevance of Carnegie CPD programme to training needs of

academic librarians.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

2.2 Training as an Example of Staff Development Models

Different professionals need and prefer different paths to develop themselves. A consideration of such needs and interests can be reflected by using appropriate professional development models. Five of the major models noted by authors in this area include training, observation, development/improvement process, inquiry and individually guided models. Training is one of the oldest and well researched staff development models and its main objective is to improve thinking. To do this, a clear set of outcomes have to be targeted and met. The most frequent training aims include awareness raising, knowledge acquisition, skills development, and attitudinal change (Zelege, 2012). According to Joyce and Showers (1988), the major components of a training model are theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching.

A part of every academic librarian's knowledge and skill is dependent upon his or her training. Cooper (2003) opined that no longer can academic libraries rely on librarians having and maintaining only their old professional knowledge. Sustained and continuous professional growth toward effective service provision and adherence to professional ethics is every librarian's and every academic institution's responsibility (Learning First Alliance, 2000). Professional development is necessary for every academic librarian to be effective in every professional situation (Pink, William T., Ed.; et al, 1990).

2.3 Continuing Development of Academic Librarians

According to Hammed and Waheed (2011) essential part to the fitness of any organization despite of its type and size is

based on investing towards individual staff success. Professions have been well characterized and documented throughout literature of different disciplines (Kendrick, Leaver and Tritt, 2013). Smith (2004) declares that, continuing professional development is universally acknowledged in education and librarianship as vital for continuing effectiveness of an individual.

Academic librarians cannot automatically be scientifically literate through university studies unless one undergoes training and development, possibly obtained on-the-job or off-the-job. Additionally, due to the advancement in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), it is necessary for library staff to undergo continuing trainings that will enable them to be relevant with existing and emerging technologies that are used to generate and disseminate information. Professional development for academic librarians fulfills a need for the continuing acquisition of knowledge and competencies that has not been met by either formal education or on-the-job-training (Pan and Hovde, 2012). Involving academic librarians in continuing education and professional development is of vital importance to the librarianship profession. Lack of enough budgets, insufficient human resources, static salaries as well as limited access to technologies has demoralized responsible academic librarians from progressing professionally (Kendrick, Leaver and Tritt, 2013).

Significance and value of training and development has long been recognized (McClelland, 2002). In order to meet the changing demands of the users, academic librarians require continuously updated knowledge and skills for operational performance (Mazumdar, 2007). It is therefore appropriate for all academic librarians to upgrade themselves so as to fit into the global world of current and emerging information and communication

technologies. Currently, academic librarians have been widened up with additional tasks regarding research needs of the users, challenging them to be knowledgeable towards attempting queries raised by users for the purpose of satisfying required information needs (Hiller, 2001).

Factors including introduction of new technology, massive growth of knowledge, changing trends in library services, increasingly social needs of educated individuals and the concept of outreach programs to attract new groups of users have indeed promoted discussions on continuing education for academic librarians since continuing professional education is a lifelong learning and is indispensable for professional growth and instrumental for sustaining one's competence (Alsop, 2013). Prince (2013) concludes that, the most valuable resource that any academic library holds is its staff. Absence of enough education among its staff, existence of poor trainings and motivations among librarians, such an academic library is not well prepared to solve the needs of its users.

2.4 The Carnegie Corporation and Training of Academic Librarians

Andrew Carnegie, an industrialist and a philanthropist in the United States of America (US), acted on the advice of his legal adviser, Elihu Root, to establish a fund to which a large chunk of his wealth would be transferred. This fund was to be given away during his lifetime and after his death (Carnegie Corporation, 2016). Therefore, in 1911, one of the oldest and grant making organizations in the US, the Carnegie Corporation, was established. Andrew Carnegie (1889) opined and believed that the best way to promote the diffusion of knowledge and understanding was through redistribution of surplus wealth in a responsible manner. In 1911 and 1912, the

Carnegie Corporation was given a sum of \$125 million as take-off fund for philanthropic purposes in the United States, Canada and countries that were then British Colonies (Carnegie Corporation, 2016). The Carnegie Corporation is managed by an executive committee and Andrew Carnegie was the first president and trustee. The scope of the Carnegie Corporation in the award of grants has widened over the years. The award of grants initially followed the personal philanthropies of Andrew Carnegie, after his death in 1919 it widened to cover education and churches. Today, the major program areas of the Carnegie Corporation include: education; democracy; international peace and security; higher education and research in Africa (Carnegie Corporation, 2016).

In 1903, Andrew Carnegie made the first major contribution to the training of librarians with an endowment of \$100,000 to Western Reserve University in Cleveland (Vann, 1961). The report of the visit of the director of study on library training of the Carnegie Corporation to fifteen schools in universities and public libraries in the United States of America, which was submitted in 1922, was published as *Training for Library Service* (Williamson, 1923). The report led to the initiation of a ten-year programme for librarianship (Smith, 2008). According to Churchwell (1995: p.58) "the Carnegie Corporation, more than any other agency or reason, quickened interest in the movement to locate library schools on university campuses and greatly facilitated such moves".

Sub-Saharan Africa has been an important focus of Carnegie Corporation since the foundation initiated work on the continent in the 1920s. One of the earliest interventions of the corporation on the African continent was the award of a grant of 1,650 British Pounds for the establishment of Lagos Library in 1929. The Carnegie Corporation sponsored two studies, Margaret Wrong in

1939 and Ethel Fagan in 1940. They were to survey the library needs of West Africa. They both saw the need for a library school, Wrong recommended that one should be set up in Nigeria while Fagan opted for a library institute that would cater for the whole British West Africa. As a result of these recommendations, the British Council, Carnegie Corporation and the Governments of Gold Coast (Ghana), Nigeria and Sierra Leone jointly financed the Achimota Library school in Ghana (Saleh, 2011). The library was opened in 1944.

It is noteworthy to mention that the award of grants for higher education in Africa has been continuous, from 2010 to 2015 a total sum of one hundred and twenty one millions, seven hundred and thirty seven thousand (121,737,000) US Dollars has been committed to higher education in Africa (Carnegie Corporation, 2016). In the last two years, 2014 to 2016, a total of two hundred and fifty-six (256) academic librarians across higher institutions in Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, South Africa and Uganda have been trained under the continuing education programme of Department of Information Science, University of Pretoria. The programme was fully funded by the Carnegie Corporation.

3.1 Methodology

This study was carried out using an online survey method. The population of the study was the 266 academic librarians from Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda and South Africa who participated in the first seven sets of continuous professional development programme of Department of Information Technology, University of Pretoria, South Africa. This continuing professional development (CPD) programme, sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York,

was for thirty-two academic librarians per set in a period of one month. The seven sets for the study attended the continuous professional development programme from the year 2014 to 2016. The research instrument adopted for the study was questionnaire deployed on Google form. The instrument was structured to assess relevant information about on-the-job training activities and related issues among academic librarians in Sub-Saharan Africa. It was validated using expert opinion. The reliability of the instrument was tested using test-retest method.

Thirty-two (32) samples of the population were also interviewed. The thirty-two were academic librarians who made up the sixth set of the Carnegie CPD programme. The authors of this work collaborated using Google Drive and Whatsapp Messenger. Link to the questionnaire on Google form was sent to the email addresses of the 266 librarian and was also posted on the Facebook group page called Carnegie CPD - Alumni. A total number of thirty-one (31) academic librarians responded through their email while one hundred and twenty-three (123) responded through the group Facebook page. In all, one hundred and fifty-four (154) academic librarians responded to the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 58 per cent.

4.1 Data Analysis and Interpretations

Distribution of Respondents according to countries

Respondents were academic librarians from all the countries that were selected for the continuing education programme. Except for South Africa, the percentage of participants who responded from each country shows a fair representation of the countries (Table 1).

Table 1: Respondents by countries

Country	No. of Respondents	Percentage(%)
Nigeria	44	28.6
Ghana	35	22.7
Tanzania	19	12.3
Uganda	43	27.9
South Africa	13	08.5
Total	154	100.0

Types of on-the-job trainings attended by academic librarians

Most of the respondents (90.1%) indicated that they attended workshops, 70.4% attended seminars, 68.4% attended conferences while only 44.7% attended classroom based lectures. These show that respondents have been exposed to one form of on-the-job training or the other. Further details are given in figure 1

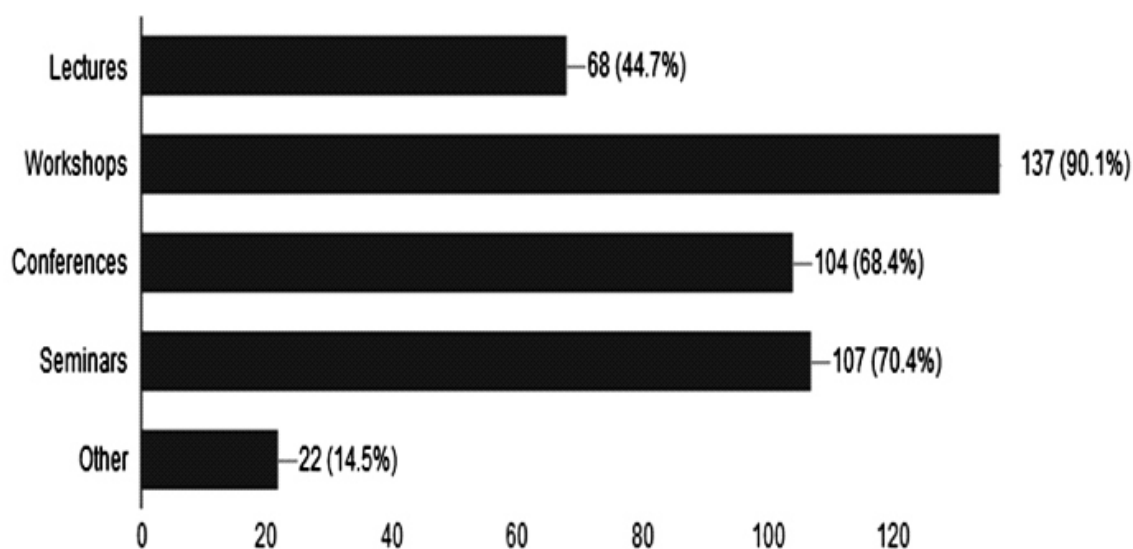


Figure 1: Types of on-the-job trainings

Frequency of attendance of on-the-job training by academic librarian

Only very few respondents (3.2%) indicated that they got trained every month, 21.4% got trained once in every four months, only 14.3% attended trainings once in six months, 26.6% attended training once in a year while 34.4% did not attend any form of training within one year.

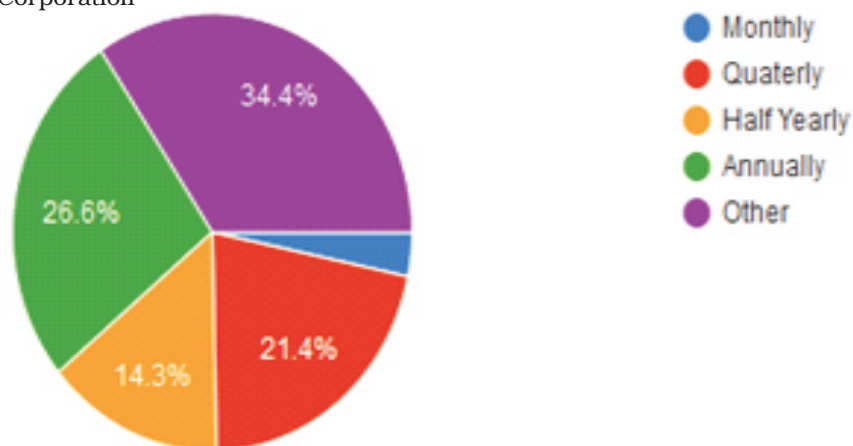


Figure 2: Frequency of attendance of on-the-job training

Perception of academic librarians about on-the-job trainings

Most of the respondents (86.4%) agreed that they always have high expectations whenever they have the opportunity to attend a training programme. Majority of the respondents (96.8%) said their participation in the continuing education programme usually enhanced their practical work experience as professional librarians. This shows that academic librarians are aware of the dynamic nature of librarianship as a profession and are always looking forward to develop themselves.

Relevance of Carnegie CPD programme to the present job (s) of participants

Findings depict that, many (75.8%) of the respondents strongly agreed that, to a large extent Carnegie Continuing Professional Development programme has been relevant to their current jobs. Only (2%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that Carnegie Continuing Professional Development programme has been relevant to their current jobs. Figure 3 provides further descriptions of the relevance of Carnegie CPD programme to their present jobs.

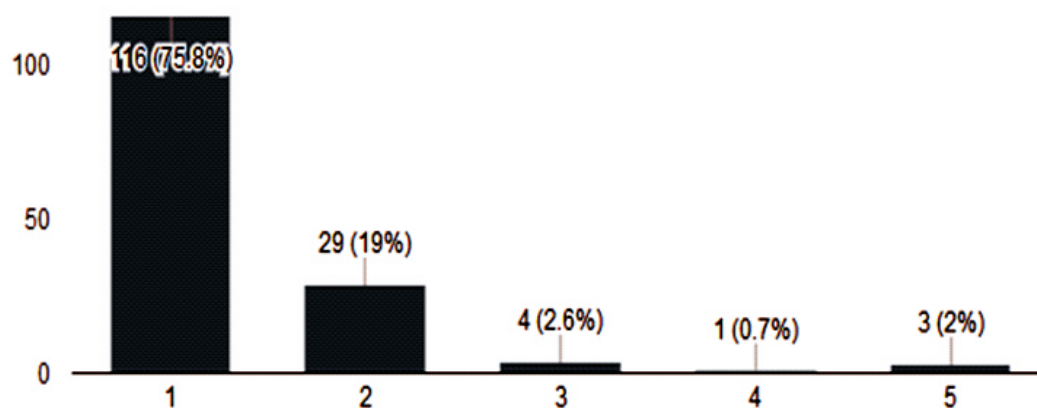


Figure 3: Relevance of Carnegie CPD programme to present job

Training Needs of Academic Librarians in Sub-Saharan Africa

According to thirty-one (96.9%) out of thirty-two members of group 6 intake of the Carnegie Corporation sponsored continuing education programme, their training needs are in the areas of applications of information and communication technology to librarianship and carrying out good research. Majority of the respondents on Google form (95.4%) alluded to the fact that the continuing education programme kept them updated with the latest technology in Librarianship (Figure 4)

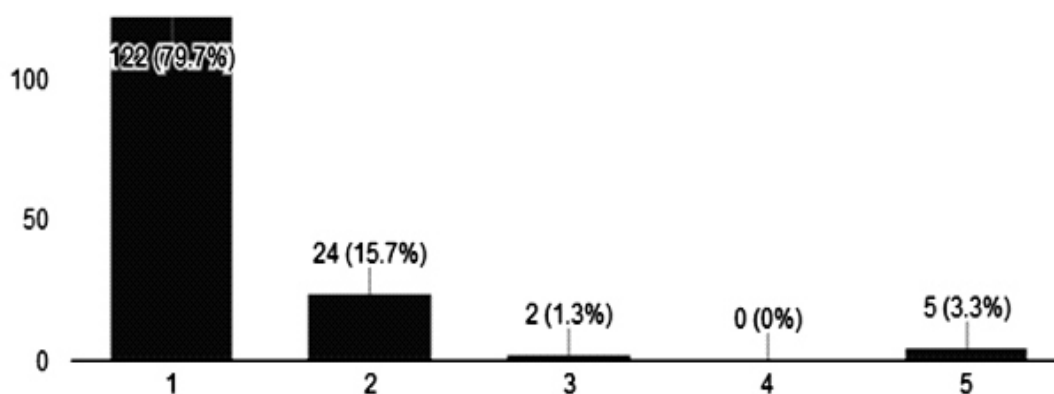


Figure 4: CPD and Technology update of Librarians in Sub-Saharan Africa

Conclusion

The dynamism of the library and information science (LIS) profession has made it expedient for academic librarians to regularly update their knowledge in the practise of the profession. The results of this study show that academic librarians in Sub-Saharan Africa have not been doing badly in the area of exposure to on-the-job trainings. Their attendances at professional workshops, seminars and conferences are not poor. The quality of the trainings they are exposed to at these various avenues to professional development however leads much to be desired. The opportunity provided by the one month long continuing professional development programme sponsored by Carnegie Corporation of United States and hosted by Department of Information Science, University of Pretoria was therefore a special one. This is in agreement with

Cooper (2003) who opined that no longer can academic libraries rely on librarians having and maintaining only their old professional knowledge. The overwhelming agreement (96.8%) of the respondents that the continuing professional development programme has positively affected their practical work experience shows that they needed the training and that it was different from the ones they had attended.

The Carnegie Corporation sponsored continuing professional development programme gained acceptance among academic librarians across Sub-Saharan Africa and the number of spaces for each intake were keenly contested because the title of the training programme was enhancing librarians' ICT skills for research enablement in African universities. Results of this study show that academic librarians who participated in the training programme were

not disappointed because most of their expectations were met. Apart from work enhancement experience gained during the Carnegie CPD programme, it was a great opportunity for academic librarians from the various participating countries to collaborate. They engage in collaboration in the areas of research, knowledge and resource sharing.

It will be a good thing for the development of the library and information science profession if more funding bodies like Carnegie Corporation could come to the aid of academic libraries in Africa. There is the need for various academic institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa to invest in infrastructure for the installation of library automation software and digital repository software to allow academic librarians practice the skills they have acquired during the training.

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