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A FOCUS ON STAFFING IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES BASED ON LIBRARIANS' REGISTRATION COUNCIL OF NIGERIA STANDARDS

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ABSTRACT
The need for standards is to ensure performance and efficiency. When there is a standard or guideline, it makes for easy process. In this regards, staffing in public libraries are expected to follow certain standards. . This paper is focused on staffing in public libraries based on librarians' registration council of Nigeria standards. The paper discussed the concept of the public libraries, and the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria. Reviews were done on Categories of Personnel in Public Libraries based on LRCN standards, Studies on Personnel in the public libraries, and the Staffing problems in public libraries. The paper concluded that adequate staffing is tied to an employee's sense of security and self-fulfillment, solving problems related to this subject should be made a priority for Nigerian public libraries. Recommendations was that there should be adequate funding to public libraries to enable them recruit more staff in the library.

Keywords: Public Libraries, Staffing (personnel), LRCN Standards.

Introduction

The library is a repository of knowledge and a dynamic social institution, an indispensable resource center for reliable information and meant to preserve the recorded knowledge of man for use. There are various types of libraries which include National, Public, Academic, Special, School, Private, Research libraries. These libraries are established based on the client that uses the library. This study will focus on the public library. The public libraries are the libraries that are established within the community to provide information resources for its clients irrespective of their age, sex, qualification and their background. The main purpose of the public library is to make it possible for members of the community to meet their information needs.

Public libraries are libraries that provide unrestricted access to library resources and services free of charge to all residents of a given community, district or geographical region (Anyalebechi & Udo-Anyanwu, 2016). Public library provides access to knowledge, information and fictional works through a range of services that are available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, physical and mental limitations, economic and employment status as well as educational attainment.For this to be achieved ,the public libraries need to be equipped with different categories of personnel. Public libraries are libraries established to provide unrestricted access to library resources and services free of charge to all residents of a given community, district or geographical region (Anyalebechi & Udo-Anyanwu 2016).

According to Abdulkarim (2010) the public libraries are expected to play an indispensable role in the life of the community they serve, some of which are: promotion of reading culture, provision of good information and reference centre for the masses, building of collection that relates to local interest, and offering of different kinds of services to users such as; reference, extension, audiovisual and training services. Public libraries as part of their mandates are expected to select, acquire, manage and process various collections towards meeting the information needs of the users. In meeting these mandates, it is expected of them to follow certain standards for their operations. The standards for the public libraries In Nigeria are structured, articulated and set out by the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN), a regulatory body established with the responsibility of overseeing the activities and practices of all librarians and types of libraries.

Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) was established by Act 12 of 1995 to regulate and standardize the practice of librarianship for quality service delivery (LRCN, 2015). LRCN is a parastatal under the federal ministry of Education and the body (LRCN) is charged with so many responsibilities gearing towards ensuring best professional practices and ensuring that standards are maintained among and within library and library professions. They also perform other duties by establishing minimum standards and guidelines which serve as yardstick for all types of libraries. Although, these standards are expected to be in conformity with the international bodies, they are slightly restructured to suit the local needs of the public libraries in Nigeria (LRCN 2015). In 2015, the Librarians registration council of Nigeria in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Education published the minimum standard and guidelines for public libraries in Nigeria; these minimum standards contain among other things, the essential requirements that every public library in Nigeria should use as a guide to recruite the right caliber of personnel in the library.

Staffing otherwise known as human resource are the personnel who are employed in an organization to help achieve its goals. Staffing is a function of human resource management. According to Okoye and Ezejiofor (2013), human Resource Management is the function within an organization that focused on recruitment of, management of, and providing direction for the people who work in the organization. These set of people who work in the organization are the staff. Staffing is also a strategic and comprehensive approach of employing and managing people and the work place culture and environment (Okoye & Ezejiofor, 2013). Effective Human resource management enables the staff to contribute effectively and productivey to the overall company direction and the accomplishment of the organization's goals and objective. In the area of librarianship, staffing are the personnel employed in the library. They are to ensure that the tasks of ensuring the mandate of the library in service delivery are achieved.

With respect to staffing in public libraries, the Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria's standard stipulates and demanded the following from the key areas: adequate and qualified personnel should be employed. Librarians must acquire degrees

in Library and Information Science discipline and must head all the departments and sections in the library; Library officers with diplomas in Library and Information Science discipline are to coordinate the duties of the library assistants and undertake responsibilities as assigned by the librarians; Library assistants are to possess O'level in West Africa Examination Council or its equivalent and are expected to perform routine duties such as filing, shelving, circulation, etc. There should be specialist staff such as Accountants, IT professionals, Human resource managers with qualifying degrees in their respective fields. Maintenance staff should possess first school leaving certificates and should be placed in charge as cleaners, porters, gardeners, security personnel etc. All these above mentioned personnel are saddled with responsibility that are inter-related towards preserving and creating access to knowledge for learning and research.

Based on the forgoing, it is evidenced that these standards and requirements that were suggested by the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (2015) to serve as a guide for public libraries in Nigeria may not have been effectively and religiously followed. Most public library may employ and assign non-librarians staffs into key sections of the library with poor experience in library task. It is clear that no library can exist in this information era without the needed and required staff to man her various sections, departments and units. The public library has the duty or right to align with these standards put out by the Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria (2015) with respect to library staff. The need to ensure that public libraries in Nigeria follow the standards of the Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria has given rise for a review of this nature. Hence the need to focus on staffing in public libraries based on LRCN standards and guidelines.

Statement of the Problem

The public library is described as the "People's University" because is meant to serve everybody irrespective of what you are, it is an indispensable instrument for intellectual, cultural, educational, informational development. Since it is meant to serve everybody, it is expected for the public library to have adequate personnel (professional, paraprofessional and specialist staff) to enable the public library to meet up to her mandate

Regrettably, most public libraries fall below these standards in their staffing which may be due to poor funding to recruit the required staff for the library. Also, it is common that public libraries are facing stunted growth because of lack of qualified staff to deliver quick and fast services to the users. There is an imminent lack or shortage of manpower with insufficient skills in providing leadership for the library. All these could be the reason why many public libraries are found to lack uniformity with the standards put in place for them to adopt based on their staffing.

A public library is supposed to adopt the staffing standards set out for them to operate as this will ensure that they meet up with the library mandate and her user's needs since adequate library staff will support efficient service delivery. For uniformity to be maintained across public libraries, the standards published by the Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria in 2015 have to be followed. The question is, are the public libraries in Nigeria

measuring up to the staffing standard set by the LRCN, being the national regulatory body to guide the public libraries? Observation made by the researcher during visit to some of these public libraries seems that the public libraries do not comply with the standard set by the LRCN, hence the focus of this review to find out if the public libraries meet up with the minimum, intermediate or excellent staffing standard set for the public libraries in Nigeria by LRCN.

Literature Review

Public libraries

Public Libraries are established in the societies or communities to provide information resources and services to everybody without any discrimination. Public library is a library provided wholly or partly from public funds and the use of which is not restricted to any class of persons in the community but it's freely available for all. Opara (2008) opined that a public library is wholly designed for the purpose of rendering information services to the general public irrespective of status, occupation, sex, age and these services are meant to be free or attract a little fee. Public library have been long viewed as a knowledge institution because they provide the public with spaces for information and learning and are accessible to all categories of people in the society, regardless of gender age and ethnic affiliation. Apotiade cited in Olarongbe, Adepoju, Akanbi-Ademolake and Pedro (2013) submitted that a public library is wholly designed for the purpose of rendering information services to the general public irrespective of status, occupation, sex, age, and these services are meant to be free or attract little fee.

Public Library is a collection of book and other forms of records housed, organized and interpreted to meet broad and varying needs of the people for information, knowledge, recreation and aesthetics. Atuti (2008) submitted that public libraries have long been viewed as knowledge institutions because they provide the public with spaces for information and learning and are accessible to all groups of society, regardless of gender, age and ethnic affiliation. Public library has the purpose of self-improvement because they are concerned with information and education (Olowu, 2004). Public libraries are set up to educate, inform and entertain their users. They carter for the heterogeneous interest of their various communities, they are local gateways to knowledge providing basic conditions for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and social groups (IFLA/UNESCO Public library Manifesto 1994).

The Public libraries are to provide access to knowledge and information through various resources and services irrespective of their age, race, social status, physical challenges and language. Anyabelechi and Udoanyanwu (2016) opined that public libraries are libraries that provide unrestricted access to library resources and services free of charge to all residents of a given community, district or geographical region. Kumar (2008) is of the opinion that public library is a library that serves as the cultural centre of the community, bringing together people having similar Interest through extensions services, it is therefore expected to have space and equipment for the purpose of exhibitions, discussions, lectures, films and

so on both for adults and children, The Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (2015) opined that public library is a library that is established to support the development and sustenance of democracy and democratic structures as such will provide access to information through various means and also meant to support formal and informal education.

Public libraries are expected to provide people oriented services ,aiming at satisfying the general public through the provision of appropriate information resources and services ,such as advisory ,strategic leadership and information on local content that corporate indigenous knowledge into it.

From the researcher's point of view, a public library is a library established within a society or community to provide information resources and services to the members of the community for their information, education, cultural development and helps in independent decision making.

Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria

Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) is a regulatory body for library and information science professionals. It was established by Act 12 of 1995. It is a parastatal under the Federal Ministry of Education saddled with the responsibility of ensuring best professional practices, standardization and regulation of the library and information profession. They perform among other functions the publication of standards and guidelines required for all types of libraries.

In 2015, the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Education published the standard and guidelines for public libraries in Nigeria. These standards and guidelines contain the minimum, intermediate and excellent requirements that every public library in Nigeria should use in acquiring and assessing resources both human and material resources so as to meet the needs of the users (LRCN, 2015). The LRCN standards stated the minimum standards and guidelines acceptable for every public library system which are itemized as follows; staffing; accommodation; furniture and equipment; collection management; services; budgeting; information and communication technology; and governance and administration of the Director/Chief Executive Officer (Librarian) in decision board.

Categories of Personnel in Public Libraries based on LRCN standards

The ultimate aim of the library as a service-oriented institution is to provide maximum satisfaction to its clients through an effective library staff. The complicated services which library personnel renders do not organize and run themselves, but must be modified, improved and extended in the light of changing conditions. Nnadozie (2007) observed that the library staff is probably the most important possession of any library. This is because the library staff provides the managerial, technical, professional and other support services. He further maintains that the planning of the library services, organization of resources and coordination of routine activities rest on the shoulders of staff. Thus, the library management's selection and employment

of the various categories of library staff must be done in line with certain standards since the achievement of set goals of any library depends to a large extent, on the caliber of staff.

Different categories of staff are required in the public library to effectively drive the services. The services offered in the library depend heavily on the skills and abilities of the library staff. As it is commonly said ‘’the library is only as good as its’ staff’’. That notwithstanding, Burton and Manab (2007) posits that library staff in the present milieu must be versed not just in traditional librarianship but also have a repertoire of skills and knowledge that would enable them to make use of and be able to offer services and also to teach users the latest in information technologies. Management of the public library has the task of ensuring that the various categories of library personnel are seasoned. It is predicated on this that the various categories of personnel recruited in the library are experienced.

The contribution of each of these categories of the library workforce is indispensible to the success of the entire system. According to the standards put up by the LRCN (2015), for effective and efficient service delivery, it is required that the public library be staffed by a mix of the relevant personnel, which include;

i. Professionals (Librarians), ii. Para-professionals (Library officers) iii. Library assistant, iv. Specialist staff (accountants, human resources managers, IT specialists etc.), v. Maintenance staff (drivers, cleaners, gardeners, security personnel and porters).

The Professionals (Librarians): The professionals in the library are the graduates from the university who possess the Bachelors or Masters degree in Library and Information Science. They are professionally trained and equipped with the fundamental knowledge of librarianship both in practice and in theory. In public libraries, personnel under this category are called Librarians. According to the Librarians’ Registration Council of Nigeria (2015), the minimum of first degree in Library and Information Science or first degree in another discipline with masters in LIS; certification with Librarians’ Registration Council of Nigeria; evidence of publication of scholarly works; Information and Communication Technology (ICT) competencies and literacy; and regular training and retraining constitute the qualification and standard for joining the professional category of the library workforce. The professionals are made to head various department and sections, thereby constituting the management team of the library. They are equally shouldered with the responsibility of mapping out the plans and programmes of the library as well as training of their subordinates (Tella and Popoola, 2007). They are also engaged in carrying out some complex cataloguing and classification, selection and acquisition as well as indexing and abstracting duties in the library. They also perform the task of interpretation of rules and procedures, analysis of library problems and formulation of solutions (Onwubiko, 2004). In line with their academic status, professional librarians also engage in scholarship by conducting research and publishing their findings; attending conferences, seminars, lectures,

workshops, symposia in which they sometimes present papers (Lynn, 2016). In this category of library staff are the Director of the Public Libraries and their deputies, and other librarians

The Para-professionals (Library officers): A para-professional is a person who is trained to assist a professional. In public libraries, the para-professionals are generally referred to as the library officers. They are the holders of NCE, OND, and HND certificates. In addition to possessing a minimum of National Diploma in Library and Information Science, the LRCN (2015), equally maintains that library personnel under this category must possess the relevant, ICT competencies and literacy; and the willingness to embark on regular training and retraining. Unlike the professionals, the para-professionals are not properly trained to handle the complex aspects of librarianship. The para-professionals are responsible for the service points and theirs operations; and are usually found within the intermediary level of library organizational structure (Wisconsin Public Instruction, 2010). In this category are the chief library officers, assistant library officers, principal library officers, senior library officers, higher library officers and library officers.

Library Assistants: This category of library workforce is employed to undertake all unskilled jobs of the library. They are mainly holders of school certificates such as West Africa School Certificate, National Examination Council, and General Certificate Examination. They are usually referred to as Library assistants. As part of their task and functions, Yahya, Wan Taib, Che Rusuli, Tasmin and Hashim (2012) stated that library's assistant usually spend a significant portion of time at their desks or in front of computer terminals. Assisting users in obtaining information or books for their jobs, homework, or recreational reading can be challenging and satisfying, but working with users under deadlines can be demanding and stressful. Some library's assistant lift and carry books, and some climb ladders to reach high stacks. Library assistants also carry out the task of shelving and shelve-reading, counter duties, clerical works such as writing overdue reminders, and reservation cards, minor enquiry works, preparing consignment for binding, insertion of catalogue cards, receipt of periodicals stocking and weeding and other routine works in special departments. Although their jobs are routine and intellectually less demanding, public libraries cannot function effectively without the services of the library assistants.

Specialist Staff: This category of library workforce is employed to undertake all skilled specialist jobs of the library that are helpful to the task and professional services rendered by the public libraries (Abba and Dawha, 2009). They are the accountants, human resources managers, and IT specialists etc. Although, they are graduates and skilled in their respective fields of study, their services are seen to be supportive to the activities in the library. They are not professional or experts in the field of librarianship but render useful support services that boost the task and function of the professional and the library activities.

Maintenance Staff: The library staff that falls under this category of library workforce is the drivers, cleaners, gardeners, security personnel and porters, who are employed to undertake these

supportive task or jobs of the library. Most of them are mainly holders of school certificates such as West Africa School Certificate, National Examination Council, General Certificate Examination and also in some instances, lower qualifications such as First School Leaving Certificate or none of the above may be required of them (Akhigbe, 1997). Their jobs cover such routine duties as cooking for the staff, maintaining the cars and of the public libraries, securing library materials and examining users who come into the library, maintaining the gardens and flowers planted around and within the library complex etc. Although their jobs are routine and intellectually less demanding, they are seen as a very useful segment of staff composition in the public libraries

These categories of public libraries staff can be likened to the wheels of a tricycle. The absence of one renders the tricycle grounded. In an ideal situation, there should be provision for at least one professional in all the units and sections of the public library. In addition, there should be attachment of para-professional and support staff to professionals. This is to help the library discharge her duties effectively and efficiently (Abba and Dawha, 2009). However, public library managers should endeavour to staff each category of the workforce with the right caliber of people not only in qualification, but their personality traits.

Relatedly, in public libraries, there is the need for adequate and qualified staff to ensure a smooth service delivery. It is necessary to maintain well trained and highly motivated library personnel to make effective use of the resources of the library and to meet the demands of the community. Such staff should possess the necessary skills and adequate qualifications as prescribed by the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) (2015) which include competence in:(a) Understanding the needs of users,(b) Communicating adequately with users,(c) Relating meaningfully with individuals and various groups in the community,(d) Recognizing the needed library's collections and how to access them,(e) Using and applying information communication technologies and be innovatively proactive,(f) Developing new ideas and practices.

In view of the foregoing, there is the need to fill the various categories of the public library workforce with the right caliber of people. Beyond academic qualifications, the personalities and attributes of individuals employed to undertake library functions is of uttermost importance. There are people whose personal traits and outlook influence their performances and contributions in the workplace. Some of these traits are positive while others are negative. The peculiarities of modern librarianship suggest that the era of meek and apologetic approach to the profession is over and that potential library employees must possess not only the requisite academic qualifications, but marketable personality. Supporting this assertion, Juceviciene, and Tautkeviciene (2002), opine that if the libraries will help to retain the meta-learning competence of their institutions and provide value added services (VAS) for the user community, they should ensure that they employ library staff who in line with the standards, qualifications, and characters such as proactive, progressive, practical and productive qualities.

Furthermore, on the level of staffing for Librarians in public libraries, Librarian

Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) guidelines stipulated that a minimum of 2, 3, 4 and 5+ librarians should be placed in a populated area of service with less than 10,000, 10,000 to 24, 999, 25,000 to 34, 999, and 35,000 and above respectively. Also, for an intermediate level, there should be 4, 6, 7, and 8+ librarians in a populated area of service with Less than 10,000, 10,000 to 24, 999, 25,000 to 34, 999, and 35,000 and above respectively. Similarly, for an excellent level, there should be 6, 8, 9, and above 10+ librarians in a populated area of service with Less than 10,000, 10,000 to 24, 999, 25,000 to 34, 999, and 35,000 and above respectively. This information depicts the expected standards (number) of librarians to serve in public libraries according to the population size of the communities. However, these standards might not be strictly adhered to where population figures are in doubt. In such cases, staffing levels can be adjusted in relation to the size of the library, the range of its functions and the number of potential users in order to be able to deliver efficient services. In view of this, Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria (2015) stated thus:

- Public libraries should be headed by librarians at all tiers of Government no matter the level of Standards whether Minimum, Intermediate or Excellent.
- Responsibility for core services such as reference services, collection development, cataloguing and classification in public libraries should be handled by librarians. Therefore, Sectional Heads of Reference Section, Lending Section, Special Collections Section, Cataloguing and Classification Section, e-library, Children's Section and Acquisition Section must be librarians in order to maintain acceptable levels of service.
- The ratio of specialist staff, support/maintenance staff should be according to the estimated population of area of service and the need of each particular library.
- New librarians are to undergo tutelage by working under experienced ones for mentoring purposes.
- All new staff should pass through an orientation programme so as to familiarize them with the needed practical aspects of the public libraries

Staffing problems in public libraries

In a public library, the library personnel play a crucial role in satisfying the information needs of the reading community. These staff are charged with a wide range of tasks which include acquiring, storing, organizing and disseminating information, providing information resources required to support the learning, teaching, and research needs of their community users. Also, they are intermediaries between the information resources and users; they are expected to provide timely and quality information resources to their users (Adewoyin, Ehioghae & Olorunsaye, 2020)

However, one of the factors that could probably hinder staffing (library personnel) in the public libraries that has affected the provision of quality information services to their users is stress. Stress has become a major problem in

today's challenging and turbulent working environment (Ahmad & Roslan, 2016). Okoro (2018) asserted that stress is not only an unpleasant result of emotional conflict but also one of the major factors contributing to low productivity among a nation's workforce. Stress that is experienced by employees at the workplace is called occupational stress.

Another major problem of staffing in public libraries is poor funding. The funding for the public libraries is very low due to the national and state dwindling revenue which affects the budget allocation to the public libraries to enable them recruit more staff. In many public libraries, recruitment of staff is usually not regular to ensure their adequacy in the public libraries. When there is poor funding to public libraries, staff strength will be inadequate and it will make some relevant sections of the library to be less functional due to poor staffing to man them.

Also, poor funding makes the management of the library to skip the required staff qualification for each advertised or needed position. This is because poor funding to the library makes the salary of the librarians to be affected and as such, their promotion will be affected and may not be regular as at when due. Staffing is an important factor in public libraries. Since the staff as human resource components of the public libraries are employed to deliver the library mandate, they are expected to be promoted as well as new staff recruited and well equipped with relevant skills and competencies to enable them function effectively. No public library can perform well if they are not provided with the needed and qualified staff strength in the library.

Furthermore, there is a shortage of qualified and experienced librarians to be employed in the public libraries. Most librarians are not skilled to suit into the new world of work in the 21st century. The staff required in libraries need to have different competence. Lack of space in the public libraries also affects the recruitment of staff in the library. Lack of certain services that are needed in the public libraries also affects staffing in the public libraries. When the departments are not sufficient, the library will make do with the few staff at their disposal. When there is poor pay and lack of motivation, it also affects staffing in the public libraries as there will be a high job mobility of librarians. This mobility also cuts across the three levels of employees: professional librarians, para-professional and support staff.

Conclusion

Given that adequate staffing is tied to an employee's sense of security and self-fulfillment, solving problems related to this subject should be made a priority for Nigerian public libraries. Notwithstanding the foreseen circumstances affecting the public libraries in Nigeria, it is expected of them to ensure that they comply with the extant rules and guidelines set out for them with respect to staffing. When the public libraries comply with the staffing guidelines, it makes them to be more effective as the issue of overload on the staff will not be seen. The LRCN's standards are to serve as guide to all Nigerian public libraries so as to ensure that no public library is under-staffed.

Recommendations

i. There should be adequate funding to public libraries to enable them recruit more staff in the library
ii. Public libraries should be attractive so as to encourage librarians to remain in the job, thereby reducing the incidence of mobility
iii. Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria should ensure that they monitor the various public libraries in the country to ensure that they stick to their staffing mandates

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