LIBRARIANS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES FOR IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine librarian's professional development programmes for improved service delivery in Anambra State, Nigeria. Descriptive research design was used for the study. Questionnaire was used to collect data from 27 librarians in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The study revealed that the types of professional development programmes in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library are workshop, job rotation, coaching, internship, instructional guidance, seminars, and apprentice. Strategies such as fostering a culture of lifelong learning, leveraging technology, promoting mentorship and peer learning, strengthening collaboration and partnerships, aligning with staff development needs, focusing on service improvement, targeting specific needs, providing incentives for participation, and implementing comprehensive evaluationwith mean scores of 3.84 and 3.00 with meanscores respectively were used for improving professional development programmes. The study also identified some challenges such as funding, technological limitations, policy barriers, staffing issues delivery, access to resources, lack of institutional support, resistance to change, lack of awareness, geographical constraints and inadequate evaluation mechanisms affecting the professional development programmes. The study recommended increased funding, investment in infrastructure, policy reforms, recruitment and retention strategies, enhanced access to resources, training and awareness programmes, cultural change initiatives, geographical outreach efforts, collaborative initiatives, evaluation and feedback mechanisms as solutions to the identified challenges for improving professional development programmes.

Keywords: *professional development, librarians, university libraries, service delivery, Nigeria.*

Introduction

University libraries play a pivotal role in the academic ecosystem, serving not only as repositories of knowledge but also as dynamic hubs that facilitate collaboration among librarians. These libraries are crucial in improving the learning culture of their users, providing materials for instruction, supporting research endeavors, and offering supplementary resources. This emphasis on collaboration within the library setting becomes particularly significant in promoting the professional development of librarians. Professional development is a key facet of collaboration that contributes to the professional growth of librarians. In addition, engaging in collaborative projects and initiatives, librarians can acquire a diverse set of skills ranging from information literacy education to digital technologies (Dika & Chukwudum, 2017). Eaton and Pasquini (2020) emphasize that this collaborative skill-building process not only strengthens individual librarians but also enhances the overall competency of the library staff. The pooling of diverse skills within a collaborative environment creates a synergistic effect, enriching the collective capabilities of the library team. Repositioning library staff to meet the changing needs of users is a central objective of collaborative professional development. As noted by Gomba (2019), the landscape of libraries, information resources, and user expectations continues to evolve. Through professional development, librarians can collectively strategize on adapting to these changes, ensuring that the library remains a dynamic and responsive hub for the academic community (Okoye, 2018).

Professional development of librarians constitutes a multifaceted approach aimed at enhancing their skills, knowledge, and capabilities to meet the evolving demands of the academic environment. This comprehensive process encompasses various training programmes and initiatives that play a crucial role in ensuring librarians are well-equipped to provide high-quality services. In the view of Dika and Chukwudum (2017) and Hussain and Abalkhail (2013), this holistic understanding of professional development is essential for librarians to navigate the dynamic landscape of information services effectively. Librarians engage in diverse areas of professional development to build competencies that is important for their roles within university libraries. Okonkwo and Anaehobi (2021), added that librarians who are competent through professional development in line with electronic resources, have a vast world of new applications

at their disposition. These competencies stand out as a fundamental component, emphasizing the librarian's ability to guide users in navigating the wealth of information resources available. This includes teaching users how to critically evaluate sources, conduct efficient research, and utilize library databases effectively (Akopkurerie, 2016). The development of these competencies aligns with the broader goals of enhancing teaching, learning, and research within the academic community.

Effective professional development of librarians comprises key components tailored to the specific objectives and aims of the library and its user group. This tailored approach ensures that librarians acquire skills and knowledge that directly contribute to the enhancement of library services and the fulfillment of the university library's mission. Participation in conferences, workshops, seminars, and webinars is a fundamental element of effective professional development (Baro, Fyneman & Zoukemefa, 2013). These events provide librarians with opportunities for knowledge exchange, exposure to emerging trends, and engagement with experts in the field. The diverse nature of these programmes allows librarians to focus on areas directly relevant to their roles, thereby maximizing the impact of their professional development experiences. Fostering engagement in professional associations is another crucial component. Librarians actively participating in professional associations gain access to a broader network of peers, share best practices, and stay informed about developments in the field (Wang, 2018). This collaborative engagement contributes to a culture of continuous learning and ensures that librarians are well-connected to the larger library community.

Investing in the professional development of librarians yields positive outcomes that extend beyond individual growth to impact the overall effectiveness and efficiency of library services. The benefits of professional development contribute to creating a vibrant and responsive library environment. Librarians who undergo professional development gain advanced skills and competencies that directly enhance their ability to provide high-quality services. This includes improved information literacy education, research support services, and proficiency in digital technologies (Seena & Sudhier-Pillai, 2014). The acquired skills enable librarians to adapt to changing user needs and evolving technological landscapes. Professional development programmes foster a culture of continuous learning within the library (Usman, 2015).

The library serves as a crucial resource hub within the university community, supporting teaching, learning, and research endeavors. Despite its significance, there exists a pressing need to enhance the professional development programmes of librarians within this library. The direct correlation between personnel quality and library service quality underscores the urgency of ensuring librarians possess the requisite skills to meet evolving demands. In the absence of robust professional development initiatives, librarians may struggle to adapt to emerging trends, hindering the library's potential to offer optimal services.

Research objective

The specific objective is to determine librarian's professional development programmes for improved service delivery in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Research questions

RQ1. What are the types of professional development programmes available for academic librarians in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, NAU, Awka?

RQ2. What are the strategies for improving professional development programmes of academic librarians in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, NAU, Awka?

RQ3. What are the challenges affecting the strategies for improving professional development programmes of academic librarians in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, NAU, Awka?

RQ4. What are the solutions to the identified challenges for improving professional development programmes of academic librarians in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, NAU, Awka?

Literature review

Concept of professional development programmes

Professional development programmes, is defined as a comprehensive and intentional process aimed at augmenting the proficiency, expertise, and effectiveness of professionals across various sectors (Osiesi, 2020). Professional development is the process of acquiring basic expertise needed by librarian in order to perform a specific task. It enables information access and use through systematic and user-centered description, categorization, digitization, storage, preservation and retrieval (Okonkwo & Anaehobi, 2021). It entails structured initiatives designed to facilitate continuous growth, learning, and adaptation to dynamic work environments. Such programmes are crucial for equipping individuals with the requisite skills and knowledge to excel

in their roles and advance their careers. Additionally, they play a pivotal role in enhancing organizational performance and fostering innovation and competitiveness. Ajani (2022) further expands on the multifaceted nature of professional development programmes, emphasizing their role in supporting individuals in expanding their expertise and staying abreast of industry trends. These programmes encompass a diverse range of activities, including training workshops, seminars, conferences, and networking events. By participating in these initiatives, professionals can enhance their competencies, develop new skills, and acquire valuable insights that enable them to excel in their respective fields.

Concurring with the above, Adejare et al. (2020) see professional development as a strategic approach for addressing inefficiencies and enhancing performance within organizations. Through targeted training and development initiatives, organizations can equip their workforce with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate complex challenges and achieve operational excellence. Moreover, professional development programmes contribute to fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement, thereby driving organizational growth and success (Okoye, 2018). Professional development programmes are instrumental in promoting job satisfaction, motivation, and employee engagement, as highlighted by Akomolafe (2013). By investing in the professional growth and development of their workforce, organizations demonstrate their commitment to employee well-being and career advancement. Moreover, professional development initiatives serve as a catalyst for enhancing employee morale, productivity, and overall job satisfaction, ultimately contributing to organizational success.

Types of Professional Staff Development Programmes of Academic Librarians

Professional development programmes of academic librarians play a crucial role in enhancing their skills, knowledge, and job performance. These programmes ensure that librarians stay updated with the latest trends, technologies, and practices in the field of library and information science.

On-the-Job Professional Development Programmes:

Job Rotation

Job rotation is a strategic human resource management approach that involves employees moving between different roles and responsibilities within an organization, typically over a defined period. In the context of librarianship, job rotation presents a valuable opportunity for professionals to broaden their skill sets, expand their knowledge base, and enhance their overall professional growth. Madukoma and Garba (2022) emphasize the significance of job rotation as a means of capacity building and work engagement especially for librarians in Nigerian universities. Job rotation offers librarians the chance to gain firsthand experience in various aspects of library operations, from reference services to cataloguing, circulation, collection development, and information literacy instruction. By rotating through different roles, librarians can develop a comprehensive understanding of the library's functions, workflows, and challenges, thereby becoming more versatile and adaptable professionals.

One of the primary benefits of job rotation is the acquisition of diverse skills and experiences. As librarians' transition between different departments or functional areas, they are exposed to a range of tasks, technologies, and user interactions. For instance, a librarian who typically works in technical services may rotate to public services, gaining insights into user needs, reference inquiries, and information literacy instruction. This exposure not only enriches the librarian's professional repertoire but also fosters a holistic understanding of library operations. Implementing an effective job rotation programme requires careful planning, communication, and support from library administration. While job rotation offers numerous advantages, it is not without challenges. Librarians may encounter resistance or apprehension when asked to step outside their comfort zones or familiar job duties. Effective communication and training are essential to address any concerns and build confidence in the rotation process. Furthermore, adequate staffing and workload management are necessary to mitigate disruptions during transitions and ensure continued service delivery.

Coaching

Coaching, as a method of professional development for librarians, is a dynamic process that involves direct guidance, feedback, and skill enhancement under the tutelage of experienced supervisors or mentors (Njoku, 2018). This approach is widely acknowledged for its effectiveness in facilitating observational learning, immediate correction, and continuous support, thereby

contributing significantly to the professional growth of librarians within the academic library setting. Coaching is a deliberate and right effort by an individual to elevate others achieve specific goal especially among librarians. The following key aspects highlight the significance and impact of coaching in the professional development landscape:

Direct Guidance and Feedback: Supervisors or mentors play an essential role in providing direct guidance and constructive feedback to librarians. This personalized approach allows individuals to receive tailored instructions, demonstrations, and evaluations, thereby facilitating their understanding of library practices and procedure.

Observational Learning and Modeling: Coaching enables librarians to observe experienced professionals in action, providing them with opportunities to learn from real-world examples and best practices. By witnessing how supervisors or mentors navigate complex situations, handle challenges, and interact with patrons, librarians can gain valuable insights and develop effective strategies for their own professional endeavors.

Skill Enhancement and Knowledge Acquisition: Through ongoing coaching sessions, librarians have the chance to refine existing skills and acquire new competencies relevant to their roles within the library. Whether it involves mastering information literacy instruction techniques, improving reference services, or enhancing collection management practices, coaching serves as a catalyst for skill development and knowledge acquisition among librarians.

Continuous Support and Professional Growth: The coaching process emphasizes continuous learning and improvement, with supervisors or mentors providing consistent support, encouragement, and guidance to librarians. This sustained interaction fosters a supportive environment where librarians feel empowered to overcome challenges, pursue professional development opportunities, and achieve their career goals within the library profession.

Understudy Assignment

Understudy assignments in the realm of professional development programmes for librarians represent a strategic approach aimed at enhancing skills, knowledge, and readiness for higher roles within the library profession. This method involves librarians taking on tasks and responsibilities that extend beyond their usual duties, providing them with valuable opportunities

to learn from more experienced colleagues and gain practical experience in diverse aspects of library operations. Librarians participating in understudy assignments have the advantage of working closely with seasoned professionals, allowing for direct observation of exemplary practices and access to mentorship (Idoko et al., 2016). By shadowing experienced colleagues and actively engaging in tasks under their guidance, understudies can acquire insights into effective strategies, best practices, and the intricacies of library work. This hands-on learning experience not only enriches their skill set but also fosters a deeper understanding of the profession's complexities.

Furthermore, understudy assignments facilitate knowledge sharing and skill transfer within the library team, contributing to a culture of collaboration and continuous learning. As understudies collaborate with their mentors and fellow colleagues, they have the opportunity to exchange ideas, seek advice, and leverage collective expertise to address challenges and optimize library services. This collaborative environment nurtures a supportive community where individuals can thrive and grow professionally.

Instructional Guidance

Instructional guidance stands as a critical method in the arsenal of professional development for librarians, as delineated by Njoku (2018). This approach encapsulates a structured process where librarians are methodically guided through step-by-step instructions, subsequently followed by practical application. Njoku underscores the importance of this method in honing librarians' skills and augmenting their knowledge within the dynamic landscape of the library profession. Corcoran and McGuinness (2014) complement Njoku's assertions through their exploration of continuing professional development among academic librarians. They accentuate the significance of structured learning experiences in facilitating skill development and knowledge acquisition within the librarian cohort. By providing lucid instructions and guidance, trainers empower librarians to grasp intricate concepts, master novel techniques, and efficaciously implement them in their professional endeavors.

Furthermore, Abban (2018) emphasizes the invaluable role of practical, hands-on learning experiences in the training and development of library staff. Through meticulously designed

instructional sessions coupled with hands-on application, librarians gain the opportunity to cement their learning, identify areas necessitating refinement, and avail themselves of targeted support from mentors and trainers.

Off-the-Job Professional Development Programmes:

Seminars and Workshops

Off-the-Job Professional Development Programmes offer librarians distinct avenues for growth and enrichment beyond their usual work environment. Two prominent methods in this category are seminars and workshops, each offering unique opportunities for intellectual engagement, skill enhancement, and knowledge sharing.

Seminars serve as focal points for bringing together librarians to delve into pertinent topics, exchange ideas, and stimulate intellectual growth (Bowen-Chang & Hosein, 2019). Through presentations, discussions, and interactive sessions, seminars provide platforms for librarians to explore emerging trends, innovative practices, and contemporary issues shaping the field of library and information science. The participatory nature of seminars encourages critical thinking, as presentations are critiqued and debated, fostering a culture of inquiry and reflection among participants. Librarians benefit not only from the insights shared by presenters but also from the diverse perspectives and experiences contributed by their peers, enriching their understanding and broadening their horizons.

Workshops, on the other hand, offer librarians a collaborative environment to delve into specific topics or activities in-depth (Cobblah & van der Walt, 2017). Whether focused on technology, research methodologies, or service innovations, workshops provide opportunities for hands-on learning, skill development, and knowledge sharing. By engaging in interactive exercises, group discussions, and practical demonstrations, librarians gain practical insights and strategies that can be applied directly to their professional practice. Additionally, the collaborative nature of workshops fosters peer learning and networking, enabling librarians to exchange ideas, share best practices, and forge professional connections with colleagues from diverse backgrounds.

Both seminars and workshops play instrumental roles in the professional development of librarians, offering platforms for continuous learning, skill enhancement, and professional

networking. While seminars stimulate intellectual growth and critical thinking through presentations and discussions, workshops provide immersive learning experiences and hands-on training in specific areas of interest. Together, these off-the-job professional development programmes contribute to the ongoing professional growth and advancement of librarians, ensuring their relevance and effectiveness in meeting the evolving needs of library users and communities.

Lecture or Classroom Method

The lecture or classroom method represents a traditional approach to professional development, involving the transmission of knowledge from instructors to a group of librarians. This method is often cost-effective and logistically straightforward, making it a popular choice for training programmes in various settings. However, as noted by Abban (2018), the lecture format may present challenges due to individual differences in learning abilities among participants. While some librarians may thrive in this structured learning environment, others may struggle to engage or retain information effectively. Therefore, while lectures and classroom sessions can provide a foundation of knowledge, it is essential to supplement them with interactive activities and opportunities for personalized learning to accommodate diverse learning styles and maximize the effectiveness of the training programme.

Vestibule Training

Vestibule training offers librarians the opportunity to undergo training in simulated environments that mirror real job conditions, allowing for hands-on practice without disrupting library operations. This method provides a controlled setting where librarians can familiarize themselves with equipment, procedures, and workflows relevant to their roles within the library. By engaging in practical exercises and simulations, librarians can build confidence, refine their skills, and troubleshoot potential challenges in a safe and supportive environment. Baro et al. (2013) highlight the value of vestibule training in bridging the gap between theory and practice, enabling librarians to apply their learning directly to their professional responsibilities. Additionally, vestibule training minimizes the risk of errors or disruptions in library operations

that may occur during on-the-job training, making it a practical and efficient method for skill development.

Briefing Groups

Briefing groups provide librarians with opportunities for collaborative discussion and knowledge exchange based on short papers or presentations. In these sessions, librarians engage in critical analysis, share insights, and articulate their perspectives on various topics relevant to their professional practice. Anene and Idiedo (2023) emphasize the role of briefing groups in promoting critical thinking and knowledge application among librarians. By participating in discussions, librarians are encouraged to explore diverse viewpoints, challenge assumptions, and synthesize information, fostering a deeper understanding of complex issues and enhancing their decision-making abilities. Briefing groups create a dynamic learning environment where librarians can learn from each other, draw upon their collective expertise, and collaboratively explore solutions to common challenges faced in their work.

Strategies for improving professional development programmes of academic librarians.

Strategies for improving professional development programmes of academic librarians in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, Awka necessitate a holistic approach that addresses various facets of capacity building. Drawing from the literature, several key strategies emerge as important in advancing the effectiveness and impact of professional development initiatives in the Nigerian context. Fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional growth within libraries is paramount. As emphasized by Abban (2018) and Rafiq et al (2016), creating a supportive environment that encourages librarians to engage in ongoing learning and skill development is essential. Library administrators should prioritize professional development by providing opportunities for training, workshops, conferences, and other learning activities. By fostering a culture of lifelong learning, libraries can empower librarians to stay abreast of emerging trends, technologies, and best practices in the field.

Also, leveraging technology to improve professional development is imperative in the digital age. Furthermore, there is need to incorporate digital platforms, online resources, and virtual learning environments into professional development programmes for effective library services.

By harnessing technology, libraries can overcome geographical barriers, reach remote areas, and provide flexible learning opportunities for librarians. Virtual workshops, webinars, and online courses enable librarians to access training materials, collaborate with peers, and engage in self-paced learning, thereby enhancing their skills and competencies (Anene & Idiedo, 2023).

Promoting mentorship and peer learning initiatives can enrich professional development experiences for librarians. This is in line with the value of mentoring programmes in facilitating knowledge transfer, skill development, and career advancement. Pairing experienced librarians with mentees creates opportunities for guidance, feedback, and support, fostering a culture of mentorship and professional growth within the library community. Additionally, peer learning networks and communities of practice enable librarians to exchange ideas, share resources, and collaborate on projects, enhancing collective learning and innovation (Fasola & Mamudu, 2020).

Challenges affecting the improvement of Professional Development Programmes of academic librarians.

Challenges abound in the quest to improve professional development programmes of academic librarians, with a myriad of factors impeding progress in this crucial aspect of capacity building. Among these challenges are funding constraints, technological limitations, policy barriers, and staffing issues, each presenting unique obstacles to the effective implementation of strategies aimed at improving professional development programmes.

One of the most significant challenges facing professional development programmes of librarians is the issue of funding. In addition, financial resources are often scarce, limiting the availability of funds for training, workshops, and other developmental activities. Without adequate funding, it becomes challenging to organize comprehensive training programmes, procure necessary resources, or invest in technology infrastructure to support professional development efforts (Madukoma & Garba, 2022).

Furthermore, technology poses a considerable challenge to the improvement of professional development programmes of academic librarians. According to Anene and Idiedo (2023), technological limitations, including inadequate access to digital resources, outdated infrastructure, and limited technological literacy among librarians, hinder efforts to incorporate

innovative training methods and digital learning platforms into professional development initiatives. Without the necessary technological infrastructure and expertise, librarians may struggle to keep pace with advancements in information technology and digital librarianship, impeding their professional growth and effectiveness in serving library users.

Policy barriers also contribute to the challenges facing strategies for improving professional development programmes for librarians. Anunobi (2013) underscores the importance of supportive institutional policies and frameworks that prioritize and incentivize ongoing professional development. However, the absence of clear policies or inconsistent policy implementation may hinder efforts to allocate resources, provide incentives for participation in training programmes, or integrate professional development into librarians' job responsibilities.

Additionally, staffing issues pose a significant challenge to the improvement of professional development programmes for librarians. As highlighted by Fasola and Mamudu(2020), staffing shortages, turnover, and skill gaps present obstacles to planning and implementing comprehensive training initiatives. Inadequate staffing levels may strain resources and limit the capacity to organize training sessions, mentorship programmes, or other developmental activities essential for librarians' professional growth and advancement.

Solutions to Challenges in Librarians Professional Development Programmes of academic librarians

Addressing the identified challenges in librarian's professional development programmes requires a multi-faceted approach involving collaboration, advocacy, investment, and strategic planning. Libraries can overcome barriers to capacity building and create a conducive environment for librarians to thrive and contribute effectively to the improvement of the library profession. Through concerted efforts from stakeholders, the library sector can realize its potential as a vital hub for information access, literacy, and lifelong learning in the digital age.

One way to address funding constraints is to diversify funding sources and seek partnerships with governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and private sector stakeholders (Madukoma&Garba, 2022). By collaborating with external partners, libraries can access additional resources, grants, and sponsorships to support training programmes, workshops, and other

developmental activities. Moreover, advocating for increased budget allocations for professional development within library budgets can ensure sustained investment in staff training and skill enhancement initiatives (Ramsook& Thomas, 2019; Semode et al, 2017).

Policy barriers can be addressed through advocacy efforts aimed at influencing policymakers to prioritize professional development and create supportive frameworks for capacity building in the library sector (Anunobi, 2013). Engaging with government agencies, professional associations, and advocacy groups can raise awareness of the importance of investing in librarian training and development. Lobbying for the inclusion of professional development provisions in library legislation and policies can institutionalize support for ongoing staff training and skill enhancement initiatives.

Staffing issues can be mitigated through strategic workforce planning, recruitment, and retention strategies (Fasola&Mamudu, 2020). Libraries can develop talent pipelines by partnering with academic institutions to offer internships, apprenticeships, and scholarship programmes for students pursuing library and information science degrees. Providing opportunities for career advancement, mentorship, and professional growth can enhance employee satisfaction and retention, ensuring a skilled and motivated workforce to deliver quality library services.

Methodology

Descriptive research design was used for the study. The descriptive survey according to Nworgu (2015), are those studies which are aimed at collecting and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. The design is deemed suitable for the study because only a portion of the population was studied and findings from the study are expected to be generalized to the entire population. The population for this study is made up of 27 professionals in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. This number is a manageable size and also accessible, hence, there was no need for sampling. Therefore, the entire population was studied. The main instrument used for collecting data for this study is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed using four-point-Likert type rating scale. The researcher personally distributed 27 questionnaires to the respondents at the library location and collected the 27 copies of the questionnaire after some minutes of distribution.

Data was collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics specifically the mean scores, tables and percentages. Thus, any mean score ranges from 2.50 and above was regarded as positive and accepted. While any score below 2.50 was regarded as negative and rejected

Results

Research Question 1: What are the types of professional development programmes available for academic librarians in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, NAU, Awka?

S/N	Types of professional development programmes	X	Decision
1	Job rotation	3.72	Agree
2	Coaching	3.72	Agree
3	Apprenticeship	3.64	Agree
4	Internship	3.00	Agree
5	Instructional guidance	3.45	Agree
6	Seminars	3.43	Agree
7	Workshop	3.67	Agree
8	Understudy Assignment	3.64	Agree
9	Lecture or Classroom Method	3.00	Agree
10	Vestibule Training	3.45	Agree

Table 1 presents the types of professional development programmes available for academic librarians at Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, NAU, Awka, along with their respective mean scores and overall perception. Overall, the table indicates a positive reception of the programmes, with all mean scores exceeding 3.0, suggesting general agreement among librarians regarding their effectiveness. Among the types of professional development programmes listed, job rotation and coaching received the highest mean scores of 3.72, indicating strong agreement among librarians regarding their effectiveness. These results suggest that librarians perceive job rotation and

coaching as valuable methods for enhancing their skills and knowledge within the library environment among other programmes.

Research Question 2: What are the strategies for improving professional development programmes of academic librarians in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, NAU, Awka?

S/N	Strategies to improve professional development programmes	X	Decision
1	Fostering a Culture of Lifelong Learning	3.93	Agree
2	Leveraging Technology	3.84	Agree
3	Promoting Mentorship and Peer Learning	3.39	Agree
4	Strengthening Collaboration and Partnerships	3.70	Agree
5	Aligning with Staff Development Needs	3.43	Agree
6	Focusing on Service Improvement	3.40	Agree
7	Targeting Specific Needs	3.51	Agree
8	Providing Incentives for Participation	3.66	Agree
9	Implementing Comprehensive Evaluation	3.39	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.58	

The findings, as depicted in Table 2, underscore the importance of fostering a culture of lifelong learning with 3.93 as mean score, leveraging technology 3.84, and promoting mentorship and peer learning 3.39 as effective approaches to enhance professional development. Additionally, strengthening collaboration and partnerships 3.70, aligning with staff development needs 3.43, and focusing on service improvement emerge as critical strategies to enhance professional development initiatives. Furthermore, targeting specific needs, providing incentives for participation, and implementing comprehensive evaluation mechanisms are identified as valuable strategies to optimize the effectiveness and impact of professional development programmes.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges affecting the strategies for improving professional development programmes of academic librarians in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, NAU, Awka?

S/N	Challenges that affect the strategies for improving professional development programmes	X	Decision
1	Funding	3.72	Agree
2	Technological Limitations	3.88	Agree
3	Policy Barriers	3.63	Agree
4	Staffing Issues delivery	3.13	Agree
5	Access to Resources	3.99	Agree
6	Lack of Institutional Support	3.63	Agree
7	Resistance to Change	3.13	Agree
8	Lack of Awareness	3.13	Agree
9	Geographical Constraints	3.13	Agree
10	Inadequate Evaluation Mechanisms	3.63	Agree
	Grand mean	3.50	

Table 3reveal a consensus among librarians regarding the challenges they encounter in enhancing professional development initiatives. Overall, the table indicates a common agreement with all mean scores exceeding 3.0. Funding 3.72 emerges as a key challenge, indicating that inadequate financial resources hinder the implementation of effective programmes. Similarly, technological limitations 3.88, policy barriers 3.63, access to resources 3.99 and lack of institutional support 3.63 present formidable challenges, impeding efforts to modernize and innovate professional development strategies.

Research Question 4: What are the solutions to the identified challenges for improving professional development programmes of academic librarians in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, NAU, Awka?

S/N	Solutions to the identified challenges for improving professional development programmes	X	Decision
1	Increased Funding	3.84	Agree
2	Investment in Infrastructure	3.31	Agree

3	Policy Reforms	3.40	Agree
4	Recruitment and Retention Strategies	3.00	Agree
5	Enhanced Access to Resources	3.97	Agree
6	Training and Awareness Programmes	3.64	Agree
7	Cultural Change Initiatives	3.45	Agree
8	Geographical Outreach Efforts	3.34	Agree
9	Collaborative Initiatives	3.79	Agree
10	Evaluation and Feedback Mechanisms	3.72	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.55	

As delineated in Table 4, increased funding 3.84 emerges as a crucial solution to support robust professional development initiatives. Additionally, investment in infrastructure 3.31, policy reforms 3.40, and recruitment and retention strategies 3.00 are identified as essential measures to address the challenges effectively. Furthermore, enhanced access to resources 3.97, training, and awareness programmes 3.64, along with cultural change initiatives 3.45, geographical outreach efforts 3.34, collaborative initiatives 3.79, and evaluation and feedback mechanisms 3.72, are proposed as viable solutions to optimize professional development programmes.

Discussion of Results

This finding is discussed under the following subheadings reflecting the research questions:

Types of professional development programmes of academic librarians

The study revealed a variety of methods employed for capacity building in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, including workshops, job rotation, coaching, and seminars. These findings align with existing literature, which emphasizes the importance of diverse approaches to staff development (Gomba, 2019). The use of such methods indicates a proactive approach by the library management in enhancing the skills and competencies of its staff members. However, despite the availability of these capacity-building initiatives, challenges such as funding

constraints and inadequate administrative commitment may hinder their effectiveness (Hussain&Abalkhail, 2013).

Strategies for improving Professional Development Programmes of Academic Librarians

The study identified several strategies to enhance professional development programmes, such as fostering a culture of lifelong learning, leveraging technology, and promoting mentorship and peer learning. These strategies are in line with recommendations from previous studies (Eaton &Pasquini, 2020; Rafiq et al., 2016). By implementing these strategies, academic libraries can create a conducive environment for staff growth and development, ultimately improving service delivery and user satisfaction.

Challenges affecting the strategies for improving Professional Development programmes of Academic Librarians

Respondents identified various challenges that impact the effectiveness of professional development strategies, including funding limitations, technological constraints, and resistance to change. These challenges are consistent with previous research findings (Okoye, 2018). Insufficient financial resources and technological limitations may limit the implementation of innovative training programmes, while resistance to change can impede the adoption of new approaches to staff development. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure the success of professional development initiatives and improve service delivery in academic libraries.

Solutions to the identified Challenges for Improving Professional Development Programmes of Academic Librarians

Furthermore, the study highlighted potential solutions to challenges in improving professional development programmes. These solutions include increased funding, investment in infrastructure, policy reforms, and recruitment and retention strategies. Additionally, enhancing access to resources, training and awareness programmes, and implementing evaluation and feedback mechanisms are crucial steps in overcoming barriers to effective staff development. The finding here is in an agreement with previous studies (Ramsook& Thomas, 2019; Semode et al., 2017). By prioritizing these solutions, academic libraries can address existing challenges and create a supportive environment for staff growth and development.

Conclusion

The findings of this study emphasize the critical role of professional development in enhancing the capacity and service delivery of academic libraries. The diverse methods employed for capacity building, including workshops and coaching, reflect a proactive approach by library management in supporting staff growth and skill enhancement. However, the existence of challenges such as funding constraints and resistance to change underscores the need for strategic interventions to ensure the effectiveness of professional development initiatives. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from library management, university administration, and relevant stakeholders. By prioritizing solutions such as increased funding, investment in infrastructure, and policy reforms, academic libraries can create an enabling environment for staff development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The library should improve on the professional development programmes in line with current innovations for librarians to keep abreast with the current trends in librarianship.

2. The library should have a well-structured strategy for improving professional development programmes (online and offline) focusing on new library innovations for academic librarians advancement towards effective library services.

3. Professional development programmes are part of driving force in work environment and as such, the university management should provide enabling environment (funding, training, facilities, and utilities) to support librarians in acquiring the needed exposure and motivation.

4. The library should ensure that librarians shift towards 21st century innovation prevalent in developed world.

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