

## Global Communication/Educational Resources and Skills Developments In Developing Countries: Case Study Of University Librarians In Nigeria

By

T. A. Akanji,

And

C. O. Ola

### Abstract

*This article examines the relevance of training and skills development to modern librarianship in the first generation universities in Nigeria. The developments noticed in this sector in the universities within the past decade made it imperative to have new workers with new skills to adopt to the many changes that have taken place that are likely to affect the working environments and professional functions of the librarians. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. 80 librarians made up of (twenty eight) 28 professional librarians and 52 Para-professional librarians participated in the study. Data were collected using a questionnaire tagged Workers Skills Development Questionnaire (WSDQ) and this was complemented with structured interview. Findings revealed that librarians should be trained to cope with global change in librarianship. Specific areas where skills need to be enhanced were identified and suggestions for sources of fund were described.*

### Introduction

The nature of library resources has transformed from the normal collections we used to know into electronic format. Clients' demands have also changed from asking for sources of information to demanding real information. These inevitable and unabatable changes eroding traditional librarianship practices have placed a demand for capacity building on libraries and librarians.

The field of librarianship is witnessing so much development and transformations that any library that does not embrace the new development will become obsolete in no time. The idea of interlibrary loans and dependency, for instance, is not strange in the librarianship circle. The dimension through which it is integrated into library practice currently cannot be ignored. It is no longer considered merely a convenient arrangement. It is structured and participatory, and the government (in public-owned institutions) takes keen interest in the arrangement plus making grants available for its smooth implementation. If an item is needed that is not available in a particular library, the item can simply be made available within reasonable length of time by clicking of appropriate keys through special delivery system. An example of such arrangement is the 'I-Share' system, which includes the resources of 65 Illinois libraries belonging to 'Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois' (CARLI webpage).

The formation of the 'Friends of the Library' association in most libraries is quite significant. Although the body's activities may seem adjunct, it is germane to the well-being of the library. If the library must perform its role effectively and be responsive to users' needs in a society where all social programmes compete for funds and attention from government, the intervention of the



'Friends of the Library' group is becoming inevitable in the library environment. In Nigeria, this group, which is becoming phenomenal in library communities, is very novel.

These trends are now regarded as 'best practices' for the improvement of library functions and services even though they may be considered as merely contingent to the core technical and professional practices of selection, acquisition, organization and dissemination of materials. More challenging presently is the need for training in the librarianship art of sourcing, acquiring, preserving and making available electronic resources. The idea of audio books may seem strange but it is generating a lot of discourse in higher educational institutions. Librarians must be ready to embrace this new medium of communicating knowledge.

Libraries exist to give service. It is either they do this or they become irrelevant. To continue to be relevant, conscious efforts should be made for training and retraining of library personnel. In recent years, many socio-economic changes have affected the funding of public universities in Nigeria and consequently their libraries. These changes affected the training of professional librarians who seriously need to face the challenges posed by the accelerating pace of change in the world of communication. The ability and readiness of libraries to adapt to the changes in this very fast evolving field would be a measure of its ability to stand the test of time, as it would be able in a position to meet the ever-increasing information demands of its ever-changing clientele. To meet these seeming uphill challenges, libraries must transform into a learning organization. Literarily, a learning organization is one that is:

- able (on a continuous basis) to take the appropriate cues from its ever changing operating environment.
- able to continuously reengineer its system and processes.
- capable of continuously repositioning itself to preserve its niche and maintain or enhance its competitiveness, by responding appropriately to evolutionary trends.

Many strange factors in developing countries often create impediments for learning organizations to be able to achieve its objectives. Inadequacy of funds is considered universal and pervasive in libraries regardless of type, status or location. However, some libraries suffer debilitating neglect than others. This is particularly serious in developing countries where there are constant economic problems which manifest in unemployment, poverty and shoestring budgetary allocations. Consequently, national priorities dictate the sectors of the economy that are given budgetary attention. Publicly funded university libraries in Nigeria are bedeviled by financial constraints. This is particularly so because the education sector is not given the prime place it deserves in the national annual budget. Since the universities are poorly funded, it is common knowledge that when there is reduction in budgetary allocations, the libraries are the first to suffer cuts in their allocations. (Ola, 1995).

In alluding to the financial constraints experienced by Nigerian Universities, Ola (2005) informs "In Nigeria, education... suffers greatly despite persistent agitations by the general public that the sub-sector should be adequately funded." He further stated that libraries are so poorly funded that they cannot even afford to subscribe to journals and other periodicals. Moreover, libraries are at the mercies of their principals. Even when subventions are released by government to universities, the ten percent (10%) of recurrent expenditure (which has now been further reduced to be 10% of overhead cost of the university) that should statutorily be made available for library use is manipulated by university administration, and oftentimes, the fund is diverted to other uses. In most cases, the University Librarians are not signatories to library accounts, so, the funds would have been long expended for other things before the libraries get to know. Under such circumstances as this, there are hardly any thoughts given to training and capacity building!



The information needs of library users continue to soar everyday due to the emergence of new frontiers of research. The only way to keep users satisfied and sustain their confidence in the libraries is through efficient training of the librarians.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There is a major transformation in the libraries in Nigeria from manual (traditional) librarianship to the electronic (modern) format of information service delivery occasioned by the changing frontiers of learning and research. For instance, libraries have to respond to the demands of distance learning through wider outreach. Many libraries now have to use new methods like On-line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), the Internet and multi-media electronic communications systems to widen their outreach which requires special and new kinds of expertise both on the part of the librarians and the library users. The new changes are coming in the face of dwindling economic resources. There is therefore the need to sensitize the librarians on the need for training to cope with these changes. Against this background, this study aims to identify specific areas where the skills of the university librarians need to be developed as a response to the identified changes in the public university libraries in Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

The descriptive survey method was adopted for the study. The instruments used for data collection were: a set of questionnaire tagged Workers Skills Development Questionnaire (WSDQ) and a self structured interview. The items contained in the instruments were used to elicit information on specific areas of skills development needs and possible environmental factors that may hinder skills development. Five First Generation Universities participated in the study. The first generation universities and their years of establishment are listed below.

1. University of Ibadan (South West, Nigeria) 1948
2. University of Nigeria, Nsukka (South East, Nigeria) 1960
3. Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (North Central, Nigeria) 1962
4. University of Lagos (South West, Nigeria) 1962
5. University of Ife (Now Obafemi Awolowo University) (South West, Nigeria) 1962

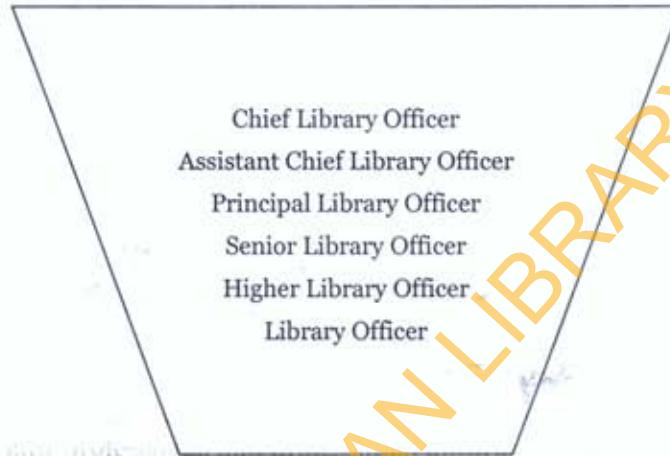
There are three categories of staff identified by the researchers, they are:

1. **Support Staff:** The library assistants, clerical, secretariat, accounts, technical and security staff.
2. **Para-professional staff.** The library officers, the staff in this category rise through the ranks. They hold diploma in the library science (DLS), a first degree in library science or other related disciplines. They cannot rise higher than the level of a chief library officer.
3. **The professional library staff.** They are the smallest in numerical terms and hold a minimum qualification of master's degree.

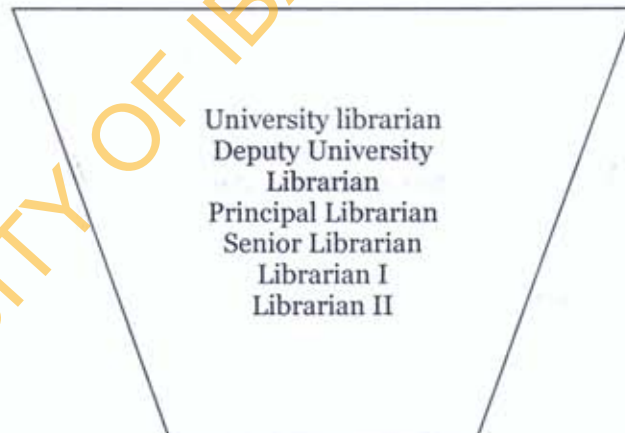
Only the last two categories i.e. the para-professional and professional librarians took part in the study.

Hierarchy of Professional and Para-Professional Library Staff in Nigeria  
The hierarchy of ranking of para-professional and professional librarians is presented below.

**A. Para-professional librarians**



**B. The professional librarians**



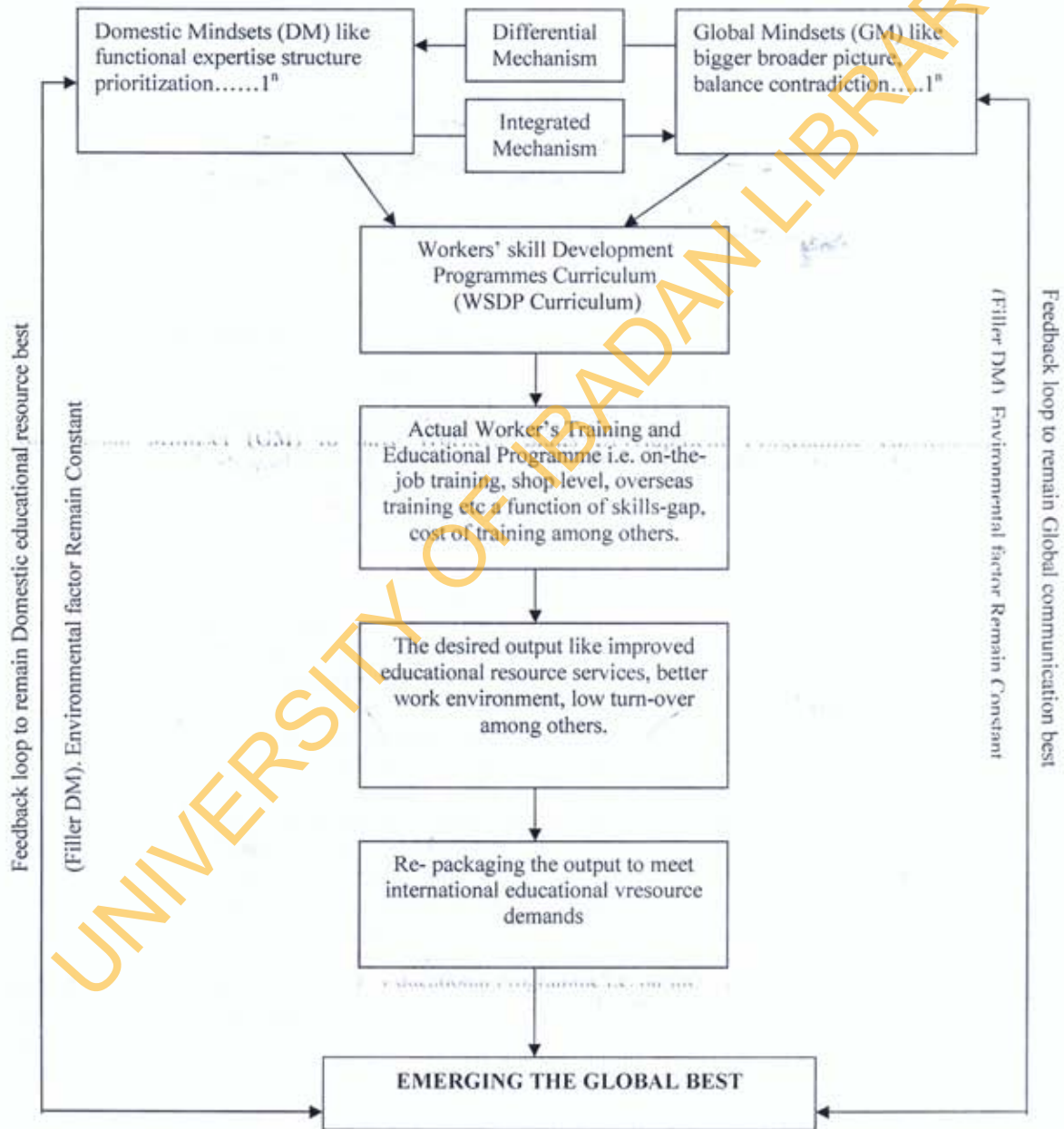
Professional librarians are categorized as academic and are in fact members of Academic staff Union of University (ASUU). The position of University Librarian is occupied by appointment for two terms of five years each. Only very few employees get to the level of Deputy and University librarians.



### Conceptual Model

The theoretical framework on which this study is based is as presented below.

The Domestic and Global Mindsets Model was developed from the submissions of Shandler (1996:7) from format WSDP (Workers' Skills Development Programme). "DM" (Domestic Mindset) is integrated into the Global Mindset (GM) to have Workers' Skills Development Programme curriculum (WSDP Curriculum) on which worker's training and educational programmes are based to produce the right skills that compare favourably well with the best across the globe and which will engender productivity.



D and GM<sup>2</sup> Model  
Developed from Domestic and Global mindsets of Schandler (1996:7)

## Literature Review

### Training

Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines training as the act of giving teaching and practice to someone in an effort to bring him to an acceptable standard behaviour efficiency, or physical coordination. Nadler (1974), Barrow (1984) and Peppel (1992) see training as the systemic development of the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviour pattern required by an individual in order to adequately perform his current task or job. Education and training are often confused and treated as synonyms. While training is often taken as being synonymous to education in some cases, others have tried to draw a distinction between the two concepts. For stance, Bukhala 1974 wrote that:

Whereas general education is more concerned with propositional knowledge acquisition of know-what and whys of concept, generalizations, principles and theories or formulae needed for the application from one type of job to another, training is more concerned with practical knowledge acquisition of technical know-how skills for operation of tools and equipment in the performance of task related to specific management or entrepreneurial and technical style inherent in a specified process of production.

Beach (1980), Gosh (1979) and Malone (1994) conceive training in terms of acquisition of specific skills for the purpose of performing a specific task. Education is seen as being concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and understanding from a wider perspective. There are some writers who see education and training as complementary and overlapping. Particularly, Omole (1996) sees education as being basic to training and that the dividing line between the two concepts is purely academic and narrow. He opines that while we need a skill to survive, the acquisition of skill in itself is inadequate. Education is further required to improve and/or modify our skills to survive. Pursuing the controversy further, he highlights the overlapping role of education and training when he sums up his own narrow distinction in this way:

"Education involves learning at the cognitive level whereby the learner is guided in the understanding of concepts at the knowledge level...Education then deals with the know-how". It assists trainees to acquire the necessary skill needed in functioning and doing things"

Training is expected to benefit trainees and employers in several ways. According to Akanji (1998), the benefits of training to the trainees and employers include the following: High turnover and profit, improved quality service, increased safety, better company image, more efficient use of means of production, highly educated and (skilled) staff, high number of transfer of super flows staff (high labour mobility], more efficiency and productivity, equal opportunities for staff (job satisfaction, better allocation of work, division of labour and professionalism) more team work (collectivism and togetherness due to common goal orientation) less absenteeism, reduced staff turnover, (less cost and human errors) increased staff motivation, better perception of the company and the job, improved communication (at levels and better customers service relation). Today, individuals and organizations must become continuous learners. It is not surprising to find that most successful organizations operate in a continuous learning mode.



## Identification of Training Needs

Training becomes useful only when it is directional. It is expected to attempt to correct an identified problem in the organization. Considering the huge cost of training to an organization, it should be given where it is really needed. Training is the use of scarce financial resources for the betterment of the equally scarce human resources. Therefore the identification of training needs should precede any training activity. Boydell & Leary (1999) describe their idea of training needs as existing any time an actual condition differs from a desired condition in the human or "people" aspect of organization's performance or, more specifically, when a change in present human knowledge, skills or attitudes can bring about the desired performance.

Ingwu (1987) also describes training need as the recognition of an unusual or abnormal condition that requires correction.

Nti (1974) identifies five fields in which training needs must be analyzed as follows:

- i. Training new employees (orientation, induction training etc)
- ii. Training present employees for increase work effectiveness
- iii. Training outstanding employees for promotion and filling of vacancies
- iv. Executive training
- v. Attitude

There is also the need for training need assessment in the organization in the following areas:

Training needs resulting from changes in legislation,

- Changes in needed skills or procedures because of new technologies (e.g. introducing electronic system into librarianship);
- Improvement of existing skills to enhance productivity and boost levels of services;
- Acquisition of new skills necessary for prompting workers in their new jobs or for introducing changes in the division of labour within administrative units;
- Continuous updating and professional fulfillment of employees whose special areas are known to undergo rapid and significant changes;
- Imparting necessary skills for new employees so that they can perform in the new environment;
- Organizational growth in terms of efficiency and effectiveness from improved management techniques;
- Increased responsiveness to present service needs and anticipation of the future public needs; and improvement skills and personal growth of all government officials.

## The Research Questions

The study was carried out based on the following research questions:

1. Are there significant relationship between the ability of the Librarian to cope with the Global changes and the following components of skills development?
  - a. Functional flexibility skills
  - b. Adaptability skills
  - c. Developmental Skill
  - d. Influencing skills
2. What are the relative contributions of each of the skills development components to the Librarians ability to cope with the changes?
3. What are the operational problems involved or encountered in the use of the skills development packages?



## Findings

Table 1: Contingency table for testing the relationship of functional flexibility skills, adaptability skills, developmental skills and influencing skills on the Librarians' ability to cope with the global changes.

	DF	Sum of squares	Mean square	F-Ratio	P	Remarks
Regression	9	1.10951	0.27738	8710.993	0.0000	Sig
Residual	71	0.01576	0.00003			

F-ratio = 8710.993; Significant of F = 0.0000;  $p < 0.05$

From the table,  $F(9,71) = 8710$ ;  $p < 0.05$ . This means that employees' skills do have a significant relationship with the ability of the Librarians to cope with the demand of global development in librarianship. The various skills identified are; Functional flexibility skills (ability to function in different capacities), adaptability skills which is the ability to cope successfully with the 'on-the-job' demands (coping mechanism) while development skills are meant to engender innovation and improvisation abilities as the occasion demands to achieve set goals and objectives. Influencing skills connotes being relevant positively to the environment(s) of operation whether domestic or global (international). It must be understood that these skills dimensions are interdependent and contingent. This means that, all together, they are the desired skills in the workers (employees) to bring about productivity.

Table II:

Contingency table testing the relative contributions of the skills to the coping abilities of the Librarians.

Variables	Beta(β)	T
Functional flexibility skills	0.176276	14.882
Adaptability skills	0.318119	28.787
Developmental Skills	0.293707	17.0.13
Influencing skills	0.258457	14.191

The analysis of the relative contributions of each of the skills re-engineering components to employees' productivity show adaptability skills ranking first with 0.318119 followed by developmental skills with 0.293707. The next in line is influencing skills which is 0.258457 and then functional flexibility skills with 0.176276.

The respondents believe that Adaptability skills have the highest relative contribution because there is a great need for the Librarians to cope with the new trends in the face of dwindling financial resources.

3. What are the operational problems involved or encountered in the use of the skills development packages? The operational problems identified and mentioned by the respondent were inadequate finance to train and educate the workers, inadequate appropriate infrastructural facilities and facilitators who were to carry out the re-skilling programmes. Also, conducive environmental conditions to carry out the programme were not available as they are supposed to be.

All the respondents agree that the greatest impediment to training is funding. In all the five universities sampled, majority (85%) want to rely on subvention from the center for staff training. The library projects in the University of Ibadan have been enjoying sponsorship from



grants obtained from the MAC-ARTHUR FOUNDATION. Some professional librarians have been assisted through this to go for overseas training to improve their competence. The internally fund-generating units are not very active in all the universities hence, the funds from these sources cannot be sufficient for training. One respondent reported that he is going to Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville in the U.S to understudy (among other things) a funding body called 'Friends of the Library.'

This is a project in which some recognized patrons "friends" donate and carry out projects toward the development of the library. The aim is to study how such projects can be implemented in the University Library when he returns. In general, the majority of the respondents (92%) agree that students should be made to pay a token levy for library development so as to have funds for training and other library projects.

### Conclusion

The findings from the study reveal that library workers can only survive in their ever-expanding roles and increased users' expectations through training and continuing education. There is therefore one inescapable fact, particularly during the period of declining economy, we may never have enough funds or sufficient resources to do all the things we would like to do. Resources will constantly be overloaded by the increasing expectations placed on continuing education by the global changes experienced in librarianship. There is therefore the need for librarians to generate funds for training through many other sources.

The fact that resources are limited for training makes it imperative for university librarians to ensure that efforts are made to identify specific areas of training needs before training is embarked upon. Training should be made to meet the changing job requirements. There should be linkage between the schools and the libraries. The librarian should understand that library schools cannot produce workers with sufficient skills to work in the libraries. Therefore, notwithstanding the training received from the schools, library staff should be provided the opportunity for in-service continuing education and exposure to cope with conflicts occasioned by constant changes and expansion of roles (Hudson 1999; Odini 1999). For instance, the emergence of the Africa Virtual University Project sponsored by the World Bank aims at powering information technology to increase access to educational resources throughout sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. This new project, which is at its pilot stage, requires that libraries train their workers to cope with the new method of creating access to such educational resources.

Of the 10% of recurrent expenditure, nay, overhead cost of the university made available as library vote, certain percentage should be set aside for training and capacity building. Also, sources of funds such as, international organizations, donor agencies and foundations should be explored to enhance training and international exposures. Link programs and exchanges should be arranged with university and college libraries in developed countries to experience best practices in the librarianship profession. Most importantly, there should be a re-evaluation and reform of Library Studies curriculum in schools with adequate input from professionals in the field because they experience the transformation taking place in the discipline directly. This will have dual advantages of equipping the students for future challenges in their chosen career as well as reducing the burden of training new recruits (entrants) into the field.

Concluding, expanding roles in libraries will constantly lead to changes in organizational objectives. Methods of achieving library objectives will also change. All these changes require new employees who can only be made through recurrent training. Therefore, life-long learning through continuing education is a must for all libraries in Nigeria.



## References

- Akanji, T. A. (1998). Integration of training programmes towards affective training skills development in some segments of the Nigerian armed forces. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Barrow, K. (1984). Control in large organization. *Management Science*, 10, 297-464.
- Beach D.S. (1980). *Personnel: The management of people at work*. New York: Macmillan.
- Boydell, T. & Leary, M. (1999). Identifying training needs. London: IPD.
- Bukhala, J. A. (1974). Problems of human resource development, training objectives and policy considerations. *African Administration Studies*, 11, January.
- Bukley, R. & Caple, J. (1992). *The theory and practice of training*. London: Kogan Page. Consortium of academic and research libraries in Illinois.  
<http://i-share.carli.illinois.edu/ilscoc/cgi-bin/welcome>
- Gosh, B. (1979). *Personal management industrial relations*. Calcutte: World Press.
- Hudson, M. P. (1999). Conflict and stress in times of change. *Library Management*, 20, 2.
- Ingwu E. U. (1987). Staff development in the Cross River state civil service. Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Nadler, A. (1974). Defining human resource development. In Erick, F. (ed.) *Defining human resource development: The European approach*. Houston, Texas: Gulf Publishing Co.
- Odini, C. (1999). Training and development of skills in a changing environment. *Library Management* 20, 2.
- Ola, C. O. (1995). The impact of economic depression on serials growth in Nigerian university libraries: The case of Kenneth Dike library, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. *Nigerian Libraries*, 29, 1&2, 50-60.
- Ola, C. O. (2005). The challenges of journal marketing and distribution in a developing economy. In L. O. Aina, A. A. Alemna & Iyabo Mabawonku. (eds.) *Improving the quality of library and information science journals in West Africa: Proceedings of the stakeholders conference held at the conference centre, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 7-8 December 2005*, 127-136.
- Omole, M. A. L (1996). The politics of workers education. A faculty lecture delivered at the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Ondari-Okemwa, E. (2000). Training needs of professional librarians in the Kenyan public classrooms librarians: A critical analysis. *Library Management*, 21, 5, 257-268.
- Ottaway, R. (1976). A change strategy to implement new norms, new styles and new environment in the work organization. *Personnel Review*; 5, 13-18.
- Shandler, D. (1996). *Re-engineering training with the new corporate agenda*. Florida. ST: Lucie Press.

Department Of Adult Education,  
University Of Ibadan,  
Ibadan, Nigeria.

E-Mail: [Adeakanji2002@Yahoo.Co.Uk](mailto:Adeakanji2002@Yahoo.Co.Uk)

C. O. Ola  
Kenneth Dike Library,  
University Of Ibadan,  
Ibadan, Nigeria.

E-mail: [co3la@yahoo.combx](mailto:co3la@yahoo.combx)