Assessment of staff training needs for Supporting Off-Campus Teaching at Selected University Libraries in Kenya

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Abstract

Kenya's university libraries are deficiently prepared to launch and operationalize full-fledged off-campus information products and services; hence, wavering support for off-campus learning and teaching. The purpose of this study was to determine staff training needs for supporting off-campus teaching at selected university libraries. A descriptive survey research design was employed and target population was 127 university library staff and 491 faculty members from business, education, information technology, and graduate studies departments. A census of all the library staff was done, while a sample size of 220 faculty members was selected using a stratified sampling technique. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. Validity and reliability tests were conducted on the data instrument. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and thematic analysis. The findings revealed that staff training needs had a positive and significant relationship with off-campus teaching at selected university libraries in Kenya. The key aspects of staff training needs noted by this study included digital knowledge, competencies, skills, and regular training. The study recommended that library management needs to strengthen their staff training needs.

Keywords*: Staff training needs, Off-Campus Teaching, University libraries*

1.0 Introduction

Off-campus teaching and learning allows students to continue their studies without compromising certain aspects of their lives, such as work, family life, and community commitments (Henderson et al., 2017). Digital literacy is the ability to find, analyze, develop, and communicate information using technology, including cognitive and technological skills (Becker, 2018). In the digital world, digitally savvy people can get a lot done. Most university libraries in developed countries build strong digital collections to support off-campus learners (Murray, 2015). Training needs to include all the necessary improvements so that individual understanding, abilities, attitudes, and experiences will enable them to work effectively in their current jobs (Abouelenein, 2016). According to Boon et al. (2015), training needs entail knowledge, possibilities, attitudes, and behaviors that learners have to increase or modify to correct current or developmental aspects.

Academic libraries around the world are equipped with appropriate learning resources in both print and electronic form (e-books and e-journals) and have trained librarians and automated libraries (Wibrowski et al., 2016). In developing countries, there has been increasing evidence

in recent years of extraordinary strides in leveraging digital libraries to support off-campus teaching and learning in Africa (Ilahi et al., 2017; Rosenberg, 2006). Much attention has been paid to digital readiness in countries such as Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, and Nigeria, as evidenced by the existence of digital libraries (Oyeleye & Uche, 2015; Wangila, 2014).

Kenyan universities are required to develop supportive ICT enablers for off-campus teaching. It is however notable that most university libraries are deficiently prepared to implement off-campus teaching programs. A glaring case in point is where most Sub-Saharan university libraries were caught unaware and unprepared during the COVID-19 outbreak since most of them had neither framework nor modalities for switching to and supporting online teaching. This was characterized by disruptions of academic activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Areba, 2020). The state of unpreparedness can be attributed to lack of necessary capacity to support this undertaking. This situation is mirrored at universities such as Kenyatta University library where less digital awareness, insufficiency of ICT resources, lack of digital literacy skills, inadequate staff training, insufficient fiscal resources, and employee turnover have been noted by KLISC (2016). The magnitudes of these impediments have not been validated at university libraries, and there exist few empirical studies that have explored the underlying circumstances to inform policy changes. To determine staff training needs for supporting off-campus teaching at selected university libraries.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Staff training needs for supporting off-campus teaching

Hamadneh (2015) study focused on identifying the training needs of lecturers at Al-Albayt University in Jordan. The research reveals that the teacher achieves significant outcomes for all of the skills tested in the questionnaire. Technical expertise is the most vital, followed by research capabilities, and finally teaching skills. "Use of a virtual laboratory" is the most popular requirement for improving technical skills. Quantitative and qualitative computing using mathematics courses was a major training need for research skills while developing thinking skills and answering students' questions was a major training need for teaching skills. According to the study, the key training needs for staff include technical expertise, research skills, and teaching skills. Nonetheless, the study was carried out in Jordan, a different learning environment from Kenya.

Abouelenein (2016) analyzed the training needs of university teachers to achieve optimal efficiency along with technological advances in Egypt. This research follows the descriptive-analytic paradigm in the presentation of literary works. Data collection is based on a questionnaire that divides teacher needs into four areas: teaching, research, community service, and promoting the quality system. Findings indicated that there was a need to train university professors in the face of technological advances. The study emphasized the essence of training university staff in line with new technological advancements. Nonetheless, the study did not specify areas that the training should focus on. It is crucial to identify specific training needs of staff.

Eze et al. (2020) examined the factors affecting student use of e-learning in Nigerian private universities. Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews with 15 L-University students who were randomly selected from the Landmark Directory, and data were analyzed using hybrid thematic analysis. Students' perceptions of e-learning tools are influenced by technological factors (usability, speed of accessibility, and service delivery), organizational factors (support and diversity of learning) environmental factors (consumer attitudes), and influencing factors (learning experience, competency development, academic

performance, and involvement). According to the study, several factors that are technology, organization, environment, and impact-related were vital in influencing students' adoption of e-learning facilities. However, the study only focused on students. Yet, teachers are equally essential in ensuring successful e-learning.

A study by Nwokedi and Nwokedi (2018) assessed the ICT training needs of University of Jos academic personnel in Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted. Data was collected using a questionnaire. The survey results indicated that the respondents had prior knowledge of using email services and also attended seminars. It concluded that academic personnel needed online training and assignments such as project preparation, teaching and learning materials. The study highlighted the significance of seminars in facilitating the training of e-learning.

Omariba (2016) assessed the willingness of public universities for basic education in Kenya to integrate information and communication technology into teacher training. Teachers, sophomore students, part-time teachers, principals, and e-learning staff at the Kenya Curriculum Development Institute (KICD) were the target groups for study descriptions. Questionnaires, interviews, and monitoring plans were used as data collection tools. The results showed that there was insufficient instruction on how to use ICTs and the willingness to integrate ICT was still in its early stages.

Tarus et al. (2015) investigated the obstacles that Kenyan public universities face in implementing e-learning. Questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and record analysis were used to gather information. The findings revealed that e-learning has several problems that Kenyan public universities must face before it can be implemented successfully. The teaching staff's lack of professional expertise in e-learning and e-content creation has been described as a major barrier to e-learning implementation. The paper offered some suggestions for public universities to consider to introduce e-learning successfully. This included expanding ICT and e-learning infrastructure to allow students, teachers, and other stakeholders easier access to e-learning by allocating more resources to ICT and e-learning infrastructure growth. Access to e-learning would be improved by the availability of computers, tablets, networks, and other related resources. It was also suggested that lecturers receive e-learning skills training. The study highlighted the lack of technical skills as a huge obstacle to the implementation of e-learning. Nonetheless, the study did not focus on off-campus teaching and learning.

3.0 Methodology

The study locations were Kenyatta, Nairobi, and Kenya College of Accountancy universities. A descriptive survey research design was employed. The target population was 127 university library staff and 491 faculty members from business, education, information technology, and graduate studies departments. A census of all the library staff was done. Yamane's (1967) formula was adopted in the computation of the sample size from the faculty members. A sample size of 220 faculty members was selected using a stratified sampling technique. The faculty members were classified into four strata: Business, education, information technology, and graduate studies. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using semi-structured questionnaires. Content, construct, face, and criterion validity of the instrument were investigated in this study. Reliability of the instrument was checked using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive (mean, standard deviation, and percentages), and correlation analysis, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically. Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

4.1.1 Findings on Staff Training Needs

The study determined staff training needs for supporting off-campus teaching at selected University libraries. The participants were asked to rate sentiments on staff training needs for supporting off-campus teaching. The sentiments covered aspects of knowledge, skill, abilities, qualifications, experience, and environment. The scale used was as follows: very small extent (1), to a small extent (2), to a moderate extent (3), to a large extent (4), to a very large extent (5). The descriptive results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Staff Training Needs

Statements on Staff Training Needs (N=225)	1	2	3	4	5	M	Std. Dev
Library staff are equipped with appropriate digital knowledge to support off-campus teaching	0	0	6(2.7%)	78(34.7%)	141(62.7%)	4.6	0.5
Library staff are equipped with appropriate digital skills to support off-campus teaching	0	0	6(2.7%)	117(52%)	102(45.3%)	4.4	0.5
Library staff have the needed competencies to support off-campus teaching	0	6(2.7%)	0	104(46.2%)	115(51.1%)	4.5	0.6
Library staff have regular training to sharpen their skills to support off-campus teaching	0	23(10.2%)	70(31.1%)	60(26.7%)	72(32%)	3.8	1.0
Library staff have the required experience to support off-campus teaching	0	0	16(7.1%	86(38.2%)	123(54.7%)	4.5	0.6
Library staff have the required knowledge to support off-campus teaching	0	0	0	78(34.7%)	147(65.3%)	4.7	0.5
Library staff have the required competencies to support off-campus teaching	0	0	7(3.1%)	78(34.7%)	140(62.2%)	4.6	0.6
Aggregate score						4.4	0.6

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents agreed to a great extent with most of the statements about the necessity for staff training to facilitate off-campus teaching. An aggregate mean of 4.4 and a standard deviation of 0.6 backed this up. The participants agreed to a very large extent with the following statements: Library staff is equipped with appropriate digital knowledge to support off-campus teaching (141, 62.7%), m=4.6; library staff has the required knowledge to support off-campus teaching (147, 65.3%), m=4.7; and library staff had the required competencies to support off-campus teaching (140, 62.2%, m=4.6). This implies that most of the library staff were well equipped with digital knowledge and this was expected to enhance their role in boosting off-campus teaching. The findings concurred with Abouelenein (2016) emphasis on the essence of training university staff in line with new technological

advancements. Similarly, the study findings suggested that most library staff were digitally prepared.

Further, the respondents agreed to a large extent that library staff is equipped with appropriate digital skills to support off-campus teaching (102, 45.3%), m=4.4); and library staff have regular training to sharpen their skills to support off-campus teaching (72, 32%, m=3.8). The findings suggested that most of the respondents acknowledged the significance of training in supporting off-campus teaching. The findings were consistent with those of Nwokedi and Nwokedi (2018) who concluded that academic personnel needed online training and assignments such as project preparation, teaching and learning materials. This brings out the importance of training for enhanced digital preparedness. Further, Tarus et al. (2015) highlighted the lack of technical skills as a huge obstacle to the implementation of e-learning. The findings indicated that most respondents had adequate technical skills and this was expected to enhance off-campus teaching.

When asked to identify the staff training needs for supporting off-campus teaching in their institution. The respondents indicated the following two themes: Training in emerging trends in ICT and Webinar training.

The themes are emphasizing the importance of training on emerging trends in ICT. When embraced in the training, it will ensure that staff are up-to-date with the current technological dynamics and therefore utilizing them for enhanced off-campus teaching. The respondents also noted the need for regular training using webinars. This would enhance their digital preparedness and subsequently boost off-campus teaching. The findings mirrored Nwokedi and Nwokedi (2018) argument that seminars facilitate the training of e-learning. Both studies agreed on the importance of ICT training in enhancing e-learning.

4.1.2 Findings on Off-Campus Teaching

The respondents rated statements on the dependent variable, which was off-campus teaching. This variable was measured using various items that covered issues on program flexibility, e-teaching &learning materials, course quality, stakeholder cooperation, networking, and enrollment. The scale used was as follows: very small extent (1), to a small extent (2), to a moderate extent (3), to a large extent (4), to a very large extent (5). The descriptive results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics on Off-Campus Teaching*

Statements on Off-Campus Teaching (N=225)	1	2	3	4	5	M	Std. Dev
The off-campus library services offer flexibility to lecturers	0	0	53(23.6%)	76(33.8%)	96(42.7%)	4.2	0.8
There are adequate e-teaching materials in library to facilitate off-campus teaching	23(10.2%)	8(3.6%)	44(19.6%)	86(38.2%)	64(28.4%)	3.7	1.2
Courses offered through off-campus teaching programs have adequate e-resources provided by the library	0	30(13.3%)	54(24%)	86(38.2%)	55(24.4%)	3.7	1.0
There is stakeholder cooperation including library administration in management of the off-campus teaching program	8(3.6%)	16(7.1%)	84(37.3%)	70(31.1%)	47(20%)	3.6	1.0
The off-campus teaching program provides faculty with opportunity to network with library	0	16(7.1%)	29(12.9%)	94(41.8%)	86(38.2%)	4.1	0.9
The off-campus teaching has increased faculty-librarian liaison and cooperation	0	8(3.6%)	53(23.6%)	99(44%)	65(28.9%)	4.0	0.8
The availability of ICT resources has made off-campus teaching flourish	8(3.6%)	16(7.1%)	61(27.1%)	83(36.9%)	66(29.3%)	3.9	1.0
Digital literacy skills is critical in supporting off-campus teaching	0	16(7.1%)	21(9.3%)	87(38.7%)	110(48.9%)	4.3	0.8
Staff training is a necessity in supporting off-campus teaching	0	16(7.1%)	14(6.2%)	40(17.8%)	164(72.9%)	4.6	0.7
The library has carried out activities to increase awareness of digital teaching enablers	0	0	90(40%)	71(31.6%)	64(28.4%)	3.9	0.8
Aggregate score						4.0	0.9

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents agreed to a great extent with the majority of the assertions about off-campus instruction. An aggregate mean of 4.0 and a standard deviation of 0.9 backed this up. The participants agreed to a very large extent that staff training is a necessity in supporting off-campus teaching (164, 72.9%), m=4.6). This implies that the respondents considered staff training as essential in supporting off-campus training. The findings concurred with the argument on the essence of training university staff in line with new technological advancements by Abouelenein (2016).

Further, the respondents agreed to a large extent with the following statements: the off-campus library services offer flexibility to lecturers (96, 42.7%), m=4.2); the off-campus teaching program provides faculty with opportunity for networking with the library (86, 38.2%), m=4.1); the off-campus teaching has increased faculty-librarian liaison and cooperation (65, 28.9%), m=4.0); and digital literacy skills are critical in supporting off-campus teaching (110, 48.9%), m=4.3). According to the data, the majority of respondents recognized the value of digital preparation in strengthening off-campus teaching. The findings corroborated with Mtega and Benard (2014) assertion that e-learning programs enhance online teaching and learning. This suggested that digital preparedness was essential in improving off-campus teaching.

When asked to suggest other ways to improve the library's support for off-campus teaching in their institution, the respondents gave several responses which were thematically analyzed and categorized into three themes: Capacity building of staff, strong digital library policies, and awareness of off-campus resources.

The respondents emphasized the importance of strengthening the capacity of the staff. This can be achieved through training and the provision of ICT resources. Damilola (2013) pointed to a lack of awareness and ICT resources as obstacles to effective e-learning. As such, strengthening the capacity of the staff is essential for supporting off-campus teaching. The respondents also noted the need to have strong digital library policies that support off-campus teaching. In particular, stakeholders should be included in the development of the policies. The findings supported Alfrih (2017) argument on the importance of engaging stakeholders. Further, the respondents cited the need to create more awareness of off-campus resources. This would ensure that more staff and students are aware of off-campus resources. The findings mirrored Lwoga et al. (2015) argument that the creation of ICT awareness among teachers was essential in enhancing teaching.

The respondents were further asked to state the challenges libraries face in supporting off-campus teaching. The following were identified as the key challenges: Low internet coverage, lack of proper policies, and lack of adequate training.

From the responses, it is evident that libraries face several challenges that may hinder the success of off-campus teaching. The respondents cited low internet coverage as one of the main challenges facing off-campus teaching. According to Yildiz-Durak (2019), the Internet is one of the most essential factors in encouraging students to use technology in the classroom. This means that a lack of good internet connectivity would hinder effective off-campus teaching.

The respondents also noted a lack of adequate training as a problem facing libraries in supporting off-campus teaching. Training is key in ensuring that the staff acquires necessary digital skills that will boost online teaching. Abouelenein (2016) emphasized the essence of training university staff in line with new technological advancements. This denotes that a lack of adequate training could hinder library staff and faculty members in supporting off-campus teaching.

Lack of proper policies was also cited as a major challenge. In particular, there is the inclusion of stakeholders in the digital preparedness process. Alfrih (2017) supported the importance of engaging stakeholders in the process to ensure that everyone is on board. However, the full involvement of stakeholders in the digital preparedness process appears to be missing in the universities and this could hinder off-campus teaching.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to compute the correlation between the independent variable (staff training needs) and the dependent variable (off-campus teaching). Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation Results; staff training needs and off-campus teaching

	Off-campus teaching	Staff training needs
Off-campus teaching	1	
Staff training needs	.494**	1
	.000	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings indicated that staff training needs (r =.494**, P = .000), had a moderately positive and substantial association with off-campus teaching at selected university libraries (Y). This suggests that improvement in staff training needs is statistically and significantly correlated with off-campus teaching. The findings agreed with Abouelenein (2016) assertion that training university staff in line with new technological advancement was fundamental.

5.0 Conclusion

The study concluded that staff training needs had a positive and significant effect on off-campus teaching at selected university libraries in Kenya. This implies that staff training needs to contribute significantly to off-campus teaching at selected university libraries. The key aspects of staff training needs noted by this study included digital knowledge, competencies, skills, and regular training.

6.0 Recommendations

The study findings demonstrated that staff training needs had a positive and significant effect on off-campus teaching at selected university libraries in Kenya. The study recommended that library management needs to strengthen their staff training needs. Such training programs should focus on aspects such as digital knowledge, competencies, skills, and regular training. Improving these aspects will boost staff training, thus enhancing off-campus teaching.

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