

**THE USE OF LIBRARY LEARNING CENTRES IN THE GHANA PUBLIC LIBRARY: A FEASIBILITY STUDY**

---

\*Samuel Nii Bekoe Tackie and \*\*Tuhufu Quagraine

*\*Department of Information Studies, University of Ghana, Legon*

Email: [snbtackie@ug.edu.gh](mailto:snbmackie@ug.edu.gh)

*\*\*University College of Agriculture and Environmental Studies (UCAES)*

Email: [stquagraine@gmail.com](mailto:stquagraine@gmail.com)

**Abstract**

*One of the current trends in public library service provision is the introduction of Learning Centres in addition to the traditional services provided. It is in the light of this that this study sets out to find out how feasible it is to establish learning centres in public libraries in Ghana and their possible influences on user patronage. In this regard, 220 patrons were sampled in addition to 6 librarians using accidental and purposive sampling methods respectively. While questionnaires were administered to patrons for their responses, the librarians were interviewed. The findings revealed that considerable benefits exist in the implementation of library learning centres within the public libraries in Ghana. However, most of the public libraries, with the exception of the Accra Central Library, are not adequately resourced in terms of infrastructure, technology, human and financial resources, necessary for the creation of learning centres. Though the libraries face these challenges, the resources within them can be enhanced to achieve this mandate. Based on these conclusions, constructive approaches – pilot project, resource support and provision, inter-library loan service, staffing and human resource development and promoting awareness services were the recommendations made towards the attempt at establishing learning centre services in the public libraries in Ghana. Therefore, the public library system needs to reassess its services and products provided in the light of the current trend of events the world over.*

**Keywords:** LEARNING CENTRES, FEASIBILITY STUDY, PUBLIC LIBRARY, LIBRARY SERVICES, LIBRARY RESOURCES, INFORMATION LITERACY, LIFELONG LEARNING.

## **Introduction**

Since the inception of the library, library services have aimed at promoting self-education of the clientele, who have some degree of formal education. In the present day society, formal education at all levels can be promoted and conducted more effectively with well-equipped libraries, which have been perfected as the principal vehicle for carrying forward and making available the intellectual resources of the nation and the world at large (Sengupta and Chakraborty, 1981). In today's world, the public library has to meet the challenge of whether to be regarded as a pleasant but scarcely vital, additional factor in people's quality of life or make themselves a serious force for social justice, one of the few unrestricted routes to personal growth we have.

The learning centre concept is considered a distinctive and learner-centred response to supporting and improving the quality of student learning. It is however, important to note that the real distinctiveness of the learning centre concept lies in its holistic approach to student learning. The concern is not just the issue of whether it should be resource-based or even service-based only, but in addition, whether it is activity-based and concerned with supporting a range of learning styles and student interactions with these resources and services. The concept and its implementation also has the potential to extend beyond just supporting existing student needs, to influencing the learning development and thus shaping the student learning environment for a better learner output (Oyston, 2003).

The uses of the public library and its value to the community has in many cases remained largely at the whim of local authorities, many of whom have little knowledge of its potential and thus, they cannot assess what the reasonable requirements to be made of its services are. But then, the total significance of the public library is fundamentally its influence on all the individuals who comprise a community and on the relationship of these people, one with another – its influence, of course, being tempered by other social factors and by their reciprocal contributions. Additionally, the effect of public libraries can be measured by the good effect they have on society; this depends on the efficiency of their organization and operation in discharging their functions (Murison, 1988).

The success or failure of firms in the service sector, of which libraries are not excluded, depends greatly on how fluctuations in demand are managed. This situation is so because today's customers are becoming increasingly sophisticated. They have become faster, more price conscious, more demanding, less forgiving and are approached by many more competitors with equal or better offers (Hinson, 2007).

Ideally, public libraries should have a clear position in a National Library and Information Plan that recognizes their continuing contribution to culture, information provision,

literacy and education. The public library can be such a focal centre, a universally-accessible resort for the educational, informational, and other cultural needs of the community. This is even more importantly an essential service when so much is dependent on literacy and on the easy communication of all kinds of knowledge and opinion vital to any community seeking progress economically and culturally (Dewe, 2006). The library of the recent past was not what the library is today. Obviously the library of the future will be quite different from what it is today. If we take the time to identify library changes since World War II, it will be evident that changes have occurred in both degree and kind. We therefore need to examine the basic social and technological factors that are affecting our lives and in turn affecting the services provided by libraries to ensure that users of our products and services rolled out become delighted (Chakrabarti and Mahapatra, 2000). As a result, it is important for public libraries to adopt a more “inclusive” policy. That is, a kind of policy that ensures that no member of the actual and potential user community is left out of the libraries’ products and services. This, it is believed, will be possible only if library authorities become more “client-centred” and focus on the particular “needs” of patrons and other user groups within the communities they serve. This situation creates room for a close collaboration with other stakeholders and most importantly active engagement with the local people from the user community of the particular library (Lough, 2002). For library authorities to be able to meet the above they would need to undertake a feasibility study. This kind of feasibility study would encompass operational, technical, and economic and schedule feasibilities.

The problem of the public library system in Ghana over the years has been their inability to change their mode of service and product provision to their clients even though public libraries elsewhere have done so. The problems, including financial, infrastructural and human resource inadequacies, involved in adapting libraries to the needs of users are similar the world over. Different people have and continue to solve them differently. The conditions such as low patronage of library services and products and the intense competition among the public library and other information providers such as internet cafés and other information bureaus, which challenged public libraries in developed countries to inculcate learning centre services into their service provision are as very much prevalent here in Ghana as they exist in the developed countries.

However, no studies on the learning centre as a part of library service provision have been identified anywhere in Ghana, hence, the expediency for a study into identifying how feasible it is for the inclusion of learning centres as a part of services provided by libraries in Ghana, especially public libraries, often touted as the library of the masses. The study was intended to assess the level of user patronage and satisfaction with the services available, explore the possible benefits and challenges involved in the introduction of

learning centres, find out the operational preparedness of management on the introduction of the concept of learning centres, and determine the level of readiness of public libraries in terms of infrastructure, expertise and funds.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical basis for this study was innovation but with a twist of feasibility study, hence, the PIECES Framework was selected as the theoretical framework for the study because it focuses on the technology that is yet to be introduced as an alternative to existing ones. In addition, each theme of the PIECES Framework describes the existing system with regards to its strength(s) and weakness(es) in that particular area. In the context of this study, the variables in the framework, as discussed below, namely; “Performance”, “Information”, “Economics”, “Control”, “Efficiency” and “Services” will be useful in determining the total readiness of the study sites for the implementation of learning centres in public libraries.

### ***Performance***

The measure of efficiency with which something reacts or fulfils its intended purpose is referred to as performance. It looks at the performance of the current infrastructure available and the need for technical components like computer hardware, software and computer databases among others to ensure optimum performance. But the performance of any system is determined by its constraints, which is anything that blocks the system from accomplishing its stated goal (Choe and Herman, 2003). As a first step to improving a system in the words of Siha (1999), managers need to determine the constraints that are preventing the system from reaching its goal(s).

### ***Information***

This is referred to as the system-generated information for use by users. Technically, information is processed data made meaningful by placing it in a context relevant to the recipient of that information (Sheffield, 2008). To Smith (2007), it is a commodity that is derived from data when they are manipulated in some way (collated, compared and analysed) so that they have meaning to someone. The legal aspect of the feasibility relates to the information aspect of the framework, and it encompasses the totality of the information to be generated from the system so that in satisfying users, nothing makes the system go against prescribed laws.

### ***Economics***

Economics in its general sense refers to the use of minimum amount of resources necessary for effectiveness. The heart of economics rests in the fact that resources are

scarce, or may be limited so that not all human needs and desires can be met. How to distribute these resources in the most efficient and equitable way is a principal concern of economists (Ayyub, 2003), hence, the need to ensure that these meagre resources are utilized in a manner that will ensure optimum realization of organizational goals and objectives, especially among public libraries.

### ***Control***

Operational feasibility has to do with the measure of control the system has in its process of information provision to users in its attempt at ensuring user satisfaction for increased patronage, and control. According to Nwachuku (2007), it is the monitoring and modification of organizational activity and resource utilization to ensure that predetermined standards are met and plans are carried out. Control for this study will be viewed in three forms: flows of information to users, change or update of information and security of information materials. Where there is effective control in a system, the subsystems are better coordinated to produce an overall acceptable result.

### ***Efficiency***

According to Boone and Kurtz (1992), efficiency refers to the resource cost of achieving objectives, and this is expressed as a ratio of outputs to inputs. Efficiency ensures that a system is productive and is able to generate needed output by employing the least possible amounts of resources needed. Schedule feasibility as in any feasibility study, relates to the efficient and service aspects of the framework, and looks at the best time that usage of the system can be both efficient and effective in its service delivery to users (Wetherbe, 1998). Although no system can be perfect, it is often possible to design one that is good enough for a given purpose.

### ***Services***

By definition, service is an activity or benefit that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. Its production may or may not be tied to a physical product (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008). Every system should be able to provide its beneficiaries with outputs that will offer a fundamental reason for its existence. Service to users in any business environment will determine the longevity or otherwise, of a company or an institution. Although each customer is unique, there are common expectations, which include communication, information, responsiveness, and problem resolution, and on-time, reliable, and consistent service, especially among public library patrons.

### **Methodology**

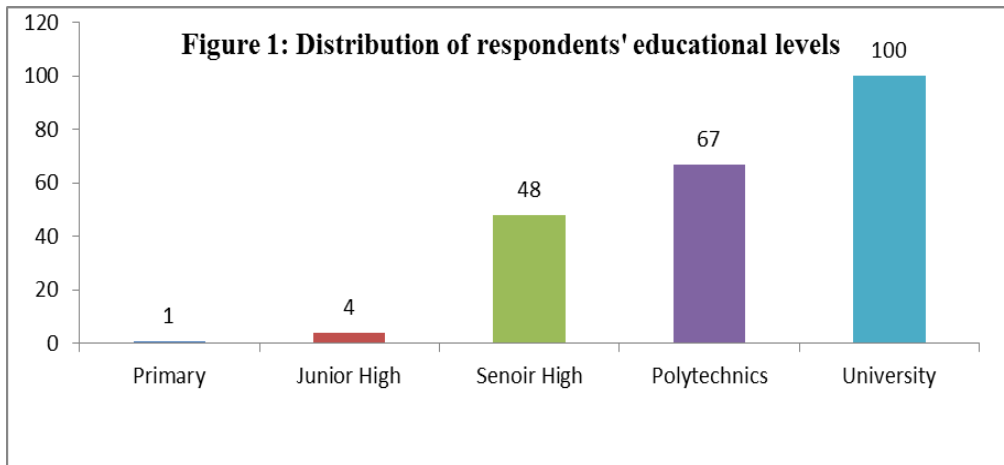
This study employed the survey research strategy in exploring the viability of implementing learning centre services in the libraries that have been chosen for the study because of its extensive usage among social scientists (Babbie, 2005). Three sites namely Tema Branch Library, Teshie Branch Library and the Accra Central Library were chosen for the study. The researcher chose these sites because of the limitations of time and other resources. Also, the researcher has patronized the services of the libraries mentioned above before in addition to the fact that the selected libraries possess the characteristics of public libraries.

The user population of the three libraries was two thousand, two hundred (2200). The sample size from the study population of the three public libraries totalled two hundred and twenty (220) patrons, and six (6) professional librarians from the three libraries using the accidental and purposive sampling methods for patrons and professional librarians respectively. The selection of these two groups was because of their separate roles as administrators and users and as such could help answer questions to enable the stated objectives to be met. For the purposes of this study, data was gathered by means of a self-administered questionnaire employing the accidental sampling technique and interview of library staff employing the purposive sampling technique as measuring instruments. The questionnaire contained a mixture of open and closed ended questions of which the closed-ended questions required a 'YES' or 'NO' answer or response from a check list of possible replies, whereas the open-ended questions required a written response and so was formulated in a manner that offered respondents plenty of latitude to express their opinion(s) freely.

The qualitative data collected was recorded in writing. This was later logically and systematically arranged, organized and interpreted for better comprehension. However, the quantitative data obtained was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). To make information clear, data was organized in frequencies, percentages, charts and graphs, and analysed accordingly.

### **Results and Discussions**

As reflected in Figure 4.2, one hundred (100) respondents (45.5%) possess university education, while sixty-seven (67) respondents (30.5%) are pursuing polytechnic education. Further, 21.8% (N=48) and 1.8% (N=4) respondents have secondary and junior school education. Only 0.5% (N=1) respondents reported being in primary school. This means that the majority of patrons of public libraries are those who have their university education. Therefore, university students patronize library services more than any other educational group.



Source: Field Survey (2010)

### Forms of Traditional Services Provided

The study confirms that the provision of traditional library services cannot be ruled out from contemporary library service provision. The respondents were asked to indicate the applicable services they are offered by the libraries. The study shows in Table 1 that 71.4% (N=157) of the patrons indicated the provision of seating accommodation as the main services offered, followed by provision of information on request (52.7%; N=116). Also, 25.6% (N=59) of the respondents indicated the offering of reservation of materials while 22.3% (N=49) of the patrons chose the provision of readers' advisory services as the main services offered by the public libraries. From the study, it was evident that the provision of services in the areas of orientation for new patrons and circulation of materials had a tie (21.4%; N=47) while bibliographic instruction had the least of the services being rendered by the public libraries. The study thus shows that most public libraries provide seating accommodation and information on request as their main services being rendered to patrons.

**Table 1: Traditional Services of the Libraries**

Services	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Orientation for new patrons	47	21.4
Readers advisory services	49	22.3
Circulation of materials	47	21.4
Reservation of materials	59	26.9
Bibliographic instruction	30	13.6
Provision of information on request	116	52.7
Provision of seating accommodation	157	71.4

*Source: Field Survey (2010). Multiple responses; frequencies and percentages do not add up.*

It is interesting to note that the orientation for patrons was not very evident in the service delivery of the libraries and thus was not considered as one of the top services provided by the libraries. This defeats the essence of quality library service provision by the libraries in the views of Curry and Copeman (2005) when they observed that quality reference service involves a relationship between the user and the librarian within a *Cycle of Dimension of Service*: willingness to assist user; knowledge (how to assist user); assessment (of user's need), and action (physically moving with the user). The libraries need to enhance their patron orientation programmes so as to promote the participation of the patrons in effective usage of the libraries.

Having indicated the services being provided by the public libraries, the patrons reported that the service they enjoy most is the provision of information on request (60.9%; N= 134). This was followed by the provision of readers' advisory service (17.7%; N= 39) as well as circulation and reservation of materials which both had a tie (16.4%; N= 36). The provision of services such as orientation for new patrons (10.9%; N= 24) and bibliographic instructions (8.2%; N= 18) were considered the least enjoyed services by the patrons. These are shown in Table 4.3. This therefore shows that patrons enjoy the provision of information on request by the librarians. The finding has significant implications for library professionals because they (library professionals) need to pay attention to those services that patrons do not enjoy.



**Table 2: Services Enjoyed Most by Patrons**

Services	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Orientation for new patrons	24	10.9
Readers advisory services	39	17.7
Circulation of materials	36	16.4
Reservation of materials	36	16.4
Bibliographic instruction	18	8.2
Provision of information on request	134	60.9

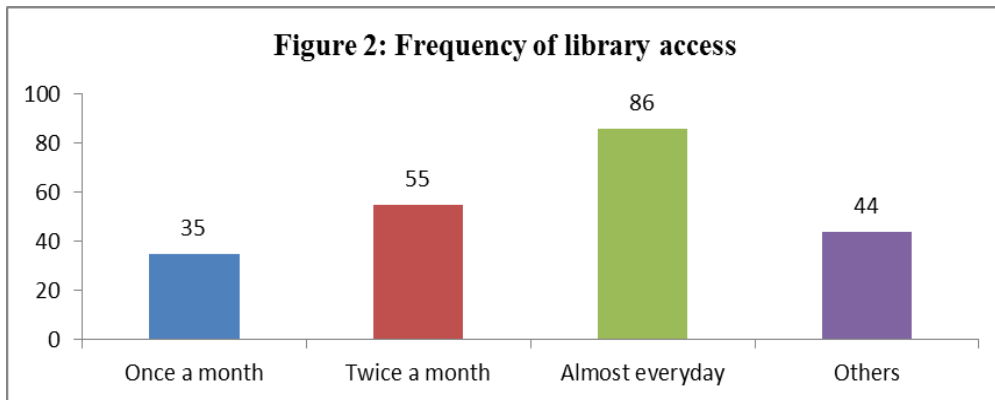
*Source: Field Survey (2010). Multiple responses; frequencies and percentages do not add up.*

The study also shows that patrons do not only expect to be provided with the traditional library services but also the provision of modern library services that will provide access to computers and online services, more comfortable seating facilities, provision of modern materials and documentary videos as well as canteen services for patrons.

#### **Level of User Patronage and Satisfaction**

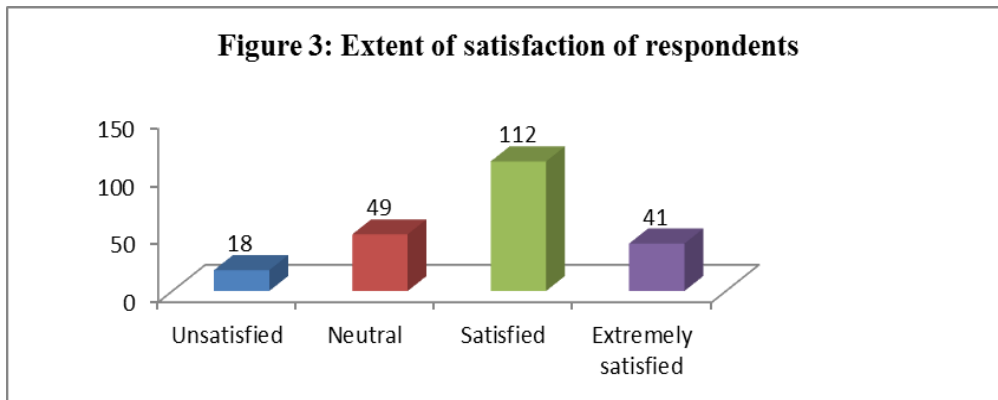
Interviews with some key management personnel from the public libraries indicate that during the formative years of the libraries, patronage was very high but due to the presence of many academic libraries around, most patrons preferred to use those library facilities, thus reducing the patronage of the public libraries. Other reasons such as the examination consciousness of Ghanaians, and the lack of reading culture were responsible for the falling levels of patronage of the public libraries. Information obtained from the patrons indicate however that some people still patronize the public libraries.

The study found that the patronage of the services of public libraries is varied. From the study as shown in Figure 4.4, the majority of patrons (39.1%; N=86) access the libraries almost every day. Also, 25.0% (N= 55) and 15.9% (N= 35) of the respondents use the libraries twice a week and once a month respectively. Additionally, forty-four (44) respondents representing 20% patronize the library services occasionally or were there for the first time or came rarely. The finding implies that there is enormous opportunity in the creation of learning centres in terms of its patronage and returns.



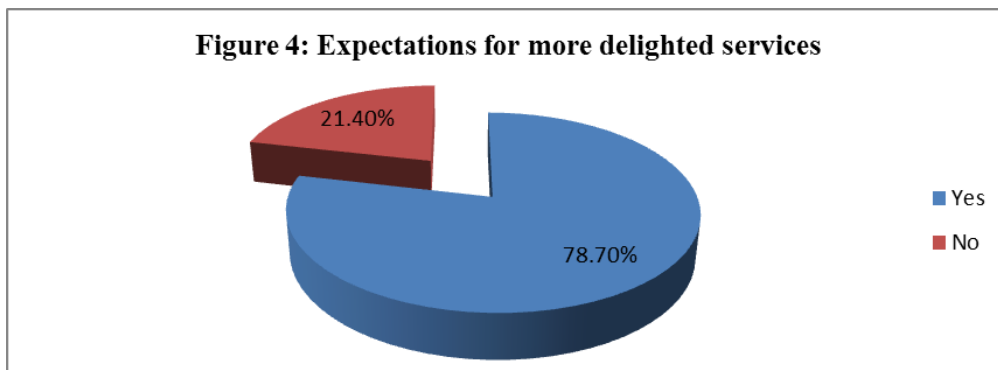
**Source: Field Survey (2010)**

The patrons were then asked whether as users they were satisfied with the libraries' customer service orientation (Figure 4.5). From the study, 22.3% (N= 49) of the respondents were uncertain about their responses while 8.2% (N= 18) were not satisfied with the libraries' customer orientation services. Further, the study shows that 50.9% (N= 112) and 18.6% (N= 41) of the respondents were satisfied and extremely satisfied respectively. This shows that the majority of respondents were satisfied with the libraries' customer service orientations. Thus, the provision of orientation services to the patrons by the libraries is well in tune with the needs and aspirations of the patrons. The finding is also an indication of poor communication between librarians and patrons, especially new patrons. The satisfaction of patrons with the orientation of patrons implies that there is good communication between librarians and patrons as envisaged by Rowley (1998). According to her, communicating with users about library services can elicit information about customer requirements, and also permit the services agent to explain the organization's products and how these can meet the customer's needs.



Source: Field Survey (2010).

The study also shows that patrons expect a more delightful service provision than they are currently being provided. As shown in Figure 4.6, while a majority of patrons reported that they expect such service provisions (78.7%; N= 173), a few of them said otherwise (21.4; N= 47). This shows patrons will generally expect better library service delivery and thus have higher expectations in the provision of library services especially in the public libraries.

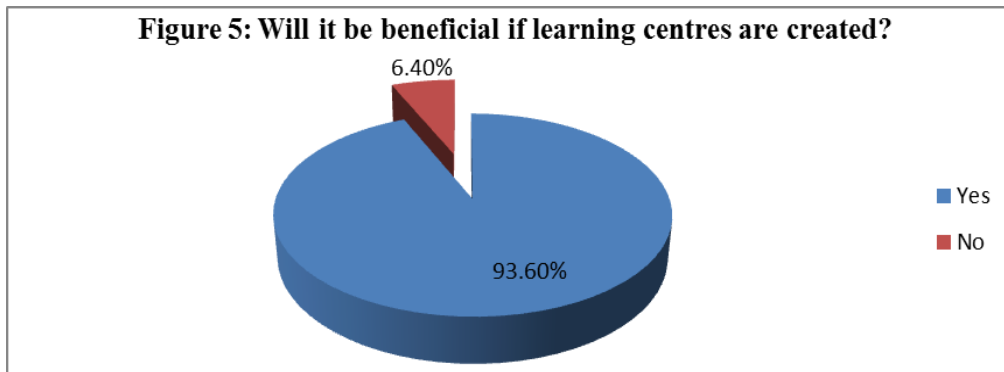


Source: Field Survey (2010).

#### 4.5 Benefits and Challenges of the Introduction of Learning Centre Services

The result of the study indicates that the patrons anticipate some benefits in the implementation of library learning centre services in the public libraries. As evident in Figure 4.7, a huge proportion of the patrons (93.6%; N= 206) indicated that the implementation of learning centre services will be beneficial while only 6.4% (N= 14)

indicated that it would not be beneficial. There is no doubt however that the implementation of such learning centres within the public libraries will be beneficial not only to the patrons but to the library professionals too.



*Source: Field Survey (2010).*

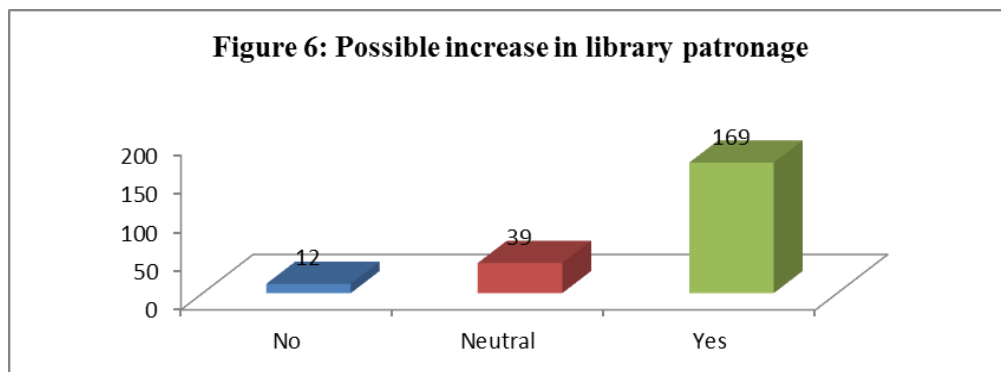
The provision of learning centres within public libraries will come with certain benefits. As evident from the study in Table 4.4, 75.5% (N= 166) of the patrons reported that the provision of such a learning centre would lead to the improvement in users' searching skills while 57.3% (N= 126) of them indicated that it would help patrons be able to locate, retrieve and evaluate information retrieved. Additionally, 45.9% (N= 101) and 46.4% (N=102) reported that the creation of learning centres would help patrons to gain practical exposure to what they are taught and help in lifelong learning respectively. Only 31.4% (N= 69) of the patrons indicated that such learning centres would enhance their occupational skills. This shows that the greatest benefit to be derived from the creation of learning centres is the improvement in users' searching skills. The results support the claim by the Library Association (2001) and that of Taylor and Cameron (2002) that users of the library stand to benefit from stimulated demand for learning, increased skills and the qualification of the workforce with particular emphasis on core skills of basic literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology skills.

**Table 3: Expected Benefits of Learning Resource Centers**

Benefits	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Improvement in users' searching skills	166	75.5
Ability to locate, retrieve and evaluate information	126	57.3
Enhanced occupational skills	69	31.4
Practical exposure to what is taught	101	45.9
Lifelong learning	102	46.4

*Source: Field Survey (2010).*

It is expected that such benefits to be derived from the creation of learning centres will lead to increase in patronage. As evident from Figure 4.8, 76.8% (N= 169) of the patrons indicated that learning centres when established within the public library systems will lead to an increase in patronage of such libraries while 5.4% (N= 12) indicated it will not lead to an increase in patronage. Further, 17.7% of the patrons representing 39 respondents were not certain in their responses. Clearly, the study shows that patrons will increase their patronage of public libraries when such libraries create learning centres. This goes to affirm the assertion by Todaro and Smith (2006) and Kotler and Amstrong (2008) that satisfied users patronize again and even go ahead to tell others about their good experience, hence, the need to create the return customer.



*Source: Field Survey (2010).*

Having established that the creation of learning centres will lead to several benefits both for patrons and the libraries, the patrons were asked to indicate the kind of learning centres that they expect to be created. The study shows in Table 4.5 that the majority of patrons indicated that they expect the provision of recreational centres (80.2%; N= 178). Further, while 53.2% (N= 117) reported their expectation for creating information literacy programmes as part of the learning centre creations, 46.8% (N= 103) indicated their preference for the provision of in-service training or workshops for various professionals as part of the learning centre services. This shows that most library patrons will expect the provision of recreational centres as part of the whole agenda of creating learning centres within the public library systems in Ghana.

**Table 4: Patrons Anticipated Services**

Services	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Information literacy programmes	173	53.2
Recreational centre provision	178	80.2
Practical sessions for taught subjects	72	32.7
In-service training or workshop for various professionals	103	46.8

*Source: Field Survey (2010). Multiple responses; frequencies and percentages do not add up.*

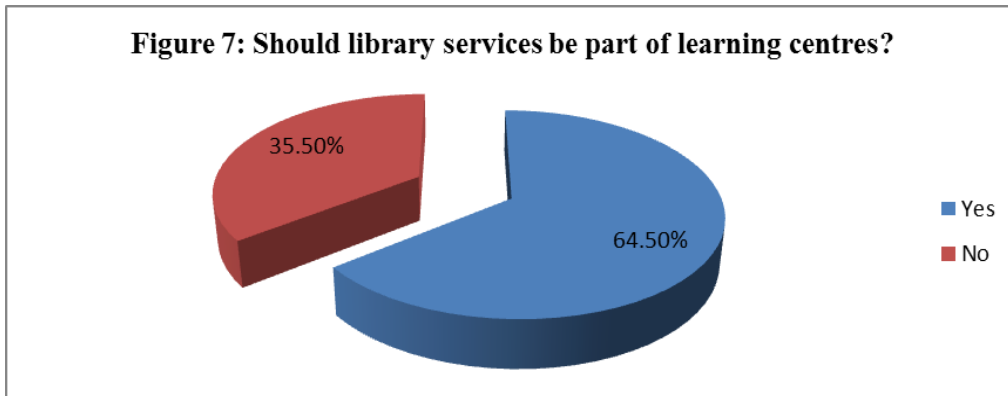
The study found that as it stands now, the implementation of learning centres will be handicapped as a result of many challenges that the public libraries face. The challenges as seen from the patrons, focus more on the inadequate seating and furniture facilities for use by the patrons, lack of subject-specific books or materials, especially those on engineering and professional practices. For most of the libraries with the exception of the Accra Central Library, lack of computer facilities and internet access was a major problem that the patrons wanted to be addressed. The finding affirms the argument raised by Lough (2002) that the provision of information and communication technology facilities where people congregate is important if patrons of the public library are to participate in information and communication technology activities. Further, some of the patrons referred to the poor ventilation within some of the libraries and thus called for the provision of adequate ventilation and especially the provision of air conditioners in the libraries. Poor orientation services for new patrons and lack of privacy for patrons were also identified.

In effect, the two most common challenges facing the libraries according to the patrons are lack of or inadequate computer facilities and internet access, and lack of subject-specific materials. The call for the need for computer and internet facilities within the public libraries support the claim by Jane and McMillan (2003) that abundant evidence exists that increasing numbers of people or patrons are turning to the internet as their preferred source of information as being reflected in library reference desk statistics. The finding also supports that of Covi and Cragin (2004) that students and faculty increasingly demand and prefer access to electronic sources delivery system, and to networked information.

Most of these challenges identified by the patrons were confirmed by the key experts who were involved in the interview. For Accra Central Library, the staff contacted indicated that their main challenges are lack of experts, teaching materials and financial support. The most pressing challenge facing the library is financial inadequacy. The interview conducted with the librarian from the Tema Branch library indicated similar challenges and additionally, lack of computers and peripherals, and internet connectivity. In addition to these challenges, the Teshie Branch library has limited accommodation space and expertise is highly needed at this branch. Unfortunately, the library has had to relocate to the Accra Central Library due to the removal of the library's roofing by a recent storm.

#### **4.6 Operational Preparedness for the Implementation of Learning Centres**

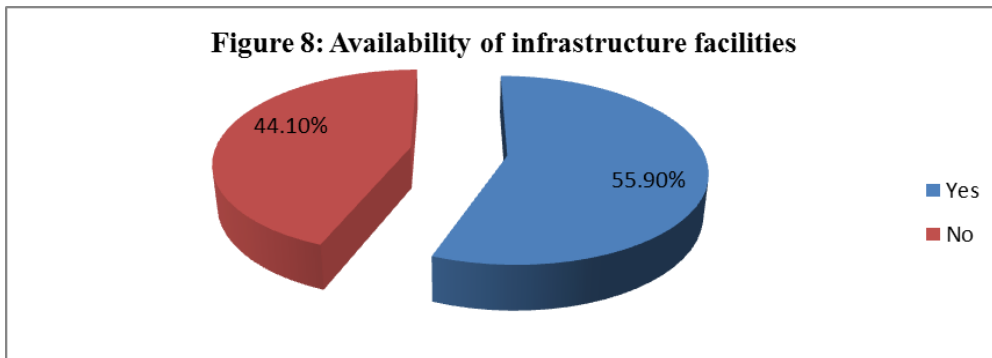
Interviews conducted with the key management experts of the libraries indicate that they expect the library learning centres to comprise of several departments, namely; library services, instructional technology and development, and technical services and automation. According to them, the libraries would have to continue the delivery of their traditional library services. This view of the management personnel was validated by the patrons. When the library patrons were asked whether they expect the creation of the learning centres to be part of the library services, 64.5% (N= 142) reported in the affirmative but the remaining 35.5% representing 78 patrons reported in the negative (Figure 4.9).



*Source: Field Survey (2010).*

### **Infrastructure and Technological Facilities**

The essence in the provision of adequate infrastructure facilities in the provision of learning centres cannot be overemphasized. As evident from the study, the public libraries (especially that of Accra Central) have enough space especially in providing accommodation-seating capacity for patrons and in providing computer services. Further, as shown in Figure 4.10, it was found that 55.9% (N= 123) of the patrons indicated that the public libraries involved in the study, especially the Accra Central Library have adequate infrastructure facilities and are prepared for the implementation of learning centre services. Further, 44.1% (N= 97) of the patrons indicated otherwise. Though the majority of patrons consider such facilities as being adequate, the interview conducted and personal observation indicate otherwise and thus agrees with those patrons who thought the facilities were inadequate.



*Source: Field Survey (2010).*



Technology is generally recognised as the most important change-agent in the creation of library learning centres in any institution. Interestingly, with the exception of the Accra Central Library, all the other libraries do not have computer and internet connectivity facilities. This means that those libraries do not have the needed technological basis to modernise their library service delivery in line with changing trends. Accra Central Library has a facility called “American Corner” that provides information technology training for patrons and public schools within its catchment areas. This facility is fully connected to the internet. Thus, patrons have access to online library services with the exception of online databases such as Emerald, ScienceDirect, and Sage among others. This implies that even though patrons have access to online services from the library, their access to online databases is limited. This is a sharp departure from the other libraries which do not have any of these services. This finding supports the earlier study by Ngimwa (2006) that African libraries are still struggling with fundamental technological challenges such as very limited bandwidth and inadequate information technology infrastructure critical to successful exploitation of digital resources.

It was also found that with the exception of the Teshie Library, the other two libraries i.e. Tema and Accra Central have printers and photocopier machines which could allow the patrons to print or photocopy relevant materials without necessarily having to borrow those materials. This would ensure that in the midst of limited library materials, patrons could effectively utilize those already existing without compromising the chances of others to use them. The presence of the printer would also help those who obtain relevant information in using the internet.

The study further revealed that the Accra Central Library has three specific library facilities namely the lending library that provides lending services to registered users and also facilitates interlibrary loans, the reference library that serves as reference for patrons on a whole array of subjects and the children’s library that provides various services for pre-school to junior high school patrons. Apart from this, it also has a conference hall that is used for various purposes. Thus, the potential of this library to be expanded for further library service delivery is high.

### **Resources/Materials**

The availability of resources for the provision of learning centres in the public libraries has been established in this study. The results show that the patrons have personally witnessed the presence of these resources. From Table 4.6, 52.3% (N= 115) of the patrons reported that the public libraries have available literature on information literacy while 23.6% (N= 52) of the patrons indicated that available human resources exist within the

public libraries to be involved in the provision of the learning centres. Additionally, other resources such as information technology facilities and lecture halls exist. These were confirmed by 16.8% (N= 37) and 15.0% (33) of the patrons respectively. The information technology facilities that exist within the libraries relate to computers or electronic units and available halls to hold class sessions. The availability of these resources within the public library systems in the country is an ample indication of the level of preparedness of these libraries in the provision of learning centres. Data from the library respondents indicate that available materials exist for use by patrons.

**Table 5: Perceived Available Resources**

<b>Perceived Available Resources</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Available literature on information literacy	115	52.3
Computer or electronic unit	37	16.8
Available hall to hold class sessions	33	15.0
Available human resource to teach	52	23.6

*Source: Field Survey (2010). Multiple responses; frequencies and percentages do not add up.*

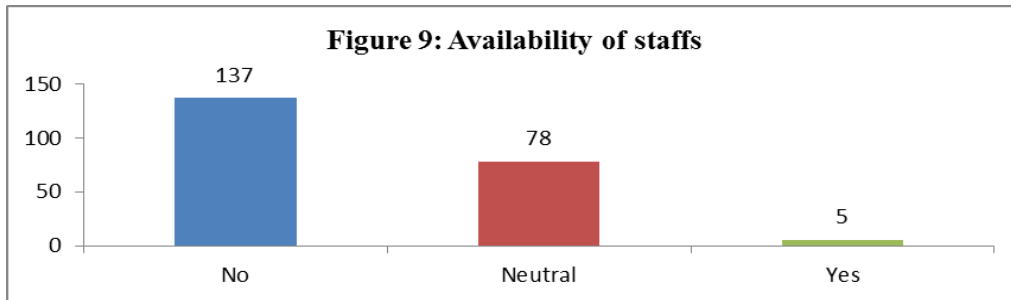
Patrons' reported availability of literature on information literacy by the libraries support Wright's (2004) assertion that librarians have a significant responsibility for information literacy instruction, specifically for the selection, use, and evaluation of multiple information resources, including internet resources. Interviews conducted with the library management respondents indicate that the libraries have materials such as bibliographies, encyclopedias, year books, directories, atlases, gazetteers, indexes, books, periodicals, and other collections such as Youth, Africana and UN. The availability of these materials attest to the claim by Kloss and Zhang (2003) that regardless of the setting, print resources still had an important role to play in the provision of reference services.

**Personnel/staff**

The effectiveness of library learning centres within public libraries will depend on the presence or availability of diverse professional workforce to lead the process. The study shows that the educational qualifications of the library staff are diverse. The staff have educational qualifications to the tertiary level and include diploma, first degree, and masters degree holders in relation to several disciplines in the library profession. In order to enhance the capacity and expertise of these staff, they are provided with regular training and development programmes in line with changing trends in the profession. Some of the training provided is need-specific while others are broad. Training is also

provided on customer care services. Though qualified staff exist within the libraries, it appears that they are not enough.

The responses from the patrons attest to the available staff as they have experienced them. As can be seen in Figure 4.11, most of the patrons (62.2%; N= 137) are of the opinion that the libraries have the requisite expertise to handle the services provided by learning centres. While 35.5% (N= 78) of the patrons claimed such experts do not exist, 2.3% (N= 5) of them were uncertain about the issue.



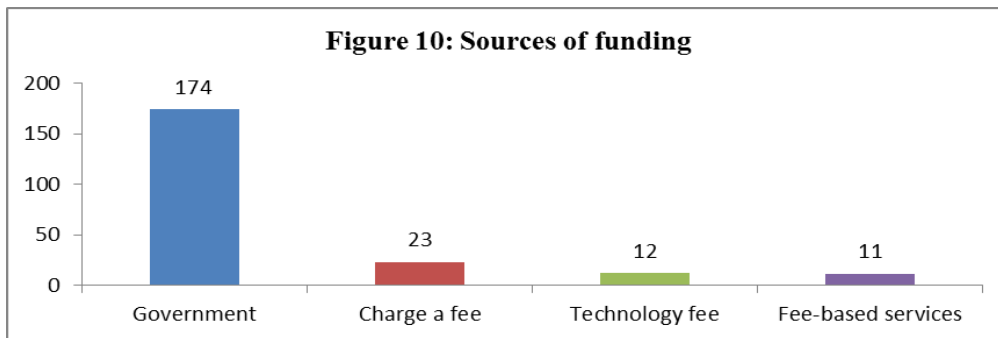
*Source: Field Survey (2010).*

The confirmation of the availability of experts to handle the learning centre services was made evident when the patrons were asked to indicate the available experts that exist in the libraries. It became clear from their responses that there is a diverse expertise of library professionals within the public library system in Ghana. The study revealed that 5.9% (N= 13) indicated that professionally qualified teaching personnel exist while 28.2% (N= 62) reported the presence of professional librarians. Also, 9.5% (N= 21) of the patrons indicated that qualified teaching personnel and librarians exist. Further, 2.7% (N= 12) of the patrons reported the existence of subject specialist librarians.

Additionally, the study found that 2.7% (N= 6) of the patrons have witnessed the presence of professional teaching personnel and librarians; 7.3% (N= 16) of them said professional librarians and subject specialists exist. 2.3% (N= 5) of the patrons indicated that all such experts (i.e. professional qualified teaching personnel, librarians and subject specialists) exist within the public library systems and 38.6% (N= 85) of them claimed that they do not exist. It is possible that those who claimed such professionals do not exist are those who have not experienced their services before or might be first timers. There is thus enough evidence to suggest that public libraries have adequate and diverse professional groups to handle the implementation of learning centres within public library systems.

### Funding

The issue of funding for the establishment of learning centres is as significant as its sustenance. Funding is needed for the procurement of resources and materials and for the payment of staff. A large proportion of the patrons reported that state or government appropriateness is the most effective method for funding the creation of learning centres (82.9%; N= 174). This finding was expected since the libraries are government owned. The study further indicated that 11.9% (N= 23) of the patrons stated that patrons should be charged a fee for the creation of the centre while 5.7% (N= 12) and 5.2% (N= 11) of the patrons reported that a technology fee and fee-based services could be implemented as a means of raising enough financial resources to implement the learning centres. These are shown in Figure 4.12. Interviews with the key experts from the libraries indicate that they are or have been in partnership with some institutions for financial support to enable them meet the infrastructure and other resource needs of the library. It thus indicates that substantial opportunities exist for which funding could be made available for implementing learning centres by the public libraries.



*Source: Field Survey (2010).*

The interview with the library staff confirmed the need for these sources of funding as appropriate for implementing library learning centres. They however, indicated that already, several organisations have been supportive and will still support any such effort aimed at expanding the scope of modern day library service delivery. For instance, organisations such as Barclays Bank Ghana Limited and Rotary Club have been supportive in terms of infrastructure development of the Accra Central and Tema libraries respectively.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The outcome of this study reveals that considerable benefits exist in the implementation of library learning centres within the public libraries in Ghana. However, most of the public libraries are not adequately resourced to undertake such an initiative. Notwithstanding that, the availability of adequate facilities, materials and resources as well as expertise at the Accra Central Library in particular supports Song's (2009) general classification for library services into facility-based, collection-based, and expertise-based institutions. Though this particular library still faces some challenges, the level of endowment of resources within it can be enhanced to achieve that mandate. The study thus concludes that though most of the libraries studied do not have the infrastructural, technological, human and financial resources to create learning centres, the available facilities and resources at the Accra Central Library if adequately equipped, will be able to provide effective library learning centre services.

In line with the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been outlined with the view to providing appropriate strategies for enhancing the capacity of public libraries in the provision of learning centres:

***Constructive approaches-pilot project:*** As evident from the findings of the study, the Accra Central Library has the potential of creating learning centres. It is therefore recommended that practical experiments or pilot studies should be implemented at the facility to support this claim by means of evidence gathered in experimental learning centres constructed from elsewhere. An evaluation of this pilot will strengthen practitioners' understanding of the dynamics at work and turn ideas on promising practices into guidelines for best practices;

***Resource support and provision:*** Attempts should be made by the government and all stakeholders to support the public libraries in the areas of finance, infrastructure, technology, and materials so as to migrate their services to the modern library service delivery that is characterized by a high degree of online library service delivery. Organisations should also support the libraries with available materials and equipment in the delivery of their services;

***Inter-Library Loan Service:*** It is further recommended that the other libraries should focus on providing inter-library loan services within their facility. The librarians should have a close liaison with other libraries in the vicinity to promote partnership and cooperation in the rendering of library service provision to the public. With this, in case of any urgent need, such libraries may draw on the resources of other libraries and

procure the books on inter-library loan and make them available for consultation within the premises of the library. If for any reason it is not possible to get the book(s) on loan from other cooperative libraries, arrangements may be made to get at least a photocopy of the material. This will enhance the availability of materials in all public libraries;

***Staffing and human resource development:*** The study also recommends that the libraries should promote an active recruitment drive to hire qualified graduates from the tertiary institutions who have the requisite knowledge in library practices and management. The existing staff within the libraries should be provided with the needed training to equip them with modern library management practices and changes. Further, staff motivation and compensation should be intensified and enhanced to encourage graduates and old staff to give their best in service delivery;

***Promoting Awareness Services:*** Speedy announcement of newly acquired information or documents to the patrons is strongly advocated. The patrons should be kept abreast of current developments in their respective fields of interests as quickly and as efficiently as possible. The members of the Library need to be informed of recent arrivals of periodicals in the library. Also, there is the need to intensify and carefully plan the initiation or orientation of patrons into the use of public libraries since most of the patrons' visits to such libraries are their first encounter with the world of books. As such, they have to be made aware of the privileges they are entitled to as well as the rules they are supposed to follow to derive the maximum benefit.

## REFERENCES

- Ayyub, B. M. (2003) **Risk Analysis in Engineering and Economics** New York: CRC Press
- Babbie, E. (2005) **The Basics of Social Research** Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth p. 252.
- Boone, L. E. and Kurtz, D. L. (1992) **Management** 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc p.12
- Chakrabarti, B., Mahapatra, P. (2000) **Library and Information Science: An Introduction** Calcutta: World Press Private Limited pp.1 – 7
- Choe, K. And Herman, S. (2003) Using theory of constraints tools to manage organizational change: A case study of Euripa Laboratories. **International Journal of Management and Organizational Behaviour**, Vol. 66, No. 2, p. 45.
- Covi, M. L. And Cragin, H. M. (2004) Reconfiguring control in library collection development: A conceptual framework for assessing the shift toward electronic collections. **Journal of American Society and Technology**, Vol. 55, No. 4, pp. 312-325.
- Dewe, M. (2006) **Planning Public Library Buildings: Concepts and Issues for the Librarian** Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, p. 5
- Hinson, R. (2006) **Marketing of Services: A Managerial Perspective** Accra, Sedco Publishing Ltd. p.1.
- Jane, C., and McMillan, D. (2003) Online in real-time? Deciding whether to offer a real-time virtual reference service **In The Electronic Library**; Vol. 21, No. 3
- Kloss, L., and Zhang, Y. (2003) An evaluative case study of a real-time online reference service **In The Electronic Library**, Vol. 21, No. 6, pp. 565-567.
- Kotler and Armstrong (2008) **Principles of Marketing** 12th ed. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc. p.19
- Lough, V. (2002) Citizenship, Computer Literacy and the changing role of the Public Library Service in the United Kingdom, Available at: <http://www.odeluce.stir.ac.uk/doc/Lough>. Accessed 20th January, 2010.
- Ngimwa, P. (2006). An African experience in providing a digital library service: The African Virtual University example **The Fourth Pan Commonwealth forum on Open Learning, Jamaica**. Available At: <http://pcf4.dec.uwi.edu/viewpaer.php?id=196> p. 14, Accessed 25th November, 2010.
- Nwachuku, C. C. (2007) **Management: Theory and Practice**. Onitsha: Africana First Publishers Ltd P. 256
- Oyston, E. (2003) **Centred on Learning: Academic Case Studies on Learning Centre Development**. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Available at:

- [http://books.google.com/books?id=H2JXUpd5s8AC&dq=the+learning+centre+concept&printsec=frontcover&source=in&hl=en&ei=YzUjTOjcEJOQjAf7rUj&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=11&ved=0CDwQ6AEwCg#v=onepage&q=thelearningcentreconcept&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=H2JXUpd5s8AC&dq=the+learning+centre+concept&printsec=frontcover&source=in&hl=en&ei=YzUjTOjcEJOQjAf7rUj&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=11&ved=0CDwQ6AEwCg#v=onepage&q=thelearningcentreconcept&f=false), Accessed 20th February, 2010.
- Rowley, J. (1998) Promotion and Marketing Communications in the Information marketplace **Library Review**, Vol. 47, No. 8, pp. 383-387.
- Sengupta, B., Chakraborty, B. (1981) **Library, Library Science and Librarianship** Calcuta: World Press Private Limited. pp. 1 – 4
- Sheffield, J. (2008) Health and medicine; Knowledge management; Knowledge creation; Patient care **Journal of Knowledge Management**, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 160 – 172.
- Siha, S. (1999) A classified model for applying the theory of constraints to service organizations **Managing Service Quality**, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 255 – 264.
- Smith, M. (2007) **Fundamentals of Management** London: McGraw-Hill Companies, p.91
- Song, Y-S. (2009) Designing library services based on user needs: New opportunities to re-position the Library **World Library and Information Congress: 75th IFLA General Conference and Council**, p. 58-59.
- Taylor, S. and Cameron, H. (2002) **Attracting New Learners: International Evidence and Practice** London: Learning and Skills Development Agency. pp.15
- Todaro, J. and Smith, M. L. (2006) **Training Library Staff and Volunteers to Provide Extraordinary Customer Service** London: Facet Publishing. pp. 63
- Wetherbe, J. (1998) **Systems Analysis and Design: Traditional, Structured, and Advanced Concepts and Techniques** 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St. Paul, MN: West
- Wright, A. C (2004) The academic library as a gateway to the Internet: An analysis of the extent and nature of search engines **College and Research Library** Vol. 65(4), p.45.