Continuous Professional Development: An Area Highly Needed for the Development of Human Resources in University Libraries in Sri Lanka

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Introduction

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) could be described as a process that a professional or an employee engages in updating and redeveloping knowledge, skills, attitudes and capacities constantly in compliance with the changing needs and requirements of the same profession or employment. CPD is an area which is highly required for the employees, particularly the personnel devoted to deliver specific essential core services of the public. Some of the core services are provided by different professionals and they are medical, engineering, architectural, accounting, legal and library. Today the world articulates about life-long education, learning to learn, Continuous Professional Education (CPE), self-oriented learning, self-education, and the knowledge management. All these concepts are underpinned with two major ideologies. One is the development of competencies. The other is related to adjust according to the latest and the advanced IT development.

Within this context, CPD could be considered as one of the very imperative areas for the development of human resources from the Librarian, Deputy Librarian, Senior Assistant Librarian and Assistant Librarian in University Libraries in Sri Lanka (ULSL). They are considered and recognized as the academic or teaching staff of the university in most of the countries including Sri Lanka. They are considered as professional library staff too. As the university academic staff training and development has been fully recognized and continued, their counterpart university library professional staff is to be given their fair share. The University Act and the Establishment Code of the University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka very clearly defines the library professional staff as university teachers and it is imperative to develop this staff. When considering this and the other factors

stated below, it could be fully recognized, the efficacy and the opportunities of CPD for the ULSL.

Research Problem

Within this context, the research problem under investigation is how the university library professional staff are trained and developed through CPD programs, and how a CPD model is developed suiting to their career demands. Owing to the different situations and demands, new changes and revisions are introduced in the area of higher education in the developing, medium developed and the developed world as never before. Curriculum and staff development, quality assurance, student skills and competency development, industrial collaboration, socialization of higher education, new endeavors for widening the higher education, funding measures for the higher education, research and development, the manpower development in technological education and the cultural harmony are some of the major challenging areas that higher education is facing today. With the passage of the university academic staff are trained and developed, it is fully realized the university library professional staff undertake for the improvement of their careers through effective and efficient CPD programs.

Objectives of the Study

The principal objective of this study was to develop a CPD model for ULSL and it is given in Figure 1.

The specific objectives are:

- to study the areas of CPD that library professionals should be trained and acquainted with.
- to investigate at which career level the library professionals should be trained and developed in different subject areas required.

Methodology

Descriptive method of research was adopted since the study is related to human resources in university libraries. Survey technique was used for collecting data. Principal research instrument was the questionnaire. Two questionnaires were designed, one for the university Librarians and the second for other professional staff. Only the professional category of staff i.e.

University Librarians; Assistant Librarians (AL); Senior Assistant Librarians Grade ii and Senior Assistant Librarians Grade I (SAL) was used as the population of study and sampling was not required since the number of professional category was below 100, when the survey was carried out. The two separate questionnaires were circulated to 14 librarians and 71 Assistant Librarians (AL) and Senior Assistant Librarians (SAL). Out of 14, only 10 librarians (71%) responded, while out of 71 AL and SAL, 46 (65%) responded. Altogether 85 questionnaires were delivered and 56 (66%) responded. Out of 16 university libraries in Sri Lanka, only 14 libraries were selected for survey. Two universities were exempted as these universities were instituted recently and did not have the professional library staff when the survey was conducted. One of the main focuses of this research was for developing a CPD model for ULSL.

Key Findings

According to the librarians, the most important Human Resource Management (HRM) task is the *training and development* of professional library staff and it was ranked first. In the study, it revealed that the '*improper human resource policy' is* the top ranking HRM problem in ULSL. The '*lack of training and development programmes' is* the second major HRM problem.
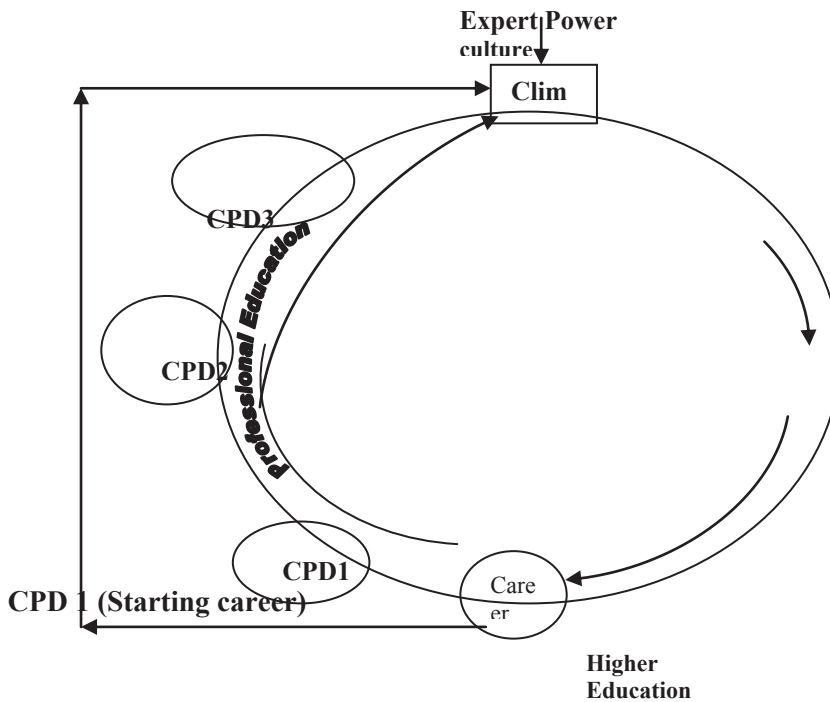
According to the librarians' *lack of personal interest,* is one of the HRM problems facing university libraries. Personal interest could be interpreted as the actual understanding and the dedication towards the professional work, service and the contribution of individual staff member in HRM. The real term is the '***lack of service attitude and quality****.'* It confirms that competency development is a pre-HRM requirement for ULSL, in order to develop *service attitude and quality* among library professionals.

It is recommended to introduce a national standard for quality assurance and quality enhancement of human resources for the organizations both in government and private sector in Sri Lanka. Researcher proposed the expert power culture is the suitable organizational model for the ULSL. In order to reach for this expert power culture, library professionals are adhered to the practice of CPD.

In order to answer the above major issues related to the HRM, more staff training and development initiatives are to be introduced into ULSL.

Therefore, the following CPD model (Figure 1) developed by the researcher is suggested.

Figure 1: Continuous Professional Development Model for ULSL

Expert Power
culture

Clim

CPD3

Professional Education

CPD2

CPD1

CPD 1 (Starting career)

Care
er

Higher
Education

1. Orientation /Induction programmes
2. In-service training programmes
3. External study courses (Degree or Diploma, or Certificate level)
4. Study visit to other libraries
5. Job rotation programmes
6. Possession of academic and research potentials
7. Engage with library advocacy programs
8. Experience in library and information expertness

 CPD 2 (Middle Career)

9. Postgraduate education (MA/M.Lib/MLS/MSc/MSSc)
10. Teaching, research and publications

11. Attendance at conferences/pre/post conferences with or without- (Middle career) library support
12. Seminars/workshops
13. Participating guest lectures
14. Working as a resource person
15. Possession of academic and research potentials
16. Engage with library advocacy programs
17. Experience in library and information expertness

CPD3 (Advanced and mature career)

18. Advanced education (Ph.D./Postdoctoral/advanced research etc)
19. Attendance at CPD programmes
20. Teaching, research and publications
21. Attendance at conferences/pre/post conferences with or without (Advanced career) with and without library support
22. Seminars/workshops
23. Participating in decision making processes
24. Coaching and mentoring programmes
25. Working as a resource person and consultant, adviser, planner, policy maker
26. Responsible member of local, national and international organizations
27. Possession of high academic and research potentials
28. Engage with library advocacy programs
29. Experience in library and information expertness

The above CPD model enumerates whole career development path of a university library professional in Sri Lanka. After the graduation, a person who joins the library profession in the university begins with the CPD 1 which means the starting career. After completing the CPD 1, he or she enters the middle career, the CPD 2, soon after completing his or her postgraduate studies. Possession of academic and research potentials are a need for whole career path commencing from CPD 1 to CPD 3. The professionals should acquire capabilities and qualities of a policy maker, consultant, or a planner when he or she reaches at the advanced and mature career, the CPD 3. In this respect, both the individual and the university library have a joint responsibility to upgrade the quality and standards of the profession and the library respectively. Quality assurance is a one method which university

libraries can develop more. Investors in People is a national standard which organizations in UK are practicing within this context.

Keywords: Continuous Professional Development; Human Resource Management Library Profession; Library Management; University Libraries

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