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Designing Effective In-service Training for Librarians in Pakistan

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Background

Adequate training is becoming part and parcel of every successful organization's policy because capacity building of workforce has now been a source of getting competitive edge in the business world. Training, however, either in classroom or experiential, it does through that learning process that organization better sharpen the skills of its workforce.

The changing scenario of management and leadership styles, communication media, domain/subject knowledge and other significant factors are also responsible to drive the passion of Library and Information Science (LIS) community to keep pace with the changing times. Other factors that have promoted the discussion of continuing education for librarianship are the rapid growth of new knowledge; social needs of highly educated population; introduction of new technology in libraries; outreach programs to attract new groups of library users; and changing trends in library services (Chaudhary, 2001).

It's absolutely significant to carry on with lifelong learning process. The famous quote of Plato "*The most important part of education is proper training in the nursery*" is evident of the factual importance of training. It's also evident from research that learning agility is becoming the critical factor for information workers. Rapid advancement in Information Technology is another fact of posing so many challenges to LIS professionals in Pakistan and the world over. LIS professionals do have a critical need of professional trainings which has been met by different public and private sector organizations in Pakistan. Although the noted organizations/agencies working for this noble cause are few i.e. Pakistan Library Association, National Centre for Rural Development, Pakistan Library Automation Group, Pakistan Academy for Rural Development, Pakistan Library Club, Pakistan Scientific and Technological Information Centre etc but no doubt the results are remarkable in terms of competencies development and professional excellence.

Training is being widely considered a key tool for enhancing job-related skills and performances, its value is being recognized world-wide in engendering behavioral changes and personal growth. "In most cases, training is influenced by ideas and values that represent the broad parameters of national objectives for social and economic development. This, in fact, helps in making the training more meaningful and purposive in the national context"(Agochiya, 2002).

Despite a rapid advancement in the past few years, LIS training programmes in Pakistan yet are confronted with short falls in many areas, both for trainers and trainees, like choice of appropriate specialized course, advanced studies, proper training opportunities and lack of proper training archetype. This is worthwhile to note that many of the prominent figures of LIS professional trainers in Pakistan have emerged out of their own experiences and efforts. There is no concrete plan to safeguard or support this resource pool through regular education or sufficient opportunities of Training of Trainers (TOT) programmes in Pakistan.

Methodology

Research design of this study was survey. Structured questionnaire, comprises of 15 questions, was prepared after an extensive literature review, and feedback obtained from the trainees in different courses conducted at Pakistan Academy for Rural Development (PARD)¹. The printed copies of the questionnaire were sent to LIS professionals of the province of Khyber Pukhtukhwa (KP)—erstwhile North West Frontier Province (NWFP). To collect country-wide data the same questionnaire was designed on a free online survey tool i.e. www.kwiksurvey.com and the link was shared on the famous LIS listserv of professional librarians in Pakistan (plagpk@yahoo.com; founded on December 9, 2000) which is currently connecting 3902² professional librarians throughout the country and abroad. In response, forty seven replies were collected from the working librarians and LIS professionals on printed copies and 132 online responses received. However, telephonic and online reminders made it possible to collect 179 total responses. Forty three female and one hundred and thirty six male librarians participated in this survey.

Expert validity of the data collection instrument was established by seeking the opinion of retrospective participants who attended trainings at different levels; strategic level LIS professionals, and some prominent stakeholders of different organizations/associations conducting in-service library trainings in Pakistan.

Two separate questionnaires were designed aiming to get responses from a trainee's perspective as well as trainers' perspective. The purpose was to accumulate the view point of both trainees and the trainers about training methods, financial resources, practical application of knowledge and skills, competencies enhancement, role of training agencies and trainees, identify focused areas of training, design and appropriate method of delivery, usage of specific training skills, and level of expertise of trainers in different areas. At the other hand data was collected from the training agencies also to know about current trends in delivery of training modules, their progress in the last 3 years, and professional approach for the conduct of training.

In general, the collected data addresses different dimensions of training from the trainers, trainees and training agency's perspective.

Literature Review

Thorough review of the related literature covering continuing education (CE) and professional development (PD), needed competencies, and professional education for LIS in Pakistan was considered in general and the component of *training* was taken in particular. The story of CE in LIS begins from 1915 when Dickinson started the first library science class at Punjab University for working librarians (Mahmood, 1997). Later on different activities i.e. workshops, conferences, seminars, professional trainings, etc that comes under the umbrella of CE has been the focus of different government, semi-government and non-government organizations for LIS

¹ PARD is the oldest public sector training and research organization in Pakistan.

² As on February 20, 2013

professionals. Enough literature is available that emphasize the need of CE activities for librarians in Pakistan. However, it is pertinent to note that most of this literature focusing the theme of Information Technology only. There is no literature available that examines/analyzes the issues regarding training regime, trainers, training agencies and particularly the issues of the trainees, training methodologies, and essential components of the training styles. Few research articles presents an overview of preferred mood of training, status of continuing education for librarians, functions and roles of libraries in research, but no training methodology, planning and mode of delivery, pre and post assessment/evaluation at the part of trainer and training agencies and training need assessment in areas other than IT has been focused. This paper focuses the issues of training, trainees and training agency as a whole.

Most of LIS researchers—working on continuing education (CE), professional development (PD) and trainings—are inclined towards focusing ICT to be the most demanding area for Librarians. No doubt it is demanding, but there are other areas also in which Librarians do require trainings i.e. Management & Leadership, Communication, Teaching & Trainings, Attitudinal Development, and Subject/domain knowledge. A lot of research has been conducted on training needs for LIS professionals in Pakistan. (**Bhatti**, 2012) identified inadequate in-service training for library staff and suggested a national committee consisted on stakeholders for the improvement of the situation. (**Ullah** and Mahmood, 2012) Highlighted the roles and functions of libraries in research and argued that librarians must prepare for professional modern skills through appropriate trainings. (**Jabeen**, 2010) investigated the then current status of librarians' continuing education (trainings) in Pakistan and suggested some measures to be taken for its improvement. (**Warraich** and Ameen, 2010) identified the level of learning and suggested that library programmes should focus on practice as compared to theory. (**Ullah** et al., 2010) argued that "Training opportunities for medical librarians in Pakistan are limited". It is suggested that Medical Library Association of Pakistan and College of Physician and Surgeons Pakistan should offer post-master (MLIS) specialized diploma in medical librarianship. (**Mahmood** and Khan, 2007) gave an overview of training methods (training styles), training providers, feasible time and duration for conduct of training, mode of encouragement and number of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) skills/techniques required for trainees. (**Kanwal**, 2006) stressed continuing educational and self-improvement measures on librarians' part for improving the status of LIS professionals in the country. (**Haider**, 2006) recommended that refresher courses and workshops on topic of interests should be organized. (**Chaudhary**, 2001) emphasized at importance of trainings for librarians working in the university libraries of Pakistan and discussed obstacles, incentives and significance. (**Sharif** and Mahmood, 2001) reported a survey on Pakistan Library Association's Computer Training Center in Lahore to and stated the impact of certificate course in Library Automation (CLA) on librarianship in Pakistan. Findings revealed that computer training contributed a lot to the success for participants in getting new jobs. Different suggestions have been made for improving the training courses. (**Mahmood**, 1998) investigated the progress of continuing education events taken up for LIS in Pakistan and suggested that library schools, foreign agencies, library associations and government should come forward and encourage the CE

activities for librarians in the country. (**Mahmood**, 1997) advocates that information technology is a key priority of training activities for librarians in Pakistan.

Report of the UNESCO “Training the Trainers in Information Literacy (TTT) Workshops Project” is one of those activities taken up at international level keeping in view the changing role of librarians which revealed some work plan for Trainers of Information Literacy. This activity covered the topics of Information Literacy theory and practice, however, this may be considered as the rare effort to prepare librarians for such TOT which includes process of selecting expert presenters and keynote speakers, preparing training material, venue, menu and logistic arrangements and finally process of evaluating the workshop³.

This evident that training regime (including all aspects of training—from need to implementation and evaluation) is entirely different for developing countries from those of required in developed countries (McConkey and Mphole, 2000). It is therefore, that this paper is reviewing the situation of developing countries primarily in order to make comparison between arguments. (**Maesaroh** and Genoni, 2010) reports on a research that examine the current and required status of academic library staff, their educational and professional development in Indonesia. Objective of the research was to identify ways for support of library staff in Indonesia for better service delivery and to assist academic institutions for research, teaching, and learning. (**Kealy**, 2009) argues that some of the key competencies required by (library) staff are not always learnt in the workplace, or in universities, but can be delivered by vocational training providers. (**Foote** and Mannan, 2009) presented training need assessment of librarians in Bangladesh. (**Thomas** and Patel, 2008) argues that LIS educators and digital library practitioners are responding to workforce shortage with training programs while training programs differ significantly in their content and objectives. Competency-Based Training is proposed as a method to shared understanding of digital librarianship, and build more consistent digital librarian training programs. (**Ajidahun**, 2007) highlights the significance of library education particularly in terms of training the human capital of Nigerian university libraries; discusses the training needs of library staff and required and training techniques. Emphasized the benefits of training, training programmes and the staff development processes. Survey of 29 nigerian universities shows that many academic librarians and other library staff are not computer-literate and that training programmes are grossly inadequate. (**Murray**, 2000) presents an overview of school librarians and teachers in Australia for improving their skills in meeting the needs of disabled students.

Instead of ICT and specialized requirement for short courses like diploma in medical librarianship the training in general, and in-service training in special, is required to impart knowledge, skills and positive attitude for performing the responsibilities or tasks assigned.

³ http://www.albertkb.nl/mediapool/60/608240/data/TTT_Final_Report_Exec.doc

Results & Discussions

Keeping in view the previous findings, this survey tends to focus three dimensionally on the issue of training i.e. Training (program), the Trainer and the Trainee. Results, however, is spot lightening on the following key points:

Training Needs:

Although previous surveys resulted in establishing that LIS professionals need more trainings in the area of Information Technology. (Mahmood and Khan, 2007) argued that an overwhelming majority is feeling the need of continuing education in various areas of ICT. However, data analysis of this study reveals that the “Management Skills” are now graded over and above than the IT skills. Results of the question “*What you feel is the most lacking side in your professional career?*” shows that 50.84% respondents believe in Management & Leadership skills to be the most lacking side of the LIS profession.

Areas	Frequency	Percentage
Information Technology	41	22.91
Management & Leadership works	91	50.84
Communication Skills	29	16.20
Subject & Domain Knowledge	14	7.82
Any Other (Pl. Specify)	4	2.23
Total	179	100.00

Another similar question was asked “*In which area the professional librarians should get trainings?*” which also results in inclination towards Management and Leadership component.

Areas	Frequency	Percentage
Information Technology	50	27.93
Management & Leadership works	53	29.61
Communication Skills	27	15.08
Subject & Domain Knowledge	30	16.76
Any Other (Pl. Specify)	19	10.61
Total	179	100.00

Learning Methods & Training Styles:

Skills oriented trainings are mostly advocated by the LIS professionals and most of the respondents emphasized on practical working sessions rather than traditional methods i.e. lecture and presentation etc. Response to a question “*What method of learning do you prefer in training?*” has shown that 78.21% of respondents preferred practical work method in the training.

Training Methods/Style	Frequency	Percentage
Practical Work	140	78.21
Lecture/Discussion	26	14.53
Exercises	13	7.26
Total	179	100.00

In this scenario it is more important to design activity-based trainings (ABT) which include case study methods, group work, role-plays, laboratory work, practical assignments, panel & group discussions, brainstorming, demonstrations, and if possible visits to identified places. Participatory training, dignity of individual, and respect for other's point of view in training are essentially suggesting values that become basis of the training process, guide the trainer to adopting appropriate training style and mode. Although most of the respondents emphasized on practical work, but the importance of lectures/discussion are inevitable especially in concept building, understanding innovative ideas, and making decision support systems.

Impact of skills over knowledge:

Training is more inclined towards development of competencies; therefore, changes are more perceptible and are open to measurement and evaluation. The majority were of the opinion that they often feel lacking of required skills and knowledge to run their routine affairs smoothly. When asked “How often do you think that you need knowledge and skills to proficiently perform your job?” responding to this question 38.76% combined with another same number of respondents said that mostly and often they feel lacking in required knowledge and skills to perform their job effectively. This further strengthening the concept of learning agility, which is rapidly emerging in the information age.

Required Knowledge & Skills	Frequency	Percentage
never	8	4.49
sometimes	15	8.43
rarely	17	9.55
often	69	38.76
Mostly	69	38.76
Total	178	100.00

Similarly the impact of skill enhancement over knowledge acquisition was further advocated strongly by a huge number of respondents on a question “Which of these (knowledge, Skills, Attitude) do you need for further development?” the responses were mainly focused on the option of “skills”

Need further development	Frequency	Percentage
Knowledge	52	29.21
Skills	105	58.99
attitude	21	11.80
Total	178	100.00

The majority, i.e. 58.99% respondents said that they need further development in skills rather than knowledge and attitude (the core components of competency-based training—CBT).

Non-availability of exposure to do things:

Another factor, of being not so beneficial from the traditional method of training i.e. lectures/workshop, is that, although the trainees are eager to implement their knowledge in practical field but, sufficient opportunities aren't available to implement the acquired knowledge and skills practically. Survey asked question as “How frequently do you apply the training knowledge practically?” to which majority has responded that they *mostly* apply the acquired training knowledge in their workplace.

Practical implication	Frequency	Percentage
never	3	1.68
sometimes	20	11.17
rarely	9	5.03
often	61	34.08
Mostly	86	48.04
Total	179	100.00

In this scenario, when there are no sufficient opportunities available for the LIS community to get practical exposure of what they have learnt and to go through its implications, then activity-based trainings (ABT) will add more features of learning and understanding the big picture. Moreover, testing competencies, application of acquired knowledge, get acquaintance to technology and be participatory during the trainings would be more beneficial for the trainees when the actual stakeholders (participants) contribute to the process of which they are direct and immediate beneficiaries because they are the object as well as subject of the training process.

Non-availability of financial assistance:

Finances also play an important role in training activities. The majority of respondents were of the opinion that they should be provided official support to attend the trainings. The response to question “*What financial resources do you look for to attend a training?*” revealed that majority of the people want that their respective organizations should support them financially to participate in such continuing professional development activities while others prefer free training opportunities.

Mode of Financing	Frequency	Percentage
Finance myself	18	10.06
look for sponsor	16	8.94
prefer free training	66	36.87
Look for official support	79	44.13
Total	179	100.00

Free training opportunities aren’t available in the country other than two government sector organizations i.e. NCRD and PARD. This issue can be addressed by taking national and international funding agencies into confidence. The organizations may also consider to support their employees to attend such activities because it would add to their organizational intellectual capital. Community based programmes also support funds for training activities while reasonable finances can also be borne by the participants themselves.

Lack of learning with same experienced grouping:

It was personally observed during the interaction with participants in different training sessions that there are two hidden hindrances in the open learning process i.e. Age difference and Gender difference. Opinion of the LIS professionals were obtained to testify the factual position and point of view which shows that majority of the respondents replied that they are less comfortable in learning with same or lower experienced mates. When asked “*With whom do you feel comfortable in training?*” the 70.22% responded that they learn more when coupled with higher experienced people in the group.

Experienced Group	Frequency	Percentage
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With same experienced group	46	25.84
With higher experienced group	125	70.22
With lower experienced group	7	3.93
Total	178	100.00

Similarly another question about “*With whom do you feel more comfortable in discussion/exercise during the training?*” shows that a gender disparity does not make significant difference in the learning process. An overwhelming majority i.e. 82.58% responded that they feel comfortable with both genders in activity-based exercises during the training. It was further suggested by the respondents to distribute the groups in beginners, intermediate and advanced level of participants and invite them in training.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
same gender	25	14.04
crossed gender	6	3.37
both	147	82.58
Total	178	100.00

Lack of LIS training culture in Pakistan:

The data was collected from the stakeholders of different training agencies involved in the library trainings in Pakistan. According to the data, collected from the training agencies, there are total of 25 trainings conducted in which 1215 trainees were trained in different professional courses in 2010 and 2011. The data was collected from public and private sector training agencies. Another factor, from the trainee’s perspective, which shows the lack of training culture, is associated with the post-training activities that a trainee is required to do i.e. documenting the training knowledge. To find out either documentation is how much important in the trainees point of view, a simple question “*Do you prepare training activity report when you attend any training?*” to which the answer of the majority was “if required”.

Prepare Training Activity Report	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	47	26.26
No	32	17.88
If required	100	55.87
Total	179	100.00

Obviously there are many factors responsible for such small number of trainees got opportunities to attend such trainings. Similarly in terms of the percentage calculated, only 22% of the total LIS community in Pakistan gets opportunity to participate in professional development activities.

The Training Agency:

In any training programme, participants, the training team, and the training agency are among the key stakeholders. Stakeholders of prominent training agencies, actively involved in offering LIS training programmes, have been contacted and data

collected regarding essential components of training cycle. It is noted that the agenda of training agencies are not clear. There is no Training Need Assessment (TNA) conducted; logistic facilities are mostly unavailable; the training participation cost is higher than average; gender issues are not properly addressed; frequency of schedules (yearly, quarterly, monthly) for proposed trainings are neither available nor communicated to LIS community; provision of conducive environment for learning, effective coordination, and regular follow up are not taken into consideration by the training agencies; proper documentation is lacking to judge the effectiveness of training; and above all course/training objectives are not clearly defined most of the time. Currently no training agency is of the SOP to follow up their trainees after delivering specialized training. The results are obvious that trainees cannot measure the improvement in terms of quality and services. This is important for a training agency to accept every programme as a new challenge, besides relaxing, it should—by incorporating essential components of the training into agenda—to proclaim its position and expertise in the field.

Lack of research activities/skills in Librarians:

The survey asked a question that “How frequently you participated or being involved in research process?” which revealed that beside a minor number of LIS professionals, the majority is either not involved in the research process neither they show positive attitude towards research oriented activities. 36.31% said that they are *sometimes* involved in the research process while 25.14% responded that they are *often* involved in such activities. Only 17.32% responses were that they are mostly involved or participated in the research activities. It is worth noted here that the respondents are both trainees and trainers.

Research Process involvement	Frequency	Percentage
never	23	12.85
sometimes	65	36.31
rarely	15	8.38
often	45	25.14
Mostly	31	17.32
Total	179	100.00

Skilled focused trainings

Data the survey shows that the LIS professional are in need of skilled focused training. When asked “which of these do I need further development?” the answer of the majority i.e. 58.99% was “Skills”. It shows that skills focused trainings are mostly advocated by the LIS professionals rather than knowledge-base trainings.

LIS professionals need development in	Frequency	Percentage
Knowledge	52	29.21
Skills	105	58.99
attitude	21	11.80
Total	178	100.00

Combined with the similar question asked earlier i.e. “*In which area the librarians should need professional trainings?*” two major areas were identified i.e. i)

Information Technology ii) Management & Leadership Style. It is, therefore, calculated that skilled focused trainings in the areas of Information Technology and Management Styles are the cry of the day. It's worth mentioning here that skilled focused training in the area of Management and Leadership style is a challenge for LIS trainers and schools.

Suggestions

Suggestions are categorized keeping in view the domain of Trainer and Training Agency individually while some other suggestions are general in nature by the author.

(a) Trainer

(b) Training Agency

(c) Others

Trainers

1. Each session in the training workshop should have planned schedule, training material, defined method of delivery, required helping material, session plan and course contents.
2. The LIS trainers are required to reshaping the structure, delivery, design and implementation strategies of training; incorporating the essential components of activity-based training styles; focusing the description, explanatory and behavioral knowledge also along with procedural knowledge or skills only.
3. TNA (Training Need Assessment) must be conducted before design and delivery of each training. Although it may be the responsibility of training agencies but the results of TNA are much more important for the Trainer as well.

Training Agencies

4. Competency based training programmes to be designed to equip trainees with more competencies in their respective fields
5. Training agencies are required to prepare a schedule calendar for the whole academic year so that if a trainee misses training he/she should be able to track the next coming training and prepare him/herself well in time for enrollment.
6. Each training should have its objective well defined carefully and should be available for trainees/participants to choose whether to attend or not.
7. The government along with associations working for library welfare are required to take initiatives for capacity building of training agencies as well as trainers
8. The training agencies should ensure gender-balanced participation of trainees so as to give equal opportunities to female participants also.

According to a survey only 69 female professional librarians have got opportunity to attend the trainings out of total 665 trainees trained during the last two years. This ratio is about 10.38% of the total trainees.

9. The training agencies should facilitate the participants for boarding/lodging facilities out of the training/registration fee.
10. Evaluation report of each training be prepared in order to gauge the participants learning and outcome of each training. These reports should be shared with all participants to make them aware of the increase/decrease in level of understanding concepts and ideas.
11. LIS training agencies are working in their own capacity and way. A close link between all training agencies is strongly suggested so as to streamline the training courses, trainer's requirements, contents and structure of trainings. In this context an initiative could be taken to develop a website which enlist all LIS trainings/workshops/seminars and upcoming events for general awareness of LIS professionals. The website should contain information about scheduled dates, duration, course contents, speakers and logistics.

Others

12. There is an extreme need of training opportunities for LIS Trainers like TOT (Training of Trainers) which further helps to extends the horizon of learning of different methods and delivery of training modules.
13. There is a need for devising a well-formulated mentoring plan for library trainers
14. Introducing the library education/training subject in curricula of LIS course at university level education

Conclusion & Recommendations

Fundamental requirement for a trainer is effective communication skills and high degree of self confidence, to be well-organized, be patience, have sufficient training skills, empathy, be result focused and obviously have sufficient subject knowledge also. Ideally these qualities can be inculcated in a student by providing sufficient opportunities of knowledge, skills and attitude to develop their competencies in the field of training and mentoring.

1. The LIS curricula at Postgraduate level studies should include a component of teaching and training so as to enable the students to choose their career as LIS professional trainers. Class assignments, presentations, penal discussions, group tasks, individual and group research are the best practices for students during their postgraduate studies in this regard. "Selected LIS teachers and librarians should be trained to designate them as master trainers in different areas of ICT" (Arif and Mahmood, 2012)
2. Notwithstanding the fact that an overwhelming majority advocate the arrangement of skill focused or skill oriented trainings, it should also be taken

into consideration that both the descriptive and behavioral knowledge are the integral parts of improved competencies and be integrated in any training modules because correlation of data analysis revealed that an individual response to positive attitude toward learning process is also inevitable by the majority of respondents i.e. 76.19%.

3. The participants should be given sufficient opportunity and exposure to do things practically; to involve them in practice through case study methods, exercises and demonstrations.
4. The training agency should adopted measures to follow up the trainees after training. The parent departments should also follow the same SOP for follow up measures. Questionnaire or survey may be conducted by the training agency after the training. Higher authorities may also be taken into account for such follow up procedure. Email service can also be used in this regard.
5. The parent department should facilitate the trainees for their boarding/lodging facility while at the same time support the trainee in financing to attend such trainings. The training agencies may look for sponsor themselves. Another aspect could be that the training agencies should reduce their fees up to minimum level so that the participants should be able to bear the expenses. Currently an average training charges as per data is about Rs. 1000/- without boarding/lodging.
6. A blend of participation in terms of working experience along with gender-balanced participation should be ensured in all training activities. The major benefit of this is to make the participants involved in activity-based learning methodology through discussions and exercises. It is further beneficial for marginalized gender to become more active and participate in learning process.
7. The students should have separate training sessions arranged periodically by the respective school of LIS to get them acquaint with current knowledge and practice. This will add to the existing knowledge and education planned in the curriculum and imparted as part and parcel of the syllabi.
8. Generic training on the key research databases should be offered, together with department related training. Critical appraisal, IT and search techniques skills often need to be addressed, and a variety of training styles should be adopted to create a broad and responsive programme that will help create newly qualified and skilled library professionals. (Rickeard and Coles, 2010).

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