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A STUDY OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT

The significance of implementing Human Resource Development (HRD) to improve academic libraries' performance and productivity will be examined in this study article. Because of the rapidly changing nature of the information environment, which is heavily influenced by ICT, the current study focuses on several HRD activities, such as staff training, career development programs, motivation, career pathing, and competences enhancement. Inadequate financing, a lack of management support, reluctance to change, and a staff skill deficit are some of the main challenges faced with implementing HRD methods. It was discovered that effective HRD procedures had a favourable effect on staff productivity, work satisfaction, competence, and the calibre of services offered by library staff.

KEYWORDS: *Human Resources Development, Academic Libraries, Staff Training, Professional Development, Library Personnel Management*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important tools in library administration is the human resources department in academic libraries. Human resources development is now a crucial aspect of library administration and development for all libraries, whether they are academic, special, public, or media. Without a doubt, effective work performance, particularly on the part of staff, is inevitable in a library system where additional and timely attention is given.

Dike (1984) noted that "Training and employee development as a scheme to catch the growth and development of modern management technique" a question now arises, what is human resources development? Or "manpower training and development? Is defined by Ajica (1989) as a strategy of increasing the performance, efficiency of people or individual through well integrated and systematic teaching and learning processes aimed at meeting individual as well as organizational objectives (and) thus facilitating a continuous positive response of both to purposeful change".

Ali and Caleb (1992) see human resources as "The managerial, scientific, engineering, technical craft and other skills which are developed, employed in creative designing. Also human resources development is inclusive of education and training and emphasize an unfolding process as well as carries an implication of growth and maturation through the lowest found education level to tertiary level and development of leadership skills and knowledge in commerce, industry and public services".

According to Ali and Caleb (1992), human resources development is the culmination of all initiatives aimed at raising the calibre and efficiency of an organization's human resources. According to the aforementioned definitions, human resources development must be people-centered in order to assist individuals in learning, improving their values, perceptions, attitudes, and overall behavioural patterns. Libraries are not an exception to the numerous examples of human resources development. "The Nigerian federal government has supported employee training and development through its own organization, the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), since the program's primary goal is to promote and encourage skill acquisition in order to create a pool of locally trained – manpower sufficient to meet the needs of the economy."

The majority of university libraries exhibit strong signs of human resource development, and Abia State Polytechnic Library is no exception. Both senior and junior employees are impacted by human resources development in the library, but junior employees are typically more affected.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The development of human resources in academic libraries has evolved alongside the growth of higher education and libraries themselves. In ancient times, libraries in places like Alexandria and Nalanda focused mainly on preservation of knowledge, with small teams of scribes and scholars managing collections. During the medieval period, monastic and university libraries in Europe relied on a few dedicated librarians who were often scholars themselves.

The modern concept of academic libraries began in the 19th century with the expansion of universities in Europe and America. Libraries shifted from mere storehouses of books to active centres of learning and research. The professionalization of librarianship started with the establishment of library schools, notably the first one founded by Melvil Dewey in 1887 at Columbia University. This marked the beginning of formal training for library professionals.

In India, academic libraries gained momentum after independence. The University Grants Commission (UGC) played a key role in strengthening library services in higher education institutions. The establishment of library associations like the Indian Library Association (ILA) in 1933 and the introduction of library science courses at universities such as Delhi University (1946) and Banaras Hindu University helped develop skilled manpower.

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Over the decades, the role of library staff has changed dramatically. Traditional duties of cataloguing and circulation have expanded to include information technology management, digital resource handling, research support, data curation, and user education. The emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the 1990s forced academic libraries to invest in staff training and continuous professional development. Today, human resource development in academic libraries focuses not only on recruitment but also on capacity building, motivation, leadership development, and adapting to changing academic environments.

This historical journey shows that human resources have always been central to the success of academic libraries. However, rapid technological changes and evolving user expectations have made continuous staff development more important than ever **before.**

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In higher education institutions, academic libraries actively participate in secondary teaching, learning, and research. However, the development of human resources is a major problem for many libraries. Even though technology is advancing quickly and customer needs are changing, library employees frequently lack the necessary training, contemporary skills, and enthusiasm. The abilities that library staff really possess and the necessary competencies in digital information management, research support, and user services differ noticeably. Both overall performance and the calibre of library services are impacted by this circumstance. Thus, the purpose of this study is to assess the situation of human resources development in academic libraries today and pinpoint practical solutions for enhancement.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is anticipated that the study will offer all the guidelines required for library staff administration to scholars, students, and personnel managers. Additionally, it will provide as a guide for future research in the area of library personnel management and as a springboard for additional studies on staff development as it relates to libraries.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions will be addressed to the best of the research's ability.

i. How do human resources affect employees' performance?
ii. Does management occasionally support the development of human resources?
iii. Before showing interest in human resources development, do employees take into account the future opportunities and prestige associated with it?
iv. Do employees genuinely care about the development of human resources?
v. Has management shown any partiality while choosing employees for training?

CHALLENGES

Financial Barriers: Building and sustaining ICT infrastructure is costly. The purchase of hardware, licensing of software, broadband connectivity, and periodic updates pose financial challenges for libraries. For many developing regions, state funding falls short in meeting budgetary needs.

Digital Divide: Inequality prevails in access to ICT. Libraries in urban areas have more resources than those in rural settings. People with low income levels, senior citizens, and individuals with disabilities are unable to maximize the use of digital technologies due to lack of devices and skills.

Privacy and Security Concerns: Borrowing records and user searches constitute data stored by libraries. With inadequate protection mechanisms, the risk of hacking remains high. Data theft and surveillance undermine users' confidence.

Technological Obsolescence and Training Gap: Technology evolves rapidly, and updating libraries becomes difficult. Staff members require consistent training, yet opportunities are scarce.

Infrastructural Constraints: Insufficient power supply, poor internet connections, and outdated technologies characterize many regions.

PROSPECTS

Although there are obstacles, ICT presents immense possibilities. Digital libraries offer services outside their physical premises. The users can access information round the clock. Instant assistance from virtual reference and chatbot services is also provided.

ICT enables efficient collection management using automated systems. Rare books can be preserved digitally and made accessible to many people. Collaboration among libraries is made easy due to common platforms.

Advances in technology such as artificial intelligence for recommendation systems, mobile applications, and Internet of Things for smart libraries can bring about a transformation. Libraries can contribute to the development of communities through digital literacy initiatives and addressing the digital divide.

Strategic planning, collaboration with the government and the private sector, and capacity-building of library staff can assist libraries to overcome the constraints and harness these opportunities.

The significance of Human Resource Development in Academic Libraries

In academic libraries, HRD is essential. Academic libraries are now digital libraries that provide study spaces and research services, rather than just being bookshops. To provide top-notch contemporary library services, competent and enthusiastic staff members are needed. Good HRD helps to guarantee that librarians acquire new skills and stay current with technological developments. Additionally, HRD improves the professional satisfaction and self-confidence of librarians. The level of services that the library offers to instructors and students is positively impacted by the training of its staff. Library performance is positively impacted by this. Academic libraries will not function well without effective HRD, despite of its architectural layout or technical innovations.

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Current Staff Development and Training Practices

Staff training sessions are now routinely held at many university libraries. Digital library and research assistance tools are used in these training sessions. Some libraries teach their workers at conferences and provide short-term training. New hires are introduced to library regulations through orientation sessions. Senior librarians may mentor junior librarians. Furthermore, because of its affordability and flexibility, online training has grown in popularity. However, various libraries continue to have varying levels of staff training.

Problems of Human Resource Development in Academic Libraries

The growth of their human resources presents a number of challenges for many academic libraries. The biggest issue is a lack of funding. These libraries are unable to encourage their employees to seek further education or offer training opportunities due to budgetary constraints. Development initiatives are further hampered by inadequate planning and administrative support. The advent of contemporary technologies is not well received by some elderly personnel. The number of certified instructors in the field of library sciences is insufficient. Staff members are unable to participate in training sessions due to an overworked work schedule.

The Value of Career Advancement and Motivation in HRD

An essential element of HRD is motivation. High degrees of energy and devotion are exhibited by valued personnel in their work activities. Opportunities for job advancement, such as promotions, increased pay, and paid time off for school, encourage workers to perform better. These days, a lot of libraries use performance-based recognition programs and incentive plans. However, work rotation and assignments enable employees to gain new skills. However, the opportunities for professional advancement in academic libraries are typically unclear. Employee turnover and low motivation are the outcomes. Therefore, an HRD policy should take into account both the personal and professional interests of employees.

Human Resource Development's Impact on Academic Libraries' Operations and Prospects

Academic libraries function better as a result of human resource development. Better services are provided to library users by qualified and motivated staff. These workers are capable of handling digital assets efficiently and actively supporting research endeavours. Modern HRD strategies guarantee quick adaptation to cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence or big data management. Information experts and learning facilitators should be professionals working in libraries in the future. Because they have good HRD practices in place, these libraries will be prepared for the new challenges. Academic libraries will be heavily dependent on the growth of their human resources in the next decades.

CONCLUSION

In the process of implementing ICTs in library operations, there is a mixture of challenges and prospects. Budgetary limitations, digital divides, privacy breaches, and fast technological advancements continue to be major problems. Such challenges become even more prominent among poorer countries and poorly funded libraries.

Nonetheless, the positive aspects of ICT implementation in libraries cannot be overlooked. ICT enhances accessibility, effectiveness, preservation, and patron interaction. ICT ensures that libraries function as essential sources of knowledge in the digital era. Effective implementation requires sufficient financing, continuous employee training, privacy policies, and patron-centred strategies.

ICT implementation in libraries necessitates the creation of policies and partnerships by policymakers and librarians. Overcoming such challenges would guarantee that libraries take advantage of the potentials of ICT. Ultimately, effective ICT implementation would enhance the position of libraries in fostering equitable access to information and facilitating lifelong learning. The development of human resources will continue to be central to the success of responsive academic libraries. It is evident from this paper that carefully planned HRD activities result in enhanced staff competence, greater motivation, efficient service provision, and high levels of user satisfaction. Nevertheless, there are numerous issues confronting academic libraries such as inadequate training, limited budget allocations, and minimal appreciation for library personnel. Unless academic librarians undergo constant professional development, they may fail to keep pace with advancements in technology and changing patron needs. In essence, library administrators and university management need to give top priority to HRD through sound policies, training initiatives, mentoring programs, and career prospects.

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