Continuing professional development of Public Librarians: with special reference to Ampara District of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This paper presents research carried out to investigate the status of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of public librarians of Ampara district and the factors influencing their continuous professional development that leads to professionalization. All public Libraries (n=58) in the Ampara district are considered as population and 50% of them (n=28) were selected as sample, by using the purposive sampling technique. The questionnaire was used as the research instrument. Both qualitative and quantitative data analyzing techniques have been carried out to generate reliable results. This study resulted that public librarians in this region have faced several types of hindrances in their professional development during the prevailed civil unrest for three decades in the island. Besides, some personal and institutional factors have retarded their professional development up to some extent. However, the Post-war situation has provided them a path to some extent of CPD during the last ten years. This study concluded that there is room for professional development of public librarians and necessary steps have to take to educate them, giving a good exposure with other library professionals and expertise, networking with other librarians and professional organizations. Therefore, this study recommends that relevant institutions and authorities have to collaborate and plan workshops, training, and other professional short courses to educate them and to provide the opportunity to take part in such programs, national and international conferences.

Keywords

ContinuousProfessional Development (CPD), Training, CPD models, Public librarians, Public libraries, Ampara district, Sri Lanka.

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Introduction

Librarianship is a noble profession. Its' prime motto is to provide services in the best possible manner to the library patrons and the librarian's prime concern is directly linked to customer satisfaction. Today's librarians should bridge the digital gap between rural communities and digital technologies.Therefore, librarians should have some competencies to satisfy the customer needs. The public library is an open system and it should change with the external environments. The availability of well-trainedmanpower or quality professionals in library and information sectors; especially in public libraries is essential for the development of the society as a knowledge society which in turn reflects national development. McKee, (2009) in Bowden (2010) stated that "LIS profession's objective is to encourage members to think about 'professionalization' and the assessment of professional competence to practice [that] play a vital part in raising standards and achieving recognition, status and reward". Therefore, professional competence is important for professionalization, and thatcan be achieved through continuous learning.This study focuses on the professional status of public librarians, training requirements, challenges face for professional development. Ampara district is one of the 25 districts of Sri Lanka, located in the South Eastern region of Sri Lanka with multi-ethnic communities. Ampara, one of the real country-sides of Sri Lanka contains only one (01) Urban council, two (02)Municipalities, and seventeen (17)Predeshiya Sabhas under twenty (20)divisional secretariats. There are 58 public libraries located in this district. Evaluating the CPD of the librarians in this district is very essential to develop the community.

Statement of the problem

CPD is essential as it promotes participants' skills and has the potential to proliferate theoutput and efficiency and improve customer service in libraries. Ampara district has more areas that are rural and people who live in this area are known as an information poor society. Public libraries of this district are not fully equipped with the necessary resources, furniture and above all,they function with insufficient number of staff members. Librarians are rarely given opportunities for professional development, further learning, and exposure.These public libraries should poster resources to provide the best services for the betterment of the

public of this district. Ampara district was also under the threshold of civil unrest for around three decades and settled in 2009. However, Ampara is also now marching forward towards post-war development.

Even though LIS education is progressing today with the emergence of many institutions and various professional courses, public librarians in the Ampara district face several challenges in their professional development and learning. National Institute for Library and Information Science (NILIS) of University of Colombo, Department of LIS of University of Kelaniya, Faculty of Graduate Studies of University of Colombo, Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA), and National Library and Documentation Services Board (NLDSB), Post Graduate Diploma of University of Jaffna are the LIS education providers in Sri Lanka. Due to the civil unrest in the Northern and Eastern province, librarians of Ampara district faced difficulties in their professional development and learning. Informal discussion among public librarians in this area showed that there is an urgent need to focus on their CPD programs. Due to lack of training and exposure, they have gaps in knowledge and skills to organize their libraries and to provide effective and efficient services to their clients. Some libraries are poor in organizing their libraries with the application of proper classification and cataloging systems. While the basic functions are weak, how they could cope with innovative services and approaches?

Shonhe (2020) indicated that research activities pertaining to CPD of Librarians is very low. He further indicated, "Research on CPD of librarians is dominant in academic libraries, hence there is a need for similar studies to be conducted in public and school libraries."A little research has been conducted in Sri Lanka pertaining to CPD of public librarians. In these lacunae, this study is conducted to investigate the real situation faced by the public librarians in the Ampara district and to formulate suitable strategiesto develop their professionalism.

Significance of the study

CPD programs are used to enhance the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of professionals.As public libraries are under municipalities and Predeshiya Sabhas, the librarians are unable to

act as per their wish and will. Therefore, it is important to identify the motivational factors as well as the perceived barriers of these librarians towards their professional development, especially in continuing education, training, exposure trips, and professional membership.This particular study will give information regarding the requirements of these librarians towards training and professional development. In addition,it recommends the LIS educators formulate suitable strategies to educate and train these librarians by using the proper CPD Model. Moreover, this will make the librarians realize their position, their responsibilities and engage in self-evaluation by using the 'living theory approach' Whitehead (1989) to identify their knowledge gaps, needs, and wants towards their professional development which in turn reflect the development of the library services as well as the community.This research study identifies some ways and means to initiate CPD of public librarians of Ampara district by making them to think about their talents, knowledge, and skills to accommodate paradigm shifts in these libraries. These librarians should evaluate themselves to identify the areas that could be developed or skills that required more training, rather than need the analysis done by others.

Objectives of this study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the status of public librarians of the Ampara district towards professional development. Specific objectives are;

1. To identifythe status of public librarians in this district
2. To identify the LIS educational level and training opportunities they received
3. To determine the perceived barriers and challenges of librarians
4. To identify and recommend strategies to facilitate the continuous professional development of these librarians.

Literature Review

What is CPD?

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has been defined and described in different ways according to different occupations. There is no specific definition for CPD given for Library professionals. However, the construction industry in 1986 (Friedman.,& et-al, 2008; Crawford, 2009)seems suitable for all professions.

This defined CPD as,"the systematic maintenance, improvement, and broadening of knowledge and skills, and development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of professional and technical duties throughout the individual's working life."Association of CPD using the term 'competence' instead of 'development of personal qualifications' adopts this definition. This definition of CPD is as "the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skills, and competence and enhancement of learning, undertaken by an individual throughout his/her working life"(Association of CPD, UK, no date Crawford, 2009).In these two definitions broadening of knowledge and skills are emphasized and generally, this can be achieved through education and continuous learning. CPD is much emphasized for medical practitioners, veterinary surgeons, teachers in education as well as higher education, (Dale et al. 2013; Truit,2013; Aileen, 2005). CPD of teachers is argued in different aspects, which involves emotional attachment and engagement in their work. Accordingly, CPD for teachers is defined as,"CPD is a process by which individuals take control of their own learning and development, by engaging in an ongoing process of reflection and action." (Megginson and Whitaker 2007:3in Crawford, 2009). This definition clearly expresses that CPD depends on an individual's willingness of learning. Living Educational Theory supports this definition. Living Theory is a form of self-study that is focused on researcher's research questions in the form of how I can improve what I'm doing' (Whitehead, 1989 &2011).CPD is sometimes referred to as CPE (Continuing Professional Education). Considering the special interest group of this study, CPD is a process by which library and information specialists maintain professional competence throughout their careers. Prytherch (2005) in Robinson &Glosiene (2007) defined CPD as "[A] career-long process of improving and updating the skills, abilities, and competencies of staff by regular in-service training and education supported by external courses."

This definition has included regular in-service training and education supported by external courses in addition to the keywords of the above three definitions. The following section deals with the CPD models & theories.

CPD models & theories

There are many theories evolved for education. The living theory approach byWhitehead (1989) is simply a form of self-study. It is an ethically driven form of research where the

educator recognizes him/ herself. Living theory research is educational and self-study of a person's presence in the world that is transformational in the process of researching to improve it. This is based on inquiry to recognize the values, talents, expertise, and knowledge of individuals' for instance "how do I improve what am I doing"? Whitehead (1989; 2018) has developed a series of questionsfor the living theory researchers, to enquire themselves (http:www.actionresearch.net).The living theory approach can be applied to Library professionals, too. They have to research their talents to find the gap in knowledge and skills to educate themselves towards best practices. Transformations of existing practices are important with changing needs of library users as well as with developing technologies. CPD of librarians will be achieved through education and training based on their inquiries by living theory approach.

Kennedy (2005) has done a study on "Models of continuing professional development" of teachers in Scotland and produced a framework for analysis. In this study, he analyzed nine CPD models by their characteristics and classified them according to their capacity for supporting professional autonomy, transformative behaviors, and practices. The nine models analyzed in this study are the training model, award-bearing model, deficit model, cascade model, standards-based model, coaching/mentoring model, the community of practice model, action research model, and the transformative model.Transformation is the term all professionals require changing their internal and external processes, practices, and services. Therefore, models related to transformation are not only important for teachers even for other professionals including librarians as they are now intermingled with several types of paradigm shifts.The product of this study is proposing a framework for CPD that interrogated all models considering the purpose of each model, types of knowledge acquisition, principle focus, accountability, professional autonomy, and means of transmission or transformative practices. The framework of Kennedy (2005) shows, that moving from the traditional transmission model to the transformative model, professional autonomy is expected greater.Transformation is the most preferential approach in CPD.

Rationale of CPD for librarians

Conventional roles of librarians are a bibliographer, selector, and helper, custodian of information, and manager of human and financial resources exist even today. However, additional roles have been introduced during the millennium and some of the traditional roles are changing with time. Today, librarians should play roles such as subject information experts, information literacy skills teachers, database managers, and institutional repository (IR) managers. Due to rapid development in technology, changing roles of librarians on technological aspects should be given more attention. A librarian should play roles as a technology specialist, e-resource manager, webmaster, access service librarian, and scholarly communication and research librarian. Introduction of the World Wide Web, social tools, the rapid development of e-information resources, and changing needs of users emphasizes librarians to learn ICT. Besides, the present generation is known as Net Generation (Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005) and they are tech-savvy. Librarians who serve today belong to the previous generations, may be Baby Boomers (born between1946-1964) or Generation X (born between1965-1982). Each generation has specific characteristics and values. Generational gaps between the librarians and the present and future library users should not influence library usage. Librarians should learn continuously to develop their knowledge and skills to serve the millennial and neo-millennial. Therefore, librarianship is a challenging profession at present. Librarians should prepare themselves to play these challenging roles very effectively and efficiently. McWilliam (2002) stated that "all professional workers need to be developed. Moreover, there should be no end to this process-the true profession knows that learning is a lifelong process." This statement clearly expresses how important is learning for an individual's professional life as well as to maintain professionalism.

Furthermore, Lepik(1995) mentioned that the librarians' increased responsibility demands good professional education, flexible continuing education, and professional development at different levels. Provision of quality LIS education and training are highly realized as important to face the changes in the LIS field, to accord with present and future trends in the discipline, and to serve the present and future generation of users. Therefore, CPD is highly realized and recognized for library professionals to bridge the knowledge gaps among

librarians and to serve present-day users and it is understood that training and continuing education have a high impact on the CPD of library professionals.

CPD of librarians in the globe

IFLA/ UNESCO Manifesto for Public Libraries (1994) declare, as "professional and continuing education of librarians is indispensable if adequate services are to be ensured."IFLA/UNESCO (2001). Guidelines for the development of the public library service defines "training of librarians as a vital element of the activities of a public library." The guidelines require every library to make a planned and continuous program of training for its staff. Moreover, large libraries should have a post of training officeresponsible for the organization and implementation of training and it is recommended that 0.5-1 percent of the library budget should be allocated to the training. Thereafter CPD of librarians is emphasized and highly realized all over the world and some good practices are adopted. However, this percentage of budget utilization seems inadequate for the libraries with a small budget.

Robinson and Glosiene(2007) have carried out a study on "Continuing professional development for Library and Information Science" in Eastern Europe to evaluate the effectiveness of a network of training centers in23 countries. They identified the good practices, the most appropriate topics to be covered, teaching and learning methods, and monitoring and evaluation policies. This is a good example for international co-operations for CPD of librarians, though the Open Society Institute (OSI) funds it. Similarly, a self-sustaining network of locally available institutions can try for this type of CPD activities of librarians in Sri Lanka. Horvat(2004) mentioned that several LIS organizations have jointly established a training center in Croatia for continuing the education of librarians. He pointed out some issues related to the activities of the training center due to lack of legal provision for leave, funding, and no connection with professional development and professional promotion. Lepik(1995) indicated "that librarians of Estonia is now well underway in co-operation and networking with world's LIS professional organizations and their participation in education and developmental projects.Therefore, librarians give more concern toCPD around the world including South Asia. Rao and Babu(1990) has researched "Continuing

Professional Education (CPE) for Librarians in Tamil Nadu"and analyzed the CPE status of librarians including the obstacles. This study presented a draft plan for CPE.

CPD status of public librarians in Sri Lanka

CPD of public librarians in Sri Lanka is an important issue to consider by the library educators, researchers, policymakers, administrators, and the government of Sri Lanka. Vidanapthirana (1997) stated ,"public libraries do not come under a portfolio of a minister, but function under local authorities. Since there is no recognition as a mandatory service, the success or failures of these libraries depend on the financial status of the local authority and the attitudes of the members towards the library service." Chandrasekar (2013) identified some major challenges faced by the public libraries in Jaffna district, which includes poor participation in CPD programs as one of the challenges.

Wijetunge (2000) has mentioned as"lack of training opportunities has affected the knowledge and skills of the public library staff. Information sources have rarely gone beyond the printed medium. Information technology is still alien to most of the public libraries and attitudes of the public as well as the authorities are negative towards the public library services".

Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA) and National Library and Documentation Services Board (NLDSB) play major roles in providing training to library professionals in Sri Lanka. SLLAis the only professional association in Sri Lanka, which provides professional status for librarians through its membership category. In addition, they conduct some training and seminars for the development of the librarians. SLLA conductsa National Conference on Library and Information Science(NACLIS) every year from 2003 onwards to provide a forum for all librarians to share their experiences, research findings collaborate, and network with each other.SLLA conducts at least one program for public librarians every year. For the last ten years;from 2010 to 2019 SLLA conducted 10 programs but only two of them are in Tamil medium. The medium of instruction for the other programs isSinhala whichis challengingto librarians of the Ampara district.

National Library and Documentation Services Board (NLDSB) also conducts training and seminars for library professionals. They conduct several programs per year mainly in Sinhala

medium. However, from 2012 onwards at least one program per year is conducted in Tamil medium.Though they have conducted many training programs at the national level and are confined to a specific district or area, the language of instruction and the place of training influence the participation of public librarians of Ampara. Considering the medium of instruction of the above programs few are conducted in Tamil medium and rarely in Eastern province. Therefore, the Tamil-speaking public librarians especially from the coastal belt of Ampara might not participate. Management Development and Training Board of Eastern Province has been conducting a few seminars and training for public librarians of Eastern province in Tamil medium since 2013 onwards. The scarcity of literature in this area of research indicates that research on continuing professional development of librarians in Sri Lanka has been given less attention. An assessment of educational and training opportunities of library assistants of Sri Lankan University libraries has only been carried out, Premaratne (2009). Therefore, researchers on LIS should give attention to do more research studies on CPD as it is a very important area to be developedin the local context.

Research design

A survey method was used to obtain information from public librarians of the Ampara district. The quantitative and qualitative approaches were used in data collection and analysis. The research instrument is a questionnaire that includes multiple-choice questions and a few open-ended questions. Ampara district consists of 55 public libraries, among which 30 are located in Tamil speaking areas, especially the coastal belt of Ampara, and the rest 25 are located in Sinhala speaking areas. The population of this study was 55 public libraries of Ampara district and a purposive sample of 54.55% (n=30) were drawn based on their mother tongue. All Librarians of Tamil speaking area especially the coastal belt was considered. The population frame was obtained from the Directory of Libraries in Sri Lanka (Public, University, Research and Technical Libraries), published by the National Library and Documentation Services Board in 2010. Descriptive statistics of SPSS package was mainly used to analyze the data. The questionnaire was administered to librarians of 30 libraries and 19 Questionnaires were returned at a response rate of 63.33%.In addition to this, programs conducted by SLLA, NLDSB and MDTB of Eastern Province and the South

Eastern University of Sri Lanka were obtained by contacting the relevant professional incharge.

Results and analysis

Respondents' Profile

Among the respondent 63.25% (n=12) of the librarians, are male and 36.8% (n=7) are female. As the majority of them fall into the age group of 41-50 and 31-40 they are capable of learning. Educating them would be useful for their professional development as well as for the betterment of the society to which they serve. Age groups of Librarians are shown below.

Table 1: Age group of Librarians

Age Group	Frequency and Percentage
20-30	1(5.3%)
31-40	8(42.1%)
41-50	9(47.4%)
51 and above	1(5.3%)

Among the responded libraries, 13(68.4%) libraries are still in Grade III, 3(15.8%) are in grade II and 3(15.8%) have not yet graded. The services provided by these librarians were also identified. They provide mainly borrowing and reference services while a few of them are doing other services. Table 1 shows the detail of the services rendered by these libraries.

Table 2: Services rendered by these librarians

Services	Frequency and percentage
Borrowing/ circulation service	18(94.7%)
Reference services	19(100%)
Current awareness	10(52.6%)
Inter Library Lending(ILL)	4(21.1%)
Photocopying services	4(21.1%)
User education programmes	9(47.4%)
Story hours	5(26.3%)
Literacy programmes	2(10.5%)

Professional status of the librarians

Considering the grade of the librarians; 13(68.4%) libraries are still in Grade III, 3(15.8%) are in grade II and 3 (15.8%) have not yet graded. Their educational qualifications and professional qualifications are mentioned in table 3 and table 4respectively.

Table 3: Educational qualifications of librarians

Educational Qualification	Frequency and Percentage
GCE-O/L	1(5.3%)
GCE- A/L	12(63.2%)
Bachelor's degree in other disciplines	6(31.6%)
Bachelor's degree in LIS	0
Post Graduate Qualification	1

No one obtained a degree in LIS whilst 6(31.6%) obtained a degree in other disciplines. A majority (n=12, 63.2%) oflibrarians are Advanced Level (A/L) qualified, but only one librarian is with Ordinary Level (O/L).

Table 4: Professional qualifications of librarians

Professional Qualifications	Frequency & percentage
Completed Diploma of SLLA, Level 1	4(21.1%)
Completed Diploma of SLLA, Level II, Part 1	9(47.4%)
Completed Diploma of SLLA / NILIS / University of Kelaniya or any other institute	4(21.0%)
Bachelor's degree in LIS	0
Postgraduate Diploma in LIS	1
Master degree in LIS	0
No answer	1(5.3%)

Considering their professional qualifications 4 (21.0%) of them have completed Diploma in Library and Information Science while others are still at Level I and Level II. One (5.3%) has not responded to this question.Due to incompletion of Diploma or Degree in LIS majority of them (n=15, 78.9%) have not yet gained professional membership of SLLA. Only 2(10.5%) of them are Non-corporate and 01(5.3%) are Associate members of SLLA and awarded charted librarianship.

Capacity of these librarians

The capacity of these librarians   is evaluated by language fluency, ICT skills, knowledge, and skills in the most important services and duties of librarians.

Language fluency: Language fluency was evaluated for Tamil, Sinhala and English by giving Likert scale questions from excellence to poor.

Table 5: Language fluency of public librarians of Ampara

Language	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Tamil	16(84.21%)	0	3(15.8%)	0
English	3(15.8%)	9(47.4%)	7(36.8%)	0
Sinhala	3(15.8%)	5(26.3%)	10(52.6%)	1(5.3%)

All the respondents are Tamil speaking, therefore 16(84.21%) are excellent and 3(15.8%) are good in Tamil and only 3(15.8%) are excellent in Sinhala and the rest have to be trained

in Sinhala Language. Only 3(15.8%) are excellent in English, therefore English language training is important for all.

ICT skills: The basic ICT skills of these librarians were evaluated by using three questions of their computer usage, internet usage, and usage of other e-resources.

Table 6: ICT skills of Public Librarians of Ampara

Skills	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Computer usage	1(5.3%)	4(21.1%)	12(63.2%)	2(10.5%)
Internet usage	1(5.3%)	3(15.8%)	10(52.6%)	4(21.1%)
E- Resources usage	2(10.5%)	3(15.8%)	12(63.2%)	2(10.5%)

This result indicates that very few librarians are excellent and good in computer, internet and e-resource usage while the majority has fair and poor knowledge. It is important to note that it is necessary to educate these librarians on ICT skills. Many responded in open-ended questions that they require training on basic computer applications and ICT.

LIS knowledge and skill : Knowledge and skills in Library and Information Science of these librarians were identified in different aspects. The results have been tabulated in Table 7.

Table 7: LIS knowledge and skills of Public Librarians of Ampara

Activities	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Classification	14(73.7%)	5(26.3%)	0	0
Cataloguing	5(26.3%)	9(47.4%)	5(26.3%)	0
Circulation services (Issue, return)	16(84.2%)	3(15.8%)	0	0
Acquisition	6(31.6%)	8(42.1%)	4(21.1%)	1(5.3%)
Library Automation	3(15.8%)	4(21.1%)	7(36.8%)	4(21.1%)
User Education program, especially Information literacy	4(21.1%)	4(21.1%)	8(42.1%)	3(15.8%)

Responded librarians are excellent and good in classification, cataloging and circulation, but they are poor and fair in acquisition, automation and information literacy. Training is important in these areas. However, they perceived themselves as excellent and good in

classification and cataloging, the organization of knowledge of these libraries is not as good as per the researcher's point of view. That means the application of these skills too should be improved.

Training opportunities and requirements

Varieties of training attended by the respondents were explored. Among the respondents, 16(84.2%) have attended 2/3 training and workshops and 13(68.4%) attended different seminars. However, no one has attended any overseas training, seminars and conferences so far. They have participated in training organized by SLLA, NLDSB, Management Development & Training Board(MDTB) of Eastern Province and Library of South Eastern University of Sri Lanka (SEUSL). Among the respondents; 10 (52.6%) attended training organized by SLLA on 'Purna' and 'Library Management' while 12 (63.2%) attended workshops organized by NLDSB on Library Management and Library practices etc. Another 12(63.2%) attended training organized by local government/MDTB.Four people (21.1%) have attended a training workshop conducted by SEUSL on 'Library Automation using open source software called -KOHA'. Two respondents (10.5%) have mentioned that they attended a workshop on 'Capacity buildings of librarians' under the sponsorship of USAID, held in Kandy. Only 1(5.3%) person attended a workshop conducted by Eastern University on 'The Role of information services' and another one participated at a workshop held in Jaffna Public Library.All of them have attended the workshops conducted by MDTB of Eastern province annually from 2013 onwards. This is because the medium of instruction is Tamil.

However, considering the training/workshops conducted by each professional and academic institution for the regional librarians is lesser than the NLDSB, which is more active. However, the number of workshops held by them in Eastern province is only two, one in Ampara and another in Trincomalee. Even for the Ampara workshop librarians under Predeshiya Sabha were considered whilst under Municipalities were excluded due to some reasons.

Factors affecting librarians in attending training, seminars, conferences and professional courses were explored by asking a Likert scale question of 3 scales.

Table 8: Factors affecting librarians in CPD

Problems and Barriers	Agree	Cannot Say	Disagree
Less opportunities given	10(52.6%)	02(10.5%)	07(36.8%)
Lack of fund	07(36.8%)	03(15.8%)	09(47.4%)
No duty leave was given	01(5.3%)	0	18(94.7%)
Due to the negative attitude of Administrators/ Chairman of Predeshya Saba	05(26.3%)	02(10.5%)	12(63.2%)
I do not want to attend trainings/ workshops/seminars	0	0	19(100%)
As a female employee, I'm unable to attend such training due to my family situation	03(15.8%)	0	16(84.2%)
No training held in Ampara district	17(89.5%)	0	02(10.5%)
Training programs were held in Colombo which is too far	06(31.6%)	03(15.8%)	10(52.6%)
It was difficult to find transport and accommodation in Colombo due to prevailed warsituation (Past)	05(26.3%)	02(10.5%)	12(63.2%)
Many training programs and online courses are conducted in Sinhala and English. I have languagebarrier to learn	14(73.7%)	02(10.5%)	03(15.8%)
I feel that I know everything and no need for further training or workshop	0	0	19(100%)

These results clearly indicate that librarians of this region have some problems in funding, the language of instruction, family burdens of female employees, attitudes of the people who influence them, location of training/ workshops held, etc., and during civil unrest, they found difficulties in traveling and finding accommodation in Colombo. A hundred percent of the respondents wish to learn more. It is important to note that 10(52.6%) of the respondents mentioned that fewer opportunities were given to them so far. These librarians should be given more opportunities, to develop their skills and knowledge through training and workshops.

Detail split of training requirements of librarians was identified by listing the areas and requested the respondents to tick their preferences. The majority of respondents 18(94.7%) wish to learn internet and online resources, then computer applications, e-resources, automation….and so on. Table 9 shows the detail with preferential order.

Table 9: Training requirements of public librarians

Areas of training requirement	Frequency and percentage
Usage of Internet and online resources	18 (94.7%)
Usage of computer	17(89.5%)
Usage of other e-resources	17 (89.5%)
Library automation	17 (89.5%)
Modern circulation services	14(73.7 %)
Digital Library practices	13(68.4%)
Other New trends in Library	12 (63.2%)
Social media	11(57.9%)
Conservation and preservation	10 (52.6%)
Language Proficiency (English)	9 (47.4%)
Language Proficiency (Tamil/ Sinhala)	9 (47.4%)
Information Literacy	8 (42.1%)
Customer care and public relations	6 (31.6 %)
Cataloguing and Classification	6 (31.6%)
Library Management	4 (21.1%)

Another question was asked 'why do you prefer to study further' and a series of responses were given to tick the reason and allowed them to select more than one answer. Responses have been shown in Table 12.Results indicate that 16(84.2%) librarians wish to learn more to obtain knowledge and skills as well as 12(63.2) to get professional qualifications, though the other reasons such as promotion, uplift the services; reputation and self-efficacy are behind.

Table 12: Reasons for Further learning

Reasons	Frequency & percentage
To obtain knowledge and skills	16 (84.2%)
To improve professional qualifications	12 (63.2%)
For promotion	9 (47.4%)
To apply the knowledge and skills to uplift the services of the library	9 (47.4%)
For reputation	5 (26.3%)
For self-efficacy	3 (15.8%)

Perception of the librarians towards CPD

These librarians are highly interested in their professional development. The majority of the 16(84.2%) mentioned that they are always thinking about how to improve their services and practices. Library users have different needs in different periods. Nearly 13(68.4%) of respondents noted that they have carried out need analysis of their library users. It is appreciated that a few respondents 3(15.8%) engaged in some research activities, too.

The perception of these librarians in CPD were analyzed directly by asking two questions; one is "do you feel that continuous training is important for the professional development of librarians" and the other is "do you think that upgrading professional skills is necessary to run a library effectively and efficiently." Their responses are tabulated in Table 11.

Table 11: Perception of Librarians towards CPD

Agreeing Level	Continuous training is important for CPD	Upgrading professional skills is necessary to run library effectively and efficiently
Strongly agree	17(89.5%)	16(84.2%)
Agree	2(10.5%)	3(15.8%)

It is important to note that these responded librarians have a positive perception towards training, CPD and library services. In addition, they were asked that whether the traditional roles of librarians are changing today. Among the respondents, 7(36.8%) have strongly agreed while 10(52.6%) agreed. Somehow 02(10.5%) have mentioned unable to decide. No

one disagreeswith this statement. This indicates that these librarians have agreed that they have to play new roles.

Professional development is closely related tothe promotion. Promotion isthe motivation throughout any professional's carrier. Staff, who are still under substitute or ad-hoc category and long waited for appointments, manage some libraries. Moreover, one of the postgraduate level qualified librarians has another grievance that he/shewas not promoted to Grade Ieven after achieving such level. Because he/she is not yet attained the required experience after a professional diploma in LIS. Requirements for promotion was not included postgraduate qualifications. Therefore, if there is any gap in promoting librarians that should be done, as this is the essential motivation to make them engage with CPD and in turn to provide the best community services.

Another librarian has mentioned that "it is important to train Chairman and secretaries of Predeshiya Sabhas to change their attitude". While many political leaders and their secretaries have realized the importance of public libraries and the development of the librarians, some still have perceived libraries as not important counterparts. A brainstorming session is essential to make such type of people to make aware of the importance of public libraries towards community development. Political influence and interference are a big headache for some librarians in their professional development. They are unable to meet their objectives towards their professional development and library development due to this problem.

Conclusions

Considering the status of the responded librarians,there are three librarians in grade II and thirteenare in grade III. There is not a single Grade I librarian in the Ampara district. While they are fluent in Tamil, they are lacking Sinhala and English Language.ICT Skills of these librarians are also Computer Literacy, Internet Literacy and E-resource usage are also not to the expected level. The majority of them are good in classification, cataloging and circulation whilst they are poor in automation, educating users and acquisition. LIS educational level of these librarians needs more improvement. Avery few librarians (only 4 respondents) have

obtained a diploma in LIS and degree in other subjects whilst the majority have not yet completed diploma or degree in LIS, except one with the post-graduate diploma. Though they have undergone some training programs they require more training on particular areas such as the Internet, computer, usage of other e-resources, library automation, modern circulation services, digital library practices, other new trends in the library, Social media, conservation and preservation, information literacy, customer care and public relations and even cataloging and classification as well as library management. Public Librarians of Ampara district face many challenges in CPD. Public Librarians are not provided financial support and study leave to complete the professional diploma and degree in LIS. Even those who follow part-time diploma courses do not have one or two-day duty leave. If so, this would assist them in traveling and accomplishing course tasks. The next more highlighted barrier is language. Lack of funds, lack of training opportunities in Ampara, transport difficulties, the attitude of superiors and family barriers are also identified as some of the challenges. This study has a limitation in that it has dealt only with the librarians who work in the libraries of Tamil speaking. In addition, this research has considered the Ampara district only. Therefore, the findings would not be generalized. This study recommends the local researchers in LIS extend this type of research to all other parts of our country.

Recommendations

More programs especially online courses in Tamil medium will be a good solution for CPD of the public librarians. Brainstorming sessions for people who influence these librarians is important to change their attitudes and make them realize the necessity of CPD of these librarians. Academic and professional associations shall consider librarians of Ampara in arranging training, workshops and seminars by considering the transformative model and the language of the participants as the medium of instruction that highly influences their participation. An effective and encouraging induction program is also necessary for newly recruited librarians to identify the ethics, code of conduct, and basic practices. Promotion to the highest grade should be a periodic exercise (at least annual advertisement) and it is advisable to adopt a common circular for this purpose. The local government of each province should be uniform in this regard. The local government should advertise it annually. Alternatively, there should be a self-evaluation method and applying for the required grade

could be implemented for public librarians.Even though,the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, the only university in this region now involves in uplifting these librarians' knowledge and skills in some aspects, has to givemore attention and prepare more training, short courses, diplomas and degree programs. SLLA, NLDSB, and SEUSL can collaboratively work together to develop these librarians' competencies to enrich professionalism. If necessary some other government and non-government organizations could collaboratively engage.Higher authorities and local politicians should consider these libraries as living components and recognize their roles in developing the society as information-rich. They should include public libraries also as one of the counterparts in post-war developmental projects. Librarians also should be ready with their proposal to include themselves in the development activities. Reflection is necessary for CPD.

'Living action research theory' is applicable for every librarian to assess their competencies by themselves and to identify the areas to develop further other than anyone else's recommendation. It is emphasized as "librarians should be encouraged to develop personal learning plans that can aid them in monitoring and improving their current and future career plans with the profession," (Moonasar and Underwood ,2018). This study also recommends and emphasizes the public librarians develop theircontinuous learning plans for professional development.

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