Training Needs of University Library Assistants: Perspective of the Librarians

B.N.G.S. Premarathne

Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science Library, University of Peradeniya

Human Resource Development (HRD) is a planned effort to improve knowledge, skills and attitudes of employees. In the library context, HRD is mainly provided through education and training programmes and a clear understanding of the HRD needs is essential before directing the staff to such programmes. To fulfill this need, a study was carried out in the context of the Sri Lankan University libraries and this abstract discusses the details in brief. The broad objective of this study was to gain an insight of the training needs of the Library Assistants (LAs) in the Sri Lankan University libraries. The specific objectives were to: i). investigate the training opportunities currently available for University LAs in Sri Lanka; ii). explore the actual training needs of the LAs as perceived by them; iii). identify the problems encountered by the LAs in undergoing training; iv). examine the Librarians' views on the training needs of the LAs and v). make recommendations to solve the identified issues. In this abstract, findings related to the fourth objective are discussed.

Twelve University libraries under the University Grants Commission (UGC) were selected for the survey. The main research instrument adopted was a self-administrated postal questionnaire consisting of structured and open ended questions administered to all twelve librarians. The response rate was 100 per cent. Descriptive statistical methods were applied to analyse the data.

The study revealed that all the University libraries have not paid adequate attention to the HR capacity development of LAs. Librarians made several observations with regard to the training of their LAs: inadequate fund allocations for training programmes; vacancies being unfilled, so that those who are in service cannot be released for training; non-availability of a training policy; non-availability of appropriate training opportunities, such as language and ICT skills; and lack of encouragement for training in the existing promotional scheme.

The study recommends the following to overcome these issues: increase funding for training; develop a training policy for the University libraries; organize appropriate training programmes by the libraries; encourage training organizations to provide more appropriate training programmes; and revise the recruitment and promotional schemes to encourage participation at suitable training programmes.