

**CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR  
LIBRARY SEMI-PROFESSIONALS IN CENTRAL UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARIES OF INDIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this paper is to find out the effectiveness of the training programmes for LIS semi-professionals and various aspects of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in Central Universities of South India. The findings of the study reveals that most of the Semi-professionals do have a positive look on CPD activities and satisfied with the effectiveness of training programmes particularly on, on-the-job training. In-house training will improve their job performance and prefer to develop new services from what they had learned. The ideal duration for CPD courses should be one week is what the research shows. Institutional problem is the major issue in participation of CPD activities. This study is the first of its kind dealing with effectiveness of CPD programmes for semi-professionals in Central Universities of South India.*

**Keywords:** Continuous Professional Development, Central University libraries, Semi-professionals, Training, Professional Development, South India.

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Staff development is a significant issue in a changing library environment as well-equipped professional librarians are key resources to developing and maintaining a high quality library (Ajeemsha & Madhusudhan, 2012). The quality of academic library depends upon the quality of workforce, which in turn directly depends on knowledge, adaptability, and satisfaction level of the professionals working in a given library (Gowda, 2009). High quality staff can transform even the poorest library into an operation offering excellent service (Mowat, 1996).

It is perceived that, library professionals, especially academic librarians in India are facing challenges in the profession due to the rapid technological changes with the development of cutting-edge technologies in library work/services. This therefore brings into focus the need to ensure that library professionals are well prepared for their duties and are also up-to-date with the current trends in their jobs. Professional Development is a lifelong activity. However there are many motivating factors and bottlenecks that affect professionals in participating in

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities. This study mainly focuses to find out the effectiveness of the training programmes for LIS Semi-professionals and various aspects of CPD in Central Universities of South India.

## **2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The literature in this area deals with the specific examples of professional development of LIS Semi-professionals. Continuing Education (CE) and professional involvement have the potential to inspire and improve job performance. While online resources should not replace traditional professional development experiences such as conferences, they can certainly provide additional ways to develop skills and expertise. Gruber (2008) explained the avenues of learning in the electronic world; specifically on networking. Gruber outlines some of the possibilities like listservs, virtual conferences, blogs, online communities and online tutorials as a tool for CE.

Academic institutions play major role in the manpower development of any nation. Okiy (2004) examined the problems inhibiting the deployment of ICT infrastructure and facilities in Academic libraries of Nigeria and stated that in-house training is an effective means for Staff Development Programme (SDP). There is shortage in ICT competencies in professional academic librarians and urgent need for SDP for professional library staffs (Shepherd, 2010). Professional development is essential for academic librarians to keep current with skills, knowledge, and competencies in rapidly changing times. Cassner and Adams (2006) surveyed professional development requirements of librarians working in distance education libraries. The study highlighted that the challenges facing by distance education librarians in obtaining professional development are time constraints, lack of sufficient funding etc. and geography does not have a significant impact on professional skills (Gosine-Boodoo and McNish, 2005). Chan and Auster (2005) examined the role of factors such as professional commitment, age, barriers to participation, organizational climate, managerial support and motivation of reference librarians in formal and informal professional development of librarians. Farahi and Gandhi (2011) conducted a comparative study on ICT skills of Medical library professionals of India and Iran. ICT skill requirements of Iranian professionals are higher than their Indian counterparts; hence their skill sets are higher. Professionals from both the countries agree that lack of policy on CPD, and sufficient library staff is the major hindrance in acquiring ICT skills.

A novel approach on analysing the psychological perspective of library staff has been conducted by Ali Anwar (1998). The author studied about the issues with the participation in CPD by the librarians. The reasons they rated are in the order: lack of financial support from the library, lack of encouragement from the library management, personal financial constraints, lack of time, shortage of staff, and lack of personal interest. This article is one of the base articles for issues in participation in CPD of the study undertaken here.

In developing countries, challenges in capacity-building are quite daunting in relation to the overall economic performance and outlook. The role of librarians and libraries in capacity building such as training and retraining, staff exchanges, links with similar and related professions, etc., in an economically starved country like Nigeria (Ogunsola, 2011). International collaboration and exchange programme as one of the effective means of CPD and staff training will increase networking between library staff and serve as a tool for learning (Leong and Nguyen, 2011) and low budget allocation to training, under-developed infra-structure, cost involved in participating in CPD are the major constraints faced by academic library staff (Maesaroh and Genoni, 2010).

The issues faced by developing countries to create an ICT enabled environment are different from that of developed countries. Mahmood and Khan (2007) in their research established that in a country like Pakistan there is a significant role for government in creating an ICT environment. The result was that professionals wanted LIS schools and professional associations to organise training programmes but the expenditure should be borne by the employees. They prefer ICT training in evenings and weekends and the medium of instruction should be done in vernacular language along with English.

### 3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

- to know the effectiveness of the training programmes for LIS Semi-professionals in Central Universities of South India ;
- to know the various aspects of job training;
- to know the preferred duration of ICT programmes by LIS Semi-professionals;
- to find out the role of Semi-professionals in CPD activities;
- to know the issues behind participating in CPD activities.

The scope of the study restricted to Continuous Professional Development and Semi-professionals (includes Senior Library Assistant, Junior Library Assistant, Professional Assistant, Semi- Professional Assistant, etc.) in the eight Central University libraries of South India, viz. University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad (Telangana), English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad (Telangana), Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad (Telangana), Central University of Karnataka, Gulbarga (Karnataka), Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod (Kerala), Central University of Tamil Nadu, Tiruvarur (Tamil Nadu), Indian Maritime University, Chennai (Tamil Nadu) and Pondicherry University, Puducherry (Puducherry).

### 4 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

A survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire circulated personally among 100 LIS Semi-professionals in eight Central University Libraries of South India in the month of April 2013. Out of this, 80 filled-in questionnaires were personally collected by the investigators, eliciting a response rate of 80 percent. All the questionnaires were selected for the analysis and interpretation of data. The response to 11 questions were analysed in the form of tables and figures.

#### 4.1 Gender wise Distribution of Respondents

A brief section of the questionnaire deals with the personal profile of the respondents. The various facets of qualitative part of questionnaire consisted of questions based on demographic features. The representation of semi-professionals based on the gender was sought and responses are presented in Table-1.

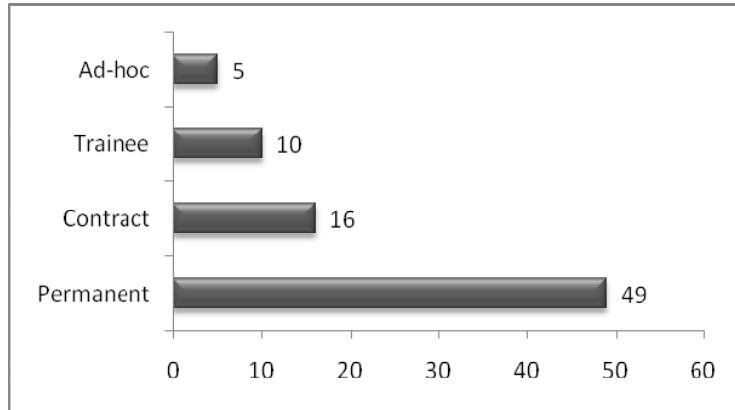
| Gender       | Number    | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Male         | 52        | 65         |
| Female       | 28        | 35         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>80</b> | <b>100</b> |

**Table-1:**  
**Gender-wise distribution (n=80)**

Table-1: shows that male representatives are greater than female representatives.

**4.2 Mode of Appointment**

Mode of appointment is a significant factor in determining whether the professional status will affect the participation rate in professional development activities. The mode of appointment is divided into four groups, viz., permanent, ad-hoc, contract, and trainee (Fig.1).

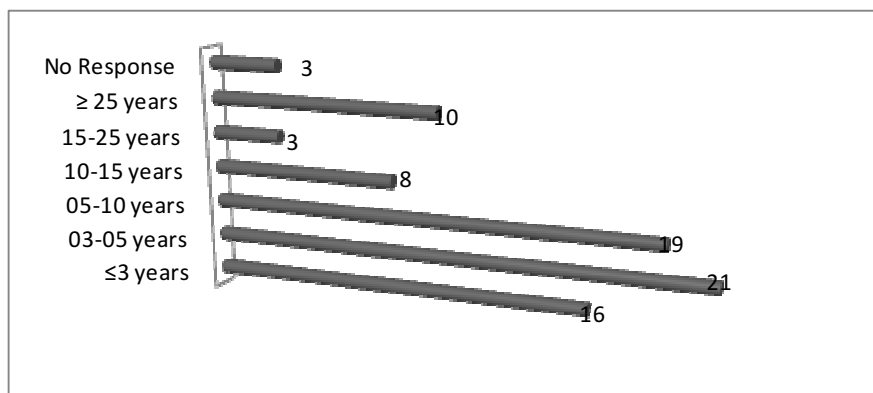


**Fig. 1: Mode of appointment (n=80)**

From Fig.1 it is evident that 61.25 per cent of respondents are permanent employees, followed by contract employees (20 per cent) and trainees (12.5 per cent). The rest constitutes ad-hoc mode of appointment (6.5 per cent).

**4.3 Total Working Experience**

From the responses received, it can be witnessed that, the total working experience of Semi-Professionals ranges from three months to thirty five years. This shows a perfect blend of novices and veterans working harmoniously in Central University libraries of South India. For the ease of tabulation, the total working years have been clubbed into six groups ranging from working experience below 3 years, 3-5 years, 5-10 years, 10-15 years, 15-25 years and above 25 years. A separate group for non-responsive staff were also included. Fig. 2 presents the working experience of LIS Semi-professionals.



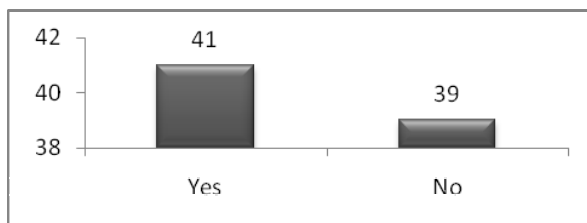
**Fig.2: Total working experience (n=80)**

Fig.2 reveals that, major chunk of Semi-professionals fall under ten years of experience. 70 per cent of respondents (56 out of 80) fall under- ten years of experience and below, of which staffs with 3-5 years of experience hold the maximum with 26 per cent. 12 per cent of staffs

have the experience of 25 years and above. Three staffs rendered their services in between 15 to 25 years and an equal number haven't responded to the same. 10 per cent of staffs are under the service category of 10-15 years.

**4.4 Effectiveness of Training**

Professional Development is essential for academic librarians to keep current with skills, knowledge, and competencies in rapidly changing times. A training programme will be effective when it will fulfill the demands of the aspirants. The success of any training programme depends upon its ability to cater the need of the participants. A question on effectiveness of these programmes was enquired to the semi-professionals (Fig. 3).

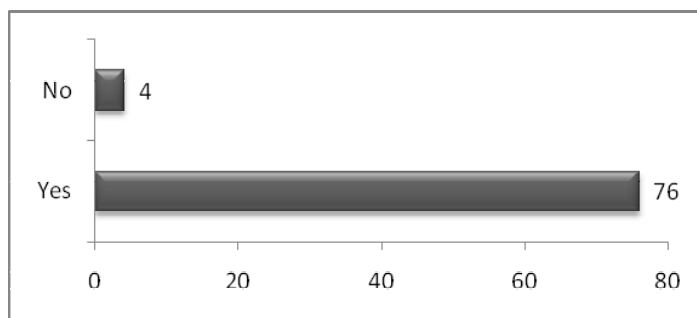


**Fig. 3: Effectiveness of Training(n=80)**

Fig. 3 indicates that almost half of them were satisfied about the effectiveness of training programmes; while another half were dissatisfied that the training programmes were unable to meet their standards. This is an alarming situation that PDP were unable to strike the right chord of 50 per cent of the participants in any training programmes. So it's time for organisers of professional training to self-evaluate themselves.

**4.5 Requirement of On-the-Job Training**

On-the-job training has more benefits than other training methods. One major advantage is that, it is truly practical than theoretical. The training is in vitro and it will help semi-professionals to acquaint more with the current working environment. Fig.4 indicates that the respondents are unanimous that they require on-the-job training (95 per cent). It is also clear that Semi-professionals prefer on-the-job training than formal training process. A similar study on education and training needs of legal information professionals was conducted by Corral and Obrien (2011). The study also came out with the result that on-the-job training is more effective than other formal training methods. The respondents in their study specifically mentioned that on-the-job training is effective in learning personal/interpersonal skills, managerial/business skills and professional/technical skills.



**Fig.4: Requirement of on-the-job training(n=80)**

#### 4.6 In-house Training and Job Performance

In-house training has been considered as more effective by the LIS Semi-professionals. This may be due to the fact that there is no need to take leave or no fear of loss of pay etc. The other advantage of in-house learning exercise is that, it will address the organizational problems and help them to develop new strategy to face the ground situation. Fig.5 shows that 95 per cent respondents favour the idea that in-house training will improve their job performance. Okiy (2004) in his study stated that in-house training is more effective in staff development activity. So the result of the present study is complementary to the study conducted by Okiy (2004).

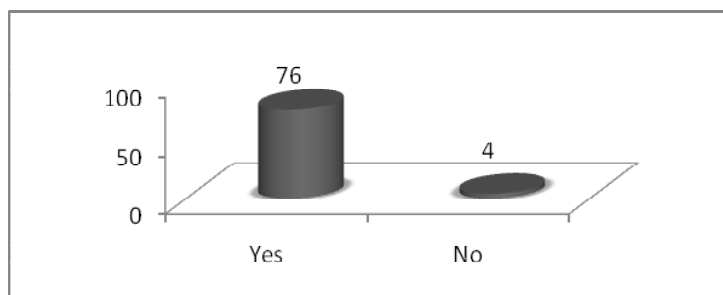


Fig.5: In-house training and job performance (n=80)

#### 4.7 Participation in CPD and Knowledge Enhancement

Learning is a lifelong process. As the technologies had eclipsed the knowledge barriers, it is imperative for library professionals to develop strategies to cater the user needs. All this can be achieved through participation in CPD activities. Participation in CPD can be formal as well as informal; it can be accidental or incidental. Realising that the participation in CPD will enhance the knowledge content, a question had been put forward to the Semi-professionals. Fig.6 expresses that Semi-professionals believes that participation in CPD activities will enhance their knowledge. 95 per cent of the respondents believed so. This indicates that Semi-professionals carry a positive look on CPD activities.

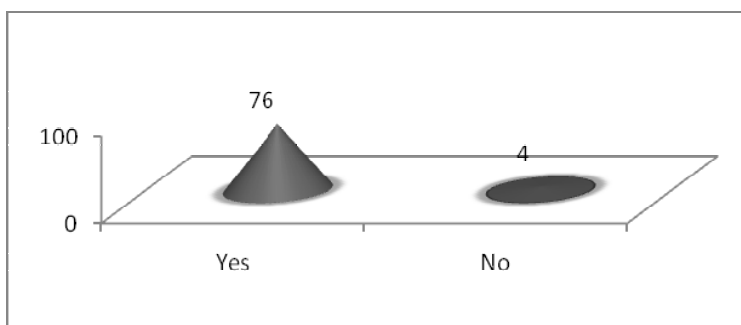
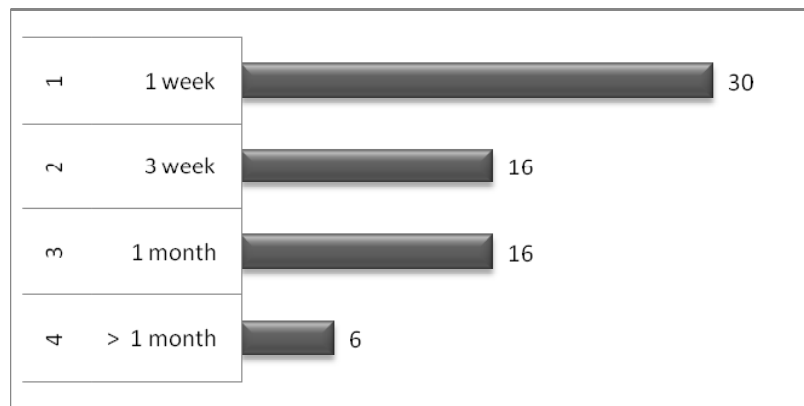


Fig.6: Participation in CPD and knowledge enhancement (n=80)

#### 4.8 Preference in Duration of ICT Courses

Duration of training programmes affects the participation rate of Semi-professionals. The main challenges are that if the duration increases, there may be shortage of participation. This may be mainly due to organisational issues; family issues; lack of contingency fund; shortage of staff; lack of leave etc. An open ended question was formulated about the preference on

duration of ICT courses with options as one week, three week, one month and more than one month. The responses are presented in Fig. 7.



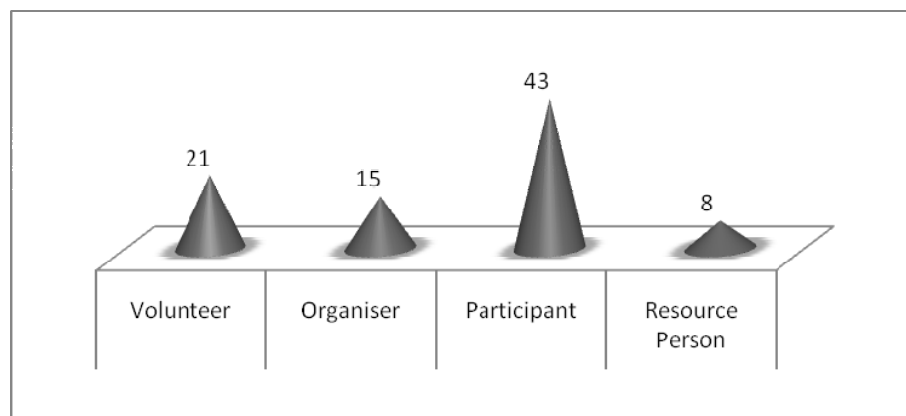
Note: Multiple answers were permitted.

**Fig. 7: Preference in duration of ICT Courses (n=80)**

From Fig.7 it is clear that 68 responses were received for this question. Out of the 68 responses 37 per cent preferred that the ideal duration should be one week. 20 per cent opted for three week and one month duration each. 8 per cent is of the view that, more than one month will be an ideal choice for learning ICT Courses. These findings are consistent with the findings of the study by Mahmood and Khan (2007). They observed that Pakistani professionals prefer weekends and evening time as more effective in learning activities.

#### **4.9 Role in Continuous Professional Development**

An open ended question on the role of Semi-professionals in CPD has been put forward for evaluation. Four choices such as volunteer, organiser, participant and resource person were given for evaluation. The preferences of the Semi-professionals are tabulated in Fig. 8.



Note: Multiple answers were permitted.

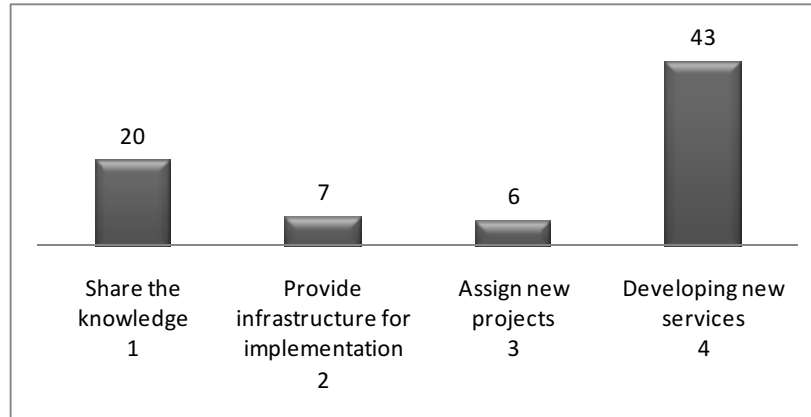
**Fig.8: Role in continuous professional development (n=80)**

Fig. 8 reveals that 50 per cent of Semi-professionals want to be a participant, followed by volunteer (24 per cent), and organiser (17 per cent). Only 9 per cent Semi-professionals feel confident that they can give training to fellow Semi-professionals. The major chunk of respondent's wishes to be a participant and the respondents are not confident to be resource persons. This indicates that the knowledge content of Semi-professionals should be shaped

urgently. Also training is required for confidence building as well as in developing communication skills.

**4.10 Role in Institution after CPD**

Imbibing of knowledge without testing them into practise is not the purpose it meant for. It should be put into practise and to be tested whether it is effective or not. An open ended question has been framed on this regard about the role of Semi-professionals in the institution after CPD (Fig.9).



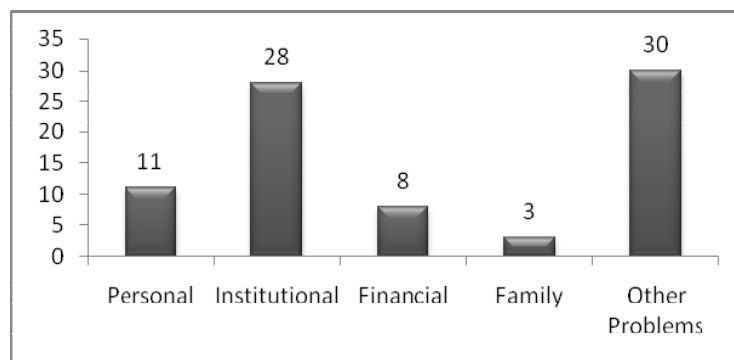
Note: Multiple answers were permitted.

**Fig.9: Role in institution after CPD (n=80)**

Fig.9 reveals that 57 per cent of the total population prefer to develop new services from what they had learned. This shows their dedication to the subject, users and organisation. 26 per cent believe in sharing knowledge with their peers. Responding to this question many semi-professionals expressed the view that authoritarianism from the top level management limits the role of them, in imparting any changes in the organisation.

**4.11 Issues in Participating in CPD**

Semi-professionals are facing many hurdles in participating in CPD activities. Selected issues like personal, institutional, financial and family issues were put in to test. Fig. 10 depicts the issues on participation of CPD activities faced by Semi-professionals.



**Fig.10: Issues in participating in CPD (n=80)**

Fig.10 shows that the institutional problem is the major issue in participation of CPD activities; 35 per cent of Semi-professionals states so. 14 per cent states that personal issues



are the major factor that retreats them in participating CPD activities. However, family issues do not draw much attention from respondents. Interestingly, 37.5 per cent respondents expressed political issues (other problems) a reason that discourage them from participating in CPD programmes.

## CONCLUSION

Emergence of new knowledge in any field needs a 'continuing' education programme to be promoted for use. Continuous professional development ensures sustainable learning experience for the career development of individual and absorbs the ongoing competencies in a modular and helpful fashion. In this context, library and information professionals are bound to act as knowledge navigators to search information available anywhere in the spectrum. Today, library and information service is experiencing a radical change that requires a new range of skills in the use and management of information and communication technology.

The findings of the study reveal that, most of the semi-professionals are positive look on CPD activities and satisfied with the effectiveness of training programmes particularly, on-the-job training. In-house training will improve their job performance and prefer to develop new services from what they had learned. The ideal duration for CPD courses should be one week. It is observed that the institutional problem is the major issue in participation of CPD activities.

Today's semi-professionals are tomorrow's professionals. Most of these professionals are in the dusk of their career. So the competence on emerging technologies is prerequisite for semi-professionals than professionals, because the future of these Central university libraries lies in their shoulders. Continuing education programmes for library and information science professionals in India should help in developing these professional competencies. The respondents of this study are unanimous about the requirement of CPD programmes. The desire of them to learn new technologies is well reflected from the data collected from the questionnaire.

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