

Development of competencies among professional staff in university libraries in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

The human component is the prime resource among all other resources of any organization. Libraries are burdened with several critical issues such as the impact of advancement of the technology, severe funding curtailment, and matters arising from changing socio-economic and unfavorable global implications. To face these critical issues, specific attention has to be paid to the development of human resources in the form of skill training and competency development. The purpose of this study was to identify different categories of competencies applicable to professional staff in University Libraries in Sri Lanka (ULSL). According to current research, competency is a state where a person possesses knowledge, skills, aptitudes, behavioral, attitudinal and wisdom qualities to perform a task successfully. Although competency is a new term in the context of university libraries in Sri Lanka, it is widely used in connection with Human Resource Management (HRM) activities in different libraries of USA, Australia, UK and other European countries. Against this background, the researcher attempted to study the competencies demanded by the University Libraries in Sri Lanka. Objectives of the study were:

- 1) to have a clear idea of competencies
- 2) to identify the views and attitudes of university librarians in developing competencies among professional staff in ULSL
- 3) to explore the most appropriate competencies for ULSL
- 4) to study the existing situation related to competency development in ULSL.

The method used for this study was the descriptive research. Survey technique was used in order to collect data. Data was collected from 10 librarians in ULSL through a structured questionnaire.

Among 11 competencies suggested, 90% of librarians selected 'communication skill as the top most competency. 80% responses revealed competencies viz. leadership; planning and organization skills; management skills; service attitude and quality as the second most important competency category. Therefore, following were identified as being the most important competencies necessary for the professionals of ULSL.

Communication skills; service attitude and quality; planning and organization skills; leadership; management skills; creativity and innovation; subject knowledge capabilities; analytical and problem solving skills; attitudinal and behavioral qualities; group skills; expertise and technological capabilities. 90% librarians were of the opinion that competency development is an essential requirement for the ULSL. Therefore, it is proposed to apply these competencies, in order to take steps for developing new competencies and a competency development model based on management.

Keywords: Training, Human Resource Management, Competencies, University Libraries, Sri Lanka.