Continuing Education Programmes for Professional Development: A Study among Academic Library Professionals in Kerala, India

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ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the continuing education programmes of library professionals working in academic libraries in Kerala. The findings demonstrated that most library professionals have a positive attitude towards CEPs and agree that CEPs are essential for their professional development. Library professionals believe that CEPs help them to keep up-to-date with the emerging technologies in the profession. Travelling difficulties are the primary issue that hindered them from attending CEPs. This study will provide useful guidance to prospective organizers of CEPs for conducting CEPs and study results with a positive note that the professionals are eager to attend the Continuing Education Programmes to acquire new skills to withstand in changing technological environment.

KEYWORDS: Continuing Education Programme (CEP), Professional Development, Academic Library, LIS Professionals, Skill Development, Kerala.

INTRODUCTION

Education and training are essential for updating our knowledge and developing skills. Thus, education becomes a lifelong process. Continuing professional education is essential for shaping and updating our professional skills and competencies. Continuing professional education is a method of learning that leads to professional growth and improvement, allowing individuals to function successfully in a changing work environment. Several methods such as short courses, workshops, in-house training, computer-based instruction, distance education, professional talks, seminars, symposia, conferences, and pre-and post-conference tutorials, etc., have been traditionally used for the development of professionals. The new technologies and techniques are emerging tremendously in recent days in the Library and Information science field. The Library and Information Science professionals have to face these uncontrolled technological changes. Today's library and information profession is very much technology-oriented and affected by enormous technological changes resulting in a paradigm shift.

The future of library science professionals depends upon the contribution they give to the organization they are working in. The situation is ripe for the professionals to engage themselves in various Continuing Education Programmes. To survive in this competitive world, they need to update their knowledge, learn new techniques and maintain their basic competencies. This study investigates the viewpoint of library and information science professionals in Kerala towards continuing education programs and the significance of CEP for professional skill development, as well as a list of the various CEPs available in the LIS field.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study conducted by Joshi and Sahu (2021) examined the relationship between the opinion of the level of job satisfaction and continuing education programs of library professionals in the Chhattisgarh region. As a result of the study, most of the library professionals agreed with all opinions of the professional education program. Most of the library professionals are satisfied with the opportunity to participate in seminars and workshops. Shahzad (2021a) examined to find out the Continuing Professional Learning Programmes (CPLPs) impact on Lahore, Pakistan's Public Sector University Librarians and also attempted to demonstrate the practical ways of efficient use of these CEPs. Shahzad (2021b)described that Information Communication reshaped the working atmosphere of libraries. So, library professionals need to be aware of emerging technologies in libraries. This can be achieved through the continuing education program and Sarman (2020) described the resources available for continuing education programmes at the national and international levels in Library and Information Science according to the latest trends and technologies. To provide efficient and effective service delivery, library professionals should continue their education to develop their skills and knowledge in this complex and ever-changing technical environment in LIS. Other researchers Saleem and Ashiq (2020) aimed to find out and consolidate literature on options for Pakistani librarians and information professionals to continue their professional development. Lifelong professional learning is necessary for the library and information science field to update their knowledge of emerging trends and technologies. Only by CEPs library professionals can fulfill the needs of patrons at the right time. Oladokun et al. (2020) evaluate the present educational credentials of the personnel at Botswana's academic libraries and their required level of continuing professional development (CPD) activities. The study also aims to identify the current CPD activities they engaged in and their impact on improving their performance on the job. The study tries to identify the opinion of academic librarians regarding training, career development and organizational commitment. Rafiq et al. (2017) focused on identifying the Continuing education needs of Professional librarians and their views on the role of library and information science schools in meeting these needs. The findings of the study help to bring a comprehensive understanding of CE requirements, as well as realistic recommendations for action.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ To analyze the attitude of library professionals towards "Continuing Education Programmes (CEP)"
- ✓ To study the reason for attending CEP
- ✓ To evaluate the effect of CEP on updating skills
- ✓ To identify the problems with attending CEPs

METHODOLOGY

The survey method is used for this study. A well-structured questionnaire was used as a tool for conducting this survey. The questionnaire prepared on Google Forms contains open and closed-end questions and is distributed to library professionals in Kerala, India through email and WhatsApp. A total of 125 questionnaires are distributed among 103 responses.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

The questionnaire is devoted to personal information, which forms the base for other parts. This section contains five (05) questions, and the answers to the above questions are presented in tables from 2 to 6.

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaire and response rate

Number of Questionnaires Distributed	Number of Questionnaires Received Back	Percentage
125	103	82.40%

Table 1 shows the number of the questionnaires distributed and its response rate. Here 125 questionnaires were distributed out of this 103 duly filled questionnaires were received back. Thus, the response rate is 8.40%.

Table 2: Gender wise classification of respondents

Gender	Number	Percentage (%)
Female	60	58.25
Male	43	41.75
Total	103	100

Tale 2 reveals the gender-wise distribution of the respondents. Out of 103 respondents, 60 (58.25%) were female and 43 (41.75%) were male. Thus, in this study, the majority of respondents are female.

Table 3: Age-wise classification of respondents

Age Group	Number	Percentage (%)
Below 30 years	34	33.01
30-40 years	34	33.01
41-50 years	25	24.27
Above 50 years	10	9.71
Total	103	100

Table 3 indicates the age-wise classification of respondents. Out of 103 respondents, 34 (33.01%) are below 30 years and another 34(33.01%) belong to 30-40 years. 25(24.27%) respondents are included in the age group of 41-50 years and the rest 10(9.71%) have above 50 years. We can understand that the majority of the respondents are below 40 years.

Table 4: Experience-wise classification of respondents

Years of Experience	Number	Percentage (%)
Below 5 years	35	33.98
5-10 years	21	20.39
11-15 years	18	17.48
16-20 years	12	11.65
21-25 years	13	12.62
Above 25 years	4	3.88
Total	103	100

Table 4 reveals the experience of respondents in the library professional field. Out of 106 respondents 35(33.98%) have experience of below 5 years, 21(20.39%) have experienced between 5-10 years, 18(17.48%) have experience of 11-15 years, 12(11.65%) have experience of 16-20 years, 13(12.62%) have experience of 21-25 years and only 4(3.88%) have above 25 years of experience.

Table 5: Qualification-wise classification of respondents

Qualification	Number	Percentage (%)
CLIS	1	0.97
BLIS	7	6.80
MLIS	77	74.76
M.Phil	6	5.82
PhD	12	11.65
Total	103	100

From the table 5, we can understand that the qualification-wise distribution of respondents. Out of 106 only 1(.97%) have CLIS qualification, 7(6.80%) have bachelor degree in library science, 77(74.76%) have master degree in library science, 6(5.82%) possess M.Phil qualification and 12(11.65%) achieved doctoral degree in library science. So the majority of respondents have master's degrees in library science.

Table 6: Designation-wise classification of respondents

Designation	Number	Percentage (%)
Librarian	62	60.19
Deputy Librarian	2	1.94
Assistant Librarian	16	15.53
Library Assistant	19	18.46
Technical Assistant	2	1.94
Library Trainee	2	1.94
Total	103	100

Table 6 indicates the designation of respondents. Out of 106 respondents, 62(60.19%) are working as a librarian in various academic institutions like universities, colleges, and schools, 2(1.94%) are working as deputy librarians, 16(15.53%) are working as assistant librarians, 19(18.46%) are working as a library assistant, 2 (1.94%) are working as a technical assistant and the rest 2(1.94%) are working as a trainee in academic libraries.

Table 7: Interest in attending CEPs

Interested in attending CEPs	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	97	94.17
No	6	5.83
Total	103	100

Table 7 shows the interest of library professionals to attend continuing education programs. Out of 103 respondents, 97 (94.17%) of them show a positive attitude toward attending the continuing education program and the rest 6 (5.83%) of them shows a negative attitude toward attending the continuing education programs. Thus, we can understand that the majority of them are interested in attending continuing education programmes.

Table 8: Rate of respondents' attendance in CEPs

Attendant in any CEP	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	78	75.73
No	25	24.27
Total	103	100

Table 8 reveals the number of respondents who attended continuing education programs in their professional lives. Out of the 103 respondents, 78(75.73%) are attendant in continuing education programs and the rest 25(24.27%) have not attended any continuing education programs. The table shows that the majority of the respondents attended continuing education programs.

Table 9: Reason for not attending respondents in CEPs

Reasons	Number	Percentage (%)
Lack of Opportunities	11	44
Lack of Awareness	6	24
Beginner, so no time and opportunities for attending CEPs	5	20
Lack of Interest	2	8
Tutorial Videos are now freely available	1	4
Total	25	100

From the Table 8, we understand that out of 106 respondents, 25 of them do not attend any continuing education programs. Table 9 reveals the reasons for not attending continuing education programs. Out of the 25 respondents 11(44%) do not attend any continuing education program due to lack of opportunities, 6(24%) of them due to lack of

awareness, 5(20%) of them are not attendant because they are beginners, so they do not get any opportunities or time to attend continuing education programs, 2(8%) of them have not interested to attend the continuing education programs, the rest 1 (4%)say that now lots of tutorial videos are freely available so there is no need to attend any continuing education program especially thus he/she does not attend any continuing education programs.

Table 10: Motive factors for attending CEPs

Motive Factor	Number	Percentage (%)
To update basic education	74	71.84
To acquire new skills	84	81.55
To get trained in the latest technologies	73	70.87
To train junior staff	19	18.45
To improve services in the library	64	62.34
To set up new systems in the library	52	50.48
To improve relations with fellow professionals	37	35.92
To get promotion	33	32.04
To develop personnel growth	52	50.48
Not applicable	25	24.27

Table 10 revealed the motive factor that influences the respondents to attend the various continuing education programs. The majority of the respondents have more than one reason to attend the CEPs. Out of the 103 respondents, 71.84% (74) attended the CEPs to update their basic education. 81.55% (84) are attended to acquire new skills. Among the 103 respondents, 70.87% (73) attended to get trained in the latest technologies. 18.45% (19) have attended the CEPs to train their junior staff. 62.34% (64) of 103 respondents attend the CEPs to improve their services in the library. 50.48% (52) attend to set up new systems in the library. 35.92% (37) attended the CEPs by the influence of improving their relationship with fellow professionals. 32.04% (33) are attended to get the promotion. 50.48% (52) participated in the CEPs to develop their personnel growth. 24.27% (25) are responded as not applicable.

Table 11: Problems /barriers that hindered attending CEPs

Problems	Number	Percentage (%)
High course fees	45	43.69
Travelling Difficulties	57	55.34
Restricted to a particular group	16	15.53
Inconvenient timing or duration	51	49.51
Lack of Interest	6	5.82
Lack of management support	15	14.56
Lack of convenient courses	1	0.97

Table 11 shows the problems or barriers that hindered the respondents from attending the CEPs. 43.69% (45) are faced with high course fees. 55.34% (57) faced travelling difficulties to attend the CEPs. 15.53% (16) said that

sometimes the CEPs are restricted to a particular group time they cannot participate in it. 49.51% (51) faced problems such as inconvenient timing and duration. 5.82% (6) have a lack of interest to attend the CEPs. 14.56% (15) confront the problem such as a lack of management support to attend the CEPs.0.97% (1) suggested that they faced other problems such as a lack of convenient courses.

Table 12: Impact of attending CEPs in the professional career

Impact of CEPs	Number	Percentage (%)
To keep up-to-date with emerging technologies	85	82.52
To help get promotions	35	33.98
To fill the gaps in conventional learning	42	40.78
Get connected with peers	42	40.78
Increased professional efficiency and skills	72	69.90
Increased subject knowledge	58	56.31
Not applicable	25	24.27

Table 12 pointed out the impact of attending CEPs on the professional career of library professionals. Out of the 103 responded library professionals 82.52% (85) views that attended CEPs help them to keep up-to-date with emerging technologies. For 33.98% (35) attended CEPs help them to get promotions. For 40.78% (42) participating CEPs help them to fill the gaps in conventional learning and get connected with peers. 69.90% (72) suggest that CEPs help them to enhance their professional efficiency and skills. For 56.31% (58) attending CEPs helps them to increase their subject knowledge. For 24.7% (25) of 103 respondents has not applicable because they don't attend any CEPs yet.

Table 13: Skills enhanced as a result of attending CEPs

Skills	Number	Percentage (%)
Managerial Skills	50	48.54
Technical skills	81	78.64
Software using skills	72	69.90
Customer service skills	36	34.95
Database handling skills	56	54.37
Research skills	47	45.63
Not applicable	25	24.27

Table 13 depicts the skills enhanced in library professionals as a result of attending CEPs. 48.54% (50) of respondents enhanced their managerial skills. 78.64% (81) of them view that attending CEPs enhanced their technical skills. Among 69.90% (72) software using skills increased by attending CEPs. For 34.95% (36) attending CEPs enhanced their customer service skills. 54.37% (56) suggest that CEPs help them to enhance database handling skills. 45.63% (47) opines that CEPs help them to increase their research skills. This question does not apply to 24.27% (25) of the respondents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After studying the library professionals' needs and attitudes about continuing education programs of academic library professionals in Kerala the following suggestions have been put forward.

1. Continuing education programs are needed for the professional development of libraries and information science professionals.

2. Continuing education programmes enhance the skills and efficiency of library professionals. It leads to providing better service to patrons thus the visibility of the library can be enhanced in society.

3. The government or other governing authorities should provide sufficient funds for conducting CEPs

4. The fee structure of the CEPs should be made affordable.

5. The location and timing of CEPs should be carefully considered. Attempts should be made to hold the event in a location and time that is most convenient for the majority of participants.

6. CEPs should be conducted by covering topics related to library automation, digital learning tools, and E-Resource management.

7. Maximize the conduction of CEPs in the face-to-face mode by ensuring direct hands-on training sessions.

8. Maximizing the publicity of conducting CEPs it helps to enhance the participation rate.

9. Conducting CEPs help to increase the profile of the institution. It is important for the accreditation process.

10. Management should give support to the library professionals to attend and conduct CEPs.

11. Continuing education programs help to ameliorate the profession of librarianship by equipping the practicing librarians and training budding library professionals.

12. Library professionals try to participate in international-level CEPs. It may raise the standard of our knowledge and help to create a healthy relationship with international professional peers.

CONCLUSION

Continuing Education Programs are essential to the professional development of the Library and Information Science professionals. The impact of information and communication technologies has resulted in significant changes in all aspects of libraries and information centres. As a result, the roles of librarians and information scientists are shifting from mere custodians of information to facilitators and disseminators of information. To survive and thrive in today's competitive world, LIS professionals must be equipped with the most up-to-date ICT skills and competencies to meet the needs and requirements of web-savvy users. Furthermore, such skills and competencies are acquired through a variety of means, such as attendance at professional meetings, seminars/conferences, training programs, and so on. There are so many organizations/institutions conducting CEPs for LIS professionals such as IFLA, ALA, UNESCO, etc. In India, Continuing Education Programmes have been conducted by many organizations/institutions like INFLIBNET, DESIDOC, NASSDOC, ILA, IATLIS, IASLIC, etc on the latest trends and topics. The associations working at the state level are also helping the professionals by conducting conferences, seminars, workshops, training programs, etc. This study analysed the attitude of library professionals towards CEPs their reason for attending CEPs and to evaluate the effect and identify the problems with attending CEPs. This study will provide useful guidance to prospective organizers of CEPs for conducting CEPs and study results a positive note that the professionals are eager to attend Continuing Education Programmes to acquire new skills to withstand in changing technological environment.

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