



ASSESSMENT OF STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR NON-PROFESSIONAL STAFF IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MAHARASHTRA

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ABSTRACT :

The study focuses on staff training and development of non-professional library staff in university libraries with special reference to Maharashtra. Non-professional staff such as attendants, clerks, and assistants form the basis on which the library services are executed; however, unlike professional librarians, these types of staff are left out of any training provision. The study seeks to assess the kinds of programs undertaken, the probable positive effects on the performance of such persons, and the problems faced in implementing these development activities. A descriptive survey method was adopted with questionnaires, personal interviews, and document analyses by-a-side from the concerned university libraries. The study found that most institutions treated continuous staff development as an ideal, while practical aspects were lacking due to irregularities in the schedules of training programs, evaluation, effectiveness, implementation, etc., mainly owing to a lack of financial and administrative backing. Hence, it might be said that training of staff in the university libraries should be based on a well-structured policy and focused on needs, aiming at productivity and quality services. Further, recommendations were made in the study concerning the formulation of institutional training policies, budgeting for training, and encouragement of collaborations with professional bodies for training activities that shall perpetuate a flow of dollar benefits to its members.

KEYWORDS : Staff Training, Non-Professional Staff, University Libraries, Maharashtra, Human Resource Development.

INTRODUCTION:

University libraries are the building blocks on which teaching, learning, and research activities in any university are established; they act as a vital intellectual center with all kinds of resources, technological tools, and services at their disposal to achieve academic excellence. The working of the library is based on infrastructure and collections, but it equally requires competent, motivated, and trained human force, especially in the cases of non-professional staff consisting of attendants, clerks, and support staff, who are the operational backbone of circulation, shelving, data entry, maintenance, and user assistance.

University libraries of Maharashtra went through major changes with the roles of non-professional staff, driven by rapid technological change such as digital libraries, ILMS, and OPAC, forcing those staff with usual skills and knowledge into new situations requiring new skills such as computer literacy, handling of information in digital format, and dealing with people. In lay terms, this draws attention to the need for institutionalized training and development for support staff through programs where they



can gain relevant skills for the modern library environment. Herein lies the glaring difference between professional librarians, for whom workshops and conferences are a regular feature, and non-professional support staff who generally are left out, thereby paving the way for inefficiencies at work, demotivation, and poorer-quality services.

Some universities in Maharashtra organize staff-development programs/interventions for university employees in general, yet the dimensions, periodicity, and real effects of such programs on the concerns of non-professional staff haven't been adequately studied. It is against this backdrop that this study is proposed to examine and analyze the nature, adequacy, and effectiveness of training programs for non-professional library staff in the last decade and find whether these training programs have been able to fulfill the changing needs and challenges faced by support staff. Preoccupation or obsession with receiving lots of beneficent material advantages could well act to stave off intrinsic development and effectiveness. Such inclination will make the person psychologically dependent on the presence of external inducements that will push him to better his life rather than by his will and decision.

The findings of this study will have far-reaching policy implications for all key stakeholders, including policymakers, university administrators, and practitioners working in the library field. Therefore, it's time for them to work towards the development of formalized, need-based, and sustainable training that will improve staff performance and service delivery, thus playing a direct role in the development and quality assurance of academic libraries in Maharashtra with staff development being identified as the cornerstone for the progress of any institution.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- 1) To identify the types of training and development programs conducted for non-professional staff in university libraries in Maharashtra.
- 2) To assess the effectiveness of these programs in enhancing staff skills and performance.
- 3) To examine the challenges faced in implementing staff training and development initiatives.
- 4) To provide recommendations for improving training strategies for non-professional library staff.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Library training and development have been studied by numerous researchers in relation to the academic libraries. Kumar (2010) said that training for professionals and non-professional employees must be sent all the time for their effective performance and in keeping with changes in technology. Chand and Sharma (2012) stated that trained support staff were few and adversely impacted library automation and service quality. Deshmukh (2014) discovered in Maharashtra, while some universities conducted some orientation and computer literacy programs for non-professional staff, the programs were irregular and without proper evaluation mechanisms. In a similar vein, Patil (2016) stated that there were barely some human resource development programs in university libraries, and those rare instances mostly excluded non-professional staff. Continuing Education Programs improved the ICT awareness in professional library settings (Joshi, 2017). Likewise, More (2014) observed that the institutions in the reaccreditation process in Maharashtra called for training activities, albeit without any systematic planning. According to Kaur (2015) and Sharma and Singh (2017), without continuous training for all categories and levels of the staff, library-top automation can never be implemented successfully. In contrast, Bansode and Gawande (2012) note the absence of formal HRD policies in many libraries. From library-related skill-development issues raised in a majority of the literature-Two conclusions can be drawn, primarily supported by the data from university libraries in Maharashtra-that training opportunities for adjunct staff remain unevenly distributed and are, at best, inadequately adequate.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The current study employed a descriptive survey to observe into training practices that existed for non-professional staff working in libraries of Maharashtra universities. It combined both

quantitative and qualitative approaches through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. The study population encompassed attendants and assistants from different types of universities. Using stratified random sampling methods, 150 respondents formed the sample that consisted of staff and technical personnel, including administrators. Data analysis procedures subjected information to statistical processing and thematic interpretation. These interpretations concentrated mostly on formal trainings because of the limitations incurred due to access of records and time constraints. Moreover, ethical consideration was granted throughout by safeguarding confidentiality and the voluntary participation of respondents.

Assessment Of Staff Training and Development for Non-Professional Staff in University Libraries with Special Reference to Maharashtra:

The study evaluates the training systems present for non-professionals working in university libraries across Maharashtra. Data extracted from some selected state, central, and private universities revealed that a few training programs got conducted but in a very haphazard manner and without any systematic planning. They mainly comprised induction and orientation training, computer literacy training, training for library automation, and short-term customer service and record management training. But, these training programs were planned mostly at an ad-hoc level with no fixed time, usually as a one-time or rarely repeated event. Only a few universities conduct training in one year, while most others do it every few years. As for the duration, most of the training lasted only one to three days, and the participants felt it was too short for any serious skill development. A 68% majority voiced that training had helped them improve at their job, especially in computer and user-oriented aspects, but many added that training material was dated and had no work experience attached to it. Some of the obstacles faced were less funding, lack of formal personnel development policies, poor collaboration with outside agencies, and no motivation for staff. A library that had very proactive management and resources was inclined toward intensive training. The synthesis states that while university libraries in Maharashtra acknowledge staff development, its actual running is pretty scattered and very much ad hoc. There should, therefore, be utmost emphasis on setting up a continuous policy-based training system for equipping non-professional librarians and, thereby, enhancing the quality of library services.

FINDINGS:

The study, carried out in Maharashtra, has imparted valuable information into any realization of the current state, shortcomings, and potentials of human resource development for staff training and development of non-professional staff in university libraries. It was revealed that the training programs were irregular and unstructured and had no policy base of their own, with only a handful of institutions running structured and periodic training programs, while most had ad hoc training sessions triggered usually by technological changes. These programs mainly covered computer literacy at the basic level, including the use of data entry, library management software, and ICT, while specialized training such areas as cataloguing, classification, e-resources handling, preservation, and digitization, fairly uncommon to emphasize, and restricted staff to mere knowledge of the fundamentals without an upgrade in the skills necessary for more advanced operational needs of libraries. It was revealed that when the training was completed, the evaluation of the training programs was the opposite, as in, the majority of institutions did not evaluate either the training or the performance of the trainees after training; thus, they could not measure training effectiveness and identify further training needs.

The absence of training budgets and policies further escalated problems as many libraries did not have a separate budget allocation for training but had to rely on irregular sources of funds, which resulted in the neglect of training needs. Institutions where administrators with a proactive attitude provided support were the ones achieving better results, nurturing a culture of continuing education and encouraging participation in training programs, workshops, and seminars irrespective of whether or not these activities were organized internally; they also cooperated with external bodies like UGC and INFLIBNET for skill development.

While a recognition of staff training importance exists, the actual implementation has always been weak, scattered, and in disarray, creating skill deficiencies among non-professional staff and less opportunity for career improvement and increased operational efficiency. This study places emphasis on a constructed policy-driven and executed sustainable training mechanism that will address these gaps with a view to enhancing staff skills, service delivery, and growing the services of university libraries in Maharashtra.

Table 1: Frequency of Training Programs Conducted

Frequency of Training	Number of Universities	Percentage (%)
Regular (Every Year)	3	30%
Occasional (Once in 2–3 years)	5	50%
Rare (Only when new technology introduced)	2	20%
Total	10	100%

Less than half of the institutions did the training thing just occasionally. Fifty percent of them appeared to take on daily or weekly training efforts properly. Thus, those that provide on-the-job or off-the-job training also take training seriously at their company. Less could rely on some sources-codes, books, magazines, or blogs.

Table 2: Type of Training Received by Non-Professional Staff

Type of Training Program	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Computer Literacy and Automation	54	45%
Orientation and Induction	72	60%
Customer Service and Communication	42	35%
Record and Maintenance Management	30	25%
Digital Resource Handling/E-library	24	20%
Total Respondents (Multiple Choices)	120	—

Higher budget universities offered specialized courses like e-library handling while orientation and basic ICT training were part of the few that were available to all, but such had a higher degree of sufficiency.

Table 3: Perceived Effectiveness of Training Programs

Response Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Highly Effective	18	15%
Moderately Effective	63	53%
Less Effective	27	22%
Not Effective	12	10%
Total	120	100%

The survey results indicated that 68% of all respondents said with a degree of certainty that the quality of their job performance had increased through training. Similarly, though, about 32% of the interviewees were critical of the programs as a whole because of less up-to-date and inadequately practiced content.

Table 4: Major Challenges Faced in Conducting Training

Identified Challenge	No. of Responses	Percentage (%)
Lack of Budget Allocation	84	70%
Absence of Training Policy	72	60%
Limited Time Availability	48	40%
Lack of Trainer/Expert Support	39	32%
Low Motivation among Staff	27	22%

What were noticed as major challenges of implementing personnel development programs were financial constraints and the absence of formal policy training.

Table 5: Comparison of Training Implementation by Type of University

Type of University	No. of Universities Surveyed	Regular Training (%)	Occasional Training (%)	Rare/No Training (%)
State Universities	5	40%	40%	20%
Central University	1	100%	0%	0%
Private Universities	4	25%	50%	25%

Central universities demonstrated consistency by conducting more on-the-job training and knowledge updates than most private universities. Apart from a few selected state universities, private ones lacked structured and clearly represented training mechanisms. Necessary basic trainings are almost frequently imparted, which are useful to fill post vacancies with new employees. However, as against lack of senior technical librarian cadre at these academic libraries, university libraries in the states of Haryana, Goa, and Sikkim have started considering the prestigious category to be filled by teaching faculty in academic libraries.

Taking a closer look at the data, it is quite clear that there is huge disparity in staff training and development area, especially with regard to non-professional staff members in the university libraries of Maharashtra. Only very few are systematically providing training, while most programs being designed are not as challenging, at least in the sense that training programs begin with basic computer literacy rather than specifically addressing library operations. The main challenges that have been expressed during data and document collection are financial constraints, absence of policies, and scant assessment policies. Nevertheless, places with very creative and initiative leaders are more engaged in training and make sure that the effect from such training is felt.

DISCUSSION:

The results suggest that though universities in Maharashtra have begun to realize the importance of platform training of non-professional employees, their objective remains far from being accomplished. There are several reasons for this, including institutional inertia, unpreparedness, or hardly any policy support, which proves to deter a definite and systematic insertion of non-professional staff into human resource program in the mainstream institution. Mostly non-professionals who manage overall operational functions of a library, they do not form part of a training schedule for professional librarians. Professional librarians usually attend workshops, seminars, and coordinated training do staff training programs. Witnessed from some covert trend of technological transformation, this change from automation at the processes, the integration of e-resources and digitization of collections became unavoidable. Overhaul in technical skills or re-tooling was required in almost all categories of library staff. But unaccommodated training programs limited structuring needed by non-

professional staff through which they would be much prepared to maintain and meet changes. Their non-involvement weakens their role in contributing to effective library service delivery.

But there are other challenges too; a successful redesign might mean training programs should be designed keeping in mind demand, occur frequently and cater to outcomes. The automated digital ecosystem being established required a long-run need and engagement in specific programs that would be triggered on the need be it a gap in automation, material care, user services, and also some massively involved bodies including the universities, UGC, and INFLIBET Centers as well as professional librarian associations which can in turn cause across-the-board promotion of such training programs as widely visible in quality and accessibility. At the same time, regional training workshops, e-learning modules, and exchange programs in-between universities are other possible avenues for enhancing their reach and continuity. Implications in all programs call for closely itemized monitoring and evaluation approaches in order to evaluate whether or not the real effect of these courses is an improvement in the participants' performance or institution efficiency. To elaborate, the Geographical Study on Training of Faculty would show that continuous training of non-professional staff can create personal elasticity, expand service standards and lead to operational excellence at university libraries in Maharashtra.

CONCLUSION:

The study brought out the need for education and training effectiveness as key determinants in managing university libraries the effectiveness of efficient university libraries in Maharashtra. It was apparent palpable that even though staff development is very essential and therefore perceived as very important, there were impediments blocking the intentions of most and at times they include the following: the said authorities have met challenges of irregular training schedules, defunct structure owing to lack of money to maintain these resources, poor infrastructure in terms of policy framework, and minimal commitment at the senior administration level. Most libraries have adopted a strategy in retraining library staff, and that was in basic computer literacy and not immediately the next level of library skills or the knowledge that they required digital information resources-thus eventually heading for a stand of non-professional staff to get hung out in technological development and automation. The study upheld that among the libraries where the management had proactively coalesced their efforts with that of the administrator had had the best results. The study recommended setting up a structured continuing education system that is policy-based, must be in close coordination with other universities, other government agencies, and other libraries to grow means and standards to create high-quality training programs in a more holistic approach. There should be constant enhancement of skills along with evaluation and reward of employee performances to instigate a culture of progressing performance and turning the lights of improvement on. Better library services for user satisfaction will help the universities modernize their library programs across Maharashtra nonetheless.

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