



TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE PERSONNEL IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Continuing professional development refers to the purposive efforts adopted by the library and information services (LIS) sector to encourage and provide for the growth of its human resources. This article discusses continuing professional development of LIS personnel and it emphasises the importance of training and development in the South African LIS sector. Since there is no structured framework for continuing professional development of the LIS personnel in South Africa, this article explores what is available in order to come up with a suitable framework for continuing professional development that can be used in South Africa. The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals' (CILIP) (United Kingdom) Framework for continuing professional development is suggested for the South African LIS sector and its importance is discussed.

1 INTRODUCTION

This article discusses continuing professional development of library and information service (LIS) personnel and it emphasises the benefits of training and development in the South African LIS sector. While individual LIS

departments are doing their own personnel development, it is suggested that a more structured and specific form of training, development and continuing professional development, is required due to the unique nature of the library. The *Encyclopedia of library and information science* (1974:71) states that more needs to be done in terms of continuing education before staff development can be placed on a sound intellectual basis.

Since there is no structured framework for continuing professional development of the LIS personnel in South Africa, the researchers needed to look at what is available in other countries in order to come up with a suitable framework for continuing professional development that can be used in South Africa. The United Kingdom's Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), formerly the Library Association, developed a formal framework for continuing professional development in 1992. This framework consists of a personal profile and a set of guidelines for the development of individuals as well as employers, professional institutions and providers of continuing professional development activities. The formal structure of the framework ensures that workers demonstrate competence at work; yet it is flexible and hospitable enough to accommodate the development needs of all workers. It also supports development within current positions held by the workers, while at the same time allowing them to prepare for possible future employment. The CILIP framework for continuing professional development has been utilised by many LIS organisations and it is believed that it is also suitable for use in the South African LIS sector.

Permission was obtained from CILIP to adopt and suggest this framework for the South African LIS sector. The framework was very carefully studied and a literature review on the topic was conducted to determine whether it is, and can be useful for South Africa. Since such a framework for continuing professional development does not exist in South Africa, this may be the stepping-stone to a more formal and structured way to continuing professional development of LIS personnel. Employers, professional bodies such as the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA), and the individual professional have important roles to play in the continuing professional development of the LIS workforce. The framework can assist one to develop the competence at work and to make the most of one's abilities, irrespective of whether one intends to seek promotions or to move on to other work options (CILIP 1992).

2 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Before discussing continuing professional development and the framework, it is necessary to describe a few key concepts.

2.1 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development can be described as ‘the development that enables professionals to fill the gap created between existing and expected knowledge, skills and attitudes that can sustain their job performance requirements’ (Ocholla 1995:12). The general purpose of professional development is to ‘educate change-agents and train supportive staff so that all citizens can pursue their own continuing education’ (*Encyclopedia of library and information science* 1974:71). The change-agent in this case, has the ability to promote a sense of order and responsibility in individual citizens, groups or the community.

Professional development in this context will therefore refer to the purposive efforts adopted by the LIS to strengthen its capabilities and to achieve its mission effectively and efficiently, by making sure it encourages and provides for the growth and development of its human resources.

2.2 CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The concept *continuing professional development* can be described as activities that staff should pursue to develop, improve and diversify their skills during their working life (Keenan 1996). It can also be regarded as all vocational and professional learning opportunities that are taken up after the completion of initial professional preparation (Jarvis 1999).

These definitions best suit the concept as it is applied in this article, since the focus is not only on maintaining current competencies but also on the acquisition of new abilities and skills as the profession changes.

Continuing professional development can further be regarded as the ongoing process that is aimed at monitoring and upgrading the skills of individual workers within the profession, for those who work as team members or on their own. Continuing professional development has the ability to enhance the individual’s efficiency and effectiveness, develop a marketable worth and promote recognised or recognisable good practice throughout a particular profession (Redfern 1994:445).

3 IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Continuing training and professional development is considered to be so important by industry and government alike that the government undertook special initiatives that indicate the urgency of continuing training and development. In South Africa, new government initiatives have been

launched that raise the profile of training and development in the country. These initiatives include the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act, Act 58 of 1995/National Qualifications Framework; Skills Development Act, Act 97 of 1998; Skills Levies Act, Act 9 of 1999 and the Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998.

The overall aim of these initiatives is to:

- Provide an institutional framework in which the training needs of employees in South Africa can be met.
- Encourage and coordinate training activities in South Africa.
- Ensure the flow of trained labour to meet the economic and industrial needs of South Africa.
- Establish, coordinate and maintain infrastructure for training and development.

The Skills Development Act, Act 97 of 1998 seeks to develop the skills of the South African workforce and, thereby, to increase the quality of working life for workers, improve productivity in the workplace, promote self-employment and the delivery of social services. The Act further encourages employers to use the workplace as an active learning environment, provides opportunities for new entrants to the labour market to gain work experience and seeks to ensure the quality of education and training in South Africa. Furthermore, the training needs-analysis or skills audit, as is required according to the Skills Development Act. This can be useful in providing individuals with an opportunity to focus on their abilities and identify areas where they might benefit from training and development. The Act can also serve as a useful tool for management to identify gaps in the knowledge and skills of their workers.

The Skills Levies Act, Act 9 of 1999 ensures that sufficient funds are allocated and available in organisations for developing the skills of the workforce. Commitment to this Act by organisations and individuals can lead to a more structured delivery of continuing professional development in the workplace. The Skills Levies Act introduces a compulsory levy that is equivalent to one per cent of the payroll of each company. Twenty per cent of the total levy collected is paid into the National Skills Fund while the remaining 80 per cent will be paid as grants to firms that carry out accredited training that meets the criteria linked to the Sector Skills Plan. This will mean that if the libraries and information services (in the LIS sector) do not engage in some form of accredited training and development of its staff, they will stand to forfeit one per cent of their payroll and, with the diminishing budgets that are allocated to libraries, they cannot afford to lose these funds.

The purpose of the Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998 is to achieve equity in the workplace by:

- Promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination;
- Implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels of work force.

This will mean that more focus has to be placed on continuing professional development of all staff to ensure that they are competent to do their jobs and to achieve equality and equity targets in the workplace.

The SAQA Act, Act 58 of 1995 indicates that one of the important functions of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is to ensure that standards and qualifications registered on the NQF articulate on a national basis and are comparable internationally. The NQF operates under SAQA, whose Act provides for the establishment of bodies for monitoring the achievements of education and training providers in offering programmes that meet certain standards. SAQA is a 29-member body that is appointed by the Ministers of Education and Labour; the members are nominated by identified stakeholders in education and training. The functions of the Authority are twofold:

- To oversee the development of the NQF, by formulating and publishing policies and criteria for the registration of bodies responsible for establishing education and training standards and qualifications, and for the accreditation of bodies responsible for monitoring and auditing achievements in terms of such standards and qualifications;
- To oversee the implementation of the NQF by ensuring the registration, accreditation and assignment of functions to the bodies referred to above, as well as the registration of national standards and qualifications on the framework.

SAQA established the National Standards Bodies (NSBs) and Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) according to Regulations published in 1998. These Bodies (NSBs and SGBs) are responsible for the generation and recommendation of unit standards and qualifications against which education, training and development outcomes, including continuing professional development, can be accredited.

In order to accommodate the quality of the qualifications offered or the learning achieved by individuals, SAQA published the Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) regulations.

The NQF will perhaps provide greater impetus to formal education and training and will probably cause an increase in demand for continuing education and training in the LIS sector. Thus far, the researchers have noted that the NSB for the LIS sector in South Africa has not made any significant progress in setting down standards for the LIS.

It is realised that once learners are aware that there are clear learning pathways which provide access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths, they are more inclined to improve their skills and knowledge. In doing so they increase their employment opportunities (NQF 2002).

These Acts can be seen as enabling tools for workers, helping to open doors by removing discriminatory barriers of the past and encouraging continuing professional development and life-long learning of all employees. The legislation also provides access to training, development, new opportunities and promotion. Organisations benefit from a more productive work force and better-trained and motivated staff can help to make the company more efficient and competitive.

Weingand (2000:199) stresses the importance of continuing professional development for all persons working in the information industry, which includes libraries. She also states that, regardless of their job titles and responsibilities – professional, paraprofessional or clerical – every staff member has the responsibility to stay up-to-date as the profession, technology and society change. This includes staying up-to-date in knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Researchers maintain that the average shelf-life of a degree is approximately three years and that its value constantly declines (Corrall 1998:17; Weingand 2000:201). This means that every professional should focus on maintaining competence and learning new skills for success in his/her career. In the light of this, continuing professional development can no longer be regarded as an option, but rather as a requirement of professional practice. Professional education is said to lay the foundation for subsequent training and development. The practical experience provides the real-life context for the new professional, who is faced with the challenge of trying simultaneously to update and consolidate what he/she knows and to acquire new knowledge and skills that are related to the job and position. It is the duty of the professional to do this and in certain professions, such as medicine, it forms part of the code of ethics.

Continuing professional development has various benefits for the staff and the organisation and it is noticed that a structured approach to continuing professional development will be very beneficial for staff. It can assist them in planning their long-term goals and deciding how they are going to achieve

them. The *Encyclopedia of library and information science* (1974:55), states that while continuing professional development is the responsibility of the individual professional, it is important to the individual, LIS organisation and the society which the profession is dedicated to serve.

4 WHY THE CILIP FRAMEWORK FOR CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS IMPORTANT?

A framework can be regarded as a set of principles and guidelines that provides a vision, a philosophical base and an organisational structure. A framework sets the boundaries within which certain activities are performed (NQF 2002).

The environment in which the LIS operate is constantly changing due to economic, political, educational, technological and social developments such as those in information technology. The LIS sector has to anticipate changes in its service delivery systems or methods in accordance with the changes in funding, technology and expectations of the users. Therefore the LIS sector will have to decide on new possibilities for service delivery and these have considerable implications for the working environment of the individual. Demand is placed on the updating of knowledge and skills, acquiring new skills and maintaining core competencies. Academic, vocational or technical qualifications cannot provide a solution in such a situation, mainly because of their short life span. As job requirements and personal interests change, the maintenance of competence and career advancement requires both a commitment to continuous improvement and professional development (Redfern 1992:389).

A literature study was conducted on frameworks and programmes for continuing professional development of LIS workers and, as mentioned earlier, the CILIP framework was suggested suitable for use in the South African LIS sector.

A framework such as the CILIP framework can also be useful to the unemployed, as it provides a systematic approach to a wide variety of learning opportunities and recognises the importance of structure in, on and off-the-job training. The framework ensures that individuals are able to recognise and identify the learning outcomes from work-based and own-time activities (CILIP 1992).

The framework aims to be supportive, coherent and consistent while, at the same time, it allows the individual the flexibility to plan constructively on the basis of personal choice, perception of need and the availability of resources.

Continuing professional development according to the framework is voluntary rather than mandatory and its success and development are dependent upon the extent to which it is taken up and the vigour with which it is applied in practice (Redfern 1992:389).

The framework caters for all LIS staff, regardless of their age, level of responsibility, size of the organisation they work for or whether they take career breaks. The framework encourages individuals to take responsibility for their own life-long learning and to influence their own future rather than simply reacting to events. Even if there are no prospects for promotion, there will always be a need to improve efforts to keep abreast with new knowledge and techniques, so that when opportunities arise, the workers are prepared to take advantage of them (Simmonds 1994:360).

Redfern (1993:496) states that the framework is a voluntary scheme that encourages a systematic approach that recognises and promotes the value of work-based learning. This supports the individuals in reviewing their own position before negotiating with employers. The framework is tailor-made to support staff in the provision of high quality services. Thus, the framework can be regarded as an enabling tool for continuing professional development, rather than a prescribed means to ensure continuing professional development.

5 THE CILIP FRAMEWORK AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CILIP introduced the framework for continuing professional development of its members, so that they would be able to keep a pace with the rapid changes in their working environment. It was noted that significant social, economic, political and educational developments had an impact on the delivery of library and information services. Furthermore, funding and administrative issues, as well as the introduction of technology and the changing expectations of the users, have also led to a change in the manner in which services are provided. This means that the LIS professionals, just like professionals from other fields, need to ensure that their skills and competencies are in keeping with the changing demands of employers and users.

As indicated earlier, academic, vocational and technical qualifications have a very short life span. CILIP responded to the need for continuing professional development after the initial qualifications were obtained by awarding Chartered Membership and fellowship, and developing a programme of events designed to update knowledge and develop skills (CILIP 1992). The members of CILIP have a responsibility to ensure that high standards of

service are rendered and employers have an equal responsibility to support staff development, including continuing professional development. Employers have the responsibility to ensure that those whom they employ are trained to conduct their activities competently.

CILIP has been recognised for its efforts in continuing professional development and for this framework. These efforts have been covered in various articles by Redfern (1992, 1993, 1994, 1995) and Owen (2003:490–499). The latter also refers to the CILIP's focus on the development of the LIS profession's practice to meet the needs of the future.

6 ELEMENTS OF THE CILIP FRAMEWORK

The framework for continuing professional development consists of the personal profile, guidelines for individuals, guidelines for employers, guidelines for professional associations and guidelines for the providers of the continuing professional development activities.

6.1 PERSONAL PROFILE

The personal profile enables the individuals to analyse their own professional development needs and to prepare a personal plan, record development activities and evaluate their progress. The personal profile is a step-by-step guide, which can form a permanent record of achievements. It also enables the individual and employers to devise, implement and to assess continuing professional development plans in close collaboration. The aim of this personal profile of continuing development is to reinforce the principles of continuous improvement in work performance as the responsibility of the individual (Redfern 1992:389).

6.2 GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUALS

The guidelines for individuals aim to develop and maintain intellectual and personal development throughout one's working life. These also include the individual's personal responsibility for taking action to improve skills and update knowledge in relation to current employment and anticipated future work. The guidelines focus on:

- Guidance on good practice in demonstrating commitment to continuing professional development
- Identifying personal continuing professional development needs
- Creating a personal development plan
- The implementation of a continuing professional development plan
- Recording and evaluation of a personal plan (CILIP 1992; Redfern 1992).

6.3 GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYERS

The guidelines for employers aim to create an appropriate climate and support system for continuing professional development, which makes a positive contribution to the organisational development. The focus is on:

- Guidance on good practice related to creating a commitment to continuing professional development
- Identifying the needs for continuing professional development
- Implementing continuing professional development plans
- Evaluation of the benefits of continuing professional development for individuals and employing organisations.

6.4 GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The guidelines for professional associations aim to promote and support the continuing professional development of the members of the association in order to enhance the status of the work force and ensure high standards of professional conduct. They focus on good practice by:

- Establishing a strategy and plans for continuing professional development of its members
- Promoting continuing professional development
- Encouraging members to identify continuing professional development needs, plan appropriate action, record and assess the benefits in a systematic manner
- Identifying the range of structured continuing professional development opportunities appropriate to the needs of the members
- Recognising the contribution of unstructured activities to continuing professional development
- Giving recognition to the continuing professional development progress
- Monitoring and evaluating effectiveness of continuing professional development framework.

6.5 GUIDELINES FOR THE PROVIDERS OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Providers of continuing professional development include employers, academic institutions, professional bodies and commercial education and training organisations. The guidelines for the providers of continuing professional development activities aim to create and maintain a continuous learning environment, recognising the contribution of both structured and unstructured activities, and giving due attention to systems of evaluation, recognition and reward. The guidelines focus on good practice by:

- Recognising and assessing the range of development opportunities in the working environment
- Reviewing the range of continuing professional development needs, both current and emerging
- Developing and delivering flexible cost-effective courses and learning materials
- Evaluating continuing professional development activities
- Considering appropriate recognition and/or reward for continuing professional development.

7 BENEFITS OF THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE LIS SECTOR IN SA

CILIP (1992) has identified many benefits of using such a framework. These can be divided into those that are advantageous to the organisation or employers and those that are beneficial to the employees.

Benefits to the employer (LIS):

- Improved service to its users and stakeholders of the LIS
- Better performance and productivity from all levels of staff
- Potential candidates for promotion
- Visibility as an exemplary employer
- Attracting high quality staff to the organisation
- A committed and skilled work force.

Benefits to the employee:

- Enhanced skills and job satisfaction
- Experience of working in an environment that supports learning
- A recognisable framework within which to place activities and experience
- A record of development with the possibility of accreditation towards academic awards
- An improved profile for library and information skills
- Increased self-esteem on the job.

It is important for the LIS to identify key work areas, within which specific training and development is necessary. The framework can be beneficial in this regard as it already identifies these key work areas as:

- Library and information skills
- Personal effectiveness or communication
- Management skills
- Corporate skills (CILIP 1992).

It is further noted that each individual will have different continuing professional development needs. The workers themselves must decide, together with their employer, what is appropriate to continuing professional development programmes. The framework will be very beneficial in this regard, as personal assessment and development of needs, and the ways to meet these needs, are a vital part of the framework.

Performance of employees is usually evaluated through an appraisal scheme where they go through a process of recording their own achievements, training needs and development ideas. However, if employees do not keep proper records of these aspects, the situation could arise where important aspects can be overlooked. The framework can serve a dual function and prevent duplication of efforts if implemented, in that it is a more structured means of recording all the information that can be used for development, training and appraisal of performances. It can also serve as a benchmark for measuring the performances of the individuals.

Nankivell (1997:553), in her study of the use of the framework by various library sectors such as academic libraries, special libraries and public libraries, found that the framework can be very beneficial to people working in smaller units of the library. Additionally, it takes cognisance of the needs of workers in distant or remote locations (away from the parent organisation) as well as small organisations and one person staffed services.

The LIS sector, or at least certain parts of it in South Africa, as in other countries, are converging (or have done so already) with other services or departments and local authorities, such as the Provincial Library Services and Metropolitan Libraries in KwaZulu-Natal. In certain instances, non-librarians are appointed to top posts – this could possibly mean that the quality of service offered is highly questionable.

Standards of professional practice and assessment of competence have become very significant in South Africa as a result of government interventions (such as the SAQA and NQF). This has meant that emphasis is being placed on competence at work, quality of services, recognition of prior learning and rewarding or accrediting learning of individuals.

The framework incorporates all of these aspects and would not only be able to assist LIS organisations in providing a more formal continuing professional development, but it would also ensure that the organisations are functioning within the ambit of government legislation.

According to Redfern (1995:33), an outstanding skill of the information professional is the ability to analyse and synthesise. The framework is about making connections with the skills staff members already have, what they might need and what they will need to thrive in a rapidly changing working

environment such as that which exists in South Africa. The process of analysis, planning and recording allows one to identify opportunities for personal growth and development (Simmonds 1994:360).

This framework represents perhaps the best method of a structured training and development situation and the recording of training and development. It is not necessary to reinvent the wheel and try to develop another framework in South Africa. LIS should rather make use of the existing CILIP framework since it is a proven method. Furthermore, the flexible and accommodating nature of this framework makes it usable in any work environment and allows for easy adaptation to suit the specific training needs of the individual organisations. The LIS in South Africa has perhaps already wasted much too much time in trying to decide on the correct structure for the training and development of its staff and the CILIP framework can provide a cost-effective solution.

8 NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE FRAMEWORK

It is important for one to bear in mind that although this framework can be very useful, certain negative elements or disadvantages also exist:

- Using the framework can be very time-consuming
- The lack of interaction between appraisal schemes and the framework can be off-putting as people involved in appraisal schemes are less likely to complete the framework since both take the individuals through similar processes of recording achievements, development needs and ideas
- It can be difficult to sustain the use of the framework although, initially, it may be very exciting and generate enthusiasm
- Librarians often feel that they should use it but do not
- The framework can seem irrelevant if individuals do have a career plan or know exactly where they want to go
- It may be difficult to encourage older and more senior LIS professionals to use the framework.

9 ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS IN CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Organisations such as professional associations, should play a role in the continuing professional development of individuals by creating opportunities for this, motivating staff to attend and rewarding them afterwards.

Professional associations are largely responsible for providing continuing education and learning opportunities that meet the needs of their members.

Continuing professional development activities can take the form of workshops, conference programmes, and articles in professional journals, reports and policies.

Noon (1994:5) stated that professions need a professional body to support and sustain the spirit of the profession on behalf of its members. Persons who are practising a profession also need to keep abreast of changes and it is the function of the professional association to ensure that every member is properly equipped with up-to-date and comprehensive knowledge.

Liebi (1998) suggests that library associations are in an extraordinarily good position to plan, organise and promote continuing professional development opportunities. The *Encyclopedia of library and information science* (1974:61) also refers to library associations playing a leading role in developing effective and continuing professional development programmes for the profession as a whole. It further states that library associations bear some responsibility for backing up efforts of individual organisations in providing continuing professional development.

The Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) is a fairly new body that was launched in 1997. It replaced all other library associations such as the former South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Services (SAILIS), African Library Association of South Africa (ALASA) and the Library and Information Workers Organisation (LIWO). SAILIS was responsible for most of the continuing professional development and accreditation of the LIS sector in the past, but due to the *apartheid* system, this service was not extended to most LIS sectors. This means that certain expertise and experience in this regard are available among LIS professionals in South Africa, who were members of this body not too long ago. It is therefore possible to re-introduce these activities and perhaps to develop a continuing professional development sector within LIASA that can deal with these issues.

LIASA, in its offering of activities to the LIS sector, states that it has the capacity to take steps necessary to promote the professional development of its members and, as part of its aims, indicates that it will promote and provide education and training to LIS workers (LIASA 2002). However, this association does not have any specific aims or committees responsible for continuing professional development. Although the association has organised several conferences, lectures and workshops thus far, it still needs to develop into an association that can provide accreditation and professional status to its members and coordinate the continuing professional development of all LIS workers.

10 CONCLUSION

The LIS sector in South Africa is faced with changes caused by technological inventions, political pressures, cultural differences, environmental and economic pressures that make it necessary for its staff to receive continuous professional development and other forms of training. It is suggested that a formal structured method of ensuring and emphasising the importance of continuing professional development and providing continuing professional development programmes are necessary in South Africa. Continuing professional development should no longer be regarded by the organised LIS profession and sector as merely 'a nice-to-do' activity, but rather as a 'have-to-do' activity.

The CILIP framework for continuing professional development is recommended for implementation by LIS sector in South Africa and it can be viewed as being the answer to some of the staff training and development problems currently faced.

The framework can be used independently by individuals to enhance their personal development, which will ultimately improve their performance and the quality of services offered by the LIS. However, it is suggested that it should be used as a tool to create and enhance a culture of professional development at work that would demonstrate real commitment to the workforce. Furthermore, it is important for management to endorse the use of the framework, as this will motivate the staff to implement it.

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