A STUDY OF HUMAN RESOURCE TRAINING NEEDS FOR THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN THE STATE OF SARAWAK

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out with the objectives of identifying the existing knowledge and skills of the professionals and para-professionals employed by the PUSTAKA Negeri Sarawak and other public libraries in the state of Sarawak (knowledge and skills according to job descriptions and actual daily tasks). In addition, it also sought to identify the actual related knowledge and skills needed by the professionals and para-professionals by comparing their existing knowledge and skills to the existing competencies standards (National Library of Malaysia and the Public Services Department and other best practices standards), and to identify the training needs of the professionals and para-professionals employed by the PUSTAKA and other public libraries based on the findings. Based on these objectives four hypothesis were formulated namely, the knowledge and skills of the professionals and para-professionals employed by the Sarawak public libraries consists of general competencies; organizational knowledge; library leadership and advocacy; reference and research; collection management; content organization and structure; and library technology management; there will be significant difference between the required competency for the job and the current competency level of the staff in terms of general competencies; organizational knowledge; library leadership and advocacy; reference and research; collection management; content organization and structure; and library technology management; the lower is the current competency level of the staff, the higher is the need for the training; and the higher is the required skill or competency for a given job, the higher is the need for the training.

In this study, a mixed-method approach was adopted involving survey research method and structured interviews. Based on the literature, three sets of questionnaires were developed for three categories for job levels i.e Basic for "Penolong Pegawai Perpustakaan", "Pembantu Perpustakaan", and "Pembantu Am Rendah"; Advanced for "Pustakawan" and Expert for "Pustakawan Kanan". In order to ensure that the developed questionnaires met quality standard, they were piloted with prospective respondents. A total of 576 were sent out to the three categories of respondents but only 525 were returned yielding to 91% response rate. Upon completion of the survey, structured interviews were conducted with selected librarians from several public libraries involving 139 respondents with the purpose of ascertaining the information obtained from the survey and to implore further information. Based on the analyzed data, the results showed that, three out of the four hypotheses were supported. Based on the findings, several recommendations were made. The recommendations are based on the seven areas of competencies namely general competencies, organizational knowledge, library leadership and advocacy, reference and research, collection management, content organization and structure, and library technology management.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Information field is a progressive field that requires acculturation of knowledge and skills. Professionals and para-professionals in this field employed by the PUSTAKA Negeri Sarawak and other public libraries in the state of Sarawak need to sustain their competencies in order to remain knowledgeable and skilful. Sustaining the competencies of professionals and para-professionals can be achieved through training programs to provide career development and at the same time to fulfill the government requirements and the professional standards.

Before any training programs could be designed for the professionals and para-professionals, it is necessary to conduct a study on training needs analysis of the professionals and para-professionals employed by the PUSTAKA and the various public libraries services in the state of Sarawak.

In identifying their training needs, the professionals and para-professionals need to describe their existing knowledge and skills against the professional competencies standards. Therefore, in this study the professional competencies standards were used as tools to measure the performance of the professionals and para-professionals employed by PUSTAKA and other public libraries in the state of Sarawak. In this way gaps between their present knowledge and skill sets, and those required for excellent performance could be identified parallel to their training needs.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

This study was carried out to fulfill the following objectives:

- To identify the existing knowledge and skills of the professionals and para-professionals employed by the PUSTAKA Negeri Sarawak and other public libraries in the state of Sarawak (Knowledge and skills according to job descriptions and actual daily tasks).
- To identify the actual related knowledge and skills needed by the professionals and para-professionals by comparing their existing knowledge and skills to the existing competencies standards (National Library of Malaysia and the Public Services Department and other best practices standards).
- To identify the training needs of the professionals and para-professionals employed by the PUSTAKA and other public libraries based on the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the important aspects of research design and method used in the study. Following the introduction section, the chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section provides a detailed account of the research design. The second section discusses the survey that was undertaken. The third section provides a detailed discussion of the interview. The last section summarizes the chapter.

2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Figure 2.1 is a visualization of steps of the research design in its entirety. Driven by the research objectives and research question, a literature review was conducted. Hart (1998) describes literature review as the selection of available documents (both published and unpublished) on the topic, which contain information, ideas, data and evidence from a particular standpoint to fulfill certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated, and effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed. Sekaran (2003) notes that the literature review provides the basis or foundation for developing a conceptual framework for looking at the problem in a more useful and creative way. Based on the information obtained from the literature, the researcher developed the conceptual framework of the research. Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) define conceptual framework as representation of reality; it delineates those aspects (variables) of the real world the scientist considers to be relevant to the problem investigated, it makes explicit the significant relationship among those variables and it enables the researcher to formulate empirically testable hypotheses regarding the nature of these relationships. Based on the developed conceptual framework, research hypotheses were then generated.

The next stage of the study involved a survey conducted with the purpose of collecting research data to be used for answering the research questions and testing the formulated hypotheses. The first part of the survey involved the development of the research instrument i.e. the questionnaire. In developing the questionnaires, the researchers had adapted measured that have been used and reported in the literatures. Further, as to ensure quality research outcome resulting from the use of the research instrument, the questionnaire underwent pilot study. Consequently, the questionnaires were sent to each and every library personnel working at public libraries in Sarawak. After obtaining a valid and satisfactory number of returned questionnaires, the researcher embarked on data analysis and interpretation stage. From the results of data analysis and interpretation, deductions were finally made.