

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIANS IN ZAMBIA: THE IMPACT ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT: *One of the major assets of any organization is its workforce. A well skilled workforce will have a positive impact on the productivity of the organization. Librarians are at the centre of ensuring that people have access to information as well as skills to access the information in the most appropriate format. To achieve this and provide better services, librarians themselves must possess the relevant skills to provide library services that are aligned with national development plans. Zambia has in the recent past been advantaged in that it has received support in building the capacity of its staff in public libraries. Amongst the notable support has been from the African Library and Information Associations and Institutions (AfLIA), through the Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) project as well as the Worldreader project plus other programmes that AfLIA has done and is still doing. Other notable support has been from Book Aid International (BAI) and many others. The objectives of this study included: to establish the various capacity building programmes that public libraries in Zambia received; to determine the challenges that public libraries faced in building the capacity of the library staff; and to determine the impact of the librarians' capacity building programmes on national development. The study revealed that public librarians had received a variety of capacity building programmes and these had a positive impact on the quality of library services provided.*

KEYWORDS: *public libraries, capacity building, sustainable development goals, national development plan, public librarians.*

INTRODUCTION

Public libraries in Zambia have not been left out in this quest to build the capacity of its librarians. Zambia, being a signatory to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), places a lot of emphasis on bettering the lives of people in various sectors. For organizations to perform effectively, it is important that its staff are well equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills required for the job. Some services such as the provision of library services are continuously dynamic. This is mainly due to the technological changes that the world is facing, and this also has an impact on information acquisition, processing and dissemination. It is for this reason that librarians must continuously be equipped with the skills needed to keep abreast with modern trends in as far as information management is concerned.

Public libraries in Zambia have been advantaged in that various stakeholders have come on board to assist with building the capacity of public libraries. This is important if libraries are going to play a cardinal role in ensuring that access to information is supported. Access to information is a fundamental human right. Public libraries, as institutions mandated to provide equal information access to people from all walks of life, have a particularly significant role to play in advancing this right. As prime access points designed to respond to various and ever-changing information needs found in their communities, libraries are at the heart of responsive community development Koontz and Gubbin (2010).

Libraries guarantee access to information, which is a cross cutting target that supports all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) IFLA (2016). Library services contribute to improved outcomes across the SDGs

by promoting universal literacy, including media and information literacy, and digital literacy skills. In this way, public libraries act as instrumental development partners in meeting national development agendas. Libraries also support development through provision of relevant, accurate, and timely information. As a powerful development tool, information supports communities in different ways. In many communities, public libraries may be the only providers of critical information on health, agriculture, education, or general information that helps citizens make sound decisions. It is therefore important that librarians who are tasked to drive this agenda are well equipped with the much needed modern skills to do their work.

One of the concerns of managers in organizations is professional development. On the other hand, Keshmiri and Nezhad (2015) observe that for improving the management system and increasing the efficiency of labor force in every organization, it is required to accept innovations, application of new methods and technologies and the rational use of experts and skillful employees. Hence, every organization should prepare the ground for the growth and development of its employees' knowledge and make good preparations in this field.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were:

1. To determine the capacity building programmes for public librarians in Zambia;
2. To determine the challenges that public librarians face in building their capacity;
3. To establish how public libraries are contributing towards national development as a result of the capacity building programmes Zambia.

METHODOLOGY

This survey targeted the 23 main public libraries across Zambia. E-Surv online survey forms were used to collect information from the respondents. The study applied both quantitative and qualitative methodology. Content analysis was used to analyze the data collected. The study used purposive sampling to select the respondents for this study. This is because the study was targeting specific provincial head librarians from Zambia Library Service under the Ministry of General Education, from main council libraries and from Lubuto Library Partners.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Public libraries in Zambia

The following were the main public libraries in Zambia and all of them participated in the study.

Table 1: Public libraries in Zambia

No.	Name of main public library
	Chililabombwe Municipal Council Library
	Chingola Municipal Council Library
	Chipata Provincial Library
	Chipata Council Library
	Choma Provincial Library
	Hellen Kaunda Memorial Public Library
	Kabwe Municipal Council Library
	Kalulushi Municipal Council Library
	Kamanga Irish Community Centre Library

	Kasama Council Library
	Kasama Provincial Library
	Kitwe Public Library
	Livingstone City Council Library
	Mansa Provincial Library
	Lubuto Library Partners Model Library
	Lubuto Mthunzi American Youth Library
	Lusaka City Council Library
	Mongu Provincial Library
	Mumuni Library
	Ndola Council Public Library
	Samuel Reuben Mwewa Public Library
	Solwezi Provincial Library
	Zambia Library Service – Public Library Headquarters

The above Table 1 indicates the twenty-three main public libraries in Zambia. The study had a response of 75% from the above listed libraries that received the e-survey online forms.

Distribution and management of public libraries in Zambia

Table 2: Distribution of Public Libraries in Zambia

Province	Name of public library	Name/s of branch libraries	Ministry/ Organization responsible
Copperbelt	Chililabombwe Municipal Council Library	-	Ministry of Local Government (MLG)
	Chingola Municipal Council Library	-	MLG
	Kalulushi Municipal Council Library	Chambishi and Chibuluma Public Libraries	MLG
	Kitwe Public Library	Buchi Public Library	MLG
	Hellen Kaunda Memorial Public Library	-	MLG
	Samuel Reuben Mwewa Public Library	Kamuchanga Public Library	MLG
	Ndola City Council Library	Kabushi, Masala, Lubuto, Twapia and Chifubu	MLG
Central	Kabwe Public Library	Bwacha Public Library, Katondo Environmental Public Information Centre, Makululu Epic Library and Kasabda Epic Library	MLG
Eastern	Chipata Provincial Library	-	Ministry of General Education (MOGE)
	Chipata Council Library		MLG

Luapula	Luapula Provincial Library	Kawambwa Public Library	MOGE
Lusaka	Lusaka City Council Library	Chilenje Public Library, Matero Public Library and Mtendere Public Library	MLG
	Zambia Library Service – Public Library Headquarters	-	MOGE
	Lubuto Mthunzi American Youth Library	-	Lubuto Library Partners (LLP)
	Lubuto Library Partners Model Library	-	LLP
	*Fountain of Hope	-	Fountain of Hope Community Centre
	Kamanga Irish Community Centre Library	-	Kamanga Irish Community Centre
Northern	Kasama Provincial Library	Luwingu Public Library	MOGE
	Mbala Council Library		MLG
	Kasama Council Library		MLG
North-Western	Solwezi Provincial Library	Kabompo and Mwinilunga District libraries	MOGE
Southern	Choma Provincial Library	*Kalomo Public Library	MOGE
	Livingstone City Council Library	-	MLG
	Mumuni Library	-	Brethren in Christ Church (BICC)
Western	Mongu Provincial Library	Kalabo and Senanga Public Libraries	MOGE

Table 2 above shows the main public libraries and the branch libraries as well as where they are found in Zambia. The table also indicates which ministries and/or organizations are responsible for them. Zambia has twenty-three branch libraries as shown above. At the time of the survey, Zambia had a total of 47 public libraries, inclusive of the branch libraries. Fountain of Hope and Kalomo Council libraries were however not operational at the time of the survey. In addition, plans were underway to open a public library in Mazabuka, Southern Province and Chinsali, in Muchinga Province.

Capacity building programmes for public librarians in Zambia

Public librarians have over the recent past benefited from various capacity building programmes. Librarians that participated in this survey outlined the capacity building programmes that they benefited from and also the others that public librarians in their libraries had benefited from too. Amongst others, were the following:

EIFL's Public Librarians' Capacity Building in Zambia

Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) in partnership with Library and Information Association of Zambia (LIAZ) trained a total of 30 staff from 12 public libraries. The main objective of this partnership was to equip public librarians with competencies and skills that supported various components. The trainings included the following modules:

- Advanced computer literacy for librarians
- Internet resources and sharing
- New services in public libraries

- Communication, advocacy and awareness raising for public librarians
- Social learning circles for online learners

The training workshops were conducted in 2018 and 2019. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between EIFL and LIAZ was extended to include a Train-the-Trainers workshop and two regional trainings where 11 of the 30 participants were trained.

The survey revealed that after the above workshops, public librarians were now more comfortable with report writing and most especially the use of Excel and PowerPoint. They were able to help users with accessing more online open resources. As will be explained under the results for impact on national development, public libraries were now able to develop new and innovative library services that were useful to their communities. The study revealed that about 82% of main public libraries in Zambia were now able to engage in some form of partnerships with other organizations or institutions.

To a larger extent most libraries (82%) working with partners had well organized programmes being conducted and well-articulated library services being provided than those that did not have some form of partnerships. This, the participants indicated were as a result of the workshops and the skills they acquired from them.

In addition, 11 of the 30 public librarians trained further attended a Train-the-Trainer's workshop which equipped them with skills on how to train other librarians in the country.

Local Content in African Libraries (LOCAL) – Worldreader

Worldreader had a partnership with LIAZ that supported ten council libraries: six on the Copperbelt Province and four in Lusaka Province. Local Content for African Libraries project in Zambia (LOCAL) aimed to generate and deliver early childhood reading materials in local languages to the ten libraries. LOCAL's ultimate goal was to create an evidence-based replicable model for librarians to play an active role in creating and supporting a culture of reading for primary school aged children through the use of digital, local language reading materials.

Through LOCAL, Worldreader had deployed a total of five hundred e-readers loaded with e-books in English and two local Zambian languages (Ichibemba and Chinyanja) in ten public libraries across two regions in Zambia. Each participating library received fifty e-readers and an extra management e-reader to facilitate sending of reports. Through this project, librarians from participating libraries received training, equipping the librarians with skills that would help them conduct reading programs with the children using e-readers. The training components included; e-reader management, community engagement, stakeholder engagement, practical sessions using e-readers and outreach. The project has been beneficial as it targeted council libraries that have had challenges with financing. The project has also helped LIAZ in supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and specifically the 7th National Development Plan currently in place.

Strengthening Innovative Library Leaders (SILL)

With the support of African Library Associations and Institutions (AfLIA), Zambia hosted a training workshop in 2017 for Strengthening Innovative Library Leaders (SILL). Public Librarians were drawn from Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi. Zambia attracted 16 public librarians who benefited from this programme. The training workshop included the following components:

- Leadership styles
- Problem-solving
- Communication
- Innovation, and
- Planning

With so much concern over limited budgets, public libraries need to be exposed to various ways of being innovative in providing library services. White (2014) argues that, the need to innovate and do things creatively and differently is a critical feature of public service delivery in the 21st century. The value and sustainability of innovation requires a mixture of creativity, practicality and a network of support. Public librarians need to be equipped with vast knowledge of library innovativeness.

Book Aid International (BAI) and Open Doors Children's Corners

The Ministry of General Education (MOGE) through Zambia Library Service (ZLS) benefited from the support from Book Aid International. The 6 provincial public libraries received support in form of training as well as funding to refurbish children's corners in all the provincial libraries under MOGE. The trainings included the following:

- Selection of children's literature
- Management of children
- Selection of local content for children
- Management of study hubs

In 2018 and 2019, BAI supported MOGE in establishing the Open Doors Children's Corners (ODCC) to five other districts in the country, these being Ndola, Kalomo, Luwingu, Kawambwa and Kabompo. This support has seen provincial libraries improve on the provision of children's literature as well as attract more children due to the beautiful children's corners. The libraries also received funding to restock the children's collections with local content.

Through the support of BAI, all librarians managing the Open Doors Children's Corners (ODCC) received training on how to organize and take care of the reading spaces for children, arrangement of materials and the kind of activities to implement. Children are among one of the most sensitive category of library users. Librarians managing children must ensure that they have the necessary skills to manage and provide the children with innovative library services. At the time of this study, eleven public libraries had ODCCs implemented; six ZLS provincial libraries and five district libraries. The trainings also looked at how to handle children with different characteristics as well as helping children to select appropriate materials. Keshmiri and Nezhad (2015) observe that training the librarians may be effective in their gaining experience and enhancing their performance. In Ndola Public Library, the LOCAL project complimented the Open Doors Children's Corner very well since both projects had similar objectives of encouraging and empowering children to read. Managing children's activities requires skills and as such the trainings conducted with the support of BAI were useful in equipping the public librarians with skills necessary to provide relevant and interesting activities for the children.

Public librarians in these libraries and district libraries are now equipped with not only resources for children but also skills on how to select resources for children as well as handle children during library sessions as well as outreach sessions.

Lubuto Library Partners and LIAZ training

In 2017, LLP and LIAZ jointly conducted a 5-day training workshop for public librarians in Zambia. A total of 20 public librarians from MOGE, LLP and MLG attended this training workshop. Lubuto Library Partners is an innovative development organization that builds the capacity of public libraries to create opportunities for equitable education and poverty reduction. LLP's mission is to empower African children and youth and help them develop the knowledge and skills to reconnect with their culture and community and participate fully in society. Lubuto constructs enduring, indigenously-styled open-access libraries stocked with comprehensive collections of well-chosen books and appropriate technology. These libraries serve as safe havens and are

the center for Lubuto's programmes, which offer education, information, psychosocial support and self-expression through reading, music, art, drama, computers, mentoring and other activities.

The training included the following:

- Digital Literacy
- Library program development for children and youth
- Library services to differently-abled children and youth
- Outreach and marketing
- Child development
- Standard reference services
- Customer care and customer service in libraries
- Early literacy
- Children's literature and collection development
- Innovation in libraries

The training, co-hosted and co-facilitated by LIAZ, LLP, and other partners (including outside experts), University of Zambia and National Institute for Public Administration lecturers, and others, was the first professionally-guided continuous professional development opportunity for Zambian public librarians on library services to children and youth.

Other programmes

Public librarians have also benefited from the following programmes, mostly with the support of AfLIA and/or the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions:

- The Initiative 'Young African Library Innovators' (IYALI) – 5 public librarians have benefited.
- The International Network of Emerging Library Innovators in Sub-Saharan Africa (INELI-SSAf) – 6 public librarians have benefited
- AfLIA Leadership Academy (AfLAc) – 1 public librarian has benefited.

Challenges in building the capacity of public librarians

Funding

About 60% of the public librarians indicated that they were not able to attend all the trainings they had planned to due to limited funding.

Undervaluing library profession

Public librarians felt that the library profession was being undervalued by some parent organizations and hence training of librarians was not a priority in some cases.

ICT challenges and lack of other tools

Public librarians lamented the poor technology infrastructure in most public libraries. Despite having skills in ICT related areas, they were not able to fully utilize this due to limited infrastructure. Less than 50% of the public libraries in Zambia have both computers and internet. Some libraries lamented that they lack tools such as cataloguing rules, etc. making it difficult to carry out their normal duties.

Effect of capacity building for public librarians and National Development

The skills and exposure that the public librarians have received have had a positive impact in supporting national development. Through the capacity building trainings librarians were able to contribute to national

development by having a nation which is well informed and educated through impacting a reading culture to the community. In addition, public librarians were able to train community members on the use of internet search engines; internet research and finding information resources that were relevant to local needs.

Promoting education and lifelong learning

About 80% of the public libraries were conducting library activities that promoted education and/or lifelong learning (Munsanje and Hagwelele, 2018). The activities that libraries were conducting included amongst others the following:

- Information search
- ICT trainings
- Homework clinics
- Study hubs
- Open doors classroom corners
- Reading tents
- Free access to library resources for school going children

Efforts towards eliminating poverty

Another area of supporting national development involved the contributions that public libraries were making to help eliminate poverty. A well-informed nation with citizens that have ready access to information will have knowledge on how best to survive in hard economic times. Librarians were able to conduct these activities effectively because they had the skills required to do so. Examples of activities included the following:

- Library mentoring *sessions* on poverty reduction
- Use of story books to educate children on how poverty can be reduced
- Support of women empowerment and literacy programmes
- Provision of variety of resources on poverty

Gender equality / empowerment of girls, women or children

Public libraries in Zambia contributed towards the above through the following:

- Mentoring sessions on gender equality – DREAMS Project (Lubuto Libraries). LLP promotes inclusiveness and uplifts the lives of children as the libraries serve the most vulnerable children and youth. They promote early literacy education as well as impart skills (such as ICT, Mentoring, Sexual Reproduction awareness etc.) in children and this helps them to make right choices in life
- The activities of the ODCCs have been instrumental in empowering both boys and girls with reading resources and may other activities.

Health

Health was also among the areas of concern for public libraries. About 30% of the public libraries engaged health specialists in conducting talks and health activities in libraries. Some libraries also had health corners to support the health information needs of community members. Some organized and conducted sexual and reproductive health programmes as in the case of LLP libraries.

CONCLUSION

It has been emphasized that libraries must align their services with the national development agenda. Libraries in Zambia are making efforts to achieve this, and they are making steady progress. However, efforts

must be made to ensure librarians continue upgrading their skills, and adopt the use of modern information and communication technology to enhance to the provision of library and information services. Various stakeholders must be encouraged to support capacity strengthening of both the libraries and librarians.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

1. Library services being dynamic, there is need for constant capacity building of librarians.
2. There is need to extend training to all librarians to ensure all library staff upgrade their skills.
3. There is need to take advantage of local expertise to build the capacity of more librarians in Zambia.

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