Technicality, humanity and spirituality --- 3-level multi-dimensional proactive services toward lifelong learning

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Abstract: This qualitative research explores 'full service': 3-level approaches to library services - Technicality, humanity and spirituality. The aim is make librarians aware of the necessity of and pathways to changes in library services. Three metaphors are used to illustrate the proposed changes of service mode - fishing over fish; people over things; and heart over head – in response to the 3-level services respectively. At technical level, service mode changes from reactive towards proactive, from transactional towards interactive, from verbally instructive towards tactile/kinaesthetic, and from information acquisition towards skill training. At humanistic level, changes swop from responsive towards facilitative, from cognitive towards affective, from informative towards transformative, from 'impartially' data-geared towards personalised client-centred, and from 'closure-oriented' towards 'step-stone-seeking'. At spiritual level, changes switch from one-off towards follow-up, from dismissive towards reflective, and from duty-bound towards passion-driven. Librarians need to scaffold patrons' learning mode from accumulative towards creative, from extrinsically-motivated towards intrinsically driven.

Keywords: proactive, multi-level and multi-dimensional services, lifelong learning, technicality, humanity, spirituality

1. Introduction

The overwhelming information explosion and our not-so-ready reactions to this trend are causing fragmentation of the world. As results, developments are unbalanced, politics is biased, education is becoming disabled, students get lost and people in general are alienated. We can save our world and ourselves by de-fragmenting our perceived reality through revitalizing the holistic nature of education that has a double-edged function: Inspiring the heart as well as informing the mind; cultivating values as well as transmitting knowledge; enabling our young to create a life as well as making a living[1]; and helping them actualize their full potentialities as well as becoming qualified professionals.

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Librarians as information professionals should undertake this mission together with teachers. This is particularly important in the era when e-learning is looming large. The features of this e-learning era are: more and more information, easier and easier access to the information of all types, less and less human contacts, shallower and shallower are communications with network language, deeper and deeper indulgence in Facebook and You-tube images, fancier and fancier is the illusionary realities, and further and further lost are the young ending up with shadowed minds, barren hearts and problematic and fragile personalities. 'What's the point of knowing everything about something or knowing something about everything while knowing so little about ourselves?' (Marsden, 2003)[2]. We can't stop the fast multiplication of information, but we can curb the world from further fragmented and people from further alienated as a result of the fast multiplication of information. These globally social and educational backgrounds validate the exploration as presented below.

2. Enlightenment House: 'spring' over 'well' (being more proactive than reactive)

The naming of things reflects the reality and people's perception of that reality. I am working in the library of TWoA (Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, the University of New Zealand), the largest indigenous university in the world and the second largest university in New Zealand. The name of library in Māori is 'Te Pātaka Māramatanga' (Enlightenment House), and the department the library of TWoA belongs to is called 'Te Puna Manaaki' (the Spring of Help). The very name 'Enlightenment House' directs us to the essential function of libraries – more than meeting the information needs. It suggests the transcending nature of libraries: uplifting the customers' learning mode from cognitive level to self-realisation level, from information acquisition and retrieving level to knowledge processing and creating level, and further to wisdom fashioning, character-building and fortune-making level. The name of 'the Spring of Help' points to the serving pattern of libraries – rather than waiting for customers to come, we flow out to them. Each library and each type of library has its own way of reaching out to customers. TWoA libraries implement their proactive approach by:

- Creating portfolios assigning each librarian to be in charge of particular courses TWoA provides. Each librarian coordinates with the teachers of those courses, provides **resource lists** for the courses and arranges library service **inductions** at the start of courses and information literacy **workshops** during semesters.

- Organising term break **'Wānanga Ready' seminars** before each semester to create ready mind of both the students and teachers how to make effective use of libraries.

- Some quality librarians, apart from their normal work, also serve as **academic advisors** to assist degree students in completing their theses

in terms of shaping thesis structure, doing literature review, facilitating creative thinking and writing, and referencing.

- Each library publishes **newsletters** regularly to update service information, display new book reviews to keep customers informed of the latest development of researches.

- We make use of **karakia** (prayer) every morning and all other **meetings** and social occasions to promote our services and initiatives.

Technicality: 'fishing' over 'fish' (providing information skills more than information per se)

Fishing metaphor best illustrates the necessity of changing our provision from information per se towards information skills. Fish feeds us for only one meal while fishing skill can benefits our whole life. **A**n information literate person, apart from the four aspects of knowledge (information needs, where to find, how good (relevant, authoritative and reliable) they are, and how to use them effectively), should also have a lifelong learning attitude; and be able to transform data to information to insight. (Gersh, S. O., 2000).

In response to the new function of the library, library **service mode also needs to change:**

- From responsive (***Yes-or-No answer from librarians or straightforward question:*** '*What do you want?*' and librarians just do what is asked for) towards facilitative ('*What do you need this for?*' Librarians illicit information from the patrons in order to identify what is really needed and what other needs behind the stated need);

- From verbal instructions ('*Go to our webcat, key in your search terms...* ') towards tactile (kinaesthetic) experimentation ('*Let's try it out! Show me what you did before and see what went wrong*'); and

- From cognitive understanding towards psychomotor skills. Patrons should be given more hand-on practice opportunities.

In dealing with reference enquiries, what patrons say are usually the clues, and librarians have to '*ask enough questions to make certain the user's question is understood in dimensions of what is or what is not required.*' (Katz, 2002, p. 129)

All TWoA libraries have computer labs, and all the teaching sites are equipped with projectors and PCs. These facilities provide a platform for transmission of information skills. At the start of each semester, librarians do information literacy inductions to all classes. The main thing is to get student library

customers motivated and involved in hands-on practice. As the saying goes, 'tell me, I forget; teach me, I remember; involve me, I learn.'

3. Humanity: people over things ('Who' to serve is more important than 'what' to serve.)

'*From human communication point of view, every communication has content and relationship aspects.*' (Radford, 1999, p. 27) **The content aspect is around the information itself, and the relationship aspect refers to the attitude, especially that of librarian.** Statistics shows that 50 % of users don't come back to libraries simply because of the discouraging attitude of the librarians. The fact that our patrons are not keen on having their technical skill needs met is mostly due to humanistic reasons: lack of confidence, lack of intrinsic motivation, fear of intimidation, poor communication skills, and librarians' discouraging attitude. It is up to library staff to motivate their learning by providing a friendly and congenial learning environment and opportunities.

One unique feature of TWoA education pedagogy is face-to-face communication between students and staff. This shows the importance of relationship aspect of education. Underlining face-to-face communication is heart-to-heart relationship building. A frequently quoted Māori proverb is*: What is the most important thing in the world? It's people, it's people, it's people.* Several relationship key behaviours are:

- Approachability: Greetings, smile, friendly body language and inviting eye contact can break the ice (defensiveness) between librarian and patrons and give patrons confidence to proceed with the questions. One librarian interviewed for this project says: 'Greeting patrons establishes a link of recognition, resulting in a brief relationship of likeness'.

- Equality: In Māori, ako means both teaching and learning. This concept carries the implication of this indigenous pedagogy: ahurutanga (study space) stressing the importance of reciprocity - a mutual or cooperative interchange. '*Here learning is neither teacher nor student dominated but the teacher the students co-construct meaning in a hermeneutic manner that is one of elements of transformative education.* (Fred, 2009) In TWoA, teachers are described as 'humble knowers' (Selina, 2012).

- Patron-focused interactions: To identify the real need, the librarian needs to go through a series of 'negotiations' with the patron, and A lot of communication strategies should be used to keep the conversation going smoothly and get the whole picture. '*Experienced reference librarians know that the original question put to them is rarely the real question…phrase their queries in different ways.*' (Katz, 2002, p. 130)

- Synchronisation between the librarian's teaching methods and patron's learning styles, such as Behaviourism, Cognitivism, Constructivism, and Experientialism, and Fleming's VARK model. Librarians should be aware of the fact that there is no 'one-fits-all' way of teaching and learning. Who to teach determines how to teach. Don't assume that what works for you would work for others.

- Cultural awareness and appreciation of cultural diversities. This is particularly important in TWoA environment. '*Don't teach me about my culture, use my culture to teach me*'. (Ohio, 2012) This statement captures the point of cultural sensitivity.

In line with the proposed humanistic approach, changes of service mode need to be made:

- From **cognitive level** (information-focused) towards **affective level** (client-focused);

- From **authoritative** decision-making ('*This is what you need.*') towards **consultative** choice-making *('We have several options…*');

- From **dismissive** 'closure-oriented' encounter ('*Here you are*' or '*Sorry we don't have this book. You may find it in other libraries*'; '*Sorry that's all I can do.*' Then the librarian's attention turns away to something else.) towards '**step-stone-seeking**' interactions ('*If you tell me more about your purpose, I may find more relevant resources for you and give you further help*');

- From **one-off** transaction ('*That's it. Have a nice day!*') towards '**monitored referral**' follow-up *('If you leave your name and contact details, I'll keep you informed when more relevant and recent resources are available*');

- From '**out-of-sight-out-of-mind**' attitude towards **reflective** self-evaluation ('*How could I have done better?*');

- From **'impartial'** one-fit-all formality (treating everybody in the same way, and expecting the same result with no 'discrimination') towards **personalized** passion-pact serving manner (goodwill to all but always ready to adjust communication strategies to accommodate patrons of different personalities, whether formal or informal, humorous or serious, sympathetic or light-hearted).

The name 'Te Puna Manaaki' (the Spring of Help) presents a sharp contrast between 'well' - traditional sense of libraries and their services and 'puna' (spring) – our new service approach. The suggestive power of the name carries

our perspectives and intentions and pushes us to transit our library service mode:

- From **reactive** (waiting to serve) towards **proactive** (reaching out hands to offer service).

Librarians' role should change despondingly from i**nformers** towards **facilitators**, from **assistants** towards **teachers**, and from **information professionals** towards **educators** in order to scaffold patrons by lifting their learning mode from cognitive level to affective level, from task-based externally motivated towards value-based intrinsically motivated, and from information recipients to knowledge creators.

4. Case study 1:

Once a student customer was viewing Facebook. According to the library rule, we can log student's PC off from our monitoring PC behind the counter if a patron is on Facebook for over 10 minutes. One staff did it, and the student was so angry he almost jumped over the counter. He has never come back again since then.

> What's the point of rigidly sticking to the rule and losing a soul? This incident might have changed the student's whole life. We have lost a patron, but we can't lose the lessons:

- Being proactive: It'd be better to check whether his Facebook viewing was related to his study, which is often the case, before logging the PC off;
- Using 'cascade' punishing method by starting from the mildest approach to avoid unnecessary confrontations. In this case, it'd be better to give the patron a verbal warning first, which is not necessarily very serious.
- Flexibility: It'd better to size the situation first, and if no other patron waiting, the staff could have turned the issue into an opportunity to draw the patron's attention back to his study.
- Face-to-face communication is very important as 'emotion investment' in establishing relationships with patrons.

5. Case study 2:

We find it a very frustrating experience in dealing with patrons who deny the responsibility for the loss of circulation items they borrow. Many patrons are instinctively defiant and refuse payment. We used to respond with cold face and apathetic voice: '*Sorry, this is the rule. You have to pay for them. It's not me who is taking the money. I'm just doing my job.*' Our intention is to reason them out in order to pay the fines, but in most cases the incidents resulted in unhappy endings. One consequence is that the patrons don't come back to the library any more to avoid embarrassment. On one occasion, one staff, motivated by this multi-dimensional service project, came across a female patron coming with a lost book invoice letter, and categorically claimed she had returned the book. Her peaking manner was full of fighting spirit: '*I'm not happy. I will not pay for things I'm not responsible for!*' Our staff smiled at her: '*E whae (Dear lady), I*

know you are an honest lady. If I were you, I would feel the same. In fact, I had a similar experience when I was a student. Don't worry. I will try my best to avoid your payment. Wānanga has seven libraries. Who knows the book might be misplaced. Let's both make effort. You look at home while I contact all other Wānanga libraries. I can't guarantee I can find it, but I can guarantee to you I will leave no stones unturned.' These words took effect immediately as shown from the patrons' relaxed facial expression. We did as promised. A few days later, the patron came back with cash. This time her manner was totally different: '*Who lost the book no longer matters. You've done enough for me. I'm willing to pay for it'*. From then on she always greets us gracefully whenever she comes to the library.

The lessons we've learned:

- **Rules are hard, but the application of rules is not necessarily so. Rules also have relationship aspect that can offset its negative impact**. **As the saying goes, a soft answer truth away wrath.**
- There is a **hidden 'rule'** behind the rule: On many 'Lost and Pay' occasions, the responsible patrons are self-defensive not so much for money as the dignity they lose. This experience teaches us: If we take care of our patrons' feelings, payments take care of themselves.
- When dealing face-to-face with patrons, no matter what types of transactions we are doing, we are actually **applying our personalities** to them. In serving our patrons, we are also serving ourselves – practicing our inner values as well as TWoA values, which are aroha (love), whakapono (belief), ture (rules), and kotahitanga (unity). All sincere services are self-serving.

My 30-year teaching and library service experiences have moulded my belief: Who we serve is more than what we serve. If you want your library customers or students to get interested in your service or teaching, get them interested in you as a person first. '*What the teacher is, is more important than what he teaches.*' (Menninger, 2013) But many of us are reluctant to take on teacher's role. Professionally speaking, librarians are not teachers. In spite of all the necessities that require librarians to think, feel and act as teachers, we don't have to. We tend to remain within our comfort zone. This 'don't-trouble- the-trouble-until-troubles-trouble-you' passive attitude validates the third part of this paper:

6. Spirituality: 'heart' over 'head' (catering relationship aspect more than content aspect of information)

Einstein said, '*You can't solve a problem on the same level you created it*' (Einstein, 2011)

The above way of thinking is brain thinking. We have to 'rise above' or 'go beyond' it to find the solution - a higher level service to meet patrons' higher

level needs. Literature reviews show that there are three common features of indigenous knowledge; spiritual dimension of worldviews, holistic education pedagogy and group development, all of which are heart-based. '*Education as involving 'a strong belief in spiritual support and influence.*' (Patterson, 1992, p. 95) '*Knowledge is given through relationships and for the purpose of furthering relationships...I have called it 'heart knowledge.*''(Holmes, 2000, p. 41) '*Māoritanga is a thing of the heart.*' (Marsden, 2003, p. 2) '*Spirituality is a critical perspective in post-modern epistemology*' and '*knowing must touch my heart.*' (Selina, 2013) '*Knowledge is spirit-driven that animates and educates*' (Meyer 2012). Researches in main stream science and education also acknowledge the spiritual aspect of knowledge and human development. '*Learning is not limited to the intellectual dimension. It includes the whole person – physical, emotional, social and spiritual.*' (Zepke, N. Nugent, D. & Leach, L., 2003, p. 10) The trouble with most people fail to realize what we are capable of becoming (Maslow).

A more heart-felt understanding of spirituality comes from personal experiences shared among the intimate friends and colleagues. During my interviews with experienced librarians, spirituality is described as '*internal source of strength and wisdom in dealing with the challenges and difficulties of everyday life*'; '*heart conversations engaged with the minds logic that offers the best service with unconditional love*'; '*something that I turn to...to help me through some difficult times in my life*'. When asked how to practice it in our daily work, one said, '*It should become an unconscious practise, a seamless approach to your daily practise whether you are in the library or not.*'

With spiritual dimension, our library service mode should change:
- From **head-based** (logic thinking using conscious mind) towards **heart-based** (intuitive feeling of inner-connectedness with all people and with unconditional love);

- From **duty-bound** (out of work requirement and job description) towards **passion-driven** (with 'Fires in the belly' in radiation with energy).

7. Case study:

Once a distraught and angry student came to us demanding an explanation, why was she denied graduation? From our previous experiences, we immediately recognize that an explanation wouldn't satisfy her as we later found out that she was experiencing recent double tragedies: her husband died, and her house was burned down. It was obvious that her real need was not informative but psychological. It is such a difficult situation that makes or breaks us. One experienced staff approached her, without saying anything, reached out her arms, gave her a long hug. The angry mood on her face melt away immediately. Then she was led into a small room behind the counter. I didn't know what happened inside the room until the staff told me later, but I did know that the

problem was solved. The staff recalled the story like this: She analysed the situation, approached her in spirit of humility, led her to a safe place, opened conversation with Karakia; allowed her to talk freely without attempting to offer advice. It was only after the lady let out all her emotions, they worked together for solutions, and lastly the staff follow-upped with concerns. When asked what went through her mind when she first saw the lady, she said she immediately sensed that this lady didn't need a person to tell her what to do, just someone to listen to her.

The lessons we've learned:

- 'The **heart** is often wiser than the head' (Marsden, 2003, p. 1) In such a situation, open your heart before opening your mouth. Heart service with 'heart knowledge';
- **Body language** can be more communicative than words. A hug is worth more than a thousand words.
- **Listening** with all attention to the speaker is the first and the best advice we can give. Verbal advice should be given only when asked for or when the situation requires.

Hiri Moko's hologram illustrates how learning proceeds: from Te Whānuitanga – expanding knowledge outward to Te Hōhonutanga – in-depth knowledge, and further towards Te Māramatanga – enlightening of knowledge. TWoA's aim, vision, philosophy, and values all direct its education towards this whole cycle of learning that ends up with students finding inner values, constantly experiencing sense of self-realization and forming wholesome personalities.

8. Conclusions

The stated information need from a customer is only the tip of the iceberg. There are other layers of needs lie beneath the water. It is up to librarians to identify the real matrix of needs and find the ways to meet these needs in terms of knowledge, skills and searching strategies at the responding levels. Informative services meet customers' cognitive needs, bring customers from unknown to known and from uncertainty to certainty, and give them a sense of satisfaction; technical services meet customers' independent learning needs by giving them confidence and competence to do their own information searching and processing and also giving them a sense of achievement; humanistic services meet customers' affective needs and establish a congenial relationship between customers and librarians and give customers a sense of belonging and home feeling; and spiritual services meet customers' inner growing needs and give them a sense of transcendence and self-realization.

Implementation starts from us librarians. We are part of this transformation process. We are not only teachers, but also actors and catalyst of knowledge. Only the transformed can transform; inspirations inspire; and wisdom teaches wisdom. The real motivation for the move does not come from a sense of duty and responsibility as required from our job descriptions, but from our inner values and perception of our identity: We are not human beings with spiritual

element; instead, we are spiritual beings experiencing a human journey. We share a lot of needs with our customers and we are growing together with them. Real education is self-educating, and sincere service is self-serving. Librarians' quality is customers' quality. This is the essence of this multi-dimensional proactive approach. When the teacher is ready, students will follow.

'*The personal agent instrumental in this act must himself have been previously endued with the spirit of the gods since he can only impart what he himself already is.*' (Marsden, 2003, p. 10) *Plant a forest, and the rains will come.* (Hawaiian proverb). *Librarians have to break out of their traditional reactive mode {and} become leaders and innovators in their interaction with faculty* (Bundy, 2012, p. 30)

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