

## Understanding Librarians' Continuing Professional Development in Public University Libraries in Uganda

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**Abstract.** Continuing professional development (CPD) is an essential characteristic of the library profession. It entails maintaining, enhancing, developing and broadening of knowledge, skills and personal qualities throughout the career. It is recognised that the expertise of the library staff is key to the delivery of quality library services. Nevertheless, there exists theoretical and empirical controversy about the concept of CPD. In this study, we explored librarians' views and experiences of CPD, focusing on how the concept is understood, its purpose, beneficiaries and what it constitutes. A qualitative approach within a case study framework was adopted for the study. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. A purposive sample was selected from professional librarians employed in five public university libraries in Uganda. Thematic inductive data analysis was used to generate the themes. The data saturation point was reached when the eighteenth participant was interviewed. The findings revealed that there is lack of clarity of what CPD is, some suggesting that CPD is an activity, form of training after initial education, or refresher course. Participants perceived CPD to serve multiple purposes at different points in time such as skills development, personal growth, maintenance of professional competency, keeping up-to-date, and career advancement. Thus, CPD is multifaceted and context dependent, encompasses both formal and informal learning. We therefore, suggest that librarians' CPD should be linked to the ideals of professionalism and can be conceptualised through a focus on the notion of practice.

**Keywords:** Continuing professional development, Librarians, Perceptions, Experiences, Situated Learning, Contextual environment, Public University Libraries, Uganda.

### 1. Introduction

Continuing professional development (CPD) of librarians involves an ongoing process of maintaining or enhancing existing competencies, developing and broadening of knowledge, skills and personal abilities throughout the career. CPD of library and information professionals is widely promoted by professional bodies and library associations. This support is reflected in the professional codes of ethics of library associations and goals of special interest groups such as the Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning (CPDWL) Section of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). Consequently, guidelines and principles have been developed to promote CPD complying to best practices (Varlejs, 2016).

At national level, the Uganda Library and Information Association (ULIA) articulates the importance of CPD for library and information professionals. The professional code of conduct, principle XIV stipulates: “Members shall strive for excellence by seeking and maintaining professional knowledge and competencies...” (ULIA, 2016:28). Empirical studies have shown that CPD is key to provision of quality library services (Ukachi and Onuoha, 2013; Corcoran and McGuinness, 2014; Bowen-Chang and Hosein, 2018). Although the importance of CPD is widely acknowledged, there are differences in views about what CPD is, what it is for, its beneficiaries and what constitutes CPD (Harvener and Stolt, 1994; Freeman, 1994; Cossham and Fields; 2004; Attebury, 2015). Moreover, this is a concern that cuts across professions. For example, Friedman and Phillips (2004) argued that CPD as a concept is ambiguous and contested. As such, professionals have different perceptions of CPD. Lack of understanding of the concept of CPD may hinder its acceptance and implementation. In Uganda, little is known about librarians’ views and experiences of CPD in public university libraries. This study, therefore, is set to contribute towards addressing the literature gap. The present study set out to explore three questions:

- i. How do the participants in the study understand by the term CPD?
- ii. How do participants perceive the value of CPD?
- iii. How do participants describe their experiences of the types of CPD activities they have participated in?

## 2. Literature Review

In this literature review, our goal is to enrich the debate on what CPD is, what it is for, and the beneficiaries. Although the literature on librarians’ CPD in Uganda is scanty, we considered studies on the subject from the other parts of the world in comparison to other disciplines.

### *Definitions of CPD*

As earlier indicated, the term CPD is widely used across professions internationally and it is a major research area. However, the concept of CPD has different connotations in specific contexts (Cossham and Fields, 2004). In line with this perspective, Friedman and Phillips (2004:361) found that “professionals have a limited view of CPD—seeing it as training, a means of keeping up-to-date, or a way to build a career.” Redfern (1995:13) identified key elements of CPD including, “a continuing process, related to professional practice, and dependent on recognisable development.” As a continuing process, it builds on initial professional education and continues throughout one’s professional career. CPD involves aspects of human development such as knowledge, skills, behaviour, attitudes, values, and ethics.

Arguably, the definition by the Construction Industry Council (CIC) is widely cited across professions (Friedman and Woodhead, 2008). This also applies to the library field (see Corral and Brewerton, 1999; Redfern, 1995). The CIC definition states that CPD is:

The systematic maintenance, improvement, and broadening of knowledge and skills, and the development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of

professional and technical duties throughout the practitioner's working life. (Construction Industry Council, 1986:3).

Although the CIC definition is widely cited, there are several other definitions in the library literature. For example,

“An ongoing process aimed at monitoring and upgrading skills and competence of individual workers in the profession.” (Doney (1998:487)

“A systematic method of learning that leads to growth and improvement in professional abilities, enabling individuals to function successfully in a changing work environment.” (Majid (2004:58)

“Is the process by which library and information practitioners update their knowledge, acquire new skills, maintain professional competence, and improve their abilities by regular in-service training and education.” (Robinson and Glosiene, 2007)

“Is a way to enhance the skills, knowledge and experience both, formally and informally.” (Anwar and Warraich, 2013:33)

“The process by which individuals involve in their own learning and development, by engaging in an ongoing process of reflection and action.” (Aslam (2017:1)

“The ongoing training and education that practicing librarians embark on with a view to maintain, develop or increase knowledge, acquire new technical skills necessary for creativity and innovativeness, and keep up to date with the rapid and numerous changes taking place in the information world. It results from the commitment to being professional and continuously seeking to improve oneself.” (Ukach and Onuoha, 2013: 270).

“Is about ensuring that individuals have the opportunity to keep up-to-date with trends and continuously learn and improve their subject and professional knowledge.” (Moonasar and Underwood, 2018:47)

The existing literature on the concept of CPD suggests that each definition emphasises specific aspects and contexts. However, the definitions have some similar orientations including:

- a) Ongoing learning process which involves building on initial education to ensure competence throughout the professional career;
- b) It is self-driven and tailored to individual needs;
- c) Involves self-assessment, action, evaluation, and reflection;
- d) Encompasses both formal and informal learning;
- e) Intended to be of direct or indirect to the professional, employer, library user, profession and society at large;
- f) Execution of professional and technical duties;
- g) Involves maintenance of professional competence in professional practice, usually in a systematic manner;
- h) Addresses dimensions of human development such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, ethics and personal qualities;

- i) Encompasses personal growth and professional development;
- j) Influenced by several environmental factors such as technological advances

The definitional variety suggests that the boundaries of the concept of CPD are blurred. The conceptual vagueness is further illustrated by the various terms used interchangeably with CPD such as continuing education (CE), continuing professional education (CPE), lifelong learning, professional development, personal professional development and staff development. Although the related terms are often complementary, they serve slightly a different purpose (Crockett, 2007). Roberts and Konn (1991) argue that CPD encompasses continuing education and staff development.

Another area of controversy regards the usage of the term CPD, Freeman (1994) argued that:

Continuing professional development is fine and appropriate for the professional component of the LIS community; to apply the term to the “nonprofessional” or “support” sector of the LIS workforce seems a distortion and negation of the term “professional”, and a damaging dilution of what should be a clear, unequivocal concept. (Freeman, 1994:27)

Generally, CPD is recognised as an essential characteristic of a profession (Crockett, 2007; Kendrick, 2013; Varlejs, 2016). A profession has specific traits such as specialist theoretical knowledge, professional autonomy, code of ethics, accountability to peers, a theme of public service and selflessness (Abbott, 1988). In this respect, librarianship has been classified as a semi-profession (Goode, 1961; Abbott, 1998). Nevertheless, based on the traits of professions, librarianship fits the description of a steadily growing profession. For example, a systematic knowledge base, a code of ethics, professional autonomy, and the provision of a public service. As a growing profession, there are calls in the literature for library and information professionals to contribute to the status and profession-wide growth (Cooke, 2012; Seminelli, 2016). For instance, Cooke (2012:1) argues that, “librarians owe it to their clients and to themselves as competent professionals, to remain abreast of trends and developments in the field.” Likewise, Seminelli (2016) recommends that individual librarians can engage in research and publications, upholding the codes of ethics, participate in professional organisations, and provide a public good.

### ***Purpose(s) of CPD***

The reasons for pursuit of CPD are specific to the individual librarian in a specific context. They may be personal or professional. Personal motivators may include ambition, desire for recognition, enthusiasm to learn, need to increase self-confidence, self-esteem or fear of obsolesce (Freeman, 1994; Broady-Preston and Cossham, 2011). Professional reasons may include to maintain competency in professional practice, sustain professional identity (Broady-Preston and Cossham, 2010), the desire for career advancement, job satisfaction (Adanu, 2007), improve performance, and keeping abreast with developments in the field (Cooke, 2012; Moonasar and Underwood, 2018), fill performance gaps or supplement initial education (Corrall, 2010; Pan and Hovde, 2010), to prepare for current and future responsibilities (Cox and Corrall, 2013).

In most cases, the interpretation of the various connotations of CPD deepens our understanding of the purpose and intended beneficiaries of CPD. For instance, the definition by Ukach and Onuoha (2013), outlines three purposes of CPD namely: a) to maintain, develop or increase knowledge, b) acquire new technical skills necessary for creativity and innovativeness, and c) keep up to date with the rapid and numerous changes taking place in the information world. The first purpose contributes to the reputation of the profession and the professional body, as well as the general public good. The second purpose relates to the individual professional, which in turn, impacts on the employers and the library users. The last purpose relates to the individual professional as the beneficiary. The importance of CPD in a university setting is reflected in the assertion by Corcoran and McGuinness (2014) who state that:

The availability of relevant and accessible continuing professional development opportunities has never been more urgent for librarians, and the survival of the profession depends on the willingness of its members to engage with these opportunities during their working lives and to keep ahead of the curve, as technological developments continue to transform research and scholarship practices. (Corcoran and McGuinness, 2014:176).

Many librarians in academic librarians perform hybrid roles such as Information Literacy instruction and participation in multidisciplinary research teams (Namuleme-Kalemeera, 2015). The ability to succeed in a dynamic academic environment, depends upon librarians' level of competency (Varlej, 2016). There is evidence in the literature which suggests that librarians lack instructional skills (Saunders, 2015; Namaganda, 2020). In particular, CPD is crucial for librarians who are engaged in subject specific roles without professional education or training in Library and Information Science. In Uganda, the entry-level qualification for librarians into university service, is a bachelor's degree usually in LIS (National Council for Higher Education [NCHE], 2010). However, in special circumstances, some library staff are recruited with a bachelor's degree from other fields such as Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

Research on librarians' CPD in Uganda, Namaganda (2019) found that librarians were motivated to pursue CPD to improve knowledge and skills, keep updated with developments in the field, learn new technologies, improve service delivery, and to demonstrate professionalism. The literature points to a discrepancy between initial LIS education and the field of practice in Uganda (Lutwama and Kigongo-Bukenya, 2004; Okello-Obura and Kigongo-Bukenya, 2011). Many LIS graduates lack of practical skills to perform tasks in specific workplaces. This problem, in part, is attributed to over emphasis on theoretical knowledge rather than practical skills during initial education. Conversely, there are several challenges facing LIS education and training in Uganda including lack of LIS educators in emerging disciplines, inadequate funding, ICT infrastructure (Obura and Kigongo-Bukenya, 2011), inadequate CPD opportunities for LIS practitioners, and the slow pace at which the LIS curriculum is reviewed and revised (Kacunguzi and Samuel, 2016).

The literature review, has revealed that librarians in academic libraries are increasingly working in a complex environment. They perform hybrid roles which require a set of new skills, hence CPD is a necessity.

### ***Beneficiaries of CPD***

There are several benefits and outcomes associated with CPD for the individual librarian, the employer, library users, profession and the general public. Redfern (1995:13) argued that “implicit in the definitions, is the outcome which is sought is maintenance and development of professional standards and status.” Decades ago, Freeman (1994) summarised the different outcomes of CPD including:

- a. overcomes the limitations of the initial professional qualification and its gradual obsolescence;
- b. maintains professional competence and standards of service;
- c. gives a wider view of professional concerns;
- d. aids job satisfaction;
- e. demonstrates that the profession is acting responsibly with regard to the wider community, and;
- f. widens the scope of professional activities. (Freeman (1994:26)

CPD contributes to the reputation of the profession and the professional body, as well as the general public good (Broady-Preston and Cossham, 2010; Seminelli, 2016). Enhancing librarians’ professional competencies at all stages of their career is a key factor in improving the quality of library services that meet the needs of the library users (Ukachi and Onuoha, 2013; Corcoran and McGuinness, 2014), although often overlooked (Redfern, 1995). Provision of quality library services can contribute to organisational performance. Redfern (1995) however, reasoned that CPD can only provide such benefits when a systematic approach is developed. Hence, it is vital to consider, the needs of the individual librarian, employers, library users, concerns of the profession and the general public.

### ***Types of CPD***

There are numerous types or models of CPD discussed in the literature from particular local or national contexts. CPD may occur formally or informally (Auster and Chan, 2004; Larsen, 2006; Corcoran and McGuinness, 2014). Formal activities as planned or structured learning activities with clear objectives and intended outcomes (Corcoran and McGuinness, 2014). Examples include, courses, and workshops. In contrast, informal activities are unstructured, such as reading the professional literature, attending conferences, and self-directed projects. In addition, Larsen (2006) classifies CPD activities as external (outside the workplace) or in-house (within the workplace). External CPD activities include study visits, writing a paper for publication, participation in conferences and seminars while in-house activities include job rotation, mentoring programmes, learning by doing, and reading professional literature.

The classification of the different modes of CPD, points to a difference in conceptualising CPD. Corcoran and McGuinness (2014:179) draw a distinction between structured and self-directed CPD activities. They state that:

Structured here, refers to CPD that contains defined activities and, protocols or tasks in which participants engage, or complete in sequence, while self-directed methods often require the librarians to set the agenda themselves, either individually or through group collaboration, and frequently require a high degree of motivation. (Corcoran and McGuinness, 2014:179)

Nevertheless, there is controversy about structured and unstructured CPD activities. For example, Auster and Chan (2004) classify attending conferences as informal while Corcoran and McGuinness (2014) classify it as formal, self-directed CPD activity. Accordingly, Auster and Chan (2004:59) argue that “conference attendance is considered an informal activity because of the myriad opportunities to network and interact socially and professionally with a wide range of peers and colleagues.” Several empirical studies describe accounts of personal experiences and benefits of particular types of CPD activities (Corcoran and McGuinness, 2014). For example, Alawadhi (2015) found that networking was highly valued by librarians in Kuwaiti libraries because librarians are able to discuss with peers about the new developments and concerns in the field.

So far, few studies have examined the various types of CPD in a comparative manner or built on the existing research. Yet, frameworks for analysis of CPD models exist (e.g. Kennedy, 2005, 2014). Conversely, few studies have theorised what and how librarians learn through the various CPD activities (Attebury, 2015). We need to understand what librarians do and the circumstances under which they learn to identify alternative approaches to CPD (Bilodeau and Carson, 2015).

### ***How librarians learn***

The professional development of librarians begins with initial education which provides the theoretical knowledge, practical skills and experiences on which to begin their careers (Okello-Obura and Kigongo-Bukenya, 2011; Bawden and Robinson, 2012). Nevertheless, the theoretical knowledge can produce a novice practitioner, who is ready to embark on learning through practice. The concept of ‘workplace learning’ is linked into the culture of the workplace and the profession (Larsen, 2006). In line with this perspective, Boud (2012) argues that the culture of the workplace embodies the social practices that are crucial to learning. Accordingly, the apprenticeship model has been embraced as a means of transition from initial education to professional practice (Cossham and Fields, 2006).

There is also considerable body of literature drawing attention to learning embedded in professional lives and work place learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Boud, 2012; Corcoran and McGuinness, 2014; Bilodaeu and Carson, 2015; Pilerot and Lindberg, 2018). For example, Bilodaeu and Carson (2015) argue that librarians’ learning is an ongoing process, self-directed, informal, based on social interactions with peers through practice. Thus, new librarians are seen as belonging to a Community of Practice (CoP). From this perspective, learning is part of working and other social activities. It occurs

through practice in work settings through interaction, sharing, and collaborating with others to find solutions to challenges (Pilerot and Lindberg, 2018). This view is supported by Belzowski, Ladwig, and Miller (2013) who argue that, CoP can help librarians to develop and sustain their professional identity which is crucial for improving the image of the librarians and the profession.

The notion of learning as participation through Communities of Practice (CoP) has been extensively used in academic libraries (Henrich and Attebury, 2010). However, there are a number of struggles in implementing and sustaining CoP which need to be addressed (Henrich and Attebury, 2010). These include issues of trust, power relationships inherent in the CoP model and member preferences. Nevertheless, research on workplace learning has identified the strong influences of organisations and particular organisational environments on learning (Auster and Chan, 2004; Adanu, 2007). To facilitate learning, there is need for a supportive workplace environment characterised by team spirit, peer support, good leadership, culture of learning. Thus, the power of authentic work settings can be harnessed as a resource for learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

Recent empirical studies (e.g. Attebury, 2017; Namaganda, 2020), have identified characteristics of CPD activities that foster meaningful or transformational learning. Some of the characteristics include social interaction, reflection, self-awareness, duration, and discomfort (challenging long-held beliefs), active learning, collaboration, relevant content, ability to integrate theory into practice, and a supportive learning environment. Some of the CPD activities that embody such characteristics include conferences, graduate degree programmes, reading groups, committees, job shadowing, immersive institutes, subject-specific training.

Although there is existing literature on how librarians learn professionally, there is a tendency of librarians to participate more in structured activities such as short courses, workshops, and seminars (Ukachi and Onuoha, 2013; Anwar and Warraich, 2015; Namaganda, 2019). These approaches have a more technical view of learning which suggests that knowledge and skills can be improved by using external experts (Kennedy, 2005, 2014). Such training is criticised for its lack of connection to the work context of the participants. In most cases, such training is delivered outside the workplace, the agenda is determined by the expert, and the participant is placed in a passive role. We argue that the problem stems, in part, from conceptualisation of CPD that fails to consider learning as embedded in professional practice. Thus, the situated learning theory by Lave and Wenger (1991) offers perspectives on understanding of librarians' professional development and how knowledge is developed within workplaces.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

The situated learning theory by Lave and Wenger (1991) posits that learning can only be meaningful if it is embedded in the social and physical context. In their view, "learning is a way of being in the social world rather than a way of coming to know about it." Thus, learning is seen as participation in the community of practice (CoP). Wenger (1998) describes a CoP as, "groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly." The CoP has three distinct



elements namely a) a domain, which is a specific area of expertise or craft that members share, b) a community which is, a group of people who interact regularly and develop relationships, c) a practice which incorporates ways of dealing with the problems typical of their domain and developed over time (Wenger, 1998). As such, the CoP embodies certain beliefs, values, behaviours, and vocabulary. Thus, a CoP forms when people “engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor” (Wenger, 2007:1).

The situated learning theory holds that knowledge should be delivered in an authentic context. Thus, newcomers join the CoP as legitimate peripheral participants or apprentice members who are involved in authentic settings of daily practice, applying knowledge by performing low-risk tasks that are valuable to the community through ‘guided practice’.

This requires social interaction and collaboration within the CoP. However, participation in complex tasks increases as the participants gain confidence, competence, and experience. The process inevitably involves the notion of ‘becoming’ from novice to expert through a process of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991). However, this process usually occurs unintentionally (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

From this perspective, learning is conceptualised as participation into a community's way of thinking, an evolving form of membership; a way of belonging. Thus, knowledge, is continually reconstructed through the relationships and interactions between individuals. For learning to occur, there should be leadership in maintaining a spirit of learning and mutual trust and commitment to facilitate interaction and to identify people who may be of assistance when required (Wenger, 2000).

#### **4. Methods**

A qualitative approach within a case study framework was used to explore participants’ views and experiences of CPD. The qualitative approach helps to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Patton, 2015). We conducted a multiple case study to describe the views and experiences of participants in regard to CPD. A case study, as a methodological tool, provides opportunities to gain access to deeper insights about contexts, situations and experiences (Stake, 2005).

##### *Participant selection and recruitment*

Invitations to participate in the study were sent via e-mail to professional librarians working in five public university libraries in Uganda. The minimum qualification was a bachelor’s degree in Library and Information Science. It is recognised that homogeneous groups enable researchers to understand and describe the group effectively (Patton, 2015). The contact details were obtained from the database maintained by the Consortium of Uganda University Libraries (CUUL). We further cross-checked the contact details with information provided on the library websites. After receiving the acceptance e-mails, we selected purposively, a total of 18 participants, 10 female and 8 males. Purposive sampling enables identification and selection of information-rich cases to answer the research question (Creswell, 2014). Thereafter, we sent the participants further details about the study. We felt that this group of participants were sufficiently experienced to offer insights into their continuing professional development.

#### *Instrumentation and data collection*

The interview schedule with semi-structured, open-ended questions was developed based on the literature review and pilot tested for suitability. After the pilot study, few questions were rephrased for clarity. Data collection commenced in May 2019 and ended in February 2020. We conducted 18 individual face-to-face interviews and 3 focus group interviews with six to ten participants in each group as recommended by Creswell (2014). All the interviews were conducted during working hours and lasted approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes. We used various prompts and probes throughout the interviews to encourage participants to think about, share and further clarify issues.

A critical incident approach was adopted, which induced the participants to recall and recount specific experiences of the type of learning activities they had participated in. An independent research assistant took the field notes on the non-verbal cues and group dynamics for the focus group interviews. The in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and field notes were used to triangulate the data. We interviewed the participants and analysed the data in an iterative process. The data saturation point was reached when the eighteenth participant was interviewed.

#### *Data analysis*

An inductive thematic analysis of data was adopted with the aim of understanding the participants' views, opinions and experiences of CPD. This approach allows flexibility in sorting data into broad themes and interpreting the data (Creswell, 2014). All interviews were audio audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and transcribed verbatim. The field notes were also typed and coded. To get familiar with and reflect on the overall meaning of the data, we read the transcripts repeatedly and took initial notes. During the transcription process, all data were fully anonymised, removing any references to individuals, locations or terms that may have identified the participants. We further reviewed the transcripts against the audio-recording to ensure accuracy.

The data were managed using Atlas.ti a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (version 7.5.16). We analysed the transcript by labelling a significant section of the transcripts to form the free codes (Rossman and Rallis, 2012). The free codes were grouped to form themes, which were later condensed to form categories. We conducted follow-up interviews with participants to give them an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of the findings (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, 2011). Ethical approval for the study was granted by the University Ethics Committee and the relevant government bodies. The limitation of this research approach is the inability to generalise findings from the sample to the larger population or from one setting to another (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015).

### **5. Findings**

In this section, findings appear thematically under the research questions and are illustrated by quotations from the interviews. A total of 18 case study participants, 10 females and 8 males participated in the study with age ranging from 31 to above 50 years old. The duration of work experience ranged from 6 to above 20 years. Out of the 18

participants, 4 had a doctorate degree, while 9 had a master's degree and 5 with a bachelor's degree as illustrated in Table 1 below. The participants are arranged according to the date of interviews.

**Table 1. Demographics of the study participants.**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age group</b>	<b>Title/Position</b>	<b>Academic Qualification</b>	<b>Years of work experience</b>
Cindy	F	46-50	University Librarian	PhD	More than 20
Henry	M	36-40	Librarian I	Master's	6-10
Kimberly	F	41-45	Librarian I	PhD	11-15
Ivy	F	36-40	Librarian II	Master's	6-10
Nancy	F	31-35	Librarian II	Master's	6-10
Eric	M	46-50	Senior Librarian	Master's	More than 20
Abigail	F	31-35	Librarian II	Master's	6-10
Fabian	M	41-45	Librarian II	Master's	6-10
George	M	36-40	Librarian II	Bachelor's	11-15
Olivia	F	31-35	Librarian II	Bachelor's	11-15
Reuben	M	46-50	Librarian I	Master's	11-15
Sandra	F	31-35	Librarian II	Bachelor's	6-10
Melisa	F	36-40	Librarian II	Master's	6-10
Belinda	F	36-40	Librarian II	Master's	11-15
Trevor	M	41-45	Senior Librarian	PhD	6-10

Isaac	M	36-40	Senior Librarian	PhD	11-15
Daniel	M	Above 50	Librarian I	Master's	More than 20
Willow	F	Above 50	Librarian I	Bachelor's	More than 20

### Participants' perspectives of CPD

#### *What is CPD?*

Throughout the interviews, participants shared their perspectives of what CPD means to them. Their perceptions of the concept CPD varied greatly. The quotes below illustrate their views:

[Henry]: In my view, continuing professional development is any training after the initial university degree that equips a librarian with the needed skills to perform effectively.

[Olivia]: To me, it is a refresher course that I take to improve my skills.

[Reuben]: An activity that improves my skills to perform competently.

[Ivy]: Learning activities professionals undertake to develop their knowledge and skills.

Although the term CPD is used across professions internationally, it is not commonly used by participants in the study. For example, during the focus group interaction some participants sought clarity about the concept of CPD as illustrated by the quote below.

Abigail explains:

[...] just want us to be sure that we are on the same page...may not be knowledgeable about the topic or experience to share. What came to my mind when you mentioned the term CPD, was the Carnegie CPD programme in Pretoria, South Africa.

Generally, there was lack of clarity about the concept of CPD. Most of the participants described CPD as training, an activity, or refresher course. However, participants were able to gain clarity of what the concept of CPD is, from their colleagues during the focus group interactions.

### Purpose of CPD

#### *How do participants perceive the value of CPD?*

Participants perceived CPD to fulfill varied purposes, in most cases identifying more than one purpose. They considered CPD essential as a means of keeping up-to-date with the latest developments in the field, maintaining professional competencies, improving service delivery, supplementing initial education, preparing for future responsibilities, desire for career advancement. The need for CPD of the participants is influenced by a number of factors, both personal and contextual.

#### *Maintaining professional competency*

The desire to maintain, enhance, develop and broaden professional competencies was highlighted by all the participants. This was linked to the notion of professional identity and professionalism as illustrated by the quotes below:

[Sandra]: As a professional, I must continuously maintain and enhance my competencies to perform my duties effectively and efficiently.

[Kimberly]: I need to stay up-to-date with the trends of my profession. Secondly, to keep to standards as the rest of my colleagues in the same profession.

[Belinda]: I have to keep learning new skills because there are so many changes taking place in the library field.

#### ***Meeting library users' needs***

The participants considered CPD as essential to improving professional knowledge and technical skills to meet the needs of the library users:

[Trevor]: What motivates me to participate in professional development is the desire to provide quality library services to the library users. It makes me happy when I render a library service and the library users appreciate my effort.

[Ivy]: I usually deal with researchers...need to be knowledgeable to meet their individual needs.

#### ***Keeping up-to-date***

As professionals, participants considered CPD as vital for keeping up-to-date with developments in their field such as new ideas, information systems, and techniques:

[George]: Change is constant in librarianship, so I have to keep abreast with developments in my field. For example, during my undergraduate training, I was introduced to a software package for information storage and retrieval systems (CDS/IS). With the new technological development, libraries are now using advanced Integrated Library Systems. ICT is used in almost all library functions. So, I have to keep up-to-date lest I, become irrelevant to the community I serve.

#### ***Desire for career advancement***

All the participants strongly felt that pursuing continuing education through graduate degree programmes enabled participants to gain career security which, in turn, increased their social status and better salaries.

[Daniel]: The job market is extremely competitive, in particular, universities in Uganda employ people with high academic qualifications. A bachelor's degree is just an entry qualification into the university service. So, if you don't obtain additional qualifications, you can't progress career wise. This is the way it is, there is no other way out.

#### ***Supplementing initial education and broadening knowledge and skills***

The participants valued CPD as a means of filling the knowledge and skills gaps not addressed during initial education.

[Kimberly]: I need to enhance my knowledge and skills because not everything I do was taught in school.

[Willow]: My current role involves Information Literacy instruction for all library users including students, lecturers and external researchers. So, I have to plan, design, and

develop learning materials. Likewise, facilitating adult learning is not a simple task. It comes with a lot of anxiety because of the diverse library clientele. I have to learn such skills since I was never introduced to instructional theories and methodologies during my past educational experiences.

### **Types of CPD Activities**

*How do the participants describe their experiences of the CPD activities they have participated in?*

They participants reported having participated in both formal and informal learning activities. The most mentioned CPD activities were graduate degree programmes, subject-specific workshops, overseas conferences, seminars and CPD programme. However, some participants had participated in library committees and projects, research and publications, YouTube videos and online tutorials. The following quotes capture their views:

#### ***Graduate degree programmes***

Eric who doubles as a senior librarian and lecturer narrates:

[...] have been participating in personal and professional improvement programmes...completed my master's degree. I have also attended short courses and workshops...must say that I have been able to progress in my career and switch between jobs. Currently, I am pursuing my doctorate...want to be a better person who can contribute to students' success and the organisation. Generally, when I look back, I don't regret having become a librarian. I feel happy, confident, and satisfied with my accomplishments. I must say that committing myself to continuous learning has made me stand out from the crowd.

Similarly, Nancy who had participated in a master's degree abroad shares her experience: It was an intensive but exciting programme for me...was exposed to a broader IT perspective. The course was unique compared to my undergraduate educational experience...difference is in the use of the learner-centred teaching and learning methods. The programme also incorporated library visits. It was worthwhile, gained valuable skills. I have been able to apply the gained knowledge and skills on the job. I am able to multi-task and I enjoy my work.

When asked about her choice of professional development activities, she responded: [You see], I work in an academic environment where higher qualifications are valued. So, I need additional qualifications to progress through the academic ranks. Obviously, promotion comes with a better salary, [...] who doesn't want a salary increment?

In her context, additional qualifications mean social status, promotion and salary increase. This information is corroborated by Henry who explains why he enrolled for a doctoral degree after that he shifts to 'we', which seems to suggest that many more librarians seek to upgrade with similar intentions. He notes:

I enrolled for a doctorate because I wanted to climb the academic ladder. Just like any other academic staff in the university. So, you have to fit into society. If that wasn't the

case, I don't think I would have gone for this degree. Personally, I believe that with my master's degree, I would ably perform my duties.

### ***Overseas conferences***

Experiences of participating in overseas conferences were shared by many participants. They however, preferred overseas conferences because of the associated benefits. For example, Cindy, a senior librarian, describes her valuable experience:

I make it a point to attend specific conferences in my field especially those overseas. It does not matter whether the university provides funding or not. Right now, I have my professional development targets...save money to attend such activities. For example, I have sponsored myself twice to attend the IFLA conferences. By the way, I also serve on one of the standing committees of IFLA. [...] get to participate in developing policies, guidelines which shape the profession.

Furthermore, Cindy explains the benefits of participating in overseas conferences: During the conferences, I meet and share with colleagues within the profession. I also get to know new people in my field. Sometimes, I attend to disseminate my research findings...use feedback to improve my paper before finally publishing it. It is also an opportunity for me to hear about the latest research in my field. At my level, conferences provide me an opportunity to meet publishers and vendors of library related work solutions. For me, right now, attending conferences is the thing for me. This is not to downplay other professional development activities

Some case study participants reported about self-directed learning activities such as online tutorials, e-learning programmes, webinars, and free web videos on YouTube.

Henry concisely explains:

I have been involved in private study...my current role requires a set of ICT skills yet I am pursuing my doctorate. Basically, I don't have enough time to participate in long duration training. So, I resorted to online tutorials, YouTube videos, webinars. I have found the YouTube videos helpful in learning practical skills.

Noticeably, while discussing their experiences, participants who studied overseas tended to compare their educational experiences overseas and at their home institutions. Participants mentioned having been exposed to new pedagogical approaches, technologies, different cultures and best practices. They mentioned being able to build networks and mix with inspiring experts in their field. In terms of skills, participants reported having developed their discipline-specific knowledge, creativity, leadership and critical thinking skills. In this regard, participants shared how they were able to use the skills gained to innovate services in their respective libraries.

### ***CPD programme***

It was common for participants to participate in fully funded CPD activities. Participants talked about the four-week residential Carnegie CPD programme aimed at enhancing the

ICT skills of librarians to support research in African Universities. For example, Olivia shares one of her best experience during the programme.

One of my best experience during the programme was the library visits to the state-of-the-art libraries...we managed to interact and discuss with our contemporaries. Actually, what was fascinating about these libraries was the various technologies used in the different library functions. It is a valuable way of sharing best practices with colleagues. I'm really excited about future opportunities to visit other libraries.

The importance of experiential learning was emphasised as Fabian succinctly explains: [...] hands-on training approach stood out for me. I am a practical person...was able to apply what I had learned.

The content coverage of the CPD programme seems to have appealed to the participants. Sandra expounds:

[We] were introduced to a variety of relevant content during the programme. For example, Information Literacy, social media, mobile technology and mobility, leadership and innovation, institutional repositories, research data management, digitisation...the content addresses existing and emerging technologies. My colleagues and I have been able to use the skilled gained. Currently, we are automating the library and trying to set up the institutional repository.

Overall, the content of the Carnegie CPD program, hands-on-activities, observing best practices fascinated to many participants.

### ***Seminars***

During one of the focus group interviews, participants reported having participated in seminar series. Eric, a senior librarian explains:

I have participated in lunchtime seminar series organized regularly by the library. Currently, there are many librarians who are pursuing their master's degrees...they share their research projects in advance and when we meet, they make presentations and we provide feedback. By participating in lunchtime seminar series, I have been able to learn from others and also improve my research skills...keep up-to-date with the research trends in my field.

### ***Workshops***

Participants describe participatory and intense learning experiences through week-long residential subject specific workshops organised and implemented by the Consortium of the Uganda University Libraries (CUUL) in partnership with INASP.

Henry vividly describes his experience of participating in the pedagogical skills workshop: I was lucky to be selected to participate in the pedagogical skills training. For me, this training was timely. This was a 'fascinating weeklong workshop. Every aspect of the course was new. We were introduced to needs assessment, learning theories, learning styles, instructional strategies and methodologies, monitoring and evaluation. I experienced active and participatory learning through a series of practical exercises. The workshop was well structured and the content was relevant to my work context. These are



topics that were not covered during my formal education...yet, we have instructional roles. Generally, the training completely transformed my practice. The trainers encouraged active participation...was able to develop new skills by practicing them during the workshop. I can now confidently facilitate adult learning.

Henry describes a fundamental shift in beliefs about teaching and learning. He claims having been “fascinated” by the learner-centred approach. He notes especially the exercise of writing reflective journals which inspired him to begin reflecting on his practice.

#### ***Negative perceptions of CPD***

Some participants commented that some of the CPD activities available do not adequately meet the needs of the participants. Isaac narrates:

There are so many ICT courses advertised out there...get disappointed when I attend. While advertising the courses, they don't specify the level of learning...basic, intermediate or advanced. In most cases, participants need basics in programming. Given my educational background, I don't have such skills. So, you don't benefit much from such workshops...really frustrating.

#### ***Informal CPD activities***

Some participants reported having participated in informal activities that were worth mentioning such as peer mentoring, research and publications, webinars, online tutorials and videos, and participation in library committees and projects, offshore library visits.

#### ***Peer mentoring***

Some participants established informal peer support groups, which has enabled them to improve their practice.

Melisa described a longer, peer-mentor relationship with one of the experienced colleagues. She notes:

After being recruited into the library service, I participated in a one-month library induction programme...provides an overview of the library, procedures, an opportunity to meet other library staff. During the programme, I met one of the experienced colleagues...passionate about cataloguing. So, I approached her and expressed interest in improving my cataloguing skills. Since, then, our relationship has grown steadily. We work in a complex environment...need guidance and support all the time.

#### ***Peer observation***

Peer observation was used by a librarian with an instructional role to learn from other colleagues. Daniel enthusiastically shares his experience:

After completing my master's degree, I was assigned an instructional role. I must confess that taking on this role brought me a lot of anxiety...had no background in teaching. So, I decided to observe my colleagues as they facilitated their training sessions. In particular, I was interested in the delivery methods. By observing my colleagues, I was able to reflect on how my practice. I can happily say that I gained confidence to begin my new role.

### ***Research and publishing***

Being academic staff in universities comes with status and responsibilities such as conducting research and publishing in peer-reviewed journals. Although it is an institutional requirement, few participants mentioned engaging in research and publications. For those participants who had conduct research and publish, it enriches their research skills, and contributes to their promotion and growth of the profession.

Willow expounds:

The university requires me to show evidence of participation in professional development activities such as conferences, research, publications, workshops and seminars. But, all these activities carry different weights during performance appraisal and promotion. So, I resorted to writing papers and presenting them at conferences. This is not a simple task, but there are benefits associated with conducting research, presenting papers at conferences and publishing. Of course, the bar is high...you have to publish in peer-reviewed journals. [...] some of the benefits include traveling abroad to attend conferences, meet new people on top of the financial rewards. But, as a professional, I also contribute knowledge in my field.

### ***Offshore library visits***

Through implementing donor-funded library projects, participants gain opportunities to visit model libraries abroad. Such library visits offer opportunities for the participants to learn best practices, and skills to implement library projects. Kimberly enthusiastically narrates:

I was privileged to be part of the implementation committee of one of the library projects that was donor-funded. In most cases, these projects include capacity building, and visits between partner libraries. I remember visiting some of the model libraries abroad to learn best practices. Part of the plan was to become acquainted with the technical aspects of the software we were planning to use at the university where I work. On return, I had to spearhead the implementation of the automation project.

## **6. Discussion and Conclusion**

In this study, we explored participants' views and experiences of CPD. We found that participants had diverse perceptions of CPD. There was lack of clarity of what the concept is, mainly described CPD as an activity, training after initial education or refresher course. This confirms the previous findings which suggest that CPD has different connotations to different people in specific contexts (Cossham and Fields, 2004; Friedman and Phillips, 2004). In addition, the term CPD was not commonly used by the participants. Previous notions that CPD is widely promoted and accepted among library and information professionals may need to be reviewed.

The participants perceived CPD to serve different interests and social demands including keeping abreast with new developments in the field, maintaining professional competency, supplementing initial education, desire for career advancement, broadening of knowledge

and skill for current and future roles, and professionalism. These perceptions are consistent with other related studies (Freeman, 1994; Opera, 2010; Ukachi and Onuoha, 2013; Corcoran and McGuinness, 2014; Namaganda, 2019). The underlying notion in different perceptions and experiences of CPD address the changes that are realised through improved knowledge and skills, keeping up-to-date, improvement in service delivery, commitment to professionalism, career advancement, increased job satisfaction, confidence and self-esteem. This finding is consistent with related studies on benefits of CPD (Adanu, 2007; Opera, 2010; Broady-Preston and Cossham, 2011; Ukachi and Onuoha, 2013; Bowen-Chang and Hosein, 2018).

Generally, participants perceived that CPD includes both formal and informal learning activities. This finding supports previous work on librarians' learning activities (Auster and Chan, 2004; Larsen, 2006; Corcoran and McGuinness, 2014). The most mentioned CPD activities that participants were involved included subject-specific workshops, graduate programmes and overseas conferences, and seminars. This finding confirms previous studies on the type of CPD activities commonly undertaken by librarians in university libraries (Ukachi and Onuoha, 2013; Namaganda, 2019).

In conclusion, CPD is an ongoing process of learning that involves both formal and informal learning. Thus, the need to embrace informal learning to fully operationalise CPD of librarians. It is argued that CPD has the potential to improve the professional competency of librarians which in turn, can lead to provision of quality and effectiveness of library services. Therefore, there is need to consider the individual needs of the librarian, organisation, library users, and the concerns of the profession. We therefore, suggest linking librarians' CPD to the ideals of professionalism and through the notion of practice. This calls for commitment and support from the different stakeholders such as the government, LIS schools, Ugandan Library and Information Association, Consortium of Uganda University Libraries, and other professional bodies.

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