

IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STAFF POTENTIAL IN A MODERN LIBRARY

IMPACTO DA FORMAÇÃO PROFISSIONAL NO DESENVOLVIMENTO DO POTENCIAL DE FUNCIONÁRIOS DE UMA BIBLIOTECA MODERNA

IMPACTO DE LA EDUCACIÓN PROFESIONAL EN EL DESARROLLO DEL POTENCIAL DEL PERSONAL EN UNA BIBLIOTECA MODERNA

Irina FOMENKO¹
Irina ZAMANOVA²
Svetlana RYADNOVA³

ABSTRACT: The article examines the need for professional education in the choice of the future profession, as well as the role of staff potential diagnostics in the work of a modern library, and the prospects and tasks in this sphere. The authors perform diagnostics of employees without special library education in municipal libraries of the Belgorod region, Russia. The study concludes that it is vital for library employees to get specialized education in librarianship in addition to that which they already have. In addition, libraries are advised to have a set of methods for diagnosing the potential of their staff with descriptions of these methods and options for their use.

KEYWORDS: Library. Staff potential. Municipal libraries. Diagnostics of staff potential.

RESUMO: O artigo analisa a necessidade da formação profissional na escolha da futura profissão, bem como o papel da equipe de diagnósticos de potencial no trabalho de uma biblioteca moderna, e as perspectivas e tarefas nessa esfera. Os autores realizam diagnósticos de funcionários sem educação especial em bibliotecas em bibliotecas municipais da região de Belgorod, Rússia. O estudo conclui que é vital que os funcionários da biblioteca obtenham formação especializada em biblioteconomia, além daquela que já possuem. Além disso, as bibliotecas são aconselhadas a ter um conjunto de métodos para diagnosticar o potencial de sua equipe com descrições desses métodos e opções para seu uso.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Biblioteca. Potencial da equipe. Bibliotecas municipais. Diagnóstico do potencial da equipe.

RESUMEN: El artículo examina la necesidad de la formación profesional en la elección de la futura profesión, así como el papel del personal de diagnóstico potencial en el trabajo de una biblioteca moderna, y las perspectivas y tareas en este ámbito. Los autores realizan

¹ Belgorod State Institute of Arts and Culture, Belgorod – Russia. Senior Lecturer. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3394-9103>. E-mail: irina_lomatschen@mail.ru

² Belgorod State Institute of Arts and Culture, Belgorod – Russia. Associate Professor. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3065-0082>. E-mail: irazamanowa@yandex.ru

³ Belgorod State Institute of Arts and Culture, Belgorod – Russia. Associate Professor. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6938-8056>. E-mail: svetlana-ryadnova@yandex.ru

diagnósticos de empleados sin educación bibliotecaria especial en bibliotecas municipales de la región de Belgorod, Rusia. El estudio concluye que es vital que los empleados de las bibliotecas obtengan una educación especializada en biblioteconomía además de la que ya tienen. Además, se recomienda a las bibliotecas que tengan un conjunto de métodos para diagnosticar el potencial de su personal con descripciones de estos métodos y opciones para su uso.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Biblioteca. Potencial del personal. Bibliotecas municipales. Diagnóstico del potencial del personal.*

Introduction

Problems concerning the staffing of Russian libraries are certainly an obstacle to their comprehensive and prompt modernization.

The staffing issue impedes important tasks in the library industry, such as the effective use of information resources, the creation of conditions for quick access to socially important information and cultural values by remote users, and the development of technologies for raising the image, status, and reputation of the organization in the public eye.

Thus, solving staffing problems is the cornerstone on which not only the future of libraries but also their attractiveness to readers depend (LIASHENKO, 2010).

The functions of library staff have changed greatly, which is associated with the following phenomena.

First, there is a change in librarians (the subjects of management), as they have become more broadly educated and knowledgeable in various fields (culture, politics, economics) through continuous education.

Second, librarians have become actively involved in management, taking part in managerial decision-making and creating strategic plans.

Third, interpersonal relations among library staff have grown more complicated and often not amenable to administrative regulation.

Fourth, all staff relations (hiring, employment contract or agreement, remuneration, dismissal) are regulated by law and are a subject of agreement between the library administration and the employees. The general provisions of labor legislation reflect the constitutional principles of freedom of personal development and guarantees of property. For instance, the legal framework does not allow for rude and arbitrary actions towards the employee by the executive. Librarians are specially protected by law in the area of dismissal.

Fifth, it is increasingly recognized that staff management is a sphere associated with management, organizational, and corporate culture, the moral and psychological atmosphere of the team, the development of professional programs and the professional career of workers, and the organization of socio-diagnostic research among employees.

Studies conducted by practicing librarians with the use of specially created instruments undoubtedly indicate the readiness of practitioners to engage in methodological and diagnostic self-learning. However, these methods are currently employed in a largely intuitive manner. One of the major issues is that serious diagnostic research of the staff potential of libraries requires theoretical substantiation to choose and create diagnostic methods.

In the most general terms, social diagnostics are understood as the “detection of relations among library staff through the lens of socio-economic, cultural-legal, moral-psychological, medical-biological, and sanitary-epidemiological rules and regulations” (GUSLOVA, 2007, p. 48). In addition, this concept encompasses the detection of problems and inconsistencies in the organization, the reasons for their emergence, and technologies to eliminate them (SHCHERBINA, 2007).

Methods

The methodology for diagnosing staff potential involves almost all the methods of pedagogy, psychology, sociology, and social psychology. The most frequently used diagnostic tools are questionnaire surveys and interviews. Among special socio-psychological instruments used are sociometry and rating. In addition, such diagnostics use personal testing and gamified (qualitative) methods – in-depth interviews and focus groups.

During diagnostics, the problems that need to be investigated are identified first, and then the research methodology is chosen, either private or general scientific. There are three groups of methods commonly used in diagnostics:

- data collection,
- data processing and analysis,
- prioritization of the problem.

Diagnostics can only be considered reliable if they rely on two groups of methods, which allows preventing errors and interference, distortion of results, and social desirability factors. A variety of groups of methods allow, on the one hand, to obtain qualitative and quantitative data, and, on the other hand, to objectively verify the acquired information. In this way, the results of the study are greatly enriched and carefully verified.

The most popular method of social diagnostics of staff, including that of libraries, is the survey method, the advantages of which are promptness, cost-efficiency, and the opportunity to collect considerable amounts of data in a relatively short time.

The survey method provides for the analysis of library staff, its components, and conditions of functioning. Surveying presupposes a set of clearly formulated questions, which are developed through pilot diagnostics, as a result of which the questions are corrected. Nevertheless, the survey method also has a drawback, as respondents may not always give truthful answers, sometimes giving too high or, conversely, too low estimates of themselves (as individuals).

Among the advantages of the method is the fact that survey questions give the library's human resources team an opportunity to explore various aspects of the respondents' life – their motivation, professional activities, communicability, stress resistance, tendency to self-learning, and striving for professional growth.

In this study, we conducted pilot diagnostics of employees without special library education in municipal libraries of the Belgorod region, Russia.

The administered survey contains questions relating both to the actual diagnostics of the staff potential of employees of library-information institutions and to the modernization of libraries, both technological and social.

Results

To the question of whether they believe their library meets modern requirements for a modern library organization, 60% of the respondents gave an affirmative answer, 30% disagreed with the statement, and 10% found it difficult to answer.

Positive responses to this survey item are associated with the fact that at the current stage, libraries are being actively upgraded to the level of model, original, etc., i.e., are being equipped with computers and peripheral devices and Internet access. Negative responses are typically given by the employees of libraries that do not enjoy a high level of modernization. Although virtually every municipal library is now equipped with computers or laptops, not all of those are fitted with additional devices. This is quite clearly evidenced by answers to the question "List the strengths of your library", as 30% of the respondents do not mention material and technical equipment, which supports answers to the previous questions.

When asked about the strengths of their libraries, only 20% of the respondents list document collections, which indicates that libraries are not well staffed with documents. This may be one of the reasons for the decline in demand for library services.

This trend can be traced back to the 1990s when the supply of libraries with new editions practically stopped. Recently, a part of library clients was drawn away by the Internet, where new books can be accessed before they arrive in libraries.

Around 60% of the respondents mention project activities as the forte of their libraries. This shows that libraries are searching for new ways to attract visitors by participating in project contests and working on new forms of work in libraries.

A strong point of libraries noted by 25% of the respondents is staff composition, which is a somewhat inflated self-assessment because among some respondents were specialists with non-library education, who classified themselves as a strong side of their library, which is not always objectively true.

Approximately 10% of the respondents report connection with the public as a strong point of their institution, and only 4% point out the attraction of extrabudgetary funds. We believe these two issues to be interconnected, as the attraction of extrabudgetary funds is closely associated with public relations. However, based on the collected responses, libraries focus more on cooperation with other organizations and not on the attraction of financing.

Finally, 2% of the respondents indicate the competent director as a strong side of their library, which is an indicator, although a small one, of the fact that the role of executives in building the strengths of a library and attitudes toward it is also important.

The next survey question is aimed to detect what features are important for a library employee. The answer options provided include knowledge of the legal and regulatory framework of the library, the ability to set up business communications, knowledge of information and communication technologies, and knowledge of traditional librarianship technologies (Table 1).

Table 1 – Important criteria for library staff

Important	% of respondents	Unimportant	% of respondents
All options	50	Knowledge of the legal and regulatory framework of the library	40
Knowledge of information and communication technologies	40	The ability to set up business communications	40
Knowledge of traditional technologies of librarianship	40	Knowledge of traditional technologies of librarianship	15

		Knowledge of information and communication technologies	5
--	--	---	---

Source: Prepared by the authors

The answers to this question are distributed as follows: 50% of the respondents consider all of the options important, while 40% argue for the significance of knowledge of information and communication technologies and the traditional technologies of librarianship. Meanwhile, knowing the legal framework and being able to build business communications is not believed to be critical. This fact affects the operation of libraries, yet it may also give grounds for the need for library institutions to work with superiors at the level of administrations at various levels, with whom it is necessary to arrange communication on justifying the activities of the library based on the regulatory documentation, not only knowledge of computers and library work. These responses are commonly given by those library workers who have not yet dealt with the administration or believe that the administration is always right and the executives do not need to prove or justify their decisions.

Aside from the above, 15% of the respondents indicate that it is not important for a librarian to know the traditional technologies of librarianship, and 5% consider it unimportant to have knowledge of information and communication technology. These answers naturally come from the respondents who do not mention material and technical equipment as a strong point of their library (the second question). For them, mastery of information technology is indeed not a vital skill. The traditional technologies of librarianship, in turn, are not learned mainly by library employees with no library education and about one year of work experience.

When characterizing the staff composition of the library system in which they work, 80% of the respondents report it to be stable and lacking staff turnover, 15% assess the composition of their staff team as rather stable, and only 5% of the surveyed library workers find the workforce not very stable, often reshuffled due to the employees' resignation.

The majority of responses characterize the composition of library and information institutions as comfortable enough. A strong turnover rate, on the other hand, most often indicates that the library is not comfortable enough for its staff or that there are excessive demands on the library's activities.

The question about the Centralized Library System's requirements for candidates for positions received the following responses:

- the importance of higher education – 50%,
- the need for special library education – 35%,
- the need for a type of education depends on the position held – 15%.

Here it is worth minding the fact that among the respondents were employees lacking higher library education and not currently obtaining a degree while having over 5 years of experience working at the library.

The answer that the need for a specific degree depends on the position for which the candidate is applying is more accurate. A librarian can often be hired if they have an advanced degree in philology or education or other qualifications which the library director believes to be suitable. In this issue, much depends on the level of development of the director of the Centralized Library System. If the head executive has special library education, they will require employees without professional education to necessarily obtain one. In turn, if the director is not trained in librarianship, they will have their own attitude toward the composition of the staff.

The experience shows that a library worker has to obtain library training in addition to the degree they already have. In this case, their attitude to work and opinion about library activities change drastically. They gain an understanding of the importance, necessity, and complexity of the library profession in contrast to the common belief that work in a library is easy and does not require additional knowledge, and that one can learn in the process of work. In reality, after the first annual report, such a staff member changes their mind and resigns from the position or decides to pursue library education after all.

When asked what methods of selection are used in hiring in their library system, 100% of respondents report that a credential is demanded first, 80% add the method of personal interview, and 50% add to that a probationary period.

One of the most widespread methods of diagnosing library staff potential is interviewing, which allows assessing both the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of library personnel and the reproduction of the workforce. However, this method can only be used with individuals or small groups. Large groups cannot be diagnosed through interviews, as questioning each person takes a lot of time and resources. The advantage of this method lies in the fact that the interviewer can turn the conversation in the right direction, being guided by the text of the conversation. This method does not have the limitations of other forms of questioning in the study of staff potential in a library.

The options rarely mentioned by the respondents are psychological and professional testing and a reference letter from a previous job or educational institution. Often, instead of an official description printed on letterhead with requisites, signature, and a stamp, organizations do obtain information about the candidate through unofficial channels, specifically, by contacting the organization directly and getting a verbal characteristic of the individual.

Testing is among the most complex methods in diagnosing staff potential, which is the reason why it is almost never employed.

When asked if the library has an incentive to improve educational and professional development, 90% of the respondents answer positively. However, it needs to be borne in mind that it is a difficult task to ensure career advancement in a library, especially in a municipal one, where the top position that can be earned by a specialist is a superintendent. In addition, since having and obtaining library education is not financially incentivized, most librarians take professional development courses, which they are required to go through every three years.

A clear confirmation of the above reasons is the answers to the question of whether the organization requires professional education, in which 60% of respondents answer positively, but specify that refresher or retraining courses are sufficient. Only 40% of the respondents report that entering a master's program in librarianship is required. However, an analysis of admittance to the respective master's program at the Belgorod State Institute of Arts and Culture says otherwise. Meanwhile, almost all of the respondents agree that their executives completely support the striving to obtain professional education.

A part of the survey questions concerns the technological and social modernization of libraries. The results show that many respondents do not know what social modernization is, as instead of a clear answer on the employed technologies of social modernization, they responded "difficult to answer". In turn, in the question about the directions of modernization used in the library system, almost 100% of the survey participants note technological modernization.

Among the elements of corporate culture, a part of the respondents indicates the corporate style and form of clothing. Around 10% mention the celebration of the All-Russian Library Day by the entire library system with excursion trips to museums. As a form of attire, a number of libraries do not recommend wearing jeans to work, requiring a more business-like style of dress.

Answers to the question about incentive allowances are split roughly in half. Around 50% of the respondents indicate that there are no incentive allowances, while the other 50% point out additional allowances for creative activity. Regrettably, librarians do not at all mention incentive allowances for scientific activity. This suggests that either the librarians are not aware that they are receiving additional allowances, or incentive payments are evenly distributed among all employees in the library system, regardless of their contribution to particular activities.

At the same time, almost 80% of those surveyed note that their libraries constantly participate in projects and programs of the municipal and regional community. Among such

programs, they mention computer courses for senior citizens, the mother's reading project, an agreement with the Pension Fund of the Russian Federation, the Dmitrov Libraries conference partnership, and a number of others.

Conclusion

The conducted survey reveals that a number of library employees are not aware of the methods of social diagnostics of libraries' staff potential and do not distinguish between the types of social and technological modernization. Consequently, a certain model of methods for diagnosing the personnel potential of libraries is needed. Such a model would present a list of methods for diagnosing library staff with descriptions of these techniques and options for their use.

REFERENCES

LIASHENKO, T. V. Informatsionno-kompetentnye kadry kak strategicheskii faktor razvitiia bibliotchnogo dela v XXI veke [Information-competent staff as a strategic factor in the development of librarianship in the 21st century]. **Bulletin of the Moscow State University of Culture and Art**, v. 1, n. 33, 2010. Available in: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/informatsionno-kompetentnye-kadry-kak-strategicheskii-faktor-razvitiya-bibliotchnogo-dela-v-xxi-veke>. Access in: 17 Feb. 2022.

GUSLOVA, M. N. **Teoriia i metodika sotsialnoi raboty**: Uchebnik [Theory and Methodology of Social Work: Textbook]. Moscow: "Academia", 2007.

SHCHERBINA, V. V. Sotsiologo-diagnosticheskie tekhnologii v upravlenii: teoretiko-metodologicheskie aspekty razvitiia i primeneniia [Sociological and Diagnostic Technologies in Management: Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of Development and Application]. **Sociological Studies**, n. 3, p. 30-42, 2007. Available in: <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=9468059>. Access in: 17 Feb. 2022.

How to reference this article

FOMENKO, I.; ZAMANOVA, I.; RYADNOVA, S. Impact of professional education on the development of the staff potential in a modern library. **Revista online de Política e Gestão Educacional**, Araraquara, v. 26, n. 00, e022142, 2022. e-ISSN: 2447-3529. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22633/rpge.v26i00.17331>

Submitted: 20/04/2022

Required revisions: 13/06/2022

Approved: 26/09/2022

Published: 10/11/2022

Processing and publication by the Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Correction, formatting, standardization and translation.

