The Continuing Education of The University Librarians in Hebei Province

Peisen Xu*, Ramir S. Austria

College of Teacher Education, University of the Cordilleras, Baguio City, Benguet, Philippines 2600

*Corresponding Author: xupeisen@hebeu.edu.cn

Abstract. This paper examines the landscape of continuing education for university librarians in Hebei Province, emphasizing best practices and challenges encountered in the process. Within the context of rapidly evolving academic and technological landscapes, continuing education stands as a cornerstone for librarians' growth and proficiency. The study analyzes existing literature, incorporating insights from experts and practitioners in the field. Key challenges identified include resource constraints, tailoring education to professional needs, securing institutional support, technological readiness, and sustaining engagement. Recommendations encompass strategic resource allocation, customized education approaches, enhanced technological integration, and the cultivation of a continuous learning culture. This study advocates for proactive measures to navigate these challenges and optimize continuing education strategies, ensuring librarians are well-equipped to meet the evolving demands of the academic environment.

Keywords: continuing education, university librarians, best practices, challenges, countermeasures.

1. Introduction

The field of library science is constantly evolving, driven by advancements in information technology, changing user needs, and dynamic educational paradigms. In this rapidly changing landscape, librarians, as information professionals, must continually update their knowledge and enhance their skills to remain relevant. Continuing education for librarians emerges as a pivotal component of their professional development, offering a spectrum of educational activities, from workshops and conferences to online courses. These opportunities are specifically designed to augment librarians' competencies and adaptability in their roles.

In both China and the international context, continuing education initiatives for librarians have gained significant attention. Various studies and articles have delved into the content, methodologies, and effectiveness of these programs, exploring the integration of technology, the role of massive open online courses (MOOCs), and comparative analyses of training mechanisms across different regions. However, a focused exploration of the continuing education strategies for college librarians in Hebei Province, China, is essential. By drawing insights from existing practices and international experiences, this study seeks to propose optimized approaches that align with the unique needs and context of Hebei's college librarians. The findings of this research are expected to inform policymaking, curriculum design, and resource allocation for effective continuing education initiatives.

The primary beneficiaries of this study encompass college librarians, who will gain valuable insights into effective continuing education strategies to enhance their professional development and job performance. Likewise, library institutions and administrators stand to benefit by utilizing the research findings to optimize resource allocation and design continuing education programs that are finely tuned to the needs of their librarians. Additionally, educational policy makers will find the insights invaluable in formulating policies that strongly support and enhance continuing education opportunities for librarians in Hebei Province.

2. Literature Review

Continuing education for librarians is a vital aspect of professional growth and adaptability in a rapidly evolving information landscape. This literature review aims to shed light on the significance of continuous education, its implementation across different regions, and the potential for improvement in the context of librarian professional development.

Liu (2016) [1] explored continuing education for both Chinese and foreign librarians. The study discussed the diverse educational needs of librarians from different cultural and professional backgrounds, emphasizing the importance of tailored educational strategies.

Liu (2013) [2] provided insights into how continuing education for foreign librarians could influence Chinese libraries. This implies a focus on cross-cultural learning and the potential benefits of incorporating international educational practices into the Chinese librarian context.

Yang (2012) [3] delved into the main characteristics and inspiration drawn from continuing education for librarians in American and British universities. This study has emphasized the strengths of the educational models in these countries, potentially providing a basis for comparison and improvement within the Chinese context.

Ecclestone (2013) [4] discussed the use of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) as a professional development tool for librarians. This article highlighted the role of technology and innovative platforms in advancing the skills and knowledge of librarians.

Smith and Oliva (2010) [5] explored the transformation of librarians into renaissance reference librarians in academe. This study has focused on the evolving role of librarians and the need for continuous learning to adapt to changing academic and technological landscapes.

Tomaszewski and MacDonald (2009) [6] discussed professional development opportunities for new academic librarians. The study has highlighted strategies to effectively integrate new academic librarians into the educational environment, emphasizing continuous learning as a part of this integration.

Thielen (2018) [7] conducted research on the content of continuing education, delving into the specific subjects and skills that should be prioritized in such programs to ensure their effectiveness.

Massis (2010) [8] emphasized the importance of ensuring librarian engagement in continuing professional education. This article discussed strategies to encourage and motivate librarians to actively participate in educational opportunities, enhancing their professional growth.

Wan (2018) [9] analyzed the current situation and development strategy of MOOC construction for continuing education of Chinese librarians. This research has highlighted the potential for MOOCs in addressing the unique educational needs of Chinese librarians.

The studies by Hu (2015), Jin and Xiao (2017), Wang and Xu (2019), Sheng (2015), Fan (2015), and Lu (2019) [10-15] explored various aspects of continuing education, potentially focusing on its relevance, the training models employed, and the challenges faced in different regions or universities.

In summary, this literature review has provided an overview of studies encompassing the importance and implementation of continuing education for librarians. By understanding the strategies employed and the challenges faced in various educational contexts, it becomes possible to identify best practices and tailor the implementation of continuous education for librarians in a way that maximizes its effectiveness and addresses the unique needs of librarians within the Hebei Province. The synthesis of this collective knowledge can further inform policies and practices to enhance librarian professional development in Hebei and beyond.

3. Methodology

The methodology of this study is qualitative method, with interviews standing as a critical component. Utilizing purposeful sampling, interviews were conducted with college librarians and professionals involved in continuing education program development. Employing a semi-structured format, these interviews revolved around key themes such as the current state of continuing education, perceived effectiveness, challenges faced, best practices, and suggestions for improvement. Data

gathered from these interviews undergone thematic analysis, enabling the identification of patterns and significant insights. The in-depth understanding derived from interviews was integrated with insights obtained from surveys and case studies, offering a comprehensive overview of the implementation of continuing education strategies for college librarians in Hebei Province. Throughout the process, ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were rigorously upheld to ensure the rights and privacy of the participants.

4. Result and Discussion

The following presents the best practices and challenges that in the continuing education of the university librarians in Hebei province.

Table 1. Best practices in the continuing education of the university librarians in Hebei province

Theme
Comprehensive Curriculum and Content
Flexible and Varied Learning Approaches
Alignment with Professional Needs and Relevance
Institutional Support and Quality Assurance
Engagement and Interactive Learning Environment

Comprehensive Curriculum and Content: In this context, having a comprehensive curriculum implies offering a well-structured and inclusive set of courses and educational materials that cover a wide range of relevant topics. The content should be tailored to address the unique challenges, technologies, research methodologies, and academic trends pertinent to the librarians in Hebei Province. It ensures that librarians receive a well-rounded education, enabling them to perform optimally in their roles.

Flexible and Varied Learning Approaches: Flexibility in learning approaches implies providing multiple modes of learning such as online courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences. This allows librarians to choose the methods that suit their learning styles and schedules. Varied approaches ensure that each librarian can engage with the educational content in a way that maximizes their understanding and retention.

Alignment with Professional Needs and Relevance: The educational programs and content should align with the specific professional needs and challenges faced by university librarians in Hebei Province. It's about tailoring the education to address their unique context, technology requirements, evolving academic landscape, and roles within the university. Relevance ensures that the education is immediately applicable and valuable to their daily work.

Institutional Support and Quality Assurance: This refers to the institutional commitment and backing for continuing education programs. The institution should allocate adequate resources, define clear policies, and establish quality control mechanisms to ensure that the education provided is of high quality and meets the expected standards. The support and quality assurance instill confidence and motivation among librarians to engage fully in the educational programs.

Engagement and Interactive Learning Environment: Creating an engaging and interactive learning environment implies encouraging active participation, collaboration, and discussion among librarians. It involves interactive sessions, group projects, discussions, and networking opportunities. This engagement fosters a sense of community and enhances the learning experience by allowing librarians to share insights, learn from each other, and collectively contribute to their professional growth.

In summary, these best practices are essential guidelines that, when applied effectively, ensure that continuing education programs for university librarians in Hebei Province are relevant, effective, engaging, and aligned with their unique professional needs, ultimately resulting in better-equipped and more competent librarians.

Table 2. Challenges in the continuing education of the university librarians in Hebei province

Theme
Resource Constraints
Tailoring to Professional Needs
Ensuring Institutional Support
Technological Preparedness
Sustaining Engagement

Resource Constraints: Allocating adequate resources, including funding, time, and manpower, for developing and delivering comprehensive and high-quality continuing education programs poses a significant challenge. Limited resources can hinder the creation of a diverse and enriching curriculum and the adoption of varied learning approaches.

Tailoring to Professional Needs: Adapting the educational content to meet the specific professional needs and requirements of university librarians in Hebei Province is a challenge. Ensuring that the curriculum remains relevant and addresses the evolving roles and technological advancements in the field is crucial but often difficult due to rapidly changing educational landscapes.

Ensuring Institutional Support: Gaining strong institutional support in terms of policy endorsement, budget allocation, and commitment from leadership can be challenging. Without robust backing from the institution, it's difficult to sustain continuing education initiatives and ensure their integration into the librarian's professional growth.

Technological Preparedness: Integrating modern technologies and digital platforms effectively into the learning environment poses a challenge. Some librarians do not have the necessary technological proficiency or access to adequate infrastructure, hindering their engagement with online courses and other digital learning tools.

Sustaining Engagement: Maintaining consistent engagement and active participation throughout the continuing education programs is a hurdle. Librarians face work-related pressures or find it challenging to balance their job responsibilities with the demands of education, potentially impacting their involvement and benefiting from the educational opportunities provided.

In short in the quest to provide university librarians in Hebei Province with effective continuing education, several best practices have emerged as vital components. These practices include offering a comprehensive curriculum, employing flexible learning approaches, aligning education with professional needs, securing institutional support, and fostering an engaging learning environment. However, challenges such as resource constraints, customization to specific needs, institutional support, technological readiness, and sustaining engagement pose significant hurdles. Overcoming these challenges requires a holistic approach involving resource allocation, technological integration, and a commitment to lifelong learning. By addressing these challenges and embracing best practices, a robust system of continuing education can empower librarians to excel in their roles, contribute to a dynamic academic environment, and facilitate the achievement of academic goals.

5. Conclusion

Continuing education is crucial for the growth of university librarians in Hebei Province. Implementing best practices, such as a comprehensive curriculum and flexible learning approaches, enhances their knowledge and skills. However, challenges like resource constraints and technological readiness must be addressed.

To succeed, a strategic approach involving adequate resources, technological integration, and a culture of lifelong learning is essential. Investing in the librarians' continuing education ensures academic excellence and optimal support to the academic community, contributing to a dynamic academic environment and the achievement of academic goals.

6. Recommendations

Optimize Resource Allocation: Allocate dedicated funds and time for continuing education programs, ensuring that there are ample resources for developing a comprehensive curriculum and incorporating varied learning approaches. Prioritize and invest in the continual professional development of librarians.

Customize Education to Professional Needs: Conduct regular needs assessments and surveys among university librarians to understand their specific professional needs and preferences. Tailor continuing education programs accordingly, ensuring direct relevance and applicability to their roles and responsibilities.

Strengthen Institutional Support: Advocate for institutional policies that emphasize the importance of continuing education for librarians. Encourage strong support from academic leadership and secure institutional commitment in terms of both financial backing and endorsement of the value of lifelong learning.

Enhance Technological Readiness: Provide training and support to improve librarians' technological proficiency, ensuring they are equipped to engage with digital learning platforms effectively. Invest in modern infrastructure and software, making technology an integral part of the learning experience.

Promote Sustainable Engagement: Implement strategies to maintain high levels of engagement throughout the education programs. Incorporate interactive elements, periodic assessments, and practical applications to sustain interest and active participation. Recognize and reward librarian achievements in continuing education to motivate consistent engagement.

Foster a Learning Culture: Cultivate a culture that values continuous learning and encourages librarians to pursue professional development opportunities. Promote knowledge-sharing, mentorship, and collaboration among librarians to foster an environment where learning is a collective and ongoing endeavor.

Facilitate Collaboration and Partnerships: Encourage partnerships with educational institutions, professional associations, and industry experts to diversify educational offerings. Collaborations can bring in specialized expertise and broaden the scope of continuing education programs, making them more impactful and insightful.

References

[1] Liu, Y. (2016). Continuing Education for Chinese and Foreign Librarians. *Intelligence Exploration, 10*, 92-94.

[2] Liu, L. (2013). The Enlightenment of Continuing Education for Foreign Librarians on Chinese Libraries. *Hebei Science and Technology Map Garden, 26*(06), 3-5.

[3] Yang, S. (2012). The Main Characteristics and Inspiration of Continuing Education for Librarians in American and British Universities. *Continuing Education Research, 9*, 175-176.

[4] Ecclestone, M. (2013). MOOCs as a Professional Development Tool for Librarians. *The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research, 8*(02), 108-114.

[5] Smith, D. A., & Oliva, V. T. (2010). Becoming a Renaissance Reference Librarian in Academe. *Reference Services Review, 38*(01), 125-141.

[6] Tomaszewski, R., & MacDonald, K. I. (2009). Professional Development Opportunities for New Academic Librarians. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship, 35*(06), 83-85.

[7] Thielen. (2018). Research on the Content of Continuing Education. *Journal of Academic Librarianship, 35*(02), 232-242.

[8] Massis, B. E. (2010). Continuing Professional Education: Ensuring Librarian Engagement. *New Library World, 111*(05), 247-249.

[9] Wan, W. (2018). Analysis of the Current Situation and Development Strategy of MOOC Construction for Continuing Education of Chinese Librarians. *Information Technology Surgery, 27*(04), 77-84+97.

[10] Hu, T. (2015). Exploring the Training of Library Librarians through Mobile WeChat. *Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Management and Technology, (08)*, 220-221.

[11] Jin, Q., & Xiaolin. (2017). On the Training Model for University Librarians in the UK: Based on the University of Sheffield Books Typical Analysis of Libraries. *Library Work and Research, 2017*(12), 36-40.

[12] Wang, L., & Xu, C. (2019). Comparison and Enlightenment of the Continuing Education Mechanism of Librarians of China US Library Alliance. *Library Science Research, 2019*(13), 83-89.

[13] Sheng, W. (2015). Research on the Construction of Human Resources Training Project System in HS University Library (Doctoral dissertation). *Donghua University*.

[14] Fan, C. (2015). Research on the Librarian Training Model of Shanghai University Libraries (Doctoral dissertation). *Shanghai Normal University*.

[15] Lu, J. (2019). Research on the Training of University Librarians in Hefei (Doctoral dissertation). *Anhui University*.