PLANNING HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT FOR MALAYSIAN LIBRARIES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: CHALLENGES TOWARDS 21ST CENTURY*

by

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ABSTRAK


INTRODUCTION

Malaysia has undergone significant changes in the last few years as a result of various measures undertaken by the government to meet the changing world economy. These changes have had tremendous impact on its human resources. Thus, if Malaysia is to continue to progress into the 21st century, it has to formulate and implement appropriate strategies for the development of its human resources which enable it to utilise to the fullest talent, expertise and energies of its human resources in all sectors including librarians and information personnel. An educated, skilled, productive, disciplined and competent workforce will be a major asset to the nation.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PLANS

Some of the government policies and plans includes; the Vision 2020 (Malaysia: the Way Forward), the Second Outline Perspective Plans (OPP2) which include the National Development Policy, the Sixth Malaysian Plan all have similar objectives i.e. to build a progressive, prosperous and united nation. There are other policies such as the National Policy on Library and Information Services, the Science and Technology Policy, the Agriculture Policy, the National Book Development Policy and many others. All these policies and plans give due recognition to human resources development.

Vision 2020 was presented by our Prime Minister, Yang Amat Berhormat Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Meeting of the Malaysian Business Council on 28 February 1991. The Vision provides a framework for Malaysian to achieve certain economic targets within a 30 years time frame. It reflects the vision that Malaysia will achieve a status of a fully developed and industrialised nation by the year 2020 in all dimensions: economically, politically, spiritually, psychologically and culturally. In term of human resources development, the main thrust includes: (a) the development of an educated, well trained and flexible manpower in order to enable Malaysia to forge ahead and maintain its competitive edge; (b) the inculcation of positive values and with

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attitudes for the development of an industrialised society and to foster national unity.

The Second Outline Perspective Plan (1991-2000) which replaces the New Economic Policy (1971-1990), provides a ten years time frame for Malaysia to move ahead towards achieving the status of a fully developed and industrialized nation. In term of human resources development, the thrust is to develop quality and productive workforce that will enable Malaysians to forge ahead and maintain its competitiveness. In order to achieve this, Malaysia will have to invest on human resources development so that the future workforce of Malaysia can contribute towards the growth of the Malaysian economy and be competitive in the global economy.

The objective of the National Development Policy is to attain a balanced development in order to establish a more united and just society based on the principle of growth with equity within the context of rapidly growing economy. It focuses on economic development, social justice, quality of life, moral and ethical values, work ethics, etc. In term of human resources development, the policy emphasises on the following: (a) developing a progressive society in which all Malaysians enjoy greater material welfare, while imbued with positive social and spiritual values and an increase sense of national pride; (b) promoting human resources development including creating a productive and disciplined labour force and developing the necessary skills to meet the challenges in industrial development through a culture of merit and excellence; (c) making science and technology an integral component of socio-economic planning and development which entails building competence in strategic and knowledge-based technologies and promoting a science and technology culture.

The Sixth Malaysian Plan (1991-1995) spells out policies, strategies and programmes to operationalise the OPP2 for the first five years. It provides detailed public sector programmes and development allocation by sectors and level of governments. Under the Sixth Malaysian Plan, a sum of $8.5 billion was allocated to education and training. This is to ensure that the quality of education in Malaysia be enhanced in all sectors of the society as well as to provide access to educational and training opportunities. In addition, the public sectors, will be encouraged to play a more active role in training and skill development.

The National Policy on Library and Information Services which was passed in 1989, provides a broad guidelines for the systematic and planned development of library and information services. The Policy aims at the provision and progressive improvement of library facilities and services in order to contribute effectively to national development and provide, in particular, effective support for:

(a) the policy formulation and decision making process;
(b) planning, research and development activity;
(c) the educational process;
(d) the intellectual development of the people, their economic activity and the fulfilment of their cultural and recreational needs.

In order to provide the professional manpower to facilitate the nation-wide development of library and information services, the policy states that measures shall be taken to:

(a) provide library education and training facilities within the country at the tertiary level;
(b) produce the required manpower with the appropriate qualifications, knowledge, attitudes and skills;
(c) provide for the further exposure and continuing education for professional personnel;
(d) provide for the staffing of library and information services in keeping with national norms and standards.

**HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**

The rapid economic transformation being experienced by Malaysians will accelerate further within the next 30 years as a result of various government policies and plans to make Malaysia an advanced affluent nation by the year 2020. If libraries and information centres are to be recognised as an agent of change within the context of a new affluent and information-rich society as envisioned by the Vision, we should ensure that we will be able to cope with the new demand of library services.

Demand of the future library and information services requires librarians to reassess the type of services that libraries have provided in the past and in present time and the changing pattern of the users needs. Perhaps librarians should be an active learners with interactive skills, and act as a “team player” with other professions whom they are dealing
with and competent in the management of change, instead of being “passive player”. Human Resources development for librarians and information personnel should provide the necessary education and training that will enable them to play a new role and importance in delivering of products and services.

Human resources development especially in term of providing continuing education and training, is vital ingredient of sustaining development and attaining objectives of Vision 2020. Human resources development involves a satisfactory development of an adequately qualified workforce capable of meeting the country’s commercial, industrial and social needs. In its broadest sense, it is the development of plan of action to meet the manpower requirements in anticipation of the changing conditions of the social, economic, industrial and business environment. The primary objective of human resources development is the effective utilization of human resources toward achieving national objectives, institutional objectives, as well as the individual objectives. In planning human resources for any profession including librarians and information personnel, various factors have to be taken into consideration. It should be sensitive towards changing environment pattern, internal and external environment, as well as new policies and plans introduced by the government that affect the country future development. In terms of human resources development for librarians and information personnel, it is evidence that Malaysia should have an adequate number of qualified librarian and information personnel to cater for the new demand in information services. The major market place for librarians and information personnel are Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, academic and college libraries, ministries and federal department libraries, public libraries in the states and local authorities as well as private corporation institutions. Institutions that provide training for librarians and information personnel be sensitive to the changing environmental pattern that affect the country future development as a result of various policies and plans introduced by the government.

Some changes in the environment that must be taken into consideration in planning human resources for librarians and information personnel are:

(a) With the new education system which emphasises students to be innovative, be functional literate, and emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge, our future youth will be more demanding for effective and efficient library services. The government proposal to have more open universities, twinning programme of local educational institutions with foreign universities, and encouraging public training institutions to have linkages with private institutions will have an impact on future library and information services. It requires effective and integrated library and information services and network and it will also open up new market for librarians and information personnel.

(b) Malaysian society of the 21st century will be an influent and information-rich society infused with science and technology culture. Librarians and information personnel working in the R&D institutions should not only be the custodians and handlers of printed materials and other media but should be scholars in their own right, understood their specialised user needs, be a partner or “team player” with the subject specialists in the institutions they are entrusted to and thus make their contribution to the development in the related subject area. Library and information school should be preparing students for such needs. Specialized library and information centers should be evolving toward becoming Information Analysis Unit. An Information Analysis Unit as defined by Unesco Working Group is “an organization unit or an independent organization that is specialized in serving peers by providing an evaluative analysis and synthesis of relevant information. This will be selected from a wide range of sources and processed by subject specialists with a view of characterization a current situation in a specific field or discipline. It may also support the solution of specific problems, the preparation of plans, and the making of decisions, with directly usable information, obviating the need to consult a number of documents. It can perform discipline-oriented, mission-oriented and data-oriented, functions which are complementary to each other”.

(c) The next 30 decade will witness formidable information explosion facilitated by the advancement of computer and telecommunication technologies and networks. As librarians and information personnel who are responsible for acquiring information in various forms, systematically process the items for easy retrieval and be able to disseminate the information to intended users, we should take advantage of these new technologies. Information sources come in various forms such as printed materials as well as in multi and hyper media. There are a number of databases, online or in optical disc, in various subject fields that are available in the market place. In term of human resources development, the implication would be to develop librarians and information personnel that have the necessary skills required to access pertinent information from the databases for the users. These include identify and “mapping” these sources of information, acquiring and processing them
systematically and sharing their utilization. Librarian and information personnel should be able to understand the structure of different databases, competent with the use of different descriptors or controlled vocabularies to be able to access relevant information effectively and most important of all to exploit these databases, analyse them and to repackage them into usable format for the specialized users. Therefore continuous training programme in information utilization from different types of databases should be planned. In addition, librarians and information personnel should also be able to contribute to the building of related databases in their pertinent subject areas at national and international through networking. Therefore education and training programmes for librarians and information personnel should includes methodology in database management and network management.

(d) With the government emphasis on productivity, total quality control, excellence services and professionalism, librarians and information personnel too should also strive for excellent service, conscious for quality control and provides services with professionalism.

To achieve these, education and training system for librarian and information personnel have to be changed and improved continuously. Organizationally, the change and improvement should involve streamlining and strengthening the linkage between education and training institutions and existing libraries in order to make education and training of librarians and information personnel more relevant to the present situation. In the projection of manpower needs, consideration should be given to national and global trends which affect the library and information services.

**FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF PERPUSTAKAAN NEGARA MALAYSIA**

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia was established under the act of Parliament namely, the National Library Act, 1972 [Act 80] and the National Library (Amendment Act, 1987 [Act A667]. The Act listed the functions of Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia under the duties of the Director General of Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, among others “to advise the Minister on the National Policy on all matters pertaining to libraries and all matters relating to libraries” and “to advise and assist in the national planning and development of libraries”. Part II Section 4(e) of the Act states that one of the functions of Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia is “to provide training in order to upgrade professionalism in library matters”.

In line with the above act and taking into consideration of the new government policies, Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia has a major role to play in the development of library and information infrastructure within the nation. In order to meet the future challenges towards achieving a developed industrial nation, all libraries in the nation be it the academic, special, public or school libraries should be an integrated component of library system within the nation that extend their collection and services to the public through its community services. All Malaysian, wherever they may be in the urban or rural areas should have access to reading and research materials in order to forge ahead as a productive, discipline, competent and skill labour force.

In order to develop an information-rich-society, Malaysia need a Plan of Action for the development of library and information services. Some of the strategies for the development of these services are:

(a) strengthening library and information infrastructure within the country by setting up more libraries in the cities, towns and villages so that all Malaysian will be able to enjoy library facilities and services that are within their reach.

(b) reducing imbalance of library development within the states by providing more financial assistance to the state authorities responsible for public library development so that all states have an effective library services and state-wide library networks. Beginning from 1992, the Malaysian government has provided half of the operating budget required by the public libraries. Thus, it is envisaged that a balanced library development will prevail in the not distant future within the states.

(c) ensuring that all public libraries in the country achieve a minimum standard of services, so that they can function as one stop community information center, reference and referral center that have access to the collections of other libraries within the nation. Library should be the major learning center for the youth to upgrade their living skills and to improve their standard of living through continuing education and self learning.

(d) facilitating the development of special libraries and specialised information system in the ministries, federal departments, research institutions and private corporations so that they can be developed as a specialised centre of
excellence or Information Analysis Centre in related subject areas and form part of the national information system. This will be done through consultancy services and through in-service training.

(e) ensuring national availability of publications to the researchers and the public who will have access to the collections of all libraries in the country through effective document delivery services. Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia is the coordinating center for the Document Delivery Service within the nation.

(f) ensuring that all libraries within the country will have access to computer facilities in order to build up bibliographic as well as non-bibliographic databases pertaining to their local or specialized environment and these databases should be accessible to the public through online library services and networks.

(g) establishing a national bibliographic database and national bibliographic network in a distributed environment. This is in line with the government objective to have an open system environment for all public sector computer systems.

(h) Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia will be actively involved in the reading campaign and user education programme to ensure that library user education programmes are upgraded in order to ensure that library users will be able to exploit information in various forms and databases, to meet the challenges of the new industrial society.

(i) Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia will cooperate with other relevant institutions to formulate the National Plan of Action to produce more reading and research materials for the Malaysian reading society.

(j) establishing within Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, a National Reference and Referral Center for local imprints as well as sources of information on Malaysia, and thus acting as the national focal point for a Malaysian information system.

(k) ensuring that all libraries be managed by qualified librarians and information personnel and achieving minimum standard of services.

(l) establishing standards for all activities of Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia in order to upgrade the quality of library services.

(m) reviewing existing standard for public and special library services so that it will be in line with the New Development Policy.

(n) intensifying the in-service training for professional and non-professional in order to meet new challenges especially in term of exploiting new information and using new technology and developing subject specialization among staff. A computer training laboratory will be set up in Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia which will act as a training center for library personnel within the country.

(o) to upgrade the quality of Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia services towards achieving services par excellence by providing timely information required by the decision makers, researchers and the public. To instill Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia’s Corporate Culture so that all level of staff have the same objectives and the same vision to forge ahead to the year 2020 in order to provide good quality services to the public - “we care for our users and we will be able to deliver the information required at the right time needed by our users”. Library services may not be purely bibliographic, services will include repackaging of information in accordance with the user needs. A marketing approach to the library services will be emphasised.

THE ROLE OF PERPUSTAKAAN NEGARA MALAYSIA

IN HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

As administrative head of the Common User Scheme of Library Services, the National Library is responsible for recruitment, posting and placement, transfers, promotion, provides in-service training and upgrading professionalism of all librarians, assistant librarians and library assistants attached at the National Library as well as those working in the ministries and federal government libraries except those attached at the Parliament and the Ministry of Education. The Malaysian government has just introduced the Sistem Saran Baru (SSB) which regroup the post of librarians and assistant librarians into a new scheme. The scheme of library personnel falls under the category of Grade S1, S2, S3 for librarians, Grade S4, S5 for assistant librarians and S6 and S7 for library assistants. Within the scheme itself there are elements of training and in-service training requirements for upgrading skills of library professional as well as for promotion.

The entry professional qualification for the librarian
posts (grade S3) is honours degree from any local universities or equivalent qualifications and post graduate diploma of librarianship or any equivalent qualifications. A newly recruited librarian will be under probation for 3 years and is required to sit for the induction course determined by the Head of the Services. In order to be promoted to grade S2 and S1, librarians should have been confirmed in the post, have performed excellent services and may be required to sit for special promotion examinations.

The qualification for assistant librarian (grade S5) includes candidates who have passed the Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan (Higher School Certificate) as well as those who have obtained Diploma of Library and Information Science from Institut Teknologi MARA or equivalent qualifications. In addition, those from the Library Assistant Services (grade S6 and S7) are also eligible to be considered by the appointing authority to be promoted to grade S5, if they have the prescribed qualifications or have passed a special examination set by the Head of Library Services, but subject to the availability of vacant posts.

Candidates with the prerequisite qualifications for entering into librarian post (grade S3) and assistant librarian post (grade S5) have been successfully provided by the School of Library and Information Science, Institut Teknologi MARA. There are a number of librarians and assistant librarians who have successfully completed the 3 years course and joined Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia and the libraries under the Common User Scheme of Library Services. In fact, they form the strength for the development of Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia for the last 20 years. Besides taking fresh school leavers, the School should open more doors for candidates among library assistants who have accumulated a number of years of experience working in the library services and have passed the examination set by Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia and have shown potential to be a professional. They should be allowed to be exempted from taking some basic courses and concentrate on specialised courses, however, with equivalent credit hours required to obtain the Diploma of Library and Information Science.

In terms of in-service training for the newly recruited librarians and assistant librarians, Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia through its Training Division, is responsible to conduct the induction course required in the scheme of services. Some of the training programmes are:

(a) The induction course is organized in collaboration with INTAN and Ministry of Education. The course content includes Malaysian history, government machineries and its structure, government policies and procedures, Malaysian education system, productivity, leadership, etc.

(b) In order to familiarize the newly recruited staff with the working environment of Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, its functions and services, orientation programme is held. The programme includes talks on the organisation of Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, its roles at national and international level, understanding the library acts such as the National Library Act, 1972, the National Library (Amendment) Act, 1987, the Deposit of Library Material Act, 1986 which have some implication to the national information system, and future development of Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia. They will be placed in different divisions of Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia as well as other special libraries within the Common User Scheme.

(c) In-service training are held at regular intervals to upgrade the knowledge and skills of all levels of library staff. These training programmes are organized with the collaboration of various government agencies as well as private sectors. Areas of concerns are on strategic management, information technologies, financial management, communication skills, customer services and other areas of specialization. Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia will be setting up a Computer laboratory and Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) Centre in the new building. These facilities will be opened for training of staff and users of Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia as well as other agencies that require such training facilities. Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia also takes advantage of any foreign experts, who are on attachment or on special mission in Malaysia, and are willing to conduct workshops related to their subject expertise.

(d) Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia also collaborates with foreign organisations such as British Council, Unesco, IDRC etc. to obtain expertise on specialized areas not available in the country and to conduct seminars and workshops on specialized information services and these seminars and workshop are open to all librarians and information personnel in the country.

(e) Staff are also sent for short courses either locally or abroad to gain experience and exposure in various specialised areas. Librarians who have shown potential and interest in pursuing further studies are encouraged to join masters and doctorate programmes. A special “Search Committee” on training is now being
formed to determine the short term and long term manpower requirement especially in term of training needs for librarians and assistant librarians under the Common User Scheme of Library Services.

(f) Job rotation and transfer are introduced regularly, though often being criticised, but meant with good intention to develop future leaders of Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia so as to gain experiences in various services of Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia and the national library information system. Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia is planning towards developing core personnel and to expose all level of staff to various library services so that they will be in a better position to be “all-rounder” managers.

(g) Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia is now developing expertise among professional staff in various discipline of information management such as management of manuscript, conservation and reprography, information technology and networking, printing and publication, counselling, human resources management, etc. Staff who are interested to pursue further studies are encouraged to specialize in either of these courses.

(h) All policies formulated by Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia such as the Training Policy, Policy on Computerization, the Policy on Conservation as well as the Manuscript Policy have placed importance in human resources development. With the government emphasis on having a flat organizational structure as well as having a more distributed management system, developing core of expertise in different areas of management is pertinent.

(i) Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia is also developing a Training Information System which will gather data on staff training, expertise, interest, etc. so that they will be able to participate in various professional projects more effectively either at national or international level. This system may be extended to include data on librarians and other information professional from different libraries in the country.

(j) In addition to the above training programmes, Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia also incorporates training at international level under the Malaysian Government Technical Cooperation Programme. Such programme includes one month course at Library Assistants level and one month library attachment programme for professional librarians. The success of the programmes lies in the cooperation of librarians from various agencies who provides attachment facilities at their libraries for the foreign participants especially from the third world countries to gain an insight practical working experiences in major libraries in Malaysia.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Some of the recommendation for institutions that provide education and training of librarians and information personnel, include:

(a) The ability to response promptly and effectively to changing economic development of the nation as well as global economic pattern. For a training institution to be effective, there is a need of feedback mechanism which acts as a means of forecasting market demand for future librarians and information personnel. Regular market surveys on library and information personnel market should be undertaken.

(b) Strengthening the linkages among training institutions for library and information science with public and private sectors in term of providing regular seminar, workshop and practical training for librarians and information personnel especially in an area of information technologies, strategic management, marketing information services and industrial visits.

(c) Educational training institutions on library and information science should conduct regular weekend training, seminars and workshop for working librarians to participate in the programme in order to update their knowledge and skills in the latest information management system as well as to cater for other professions who are interested in the area of information management and information system.

(d) Schools of library information science should open more doors for those working librarians and information personnel who have long years of experiences but require the necessary qualifications to be specialised in different subject area related to information management.

(e) There should be a Permanent Advisory Committee for library and information science schools and training institutions.
CONCLUSION

The last decades of the nineties will be a challenging decade for human resources development. This is because the economic transformation towards greater industrialization depends not only on capital resources and technological development but also on the quality of available human resources. The Malaysian government has emphasized that it is important for our Malaysian workforce to be diligent, dedicated, creative, highly discipline, quality conscious and adaptable to the changing environment. To be recognized as an information personnel in this changing pattern, the profile of librarians and information personnel should have the following criteria: scholarly, information organizer/analyst, strategist, professionalism, communicator customers-driven, technology literate, research oriented, innovative and adaptive, integrity with vision. The task of creating and nurturing such manpower will rest on a pragmatic education and training delivery system that is sensitive to future changes and the needs of the market. Training and educational institutions for librarians and information personnel should be sensitive towards these changing environment pattern and needs. Once librarians and information personnel enter into any libraries or information services related organization, it is the responsibility of its parent organization as employer, to train, expose, mould them to be our future leaders as information managers and their services are recognized by all professions.

(f) Encourage more librarians and information personnel to pursue continuing education by attending courses on other subject disciplines organised by different institutions and associations so that they will be kept up to date with the latest information on the related subject areas. Therefore, they will be more confident to act as “team players” with researchers from different disciplines.

(g) Educational institutions for library and information science should have “sandwich” courses i.e., courses which incorporate practical training, industrial attachments/seminars and workshop between sessions of academic besides theoretical training. Courses on library and management should include components on strategic management of change, information technologies, marketing information product and services, customer services and total quality management.

(h) There should be a “Registration center” whereby all newly qualified librarians and information personnel can register. This registration data will be used as monitoring devices for marketing needs.

(i) Provide wider dissemination of information on the roles of librarian and information personnel to potential employers, school leavers and other professions.

(j) A wider mass-media coverage of existing training facilities and courses should be circulated and given to other professional bodies so that they will be able to know the course contents on information management.

(k) Developing a coordinating mechanism for R&D activities among institutions and schools of library and information science to allow the sharing of expertise and information on the result of R&D and to avoid duplication of R&D activities.
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