

MANPOWER NEEDS AND DEVELOPMENT

By

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The need for manpower planning and problems involved are discussed. The paper also deals with the importance of formal and continuing education and training for librarians and other supporting staff.

Manpower planning presents a problem at national and international levels. Most developing nations attempt to increase the supply of trained manpower without reference to the demand for it. This tendency is however, not restricted to the developing nations alone. In 1972 there was a surplus of professionally qualified librarians in the U.S. and there was an outcry from those who could not readily find employment at the annual conference of the American Library Association that year.

Similarly, in the U.K. the advent of the Library Schools and the transition from part-time to full-time education produced a small surplus of professionals and the "Library Association Record was inundated with letters of complaint from young and newly qualified professionals who found that they were not able to obtain recruitment exactly when and where they wanted".¹

Manpower planning is a comparatively new phenomenon brought about by the interest in management skills especially after World War II. It is therefore only recently that most countries have established national manpower policies, based on statistical data. It is never an easy task. In developing countries the situation is further aggravated by the lack of the necessary data. Nevertheless, forward planning is absolutely necessary in any country if wastage of skilled manpower is to be reduced to the minimum. It is necessary to establish clearly the economic, cultural and educational benefits of well-developed library services so that staff development may be given its due place in overall national development plans.

In June, 1981, the Council of the British Library Association set up a joint working party on manpower forecasting to consider the qualitative and quantitative aspects of

manpower forecasting. This working party was under the chairmanship of Philip E. Gill.

The Futures Working Party (as it became known) presented its final report to the Council on 31st October, 1985.

Paragraph 22, **Manpower Requirements** has this to say:

"In considering the scope and future manpower requirements of the Library and information community, in accordance with our terms of reference, we wish to reiterate the Association's evidence to the Transbinary Study Group on Librarianship and Information Studies.

Our view is, that precise manpower forecasting is extremely difficult in our field for a variety of reasons including:

- (a) public sector provision of Library and information services is heavily dependent on government policies and perceptions about "public spending".
- (b) traditional private sector provision is highly sensitive to the prevailing financial climate and . . . libraries and information units are, (like research departments) often among the first to be axed in unfavourable economic circumstances . . .
- (c) It is difficult quickly and

accurately to 'fine tune' numbers of students to actual or perceived requirements.²

At the UNESCO intergovernmental conference on Libraries, archives and documentation centres infrastructures, held in Paris in September 1974, it was agreed that "comprehensive surveys should be undertaken of existing national manpower resources as a basis for the planning of manpower provision, and the forecasting of future needs for N.A.T.I.S."

The report on planning manpower requirements, for documentation Library and archives services, presented at the conference emphasized that:

"Manpower planning and evaluation depends on so many factors; Economic changes and governments own priorities and plans. Developing countries in particular have to plan professional manpower within the general framework of government priorities and other financial constraints".³

In March, 1972, the Department of Education and Science, in collaboration with the Scottish Education Department, the Northern Ireland Ministry of Education and the Welsh Education Office carried out a census of the numbers of staff employed on Library and Information work in the United Kingdom. Prior to the census, there was no set of returns which attempted to

cover the staffing of all types of library and information services on a very comprehensive and comparable basis. This information was therefore collected as a basis for the future planning of manpower needs of library and Information services of all types in the United Kingdom as a whole.

The census was designed to cover staff in all known libraries and information Departments in the United Kingdom, except that school libraries not staffed by public library authorities were excluded due to problems of definition and coverage. The census questionnaire asked for numbers of staff as at 31st March, 1972 categorized by type, age, sex and whether full time or part-time. The number of vacancies for trained librarians and Information Scientist was also requested.⁴

In 1983, "Library resources: A study of supply and demand" was jointly funded and co-ordinated by two components of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education, the National Centre for Education Statistics and the Office of Libraries and Learning Technologies. This study reflects the results of investigations into the magnitude of change in the employment of Librarians projected to 1990.

The projections provided by the study serve as sources of input

into decision-making processes for government policies and programmes in education for librarians, library services and library research. They also serve as an information device for librarians, library educators, library employers and potential labour market entrants, especially in terms of providing an early warning system for library labour market imbalances to reduce supply/demand adjustments problems. The study also provides valuable information for professional development. It indicates that there will be a need for continuing education experiences both at the entry level, as well as the advanced level.⁵

The first list of qualified librarians and archivists in Ghana as at August, 1963 was published in the maiden issue of the *Ghana Library Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1963. There were 42 qualified Librarians, nine of whom were expatriates, eleven fellows of the British Library Association, seven graduates and a lone Archivist.

Professor John Harris also made a forecast which he termed "Librarians for Ghana". This was presented at the Conference held in the U.S.T. in Kumasi, in 1969, and published as an occasional paper by the department of Library Studies.

An estimate of staff vacancies among a selected number of libraries compiled by S. I. A. Kotei from data received from the Libraries

over a period of five years, 1968-1972 produced interesting results. All the Libraries reported "that the present economic situation of the country made any accurate estimates of staff recruitment a rather fortuitous exercise". Consequently the figures received were either optimistic, or conservative depending on each library's circumstances and its prospects for expansion.⁶ Professor H a v a r d-Williams also made recommendations on manpower planning and curriculum development. His recommendations on manpower were as follows:

"(a) He saw the need to produce 330 librarians at the professional level, 77 archivists, 800 certificated library assistants and 330 certificated archival assistants over the next ten years.

(b) That the Department of Library and Archival Studies should in co-operation with the professional association monitor the manpower situation and encourage the appropriate body to investigate the current level of salaries for librarians, information officers and archivists and make recommendations. On manpower planning, he noted that "There appears to be no reliable national surveys of manpower needs and indeed

it was difficult to make manpower predictions in the present period of economic uncertainty."⁷

The nominal roll compiled by the Ghana Library Association in 1986, identified 89 professionals, 38 diplomates and 56 certificate holders. Of the 89 professionals 58 are graduates and there are 3 expatriates, so in 23 years the number of professionals at post has doubled. What is more interesting is the fact that from a mere 8 graduates in 1963, there are now 58. All things considered, this increase has been remarkable and the indications are that the trend will continue in the years ahead.

All the forecasts made so far have not been accurate. Several reasons account for this state of affairs. These are mainly due to the general global economic imbalance and lack of development in the country generally. A few examples would suffice.

The Balme Library should have moved into magnificent new buildings at least two years ago. In fact, it is on record that a former Librarian of the Balme Library was attracted all the way from Lesotho to Ghana because of this new building.

Likewise, the Cape Coast University Library should have moved into its permanent new buildings by now. Here, however, a start

seems to have been made but progress has been painfully slow.

The new building to house the Central Reference and Research Library of the C.S.I.R. was started in real earnest, but the project has come to a stand-still. The same situation applies to the extensions to the Library of the University of Science and Technology, in Kumasi.

The Ghana Library Board embarked on a rather ambitious programme to house all its regional libraries in suitable buildings. All administrative districts in the country were to have purposefully built district libraries to be manned by professionals. At the time, 65 such districts were identified. A Staff Development Programme was also started. If all these plans had come to fruition, more staff would have been needed at both the professional and sub-professional levels.

Most special libraries in this country have been content with only one professional staff. Could they do with more? The possible exception is the Ghana Export Promotion Council which has maintained two professionals for a considerable length of time.

Then, there are organizations which do not either have a library or a Librarian. Such organizations as the Institute of Professional Studies, the Agricultural Development Bank, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Bank for Housing and

Construction and the Regional Maritime Academy among others. Recent advertisements for Librarians from organizations like the Ministry of Fuel and Power, the Attorney-General's Department, the Ghana Water and Sewerage Corporation, the Ghana Institute of Chartered Accountants and the Cultural Centre of the Embassy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic have been very encouraging indeed.

Other institutions either without a library or librarians are the Polytechnics of Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi and colleges of further education, like the Technical Teachers' College at Kumasi and the School of Ghana Languages at Ajumako.

The focus of interest for the planner of national manpower needs will naturally be the national policies in the field of libraries where these exist. The establishment of valid planning objectives depend upon the accuracy of the diagnosis of the existing situation. The accuracy of the existing situation depends upon: availability, accuracy, reliability and relevance of the data on the existing situation and also upon systematic and effective methods of data collection and analysis.

Mr. E. Max Broome, then library advisor, Department of Education and science in his article "Library manpower planning" stated that

“the main purpose or advantage of manpower planning is to enable an enterprise to discover at an early age, the critical points in the labour force where shortages are most likely to develop or where there is inefficient use of labour. It is sometimes argued that because forecasts are apt to be unreliable there is little virtue in spending valuable executive time in preparing them . . .”

Manpower planning is, however, an invaluable management tool in controlling labour costs and vital to the future efficiency of any service. Brome advanced five specific reasons for attaching importance to manpower planning and forecasting:

1. The determination of recruitment levels
2. The determination of optimum levels
3. The provision of a basis for management development programmes
4. The costing of the labour element in new projects
5. The planning of future organizational structures

Manpower forecasting is necessary to training and retraining programmes. These would help in improving the library service structures.

Forecasting may be for a short term, that is, up to two years, me-

dium, that is, up to five years or long term, that is ten years. In every system of manpower forecasting, due cognisance should be taken of wastage. These may be natural wastage, that is loss of staff due to illness or disability, retirement and passing away. Normally, retirement can be predicted by age, but it will be extremely difficult to predict the others. It will also be difficult to predict voluntary retirement.

Voluntary wastage and mobility depend on such factors as staff morale, job satisfaction, general working conditions and job opportunities at home and overseas. It is normal for staff to move from job to job making sure that they always land on a better one.

It will be necessary to keep accurate personal records which would include such particulars as age, date of employment, sex, date of resignation or departure.

There is also the problem of re-entrants. These include staff who leave the service of an organization after a number of years and later re-enter.

Although some clues may be obtained from the experience of other countries, there is no way to determine accurately the numbers and qualifications of people required for our own local development. First hand knowledge about the existing manpower supply is not available. Nor can demand be esti-

mated accurately. A survey of employers' forecasts has not worked in the immediate past.

Staff Development

The Working Party on Post-qualification training set up by the Library Association of Great Britain in 1974 identified the advantages to be gained by both prospective employees and employers from a scheme of staff development as follows:

4. To keep staff up to date in their knowledge of developments
5. To prepare staff for promotions
6. To re-train for new specialities.

Employee

1. To widen experience and practical knowledge in the practice of Librarianship in general and the practices of the particular organization he serves
2. To promote job satisfaction
3. To ensure an opportunity of keeping informed of new developments
4. To prepare for promotion
5. To provide opportunities for being informed about a different field of work for those wishing to change to another speciality.

Employer

1. To provide a sense of commitment to the aims of the organization
2. To promote the performance of the staff in their work
3. To produce a consciousness of the wider implication or development possibilities of a post.

This development would include attendances at conferences and seminars both at home and overseas, induction or orientation courses, staff meetings, in-service training courses and workshops. In effect, this really involves training and re-training on a continuing basis.

Staff training is distinguished from mere induction because training seeks to impart skills. Training, like communication to which it is closely linked is a continuous process. The general aim of any training will be to create conditions in which people are able to learn most effectively and apply their learning in library service. Its contents and methods will vary according to the type, size and purpose of the library, type of staff involved, e.g. senior, juniors or non-professional.

Formal courses at the professional and sub-professional level are offered at the Department of Library and Archival Studies.

The post-graduate diploma in Library Studies offers the basic professional qualification needed for professional careers in all types of libraries—academic, special, public

and schools and colleges, with strong emphasis on West African Libraries and specifically, Ghana.

The M.Phil in Library Studies provides mid-career educational opportunities and prepares professional librarians to become library administrators, and to conduct research in library studies, especially in formulating, demonstrating, and assessing new methods for library services in Africa.

The diploma and the certificate in librarianship prepare library assistants to support professional librarians in various library operations, to perform technical tasks without direct supervision and to supervise the execution of various mechanical and clerical operations.

Library authorities are known to have given their staff study leave with or without pay to acquire additional qualifications. This also enables them to conduct research for the purposes of writing books or contributing to the professional press.

Staff are also encouraged to participate in conference activities. On the national level, staff are known to be very keen on attending conferences. During the early days of the West African Library Association, staff were keen on travelling all the way to Lagos, or Ibadan to attend conferences. Organizations were paying all or part of the fees to enable their staff to attend these

conferences, but in recent years the reimbursement of costs incurred by staff members attending conferences has become more difficult than before.

The recent Congress on Library Education and the Seminar on the A.A.C.R. II organized by the Ghana Library Association in December 1983 and 1984 are also examples of staff development.

On the international scene staff have attended conferences of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (I.F.L.A.) and UNESCO and the now famous International Graduate Summer School at Aberystwyth. These have been made possible through the generosity of such funding agencies as UNESCO and the British Council. Staff in the Universities have also been attending the Standing Conferences of the African University Libraries, particularly the West African Division.

The British Government has and continues to sponsor staff of various Libraries for Masters degree programmes in the United Kingdom. The United States Information Services (U.S.I.S.) has also provided training and travel fellowships for a number of Librarians for education and practical experience in the United States.

Staff development through short courses and workshops rather than overcrowded or prolonged library

education can equip practising librarians with the special knowledge they need to know about current developments in the field of librarianship and Information Science.

Personnel development which is used synonymously with staff development is fully possible only in an environment which not only permits, but actively encourages individuals to develop their potentials.

Definitions overlap in this field. As a result there is a lack of clear distinction, between continuing education, personnel or (staff) development and training. The Guidelines sub-Committee of the Staff Development Committee, Personnel Administration Section, Library Administration Division of the American Library Association has this to say "In these guidelines, continuing education is conceived as being a life-long process through which individuals maintain themselves as competent people and grow to meet the challenges of change. Staff or personnel development more narrowly restricts those competences to being job-related yet broadly defines that term beyond only knowledge and skills to include attitudes and behaviour which thus involve the total person as a worker and a member of a library organization. Training is viewed here as a means of person-

nel development, referring more directly to methodology . . ."⁹

It is important to consider the quality of the staff who should be induced to enter and remain in the service of an organization. Inducements can be categorized as salary, status and image of the profession. An unsatisfactory state of affairs in any of these areas leads to a high turnover of new entrants and discontent among those who remain.

Conclusion

It is vital to try and anticipate our manpower needs. It is important to ascertain the likely demand for different categories of staff, during the next decade. There are signs that, there will be a need for significant numbers of well-trained graduate librarians together with a continuing flow of supporting staff. Information Officers with a scientific or technical background will also be needed. Economic changes are likely to throw any detailed calculations out of gear. Predictions so far made have been prone to error. But a bold attempt must be made.

Continuing education for Librarians and other supporting staff is important. The Association can and should provide a common platform for the exchange of experience and ideas.

The Association should keep track of all professional librarians and their supporting staff in the country. A beginning has no doubt been made and our congratulations are due to the present Council. A nominal roll could be issued yearly or as often as the need arises. There is need for regular information on library manpower resources. This information will be useful in forecasting the quantity and quality of staff needed over a given period of time. The Association has an education committee. It will be part of the duty of this Committee to make constant surveys of manpower resources in all types of Libraries. This could be done in collaboration with the Department of Library Studies.

Indeed the Ghana Library Association and the Department of Library and Archival Studies should monitor the output of the Department of Library and Archival Studies and the employment opportunities of its students.

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