Transformational Professional Development: The Case of the Pedagogical Skills Course in Academic Libraries in Uganda

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Outline

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Librarians’ Professional Development
Introduction

- Libraries are expected to impact their communities-meeting their needs/solving problems
- How do we libraries impact their communities?
  - Providing quality library services (Innovate, Reinvent & Renvate)
Introduction...

What needs to be done for librarians to transform library services?

- Need to be empowered with knowledge, skills, right attitudes, values & beliefs
- Need continuing professional development (CPD)
- Not just any CPD, but transformative CPD
Transformative Learning (TL)

- Transformative learning refers to those learning experiences that cause a shift in an individual’s perspective/frame of reference, consciously making and implementing plans to change practice.

- TL offers another perspective on adult learning.
  - Adults are capable of seeing distortions in their beliefs, feelings & attitudes.
  - Challenge/Question long-held beliefs.
  - Cause a shift in perspectives.
Context of the Study

- The PedSkills course was part of the wider INASP professional development activities with national consortia (https://www.inasp.info/publications/inasps-face-face-training-evolution).

- The course was implemented in six countries (Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Malawi & Zambia)
The Pedagogical Skills Course- Case study

The explicit goal of the course was to equip participants with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to deliver learner-centred training.

Specifically, the course proposed to transform participants into self-reflective educators who would serve as change agents at their respective institutions.
Objectives of the Course

To increase the participants:

- Ability to make training learner-centred and engaging;
- Confidence in delivering training;
- Knowledge of pedagogical theory;
- Ability (and motivation) to plan training;
- Strategies for dealing with participant behaviour.
PedSkills-Course content

- Needs Assessment, Importance of M&E
- Learning theories
- Learning Styles
- Lesson Planning
- Reflective practice
- Managing participant behaviour
- Learner-centred approach
Course Format

- Mini PPT presentations
- Small & large group discussions,
- Reflective Journal writing,
- Individual presentations,
- Role-play
- Experiential activities
- Follow-up activities
Purpose of the Study

- To inform our understanding of librarians' experiences of learning pedagogical skills.
Research questions

- How do participants describe their learning experiences?
- What do the participants recognise as promoting these experiences?
- What are the themes of this transformational learning? and
- How might these learning experiences be characterised within the transformational learning framework
Literature Review

- Increased librarians’ involvement in teaching (Musoke, 2010; Namuleme-Kalemeera, 2015)
- Lack of pedagogical knowledge and skills (Bell & Shank, 2004; Julien & Peacock, 2011).
- Such competencies can be gained through CPD (Walter, 2006)
- Professional development activities for librarians are irregular & inadequate (Lutaaya & Hoskins, 2015).
- Methods and best practices of implementing professional development are less well-defined in LIS literature (Attebury, 2015).
- Research is needed to provide evidence of what librarians consider meaningful/transformative CPD.
Theoretical Framework

- Adult learning theory and principles provide a framework for examining and understanding the adult learning experiences of librarians while learning pedagogical skills, and recommend meaningful, and andragogically sound guidelines for such experiences.

- Based on the idea that learning is the “process of making a new or revised interpretation of meaning of an experience” (Mezirow, 1990).
Transformational Learning Theory

- Disorienting Dilemma
- Self-Critical Assessment
- Discourse

- Exploration of new ideas & relationships
- Planning a course of action
- Taking action
What transforms Learners?

- Discussions & Interaction
- Knowledge claims are questioned & defended
- Cognitively challenging
- Meaningful Contexts
- Socially satisfying
- Emotionally engaging
- Personally relevant
- Deeper understanding
- Experience
Methods

- Qualitative, case study approach
- Individual semi-structured Interviews.
- Interviews (30-40 minutes)- audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.
- Thematic analysis
Participant Demographics

- Total of 10 participants
- The sample was predominantly female (6/10; 60%).
- Level of education: All 10 participants had Masters, 2 currently pursuing PhD
- Working experience (More than 7yrs)
Findings
Captivating quote:

Before the training, I had a mindset that, it was the job of the teacher to facilitate the entire learning process by standing in front of the class and giving the notes. It had never occurred to me that I needed to change my training approach. However, during the workshop I was introduced to the learner-centred approach. I then realised the problems inherent with my thinking and practice.
Perspective transformation

- The predominant theme of perspective transformation was empowerment. Participants gained confidence in teaching.
- Participants emphasised the positive impact of the course on their pedagogical attitudes, capabilities and practices.

- The learner-centred approach inspired changes in teaching.
  - Before I attended the pedagogical skills course, I would not think about different ways I could facilitate library instruction sessions. Now days, I think more about the library users’ needs. I think about different methodologies...I want my learners to have the skills to do things on their own.
Change in practice

“I emphasis more practical work for students”

“I engage my students in active learning...pause...frequently. These activities lead to good results because students share their knowledge and experiences with peers”.

“Before attending the course, I would not think about different ways of teaching...now I think about the methodologies of how to deliver my lessons in advance
Conclusion

- This study provides evidence of the successful implementation of a model for the professional development of librarians.

- Professional development programmes that incorporate hands-on exercises, substantial content, collaborative inquiry, peer-to-peer dialogue, and reflective practice can facilitate transformational learning experiences.

- Findings show that prior to participation in the course, majority of the participants had limited understanding of how learning takes place. Similar to international concerns (Bell & Shank, 2004; Walter, 2006; Julien & Peacock, 2011).
Implication for Practice

- Exploring the learning experiences of librarians from the perspective of adult learning generates implications for theory and practice.

- The findings of this study indicate that professional development can be transformative for librarians if certain elements of course design are in place (learner-centred, sustained interaction, and opportunities for self-reflection).

- Features of high-quality professional development activities could be used as a framework when planning future CPD activities.
References


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