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The Role of the Iranian Library and Information Science Association in the Informal Education of Librarians

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Introduction

Social participation and membership in nongovernmental organizations are important factors in creating civil and democratic societies. Participation is not a new concept but participation and cooperation are increasingly important. The capacity for cooperation has increased with changes in technology, and the issues we face are too complicated to be solved by a limited number of people (Saeedi, 2004) Professional associations are one manifestation of participation. They are social organizations established to satisfy the needs of people with the same aims and interests. Professional associations have a crucial role in the growth and development of a profession its promotion. Recognizing the capacities of professional associations, we can promote the participation culture and satisfy the needs of a group of people (Sohanian Haghghi, 2006)

Library associations have been formed with purposes such as education, human resource training, publication, research, and communication with other organizations and institutions. These activities can help members know more about their profession and work more efficiently (Taghizadeh, 1994)

Statement of the Problem

Scholarly and professional associations have a basic role in producing knowledge and increasing scientific development. In the 18th century many journals were published by associations, as they are today. These associations were created when experts understood the importance of improving specialist knowledge and sharing ideas (Arasteh, 2007) Library and information specialists have also established associations to exchange their views and ideas in forms such as education, seminars and workshops, research projects, publishing books and professional journals. (Ghani, 2007)

Library associations help their members put their knowledge into practice. In an information society, this can affect decisions made in industry and government.

Library associations have a role in library education, in the planning and evaluation of library courses and continuing education (Taghizadeh, 1994)

One of the basic and most important purposes of scholarly and professional associations specialized professional training. This process is done outside of formal academic education. It is presented in forms such as workshops and seminars. Sometimes this education is presented indirectly and outside of any formal setting.

The Iranian Library and Information Science Association and its provincial branches are active in this field and present useful specialized information to members. There is a need to evaluate this educational function from the viewpoint of the members, to clarify strong and weak points. In this article, informal educational activities of the association and one of its oldest branches (Khorasan branch) are discussed and evaluated.

Significance of the Study

This research evaluates the educational function of the association in the recent years and describes its activities among librarians in Iran, and encourages librarians to cooperate with the association to further its educational goals.

Research Questions

1. How successful has the association been in executing informal educational plans?
2. Is there a significant difference between members of the Iranian Library and Information Science Association's opinion and members of the Library and Information Science Association, Khorasan Branch's opinion in evaluation of the informal educational plans?
3. Is there a significant difference between the association member's opinion (permanent, dependent, and student) in evaluation of the informal educational plans?
4. Is there a meaningful relationship between the level of education of the association members and their opinion about the evaluation of informal educational plans?
5. Is there a meaningful relationship between the years of membership and the members' opinion about the evaluation of informal educational plans?

Review of Related Literature

Some research has been done to evaluate members' opinions about activities of associations. The Canadian Library Association conducted a poll among its members with the purpose of determining the level of member satisfaction with association activities, determining the most important issues in the profession, the role of each member, and the work priorities of the association, The results found partial satisfaction and determined that informal education and the development of professional knowledge were important activities (Canadian Library Association 2000)

Aslan (1995) examined Turkish Library Association member opinions and expectations about the association's activities. A questionnaire asked questions about the most important functions of the association, the level of satisfaction, priorities, different ways funding options, suggestions for improvement, etc.

Muswazi (1998) reports on research done in Swaziland, which examined advertising, education, legislation, research, and publication done by the library association. The data consisted of association

documents and interviews with association members and indicated the need for a strategic plan, improvements in communication, and increase in membership fees (Muswazi, 1998)

Mohseni (2004) and Amir Sheibani (1995) look at the cooperation of members in association activities. Sohanian Haghighi (2006) examines the role and function of Iranian Library and Information Science Association, examining four factors: identity, integration, inner acceptance, and legitimacy or outside acceptance. His research shows the association to be successful in these areas.

Pakdaman, et al., (2008) explore medical librarians' opinions toward the Iranian Medical Library and Information Science Association, showing reasons that some librarians are not members, and the function of the association in its different committees.

History of the Iranian Library and Information Science Association

The association was established in 1961. There were 21 members, and the association lasted for a year and a half. In, 1965 a group of Iranian librarians tried to establish the association for the second time with the cooperation of two American librarians who were teaching at Tehran University. The association activities lasted until the revolution, and during this period was a successful forum and meeting place for librarians and a place for the education for librarianship in Iran, through holding courses and preparing educational materials. Hayati (2003) explains part of these activities. In 1979, a new constitution was prepared by the association. This period lasted for two years, and in 1979, the association was dissolved along with all other institutions. In 1998, a group of librarians came together to re-form the association, and after working for two years, the association was certified by the Ministry of Science. The first meeting was held in 2000 (Niknam, 2001). Along with the main branch in Tehran, other branches began to form in provinces such as Khorasan, Isfahan, Khoozestan, Fars, Ghom, and Lorestan. The association has conducted workshops and annual and monthly seminars in its new period of activities after the revolution. In the appendix of the article is the list of workshops and seminars held by the Iranian Library and Information Science Association and its oldest branch, Khorasan branch.

Methodology

Data was gathered using a survey, with a questionnaire designed by the researchers. The population is all members of the Iranian Library and Information Science Association (resident in Tehran and Khorasan) in 2008. Statistical information was gathered from the data base of the association. The sample size is determined through “estimating the sample size with regard to partial error of the estimation” method. The next step was selecting the samples from the members of the association based on their place of residence (Tehran-Khorasan) using the random-categorized method. If Y_n is taken for the average of the sample and Y_N for the sampling population (statistical universe), then the ratio of $(Y_n - Y_N)/Y_N$ will be the partial error.

The sample size is calculated using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{(ZS)^2}{rY_n} \left[1 + \frac{1}{N(ZS)^2} \right]$$

in which S and N are the parameters of standard deviation and sampling population (Amidi, 2000).

Table 1. Determining the sample size based on the place of residence of the members

Sample size	Population size	membership
135	851	Members resident in Tehran
40	248	Members resident in Khorasan
175	1099	total

The questionnaire was examined by some experts and library and information science faculty to ensure validity. Its reliability was examined using Kronbach a coefficient. Using a primary sample of 20, the Kronbach a coefficient test was calculated. The co-efficient was .7 and higher, affirming the reliability of the questionnaire. Data were analyzed using Excel and SPSS, using analytical and descriptive statistical approaches. A Likert scale was used in the questionnaire and results were encoded on a scale of five values. Values less than 2/5 were determined to be the weak functions of the association, values between 2/5 and 3/5 were average, and 3/5-5 good.

Findings

Members' opinions were evaluated and questions are examined below:

1. How successful has the association been in executing informal educational plans?

Twenty-three factors were defined:

1. Increasing specialized information
2. Increasing knowledge and improvement of job skills
3. Preparing for new specialized information and methods
4. Continuing professional occupation
5. Positive effect on job evaluation
6. Applicability to field of specialty
7. Efficiency of workshop teachers
8. Practical experience of workshop teachers
9. Workshop teachers with high level of education.
10. Suitable methods for presenting materials.
11. Suitable training devices
12. Experienced planning committee
13. Planning committee's successful fulfillment of tasks.
14. Sufficiency of seminars in Tehran

15. Insufficient training programs in other provinces
16. Suitable place to hold training
17. Appropriate times for annual seminars
18. Appropriate times for monthly seminars
19. Appropriate times for workshops
20. Adequate time for programs
21. Appropriate material covered
22. Good attendance at programs
23. Satisfaction with quality and approach of programs

Table 2. Frequency, Mean, and Standard Deviation of the Scores after Evaluating Association's Informal Training Program

Question number	Totally for		for		neutral		against		Totally against		No answer		mean	SD
	percent	freq	percent	freq	percent	freq	percent	freq	percent	freq	percent	freq		
1	44	1/25	107	1/61	16	1/9	6	4/3	0	0	2	1/1	09/4	52/.
2	27	4/15	91	5/52	42	24	8	6/4	0	0	7	4	81/3	58/.
3	27	4/15	95	3/54	39	3/22	8	6/4	1	6/.	5	9/2	81/3	59/.
4	28	16	79	1/45	55	4/31	6	4/3	0	0	7	4	76/3	59/.
5	14	8	69	4/39	63	36	17	7/9	3	7/1	9	1/5	44/3	06/.
6	32	3/18	86	1/49	48	4/27	3	7/1	1	6/.	5	9/2	85/3	05/.
7	57	6/32	99	6/56	15	6/8	2	1/1	0	0	2	1/1	21/4	04/.
8	46	3/26	97	4/55	20	4/11	5	9/2	0	0	7	4	09/4	05/.
9	61	9/34	90	4/51	12	9/6	4	3/2	1	6/.	7	4	22/4	05/.
10	31	7/17	96	9/54	32	3/18	6	4/3	0	0	10	7/5	92/3	05/.
11	25	3/14	92	6/52	34	4/19	12	9/6	1	6/.	11	3/6	78/3	06/.
12	28	16	93	1/53	34	4/19	9	1/5	2	1/1	9	1/5	81/3	06/.
13	23	1/13	83	4/47	44	1/25	11	3/6	4	3/2	10	7/5	66/3	06/.
14	12	9/6	6	4/3	16	1/9	64	6/36	71	6/40	6	4/3	95/1	08/.
15	55	4/31	66	7/37	39	3/22	2	1/1	4	3/2	9	1/5	4	07/.
16	16	1/9	78	6/44	34	4/19	33	9/18	4	3/2	10	7/5	41/3	07/.
17	9	1/5	64	6/36	76	4/43	11	3/6	4	3/2	11	3/6	38/3	06/.
18	14	8	88	3/50	33	9/18	25	3/14	7	4	8	6/4	46/3	07/.
19	12	9/6	60	3/34	69	4/39	19	9/10	1	6/.	14	8	39/3	64/.
20	8	6/4	78	6/44	43	6/24	37	1/21	2	1/1	6	4/3	55/3	25/.
21	14	8	118	4/67	26	9/14	8	6/4	1	6/.	8	6/4	81/3	78/.
22	4	3/2	67	3/38	37	1/21	50	6/28	10	7/5	7	4	02/3	07/.
23	13	4/7	97	4/55	36	6/20	19	9/10	3	7/1	7	4	58/3	06/.
Total	600	9/14	1899	19/47	863	8/24	365	07/9	120	98/2	177	39/4	84	91/4

Question 9, regarding the educational level of teachers and lecturers, has the highest average (4/22) and it shows the acceptable function of the association in this issue. Question 14, about the quality

of programs in Tehran, has the lowest average (1/95) and shows the dissatisfaction with the centralized educational plans of the association in Tehran.

The general average (4/39) shows that the association is successful holding informal training programs for librarians.

2. Is there a significant difference between members of the Iranian Library and Information Science Association's opinion and members of the Library and Information Science Association, Khorasan Branch's opinion in evaluation of the informal educational plans?

Table 3. Mean of the Scores Based on Residence

Parameters: Type of membership	Mean
Tehran	26/84
Mashhad	18/83
Total	44/167

The average score of Tehran members (84/26) is higher than the values of those who reside in Khorasan (83/18). A T test was used to test the relationship between these scores.

Table 4. T Test Results

	t	df	Average Difference	p-value
High educational level of the seminar lecturers and workshop teachers	419/.	166	292/.	030/.
Adequacy of holding programs in Tehran	19/2	167	455/.	030/.

The T test shows that, using a confidence interval of 95 percent, except for two factors there is no significant difference between the opinions of Tehran librarians and Khorasani librarians. Librarians who reside Tehran believe that the lecturers in Tehran have a higher level of education than those in Khorasan have regarding their lecturers. In evaluating training held in Tehran, it can be concluded that non-Tehran librarians are not satisfied with the association's policies, and disagree with their colleagues in Tehran about this aspect of training.

3. Is there a significant difference between the association member's opinion (permanent, dependent, and student) in evaluation of the informal educational plans?

Table 5. The Mean of the Scores Based on the Type of Membership

Parameters: Type of membership	Mean
Permanent	17/81
Dependent	85/84
Student	52/82
Total	54/248

The total mean of the dependent members' scores (84/85) is higher than the other members. Permanent members have the lowest scores of total average. In order to answer the research question the F test or ANOVA was used.

Table 6. F Test results

		Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	mean of squares		P-value
Sufficiency of training programs in provinces	Between groups	034/6	2	017/3	704/3	027/0
	Within groups	184/100	162	815/.		
	total	348/106	164			
Appropriate times and dates	Between groups	164/6	2	082/3	861/4	009/0
	Within groups	184/100	158	634/.		
	total	348/106	160			
Good attendance at programs	Between groups	435/7	2	718/3	710/3	027/0
	Within groups	349/164	164	002/1		
	total	784/171	166			

At a confidence level of 95 percent or higher, there is no significant difference among categories of membership except in the three areas listed in the table above. In order to find in where the significant difference exists, the Tokay post test was used.

In the first factor, insufficient training programs in the provinces, there is a significant difference between permanent members and students, and the average level of the permanent member's value is higher. Regarding the second factor, appropriate times and dates for workshops, there is a significant difference between dependent members and students, and the average level of the values of the student members is higher. Regarding good attendance at programs, there is a significant difference between dependent and student members, and the values of dependent members is higher.

4. Is there a meaningful relationship between the level of education of the association members and their opinion about the evaluation of informal educational plans?

A Pearson test was used to find the relationship between these variables.

Table 7. Pearson correlation test

Relationship with job evaluation	Pearson Correlation	161/-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.038
	N	166
Appropriate times and dates	Pearson Correlation	156/.
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.044
	N	167

There is a meaningful link between two factors: positive effect in job evaluation and the appropriateness of dates and times for annual seminars with level of education. In the first case, there is a negative correlation, i.e., members with more education believe that the training programs of the association do not have much positive effect on their job evaluation. There is a positive correlation

between the date/time and education variables, i.e., members with more education believe that the days and dates of annual seminars are appropriate.

5. Is there a meaningful relationship between the years of membership and the members' opinion about the evaluation of informal educational plans?

Four levels have been defined for comparing years of association membership and use of its programs.:

1. One year of membership
2. Two-to-three years of membership
3. Four-to-six years of membership
4. More than six years of membership

A Pearson test was used to find the relationship between these variables.

Table 8. Pearson correlation test table

Relationship with years of membership	Pearson Correlation	210/.
	Sig. (2-tailed)	. 034
	N	102
Good attendance at programs	Pearson Correlation	322/.
	Sig. (2-tailed)	. 012
	N	60

The only meaningful relationship is between the relevance of seminar topics and good attendance with years of membership. In the first case, there is positive correlation. Those who have been members longer see more connection between the members' occupation and the programs' topics. There is also a positive correlation between good attendance and years of membership, with those who have been members longer believing that there is good attendance at these programs.

Conclusion

The Iranian Library and Information Science has substantial programs for librarian training and continuing education. The data presented in this article indicates that the association is mostly successful in fulfilling its educational goals. On the other hand, librarians who reside in the provinces see a difference between the programs offered to them and those available in the capital. Another interesting finding is that members with more education believe that the association training programs and the certificates offered have little effect on their job evaluation. The association must think about this issue and find suitable ways for its certificates to be considered valid by organizations and other institutions. Another issue is the participation of librarians and students in the association's educational programs. More research is needed to find ways to encourage participation.

Recommendations for improving the educational plans of the association.

- Change the structure of the education and seminar committees and select at least one member from provincial branches to make coordinated and inclusive decisions.
- Repeat successful workshops and seminars in provincial branches
- Use professional, well-known, and outstanding experts for training programs and seminars
- Encourage large libraries, universities, and related organizations to accredit the association's certificates

- Make some provision for active students attending these training programs and help them with selecting a position and continuing their education
- Hold constant and regular national annual seminars in cooperation with other valid organizations and institutes
- Select specialized, new, and challenging topics for the training programs and the monthly seminars

In the end we hope that the Iranian Library and Information Science Association, with the help of all Iranian librarians, will continue to improve and reach the level they deserve.

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