

Reshaping Librarianship as a Career through Professional Certification: An Indonesian Issue

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Abstract

Compared to other professionals, librarians in Indonesia are less recognized as belonging to a profession. Rather than information professionals, librarians in Indonesia are seen as technical, clerical, and administrative staff. This paper discusses the implementation of a professional certification program to build and strengthen librarianship as a professional career in Indonesia. A questionnaire survey was administered to 60 library stakeholders to determine their perceptions of professional library certification. The study finds that the certification strategically reshapes librarians' professionalism by assessing their competencies. Through accreditation, professional librarians' competencies are measured and accounted for by performing specific library tasks that will affect library services.

Introduction

Today, there is rapid change in human resource management. Competitiveness has increased in the workplace, and staff are challenged to distinguish themselves through competencies. Rather than hiring staff with high educational qualifications, industries seek people with the required competencies to do specific jobs or tasks. Professional staff with certified expertise are preferred for recruitment. Professional certification, therefore, becomes crucial and strategic in the business market to fill positions. Phillips stated that professional certification is part of the changing workplace that has become more competitive and professional.¹ Moreover, it was

¹ Phillips, "Professional Certification."

believed that certification offers additional value to individuals for their professional credibility and expertise.²

In libraries, the need for professional librarians has been demanded for better library service. The advancement of information technology and the proliferation of information have challenged librarians to develop their competencies continuously. According to Khan and Bhatti,³ librarians should have adequate knowledge of various information sources and their access. In addition, they are also required to follow the trends and developments in computer technology, media, and publishing.

However, libraries faced professional challenges to strengthen their roles in providing information services. The certification of professional librarians is a strategic program to enhance the quality of library services. This program will guarantee certified librarians can perform their responsibilities or jobs in library service provisions. The certification program, therefore, is crucial to strengthen careers as librarians as professionals in library and information services.

This paper aims to understand the perception of stakeholders on professional librarian certification and its importance in strengthening the professional career as a librarian, especially in Indonesia.

Literature Review

As stated by Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 24 of 2014, certification is the process or activity of granting certificates for a product, service, system, or people who have fulfilled specific criteria. Fulfilment is obtained through the assessment carried out by an independent body based on the standard. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO 9001: 2008 or ISO 14001: 2004) stated that certification refers to the issuing of written assurance (the certificate) by an independent external body that it has audited a management system and verified that it conforms to the requirements specified in the standard.”⁴ (ITCC International, 2023).

According to these definitions, certification is not only limited to products or goods but also to services, systems, and people. The assessment of people is carried out to ensure that

² Adane, Chekole, and Gedamu, “Cultural Heritage Digitization”; Aguinis and Lengnick-Hall, “Assessing the Value of Human Resource Certification”; Phillips, *PMP*.

³ Khan and Bhatti, “A Review of Problems and Challenges.”

⁴ “ITCC International - ISO Standards.”

individuals have the abilities or competencies relevant to specific jobs. A certified person is an individual who has attained the competencies required to perform a particular job through the certification process. In the context of librarianship, certification of librarians assesses their competencies in accomplishing specific assignments in the field of librarianship, such as library material acquisition, cataloguing, library services, and library management. Accordingly, certified librarians have met the criteria or measurements of required competencies through the assessment processes.

In addition, the definitions imply that there are at least two critical aspects of the certification processes: the measurement or standards and the independent body that is responsible for the certification program. First, the certification program must be the standard to measure the competencies required for particular roles. The standard consists of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are expected to carry out work in the field of librarianship (Ministry of Labor and Transmigration 2012). The certification is a process of evaluating the professional competencies of librarians following the standards. Accordingly, those who meet the required competencies or standards will be awarded a certificate of competency. Second, the certification must be from the body or agency carrying out the program. The body will be responsible for planning, organizing, and reporting the assessment program and its implementation. Moreover, the body should be independent and credible so that objectivity and fairness principles can be achieved in the assessment processes.

Professional library certification programs have been implemented in various contexts, including a certification program for librarians' work competencies in Indonesia⁵ and the Certified Public Library Administrator Program in the United States.⁶ These programs aim to improve the quality of human resources in libraries and provide career development opportunities for librarians. However, there are differing views on the importance and effectiveness of certification. Some librarians see certification as a formality or a means to obtain certification allowances, while others recognise its importance in improving the quality of human resources in libraries.⁷ Certification programs also play a role in defining competencies for employment decisions and professional development in areas outside of librarianship, such

⁵ Rodin, "Minat Pustakawan"; Sumiati and Luddin, "Program Evaluation."

⁶ Grady, "Answering the Calls."

⁷ Rifai and Makarim, "Practices and Challenges."

as instructional design and learning management systems.⁸ The establishment of certification programs in the library profession is part of the broader phenomena of professionalisation and credentialism.

Methodology

The study was conducted through a survey method administered to library stakeholders consisting of practitioners, academics, experts, and the industrial world. The questionnaire survey was distributed to 60 respondents by random sampling. The documentation study was carried out by studying the documents of the program of certification implementation. By using descriptive analysis, this study aims to determine the prospects and challenges of the certification program in building the professional career of librarians in Indonesia.

Research Results

Certification Program in Indonesia

Since 2013, the National Library of Indonesia, through the Centre of Library Human Resource Development, in cooperation with the Indonesian Librarian Professional Certification Body (LSP), has implemented a professional certification program for librarians. As of 2023, the body has implemented the professional certification in almost all provinces in Indonesia, and more than 1,000 librarians have participated in the program.

According to the Centre of Library Human Resource Development's report of the National Library of Indonesia, out of 19,454 library staff, only 2,399 librarians (28%) participated in the certification program. The data suggests that implementing the certification program could be faster, and promoting the program among library stakeholders is challenging.

Stakeholders' Response to the Certification Program

This section results from a survey of the librarian profession stakeholders regarding their perceptions and responses to the librarian certification program.

The Importance of a Professional Certification Program

The first question asked to stakeholders was on the importance of professional certification for librarians. The perceived importance of the program will lead the stakeholders to positive responses to the professional certification for librarians.

⁸ Lytle, "Differentiating Yourself with a Professional Certification"; Sambo and Oyovwe-Tinuoye, "Awareness and Perception of Certified Librarians of Nigeria."

Table 1 Perception the Importance of Librarian Certification

Is the certification important for librarians?			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	59	98.33
	Not	1	1.77
	Total	60	100.0

Table 1 demonstrates the positive perception of the library stakeholders on the certification program for librarians. They opine that it is required for librarians to be certified as professional librarians. Of the 60 respondents, 59 (98.3%) agree that the certification program for librarians is crucial.

The Intention of Stakeholders to Include Their Library Staff in the Certification Program

As library stakeholders acknowledged the importance of the certification program, they committed to the continuing professional development of librarians through the certification program.

Table 2 Willingness to Participate in Librarian Certification

Are you interested to include your library staff in the certification program?			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	59	98.33
	Missing	1	1.77
	Total	60	100.0

Table 2 shows great stakeholder willingness regarding the professional librarians' certification. The 59 of 60 respondents agree to include librarians in the certification program.

The Significance of Librarian Certification

Concerning this issue, there are diverse opinions among stakeholders. They expected the certification program could increase the competencies of librarians as professionals in librarianship. In addition, the program elevates the profession by ensuring a high standard of practice, which in turn enhances the competitiveness of librarians on national and global levels. The following is data regarding the significance of the certification program for librarians.

Table 3 The Reasons for Implementing Professional Librarian Certification

In what extent should the certification program be implemented to librarians in Indonesia?			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	To pursue legal acknowledgment of their competencies	33	55.0
	To increase the professionalism	41	68.3
	To maintain the current competencies	11	18.3
	To develop their professional career	14	23.3
	To provide evidence for incentive or remuneration	12	20.0
	To increase the professional competitiveness	28	46.7
	Others (global labor market)	1	1.7

Table 3 describes the reasons for implementing professional certification for librarians in Indonesia. It is argued that achieving the professionalism of librarians is the most expected objective by stakeholders through the certification program by 41 respondents, or 68.3%. In addition, the certification program should guarantee the actual competencies of librarians in performing their duties in library operations. Thirty-three of 60 respondents, or 55%, expected the certification program to provide legal and actual competencies needed for library services. It is followed by expectations to improve professional competitiveness (48%). Only about 20 percent of stakeholders declare certification could be used for remuneration or incentives.

Discussion

The discussion of the results is aimed at the importance of the certification program to build the professional careers of librarians, especially in improving their competencies and the professional competitiveness of librarians at national and global levels.

Strengthening Librarian Professionalism

The results showed that a librarian certification program was needed to improve and guarantee the competence of librarians to carry out tasks in the library. As seen in the findings, stakeholders were optimistic that the certification program could increase the professionalism of librarians (68.3%), and that certified librarians were formally guaranteed to have competencies needed for library services (55%). In addition, the certification of librarians is believed to

increase the competitiveness of the library profession at national and international levels (48%). Lastly, the result of certification will provide evidence for the career development of librarians and their incentive or remuneration by 23% and 20%, respectively.

These results indicated that the library professionals' professionalism and competitiveness are the certification's ultimate goals. These findings align with national policies on the certification program issued by the National Professional Standards Agency (BNSP). In the legal document issued by BNSP, the objective of the certification is to achieve the professionalism of labor or human resources through assessment of the professional competencies. The professional certification for librarians is assigned to increase librarians' competencies based on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for library services.

According to Elwell,⁹ through certification librarians demonstrate their capabilities and expertise performing specific duties in the fields of library services. Certified librarians are persons who are capable of performing certain tasks in library operations. Lytle¹⁰ stated that competent librarians are professional librarians who dedicate their expertise in library services and management. They work in the library based on their knowledge, skills, and attitude required to perform a specific task.¹¹ In addition, Cassel and Holmboe¹² added that certification is part of efforts to build professionalism and accountability of a profession. These results are in alignment with other certification programs in different professions such as school counselling staff,¹³ nursing,¹⁴ and engineer.¹⁵

To achieve professionalism and an accountable profession, it is required to define the professional standard. Igor and Dragiša¹⁶ stated that the development of a standard-based profession is the crucial issue in regard to human resources development, especially when it is associated with professional certification. This standard provides specific tasks that professionals should demonstrate in their job. Professionals in different occupations such as

⁹ Elwell, "Certification Matters."

¹⁰ Lytle, "Differentiating Yourself with a Professional Certification."

¹¹ Qin and Li, "Can Certification Improve."

¹² Cassel and Holmboe, "Professionalism and Accountability"; Qin and Li, "Can Certification Improve."

¹³ Milsom and Akos, "National Certification."

¹⁴ Wynd, "Current Factors Contributing to Professionalism in Nursing."

¹⁵ Widiasanti, "The Role of Universities in Engineer Certification."

¹⁶ Igor and Dragiša, "Professional Development of the Teacher"; Ingvarson, "Professional Development as the Pursuit of Professional Standards"; Myles, "The Development of Professional Standards in Coaching."

accountants, teachers, engineers, and librarians have their own standard. The standard has accordingly become strategic in building accountable and professional workers, and in professional certification in the different occupations including in the field of librarianship.¹⁷

Furthermore, the results of this study confirm the importance of standardization in developing the profession. The standard provides measurements to evaluate and assess competencies of librarians required to perform certain tasks in the library operations. In Indonesia, the National Library through the Centre of Professional Librarian Development has developed the standard for librarians' competencies, namely the Indonesian National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI). To keep the professional competencies updated, the centre is responsible to maintain and review the standard regularly. Recently the centre has published a new standard (or second generation) of the competencies for professional certification. In the certification process, then, librarians are assessed through direct and indirect evaluation—written and practical tests—to demonstrate their ability in conducting their jobs based on the cluster of library tasks such as library material acquisition, library cataloguing and classification, and library services.

In addition, in terms of labor competitiveness, the certification program was also believed by library stakeholders (48%) to increase the professionalism of certified librarians and elevate the dignity of librarian profession in local, national, and international arena.

The Challenges of Librarian Certification Program

Since the professional certification is new, and the program's implementation is mainly under the responsibility of the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, it is argued that some stakeholders need to be more skeptical. Based on the open-ended questionnaire administered to the stakeholders, they strongly recommend that a professional librarian organization organize the certification program for librarians. The professional certification bodies (or LSP = Lembaga Sertifikasi Profesi) as the implementation program unit of professional certification for librarians in Indonesia, therefore, should collaborate with the Indonesia Library Association (or IPI = Ikatan Pustakawan Indonesia) in conducting the certification program. The national library, as the Indonesian government's representative, provides the certification program's policies and procedures and facilitates, monitors, and evaluates the program's implementation.

Furthermore, stakeholders suggest the following ideas and considerations to achieve librarians' professionalism. First, it is necessary to strengthen professional librarians through professional education and training after completing their undergraduate program. Like other

¹⁷ Kulikova and Uvayev, "Professional Standard as Regulation."

professions in accounting, medicine, and law, special education and training is also required for librarians to be professionals in librarianship. During the period of education and training, their skills will be enhanced so they can become experts or specialists in conducting professional tasks in library services and operations. The certification, accordingly, will be a tool to judge the achievement of their competencies.

Second, to be acknowledged and competitive, it is necessary to review the national professional standards for librarians to be equal to other measures at the regional and international levels. This review will challenge the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia to communicate and collaborate with other countries to arrange mutual recognition in developing professional standards for librarians.

Third, there are some agendas to improve and achieve the effectiveness and efficiency of the process and system of the librarian certification implementation. The development of online certification management systems, systems for monitoring the professional certificate holders, and enhancing the quality of assessors and the certification process are among the agendas for better implementing librarian certification.

Last, the Professional Certification Bodies, or LSP Pustakawan Indonesia, is the only body responsible for conducting the librarian certification program in Indonesia. There are high demands to certify all librarians from stakeholders. To achieve the broader target of certified librarians, it is necessary to work and collaborate with other institutions, particularly with library schools or the Department of Library and Information Sciences. The school or department should participate and contribute to preparing their students to be professional librarians and establish the LSP 1 (the 1st Body), which is responsible for organizing and organizing the certification program, especially for their students. A study conducted by Wideasanti (2017) found that universities play strategic roles in preparing their students to be professional workers. It means that the universities, through vocational programs, should be encouraged to establish the certification unit to work with existing bodies, especially with LSP Pustakawan Indonesia, to conduct the professional certification for librarians in Indonesia.

Conclusion

A certification program is strategic for preparing professional workers, including in the field of librarianship. Library stakeholders believe that the program benefits in providing competencies of professional librarians. It is argued that librarians will be more essential in the library

operation and development and more competitive in the national and global labor market. The professional certification will shape librarianship as a promising career in Indonesia in the future.

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