



Bringing out the best of everyone: a systematic approach to the workplace coaching and learning at the Kuopio University Library, Finland¹

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Abstract:

From the beginning of this millennium, there has been going on a radical restructuring of the Finnish higher education. At the same time the digital revolution of scientific information dissemination has changed the ways libraries provide services to academics and students as well as it has generated generation gaps between aging library staff and born-digital student generation. To answer the rapid changes in the University's working environment the Library started to develop a systematic approach to its human resource management. In this development process several different tools have been used: e.g. the creation of a quality management system, where the use of a participant management style was used. Also the evaluation of each individual's fields of know-how has been carried out and it has been used in tailoring personal training programs. The tacit knowledge has been disseminated between colleagues inside the library with lectures given by staff members to colleagues, as well as, by using the so-called social web-technologies in communicating inside and outside the library. Finally, a program for active networking – both national and international – has been taken into use. The success of these actions has been measured annually and there already is some evidence of skills improvement as well as of a better motivation towards the work on the Library.

¹ The Kuopio and Joensuu Universities were merged from the beginning of the year 2010 to create the new University of Eastern Finland. Kuopio Campus library is now one of the three campus libraries of the new university.

Introduction

The radical restructuring of the Finnish higher education started from the 1990's. One can see at least three main reasons for this. The first is the change in the public sector management, where more and more models from the private sector are implemented within the public sector. There the concept of new public management has been used. In addition the rhetoric of efficiency and tightened integration to the welfare production has been used when defining the role of the Universities (see Saarti & Juntunen 2007 and Osaamisen ja edelläkävijyyden ...2009, 62). Other reason has been the change brought by the rapid change the information technology meant for the information dissemination and the global networking. Finally, the third is the need for a high level of education and a multi-skilled workforce in order to fulfil the needs of the information society's working life.

The new Finnish University act that was passed in the summer 2009 means a paradigm shift to the management of the universities and their departments. The previous State owned universities became more independent, they now have a juridical status on their own and thus they became autonomous economic actors. In addition the new law enables business like actions for the Finnish universities. Universities as the juristic persons of public law have to bear the economic and juristic responsibilities by their own. (Yliopistolaki 2009, 5§.)

One main reason for this change towards more autonomous universities in Finland has been the need for result oriented and efficient management. This has been emphasised in Finnish reports (Jääskinen and Rantanen 2007) as well as international reports (OECD 2007) that have discussed the future of the Finnish higher education. The main rhetoric here has been the need for the shift from the academic management towards professional management where the decision makers have very concretely to bear the responsibilities of their decisions very much like the way commercial enterprises are managed. Here the concrete example in Finland was the decision where the governing board was set apart from the acting management as well as the decision that more outsiders from the university were taken to the governing board. The business rhetoric is in its utmost when, according to the new University act, a University can go bankrupt – at least in theory. (Mäenpää 2009, 33 – 34.)

Other factor that has effected especially to the library managing has been the on-going shift to the digital library that also begun from 1990's. This started when international peer-reviewed journals started to move from printed dissemination to the digital. The second phase, the digital book culture has also started to emerge. Whether the result will be a completely digital book-culture and the timeframe when this will happen is still open. Here the most challenging aspects are finding the right business-model for academic books disseminated by the academic libraries and the need for open and standardized e-reader technology.

The digital environment has meant for the university libraries a need for the networking ways in creating services. At the same time, a lot of services were outsourced to enterprises. In addition the library monopoly of enabling access to the scientific documentation has changed to a heavily competed marketplace where different types of actors make products and services for the students and academics. All this has meant that the competencies and skills needed in the daily library work have changed radically (see University Libraries Network... 2005). A modern library worker has to be a high level academic expert, a modern manager, an efficient marketing specialist and an excellent PR-person. Most likely also in Finland – due to the new University act – the skills and know-how needed in fund-raising and economic issues will become more and more important. This added to the challenges of aging population and the exchange of tacit knowledge between different age groups sets new challenges for the personnel management inside University libraries. In the following, we shall discuss the actions and measures needed in developing the expertise and managerial skills of the staff based on a case of one university library in Finland.

The aim of the study

The aim of this study is to describe the tools and methods used and developed within the University Library of Kuopio, Finland at the beginning of this millennium that have been used in managing the personnel, their well-being and their personal professional and skills development. The other aim is to assess the effects the previously mentioned tools and methods have had in the ways of managing the library, service production as well as the know-how evolution of the staff.

Theoretical framework

The viewpoint of this study is that of a case study where both of the authors were involved in the actual actions where the tools and methods described in this paper were used within the daily management of the library. Thus the results presented are of subjective nature although the results of these actions have been monitored with more objective methods, e.g. surveys and statistics.

The case study point of view has been used within the management studies especially due to the rapid change and evolution of the ways and methods used in the management. This because one does not have enough long datasets in order to achieve valid statistical analyses. One of the challenges of case studies is that they require quite a lot of time and commitment from the researchers in order to obtain enough

knowledge of the subject of the study. The other is the above mentioned subjectivity of the results and conclusions, this can be avoided e.g. with triangulation, i.e. using different methods and analyses of the data gathered and using multiple people in interpreting and discussing the meaning of the results. (Voss, Tsiriktsis & Frohlich 2002, 195.)

In this study, the management framework is the quality management and its methods – this because it was introduced in the Finnish and European higher education from the beginning of this millennium when e.g. in Finland it was decided that all the higher education units are to be quality audited. Here the need for documentation is emphasised in order to increase the quality of library's processes and products provided for the users. (Saarti & Juntunen 2007.) Valid documentation can also be seen as excellent tool for disseminating the tacit knowledge of the library staff between teams and individuals.

The concept of the learning organization is used here as the framework of managing an expert organization. This was introduced especially during the 1990's when Peter M. Senge published *Fifth Discipline* (1990). His intention was to model an optimal organizational culture where the continual learning of individuals, teams and the whole organization could be enabled. This, according to Senge, would enable the challenges of the rapid changes in the social and working environments and at the same time give to the individual ways to optimise his or hers own strengths in line with the organization's main mission.

The rhetoric of learning organization suits exceptionally well in the university environment. This due to the basic missions of the universities: education and research, which both require enormous input from the individuals and which both are usually achieved and conducted in teams. Especially the academic research is self-correcting activity that need systematic tools and result monitoring on all levels. The modern environment also acts almost chaotically and changes are rapid, multi-dimensional and have different types of values behind them. The chaotic environment needs rapid decision making procedures that go on the individual level. The management must also be alert in order to change the aims and strategies, even overnight, when needed. (The concept of "chaordic enterprise" has been used when one has tried to use the chaos theory when analysing complex organizational cultures and environments, see Eijnatten & Putnik 2004.)

Tools for the creation of a learning library organization

The tools and methods used when creating a learning organization within the Kuopio University Library are collected in the table 1. The tools for the skills and know-how development of the personnel have

been used in all the levels of action: between organizations, within the organization, on the team level as well as on the personal level. In the following, we describe examples and results from each of these levels.

Level of actions	Methods used
Between organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmarking • Working visits • Networking and workgroups
Organizational level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic management • Management system • Information system, including the documentation of work • Involvement in the University's workgroups
Team level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the working methods • Methods for the self-direction of the teams • Reporting and planning
Personal level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping of the field of know-how • Management training • Internal training • Performance review discussions

Table 1. Tools for developing a learning organization at the University of Kuopio

Acting at the level between organizations enables the chances of the library to have an impact on the strategic decision making in national and international networks and on the services that are provided on national and international level. At the same time, those people who partake in this work learn how national and international networks are managed and they get the newest ideas and knowledge.

In order to enable this level work the organization must allocate resources, i.e. working time and travel cost, for the latter one can efficiently use outside funding. The management must also ensure that the staff has the skills needed, especially, when participating in the international co-operation. Here the library has provided training e.g. about cultural knowledge, how to get funding and language courses.

The library has had as a strategic aim to have members in the most important national library bodies. In addition the aim has been to have at least some staff members attending international co-operation. The internationalisation process has been enabled and supported by the university, e.g. the European ERASMUS-funding opened for all the staff. The reporting of the visits has been implemented in regular staff training, i.e. staff members are required to write a report and present it to the other members of the library staff (see Ovaska 2009). Also at the university level the aim has been that library staff partakes in university's committees and other decision making bodies.

The national and international visits have given the library an opportunity to benchmark between different libraries, which has then been used in improving the library's quality management system and processes (Balague & Saarti 2009).

On the organizational level the most important task of the management is the strategic work and building the management system in order to implement the strategy efficiently. In the strategic work, the library has consciously used staff involvement in the strategic process – this has been used both at the University's and its Library's level. This has been of utmost importance when merging two previous universities and their libraries into the new University of Eastern Finland.

The management system has been build according to the University's adopted ISO 9001 standard, here the documentation has been the most important tool. This has been divided into two: intranet that includes both the documentation staff needs in everyday work and the minutes of different teams and internet that provides services and the documentation needed in their use for the users. Emphasise in the development of the documentation and reporting procedures have been that they must support and help effective provision of high quality library services.

Thus the aim of the documentation - especially in the library's intranet - has been the implementing of the standard ways of doing library work. These have also been useful when training incomers. The opportunities provided by the digital technologies for the communication between the staff have been used prominently in the library – especially valuable have been the social web-technologies and video-conferencing during the merging process of the Joensuu and Kuopio Universities, this due to the long distances between the campuses.

The teams are responsible for the everyday work planning and executing of the library services. The aim has been to support the self-direction of the teams. Teams are responsible for reporting and planning the annual work as well as possible reshaping needed. This way of acting has helped in involving the expertise and know-how of every individual member of the staff in the planning. Team reports and plans form the foundation for the whole library's strategy and budget work. On the other hand, the direct reporting to the library management helps in aiming each of the teams' objectives in line with those of the library's. This way of acting has helped in increasing the know-how and skills of the teams and staff-members, especially regarding the communication and negotiating skills and integrated them into the planning process of the library.

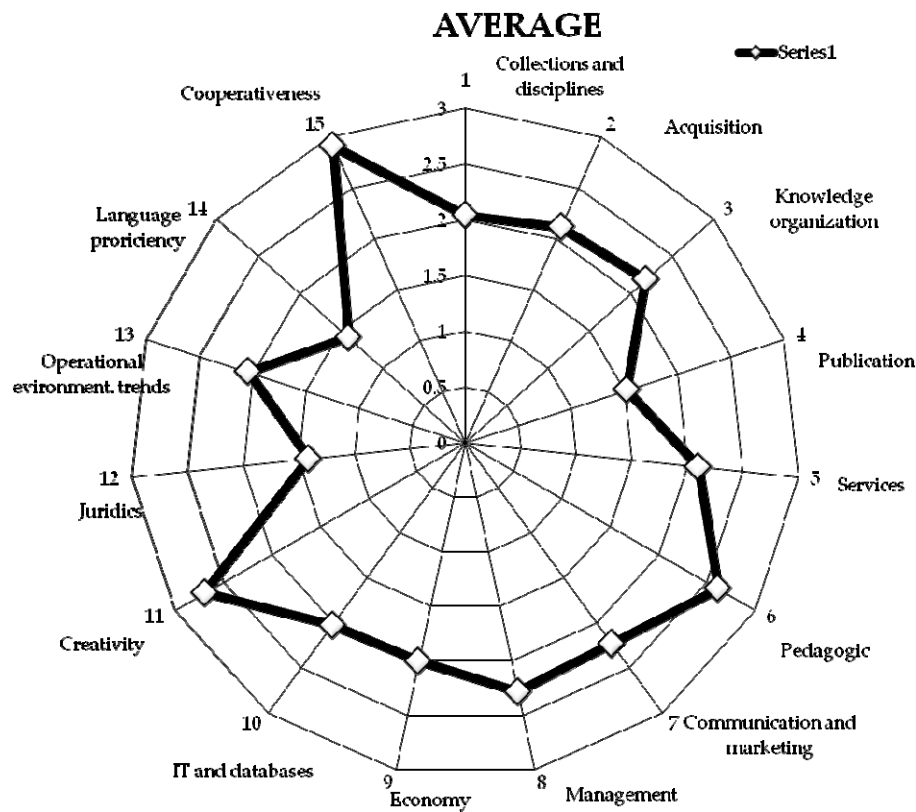
On the individual level the change in the management culture meant a rise in the need for more training. After implementing the quality management system in the year 2004, the amount of the time used in training started to increase (see table 2).

Year	Amount of days	Amount of personnel
2002	30	39
2003	94	42
2004	109,5	40
2005	128	37
2006	224	34
2007	333,5	34
2008	227	34

Table 2. The days used for the staff training between years 2002–2008 in the Library.

The need for the training did not arise solely from the management but also from the individual staff members. The growth in responsibilities meant the need for new management skills for all the staff. E.g. for instance all the members of the library's management participated in the management course that was provided by the University.

In order to map the know-how within the library, a mapping of the know-how was implemented in the year 2007. This was done jointly by two local libraries, the National Repository Library and Savonia Library – there the aim was to map the library knowledge in the region and whether this could be used with the principle of reciprocity. The results were summarized and analyzed on the library's level. The know-how of each individual worker was discussed in confidence between him/her and the superior. This mapping can be described as the mapping of the present knowledge – as important will be the mapping of the future needs in skills and knowledge. (Hätönen 2004, 9-10.) The mapping gave the library a good and valid picture of the know-how of the whole library staff and it was an excellent tool for the training planning (fig. 2).



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Fig 2. Mapping of the field of know-how – the averages of the staff.

The know-how and skills development of each member of the staff is monitored in the yearly performance review discussions. Everyone keeps a CV-portfolio that consists of the education, training, courses, team memberships within the library and the university, publications, appearances and memberships in professional organizations. The mapping of the field of know-how can also be utilized analyzing the gaps between the know-how library staff has and needs. This can then be used in planning training and when recruiting new staff.

Conclusions

According to Higgs (1999) the teams work at their best when they have a clear goal, they know what to do, they are empowered, they have a clear reporting responsibility and when they have a mutual feeling of success. In an expert organization, this means that the management has to guide and manage the teams towards a common goal, give them enough resources and responsibilities and allocate time for discussions between teams and the management. This then leads to better results.

According to our experiences, the main challenge for the management is to make a clear and concrete enough strategy: the basic mission of the library and its staff must be clear enough and the success in fulfilling it must be measurable. Here the self-evaluation of the teams yearly together with the management in the yearly management review seems to be a working model. Self-evaluation of the teams and staff members jointly with the management and superiors also seems to be a good way of committing the staff.

Also within the expert organization the optimal use of the resources allocated is important, especially during the present financial crisis when more results are needed with lesser resources. This can be achieved by increasing and optimizing the distribution of work as well as increasing the skills and know-how of the staff. Self-direction is also important: an expert should be able to make most of the decisions concerning service production and development unescorted. Here the management should rely on evidence-based monitoring and assessment.

The most important thing is to build a distinct and working learning organization, i.e. enable and motivate knowledge sharing inside and outside the library. Here the urge for documentation, staff training and team-work is fundamental. This should be merged with the efficient tools of disseminating the tacit knowledge to the help of the whole organization. Valid process documentation helps in optimizing processes as well as in joining different processes smoothly. For the library management evidence based process documentation and reporting gives good tools succeeding in the basic tasks and functions of the library. If one fails here, the result can be that everyone in the staff starts to find out handdogs for the failures that can lead to a paralyzed organization.

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