The roles of professional organizations in school library education: Case studies from around the world

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International guidelines for school libraries and teacher librarians exist. However, the role of professional library associations in teacher librarian education has been largely overlooked. This exploratory study examines the role of professional library associations in Brazil, Honduras, Nepal, and the United States (specifically California) relative to teacher librarian pre-service education and in-service professional development. The associations are analyzed in light of communities of practice and the contingency theory of socialization. The findings demonstrate how professional library associations provide culturally relevant professional development that melds professional expertise and socialization.

Introduction

In 1999 the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) approved a School Library Manifesto. Titled The School Library in Teaching and Learning for All, the document asserts that “The school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today’s information and knowledge-based society. The school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens” (p. 1).

The manifesto states that the mission of the school library is to “offer learning services, books and resources that enable all members of the school community to become critical thinkers and effective users of information in all formats and media” (p. 1). School Libraries link to the wider library and information network in accord with the principles in the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto.

To that end, school library resources should complement textbooks, and include a variety of formats. Services need to be provided equally -- and free -- to all school community members, and accommodate individuals with special needs. The manifesto concludes that collaboration between teachers and librarians, as well as partnerships with outside entities, result in improved student literacy and communication. School libraries must have adequate and sustained funding for trained staff, materials, technologies and facilities.

Trained staff must be provided to achieve the goals of the manifesto. However, the definition of trained is left unsaid, as are the provisions of such training. In an ongoing study of experiences of beginning teacher librarians (TL) and expert TLs to ascertain the factors that predict practitioner success, the author has compared southern California TLs (and their academic preparation) with the experiences of TLs in other representative countries (e.g., Australia, Brazil, Canada, European Union, Hong Kong, India, Nepal, Japan, Taiwan, and Turkey (Farmer, 2008). Factors were identified that link to TL preparation, with the intent of determining: 1) at what point in the academic-practice continuum identified skills, knowledge, and dispositions should be addressed; and 2) what pre-service activities optimize learning. In the process, the author tried to
uncover universal and culturally determined practices. For the most part, the author used an online survey to collect data. However, she conducted face-to-face observations, interviews, and focus groups in Southern California, Brazil, Honduras, and Nepal. In all cases, the need for librarian and library standards – and professional development to support those standards – has become a strong desire among librarians.

In the process, the author discovered the importance of professional library associations in the pre-service and in-service training of TLs. This paper discusses those findings in light of two applicable theories: contingency theory of socialization, and communities of practice.

Standards

Examination of IFLA’s book on library science education (Schniederjürgen, 2007) and their book on access to libraries (Bothma, 2007) reveals that TL education and school library practices have been very uneven. In England, for instance, school library program guidelines exist, but there is no mandate for school libraries (Flood, 2012). In Sweden, the opposite is true (Education Act (2010:800 Chapter 12. § 36). The level of preparation for teacher librarians is likewise very uneven. Language and cultural differences make this international work challenging at best as evidenced in Helen Boelens’ 2011 dissertation data on the status of school library programs in 61 countries.

Professional associations have been increasingly interested in developing standards for school library programs, for teacher librarians, and for teacher librarian preparation programs. The Bologna Declaration of 1999 and ensuing process opened the way for European countries to examine the possibility of standardized, or at least equivalent, post-secondary education across national borders. In specific, the European Network for School Libraries and Information Literacy (ENSIL), founded in 2003, has been striving to conduct research, disseminate information, provide professional development, and advocate for teacher librarianship (http://www.ensil.eu). In a study of library education curriculum planning, Lester and Van Fleet (2008) found frequent use of professional competences and standards, particularly for teacher librarianship.

In 2009 the American Library Association approved these Core Competencies of Librarians:

1. Foundations of the Profession
2. Information Resources
3. Organization of Recorded Knowledge and Information
4. Technological Knowledge and Skills
5. Reference and User Services
6. Research
7. Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning
8. Administration and Management

More specifically, the American Association of School Librarians (2009) stated that TLs needed to carry out the roles of information specialist, instructional partner, teacher, program administrator, and leader. Their standards are couched in terms of expected actions: teaching for learning, building the learning environment, and empowering learning through leadership.

More specific standards have been developed to address the competencies needed by TLs. IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations)’s School Libraries and Resource Centers Section (2002) identified the following fundamental qualities and skills needed by TLs (p. 12-13):

- the ability to communicate positively and open-mindedly with children and adults
- the ability to understand the needs of users
- the ability to cooperate with individuals and groups inside and outside the school community
- knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity
- knowledge of learning methodology and educational theory
- knowledge of information skills and of how to use information
- knowledge of the materials which compose the library collection and how to access it
- knowledge of child literature, media and culture
- knowledge and skills in the fields of management and marketing
- knowledge and skills in the field of information technology.

In investigating the experiences of beginning teacher librarians (TL) and expert TLs to ascertain the factors that predict practitioner success, the author tried to determine at what point in
the academic-practice continuum identified skills, knowledge, and dispositions should be addressed. In the study, the author also tried to uncover universal and culturally determined school librarianship values and practices (Farmer, 2008). Based on the data collected and analyzed, the main conclusion drawn was that teacher librarians grow developmentally, from pre-dispositions to pre-service education and in-service professional development. Data indicated that candidates need to understand underlying theories of librarianship as well as apply those principles and best practices in real-life situations, with an intention of educational management and leadership. They also need to be able to explore current library technologies in order to develop valued expertise at the future work sides. Furthermore, explicitly addressing professional dispositions should constitute part of academic recruitment and socialization. Most content knowledge and practices were found to be universal. Culturally-defined aspects tended to focus on hiring practices, job functions, and decision-making.

In terms of library education (particularly pre-service professional development for teacher librarians), the bachelor’s degree is the entry point for librarians in several countries. Some programs have the same requirements for all students, and others allow students to choose from several electives (which would facilitate training for teacher librarianship). Specialization for teacher librarianship would most logically occur at the master’s level, although this degree is not required for one to become a librarian in school settings in most cases. In reality, few master’s programs around the world offer that specialization. As the issue of education/pedagogy emerges as a growing concern, library educators are trying how to figure out to involve and collaborate with education faculty members.

Additionally, TLs need to keep current in their field in order to stay relevant. However, the venues for such in-service professional development can be more difficult to take advantage of. Typically, librarians read the professional literature and depend on their professional organizations to keep them abreast, particularly in tough economic times when their institutions do not have the time or funding to provide such continuing education systematically. Additionally, TLs may find themselves isolated from the peers, and need further specialized training that others find largely irrelevant; to that end, professional library associations offer socialization and support.

**Theories Supporting Teacher Librarianship Training by Professional Association**

To a large extent, professional organizations develop teacher librarian standards and provide in-service training. These practices reflect the concept of the learning organization. In the information age, enterprises realize the importance of their intellectual capital or assets, and they are couching efforts within a framework of a learning organization. The enterprise has a vision, identifies the gaps between reality and that vision, and sets about ways to bridge those gaps (Laiken, 2001). Senge (1990) defined learning organizations as: “organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together” (p. 3). It is in this spirit that the theory of a community of practice and the contingency theory of socialization can be applied to teacher librarian pre-service education and in-service professional development, specifically as it engages professional library associations.

**Professional Organizations as Communities of Practice**

Basically, a community of practice consists of a group of people with common values and goals. In the business world, a community of practice could include a work unit, mid-level management, or even the entire enterprise. In most cases a community of practice has a social dimension that fosters interdependence, but the chief goal is organizational improvement through individual and group professional development and deployment.

In education, the term “community of learners” is more likely to be encountered. As with a community of practice, a community of learners develops interdependent relationships as they learn from each other. Carney (1999) defined a community of learners as “a place where student
learners are made to feel that their prior knowledge, the knowledge that they are acquiring, and the skills that they are learning to acquire future knowledge are all tied together” (p. 53).

In both kinds of communities, the notion of sustainability, or at least ongoing engagement is expected. In a community of practice, it is more likely that a broader spectrum of experience and expertise will be represented, if for no other reason that entry-level professionals may be incoming members and long-term professionals may serve as mentors. A social norm exists that fosters and facilitates the sharing and generation of information.

It might be assumed that a community of learners has as its first goal individual achievement, unlike a community of practitioners who also strive for organizational achievement. Nonetheless, in teacher librarianship, a blending of a community of learners and practitioners is a valid approach since the profession as a whole should benefit from the training being offered to a specific population. Because professional organizations may include both pre-service education and in-service professional development, the term “community of practice” (CoP) offers a more robust and valid perspective.

Collaborative learning constitutes another feature of CoPs. This learning strategy involves small groups working together towards a common goal or solution. Other features of collaborative learning include group and individual accountability, distributed leadership, and group autonomy. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the social aspect of learning, asserting that learning exerts first between people and then is internalized. Collaboration provides opportunities for learners to think aloud and engage both intellectually and emotionally, and incorporates both academic and social objectives. Furthermore, CoPs tries to take advantage of the expertise within that community (Wenger, 1998).

Professional organizations need to find ways to foster interconnectedness in communities of practice in order to optimize learning and application of knowledge to real workplaces. Senge (1990) identified five principles for sustainable knowledge sharing, which can inform professional development (PD): systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning.

**Systems thinking** needs to frame learning within the organization in order to allocate and manage the necessary resources to support such learning. For instance, professional organizations should examine how existing committees relate to each other, and how they can all support PD. Organizations also need to connect with their members to make sure that their programs are relevant and applicable to library workplace settings.

**Personal mastery** connotes an ongoing process of self-assessment and self-improvement. Professional organizations can provide the conditions for learning by announcing learning opportunities within the organization and beyond, linking learners to experts, locating resources that can provide desired information, documenting the learning effort, and facilitating the public recognition of gained knowledge.

**Mental models** impact individual and group learning in that they codify the organization’s assumptions and expectations. If, for instance, a mental model of mutual support and encouragement exists, then shared learning is more likely to blossom. Generally, an organizational attitude of open dialogue and positive problem-solving tend to support the principles of a learning organization.

**Shared vision** offers a touchstone to anchor the learning organization. Practitioners can determine whether their learning efforts contribute and manifest the vision – or detract from it. Having a shared vision certainly helps PD designers frame their efforts, and enables them determine what resources and service are needed to actualize the shared vision through efficient learning within the organization.

**Team learning** acknowledges the social aspect of PD. Individuals like to talk with each other in order to confirm -- and improve -- their knowledge base. More importantly, team learning appreciates the unique skill sets of each person, and builds on those individualities to produce a significant product that no one person could do independently. PD designers within organizations can help individuals gain expertise in collaboration: building mutual respect and trust, communicating and negotiating effectively, understanding group interaction and dynamics, sharing control, assessing efforts and progress, and making adjustment to optimize results (Greenberg & Baron, 2002).

*Contingency Theory of Socialization*
Contingency theory of socialization examines the interaction of a new employee and an organization in pursuit of attaining the goals of general satisfaction and mutual influence. Feldman (1976) found that role-centric socialization was more impactful than social group initiation. However, personal resolutions of conflicts significantly impacted general satisfaction with the job. Cunningham (1998) emphasized the effectiveness of workplace learning through interactions with other learners and experts, reinforcing social-interaction conceptualization. Noting inadequacies of organizational socialization, Louis (1980) identified key features of new employee experiences: surprise, contrast to assumptions, and need for change. Rather than trying to avoid all surprise or unexpected experiences, employers should help newcomers make sense of these surprises by facilitating relationships with knowledgeable peers, sharing information, and giving timely feedback. TL training should also alert beginning professionals about possible assumptions and likely surprises when encountering the realities of the job and the organization.

Jones (1986) examined socialization tactics. He compared collective and formal initiations to individualized and informal ones. Formal models tend to lower anxiety for newcomers with less self-efficacy (and are likely to be associated with more routine jobs), while informal models lead to more differentiated responses to work situations, which is more reflective of TL positions. Organizations who want to help less confident beginning TLs need to focus on ways to reduce anxiety by providing targeted professional development opportunities and positive role models. In short, both organizational demands and personal self-efficacy impact the socialization process.

One popular approach to socializing new professionals is the use of mentors. Mentorships by—and collaboration with—peers in the same subject domain result in job and career retention (Pierce, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Australian Library and Information Association, 2005). Kardos (2004) reiterated the importance of matching subject-specific mentors with their beginning counterparts in order to positively impact teacher retention. Hein (2006) noted one limitation of mentorship: lack of joint available time. Nor is mentoring a natural activity for educators; making good practice explicit and crafting individualized learning activities for new peers requires training for mentors themselves (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). For mentors to be successful, Pierce (2004) asserted that several factors need to be in place: a sense that the mentor is the expert, a complementarity of needs between the beginner and expert (i.e., forming a professional identity and self-renewal), a willingness to nurture and to be nurtured. Monsour’s (1998) recommendations for successful administrative mentoring programs included similar factors: mutually respectful pairs that met at least monthly and participated in various activities characterized by networking, emotional support and validation, resource sharing, site visits, and guidance. Thus, mentoring is in itself a microcosm of the contingency theory of socialization.

Professional organizations can support beginning TLs in light of the contingency theory of socialization. The organization’s structure facilitates relationships with knowledgeable peers and the sharing of information. Such organizations provide effective role models and mentors, and offer targeted professional development. Organizational members can also explain job expectations and realities so that beginning professionals can reconcile their own assumptions with their institutions, and make appropriate accommodations.

Case Studies of Professional Associations in Teacher Librarianship Education

In studying teacher librarianship internationally, the author had opportunities to observe and talk with beginning and veteran teacher librarians, library educators, and professional library association leaders in Nepal, Brazil, Honduras, and California.

Nepal

As the IASL Vice-President for Association Relations, the author had been in correspondence with the School Libraries Support Association Nepal (SLSAN) chair Mahadev Parvate for several years. Therefore, as part of a professional trip to northern India in 2008, the author took the opportunity to visit with Parvate and Nepalese Association of School Librarians (NASL) chair Sharada Siwakoti.
They talked at length about the issues of teacher librarianship, mainly in terms of TL preparation and resources. Several factors constrain TLs: lack of publishing in Nepal, undervalued reading culture, unstable and unavailable technology, lack of funds, lack of support, and lack of professional training. TLs need to work closely with their communities to assess local needs and interests as well as available resources. TLs need to take leadership roles in identifying what local resources need to be developed as well, and then collecting, organizing, and making available those locally-produced resources as part of the library’s collection. As well as physical access to the collection, TLs need to provide intellectual access to these resources by working with users directly and also with educators to integrate literacies (reading, technology, information, cultural) into teaching and learning. This role necessitates TL preparation programs including educational issues into their curriculum. The importance of culture was also a big insight, with the idea of education helping learners to appreciate and express their cultures accurately and authentically. The need for librarian and library standards – and pre-and in-service professional development to support those standards – has become a strong desire among librarians.

At present, the national government has delegated authority to NASL to train teacher librarians. This organization’s members deliver courses for pre- and in-service TLs. During the author’s visit, a regional Interaction Program on School Library Management was held to gather stakeholders to discuss school library’s significance in Nepal’s education. The author keynoted the program, noting the impact of school libraries on student success and suggesting ways to foster high-quality library programs. The group is starting a “No Library No School” campaign, and hopes to include a mandate that every school have a library and professional teacher librarian be included in the revised constitution (a Parliament representative participated actively in the program). In small groups, attendees identified key issues and solutions, and shared their ideas. Both grass roots and systemic strategies were voiced: e.g., collecting local information, promoting the habit of reading, increasing collaboration between teachers and librarians, working with publishers and other entities, garnering community support. The need for library and librarian standards was identified, and an idea for TL-focused pre-service education was discussed. Three modules were identified: resource management within school contexts, communication skills within school contexts (e.g., promotion, advocacy, collaboration, supervision), and educational issues within school contexts (literacies, curriculum, instruction, collaboration).

Brazil

School libraries and teacher librarians reflect Brazil’s political and educational realities, as observed by the author and gained from the author’s interviews with TL researchers and practitioners. Most schools operate on two-three shifts because of overcrowding and lack of financial support. With their independent funding, private schools usually have better stocked and better staffed libraries. However, all school libraries could be improved in terms of instruction and collaboration. Library practices reflected a wide spectrum of quality in terms of collections, selection, acquisitions, staff, facilities, access, instruction, curriculum, and collaboration: from poor, uncatalogued donations with little access to grade-specific libraries having rich collections, strong educational activities, and well-trained teacher librarians.

A great need exists for more financial and legislative support for libraries, particularly for school libraries. The Federal Council of Librarianship (http://www.cfb.org.br) and its regional and state councils are government entities administered by elected librarians to monitor the librarianship profession. These councils launched the School Library Project to create support for school libraries. Representatives met with decision-makers to explore the possibility of mandating school libraries in every school, with the resultant Law 12244 passed in 2010 to that effect – with the goal to be achieved by 2020 (Campello, 2009).

Academic library preparation dedicates little coursework targeted especially for teacher librarianship. Most librarianship pre-service programs are undergraduate degree programs, which focus on basic operations. As the issue of education/pedagogy emerges as a growing concern, library educators are trying how to figure out to involve and collaborate with education faculty members. The School Library Research Group (http://gebe.eci.ufmg.br), based at the School of Information Science at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, is focusing on school library research and education.

The Federal Council of Librarianship holds regular workshops and conferences for TLs. Sometimes they partner with other agencies and professional associations such as IFLA, the International Association for School Librarianship (IASL), the United States International Resource
Centers, and the national bilingual centers. The council also links up with the biannual meeting of the Brazilian National Federation of Librarians (FEBAB) to lower costs and bring in more attendees. In addition, these professional library associations disseminate professional publications to their members, and publicly recognize outstanding practitioners. For instance, the Regional Librarianship Council of the State of São Paulo awards the X “Laura Russo” São Paulo Librarianship Prize to honor librarians, personalities and institutions, whose actions and activities promote and contribute to the diffusion of knowledge and to the construction of a more equititarian society (Berg, 2011).

In 2008 the author received a Fulbright Senior Specialist Award to present and participate in an International Forum on School Libraries and School Library Seminar: Space for Pedagogical Action, which brought together more than 200 school librarians, public librarians, and library educators from Brazil and neighboring countries. The IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto, presented by the author, provided the overall principles as well as the regional challenges to implementing the manifesto. Several initiatives were described. A national program in schools is focusing on improving reading literacy through resources, information literacy, and staff training. The University of Sao Paulo has a model school where pre-service teachers can observe good practices, including a school library program. REBI (Rede Escolar des Bibliotecas Interactivas) is a university-based initiative that has created over 80 school libraries that foster information literacy, reading, and culture.

**Honduras**

In September 2011 the author received a second Fulbright to work with Honduran libraries to finalize a proposal for a master’s degree program in library science, and to provide in-service professional development for librarians. For the past seven years, the National Pedagogical University Francisco Morazan (UPNFM) has been trying to develop a master’s degree program in library science, the first such degree program in Honduras. It was intended to be approved spring 2012.

According to the National Network of Public Libraries, in 2009 Honduras had 135 public libraries. Since then, no current data on other documentation such as school libraries, academic, or special libraries were on file because of government changes, although librarians are trying to develop a directory of Honduran libraries. While school libraries exist, they are sometimes merely small collection warehouses. Nevertheless, the Republic of Honduras’s strategic planning reports include concepts of information systems as part of the development plan in terms of education, culture, health and the country’s security (UPNFM, 2011).

To this point, professional institutions and organizations such as the National Pedagogical University Francisco Morazan (UPNFM), the Riecken Foundation, Project Share, Price Charities, and others have offered resources and in-service training for librarians in different data centers, but it is short-term instruction for limited audiences. From time to time, other institutions and associations such as the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH), Hondutel, the Royal Library of Sweden, the Embassy of Spain, the Embassy of Colombia and the Association Share have contributed materials to public libraries and in-service training for librarians. In addition, the United State Consulate has provided in-country librarians in-service professional development and scholarships for librarianship pre-service education in the United States (UPNFM, 2011).

The pre-primary through secondary school system is governed by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Culture (specifically the Honduran Institute of Books and Documents) provides short-term in-service professional development for TLs (who are usually teachers). The Tegucigalpa Bi-National Center sponsors field trips from local public schools to see their library and get some training. The United States Information Resource Center provides ad hoc in-service professional development for librarians, including TLs, particularly in the use of their resources. In addition, the Regional Center for Book Development in Latin America (CERLALC), a branch of UNESCO, works with the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Sports of Honduras with the mission to advance the development and integration of the region through readers building societies. The Center works with public and school libraries, supporting libraries in the region through training and research in social and economic value of reading and how libraries can advance their own
The roles of professional organizations

Farmer

ABIDH (Association of Honduran Librarians and Information Professionals) constitutes the main professional library association, and involves all levels of library staff from all types of libraries. It meets regularly, and provides in-service professional development across settings. At the seventh annual conference, held while the author was in country, plenary sessions and workshops provided both basic in-service training in library operations, children’s programming, and database selection and use, as well as advanced training in such concepts as research incorporating social media. ABIDH has also been involved in the development of the master’s degree program proposal, and its president (also the director of the UPNFM library) spearheaded the initiative.

United States: A California State Perspective

In the United States, each state accredits TLs, so professional guidelines exist largely within that framework, unlike some other countries. California represents one of the larger states; it has four state-accredited school librarianship programs, two of which are nationally accredited. The main TL professional association is the California School Library Association (CSLA), which offers regional workshops and an annual state conference. The association also spearheaded the California Model School Library Standards, which were approved by the state legislators in 2010. The author provided the research basis for these standards.

Of particular interest in terms of TL professional development has been CSLA’s development and implementation of online self-paced training modules. Inspired by librarian technologist Stephen Abram’s 2006 article on 43 things to learn about technology in order to keep current, and based on the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County (North Carolina)’s streamlined self-paced 23 Things online PD set of modules, CSLA adapted the online 23 Things PD for its own membership, labeling it School Library Learning 2.0. A small committee was formed, and the state board approved the project immediately. Their goal was to provide a fun and useful, free and easy, online accessible and hands-on, interactive and collaborative professional development (PD) tool. The group realized the power of “playing” with technology, and wanted to give its membership and others a digital sandbox for learning.

The structure of School Library Learning 2.0 provides a predictable and interactive experience. The first session explains the spirit of 23 things and encourages the participant to reflect on his or her own PD and learning goals. In general, each week begins by explaining a new web 2.0 topic, followed by discovery exercises. For example, the second session introduces blogs as a learning tool, and asks the participant to start a blog as a journaling and sharing device. Additional modules were added in the following three years: assistive technology, sports and information literacy, teen learning, and digital citizenship. Existing modules have been modified occasionally, as time permits, in response to participants’ suggestions in order to keep the modules current and relevant.

The website was announced on June 1 via the CSLA website and flyer to the membership and a California teacher librarian listserv, with the intent to provide free self-paced professional development over the summer when most teacher librarians had more time. In order to optimize sustained engagement, CSLA required participants to register (even though the program was free), and to set up and use a public blogline account to journal their experiences. The “blogroll” was open so that participants could comment and share with each other. On its end, CSLA assigned 2.0 “cheerleaders” to the participants; each leader had about thirty bloggers to follow and cheer on, insuring that at least one person would comment on the participant’s blog. This approach helped participants feel connected and supported. As further enticements, participants could earn two continuing education credits with Fresno Pacific University, which has a teacher librarian program. In addition, those participants who finished by September 30 were given certificates and publicly recognized at the November CSLA conference.

Within two months, the website (http://schoollibrarylearning2.csla.net/) had over 30,000 hits, about fifty daily. Most registrants were from California, but individuals from Great Britain and the Philippines also enrolled. In total 124 California library staff and 64 outside of California participated that summer. A follow-up winter session picked up additional participants, and veteran program participants were encouraged to serve as cheerleaders themselves. The site continues to be available free, although the cheerleading aspect is not present. Many of the bloggers linked their learning to their library practice, and stated how they would share this
information with their school community. This kind of connection between PD and “back home”
implementation underscored the usefulness of School Library Learning 2.0. In addition, the
organizational venue and support gave the project more credence, and fostered an authentic sense
of learning in community.

School Library Learning 2.0 and associated modular online PD have been incorporated into
pre-service education. For example, the author used both the original CSLA and their assistive
technology PD modules for hybrid and online courses for pre-service TLs. Alongside other
readings, the course instructor assigned a module each week, and had students blog their
experiences; they also had to comment on a peer’s blog entry each week. The content matter also
informed the students’ efforts to create a technology plan that addressed the needs of students
with special needs, which was graded in terms of the feasibility, quality, and thoroughness of their
plan.

Linking Professional Association Professional Development to Theories

The three countries (Brazil, Honduras, Nepal) and California examined in this study provide an
intriguing cross-cultural perspective on the roles of professional associations in TL education and
professional development. The associations can be viewed along several dimensions:

• Two of the four associations had some connection to government. Brazil’s Council of
  Librarianship is a government entity, although run by librarians elected by the membership.
  Nepal’s government delegated TL training to the Nepalese Association of School Librarians.

• Two of the four associations provided pre-service education that was linked for licensure:
  Nepal and CSLA, whose online training was eligible for graduate continuing education PD
  credits and was embedded in graduate accredited program courses.

• Two of the associations encompassed all types of librarians: Brazil and Honduras. Nepal’s
  and California’s associations focus on TLs.

• All of the associations provided pre- and in-service PD, although only the Nepalese
  association specifically targeted pre-service TLs.

• All of the associations provided workshops and conferences. Only Nepal offered formal
  pre-service courses, and only CSLA provided online in-service PD.

The associations were found to reflect Senge’s CoP principles.

Systems thinking. All of the associations had as one of their missions to provide PD. Members
constituted the basis for PD development, and usually provided the expertise. From the
author’s observations, all of the associations had a core group of leaders who drove the
associations, which also reflects the realities of most CoPs. These smaller steering groups were able
to allocate core functions among themselves, and required few resources to implement their plans.

Personal mastery. All of the associations appeared to self-monitor their effectiveness, and
shared new knowledge through presentations, conferences, and publications. The associations
communicated with their membership, and all publicly recognized outstanding librarians among
their members.

Mental models. All of the associations had goals and expectations. Because all of them
were voluntary associations, they were sustained by mutual support and problem-solving.

Shared vision. All of the associations had a shared vision of librarianship and their role to
support the profession. Each association had some kind of strategic planning. Nepal, Brazil, and
CSLA all aimed for libraries in every school. Honduras focused on supporting a library science
degree program. All of them also wanted to partner with other groups to improve the training and
conditions of librarians.

Team learning. All of the associations included a social aspect, and built on individuals’
strengths collaboratively. Leadership was shared.

The associations also supported the TLs’ success in the workplace as reflected in the contingency
theory of socialization. All of the associations included a wide spectrum of librarians so that new
professionals could relate to knowledgeable peers and share information. None of the associations
had a formal mentor program, but informal mentorships were evident in all cases; newer members
were often “spotted” by existing leaders and encouraged to assume more responsibility within the
organization. In addition, because most association members were practicing librarians, they
shared workplace experiences and gave practical advice in their in-service PD venues. These activities enabled new professionals to check their professional assumptions, and compare potential working sites with those of their association colleagues.

**Conclusion**

The role of professional organizations in teacher librarianship pre-service education and in-service professional development has been largely overlooked in the literature. These case studies of ground-level professional librarian associations from different countries demonstrate their effective role in TL preparation and practice. Regardless of their country’s origin, the associations shared a common professional librarian culture. The associations consistently epitomized the power of shared expertise and social engagement and support. As the members coalesced into these associations, they were able to accomplish not only TL training in general but other initiatives to improve the state of school libraries and teacher librarians as a whole.

Universal guidelines for school libraries have been established by IFLA, and the author’s 2008 study found agreement among the sampled respondents across countries about TL values. Boelens’ 2010 dissertation also uncovered common understandings about school librarianship. Certainly, more research is needed to make valid assertions about TL pre-service education and in-service professional development. Nevertheless, controversy about the level and type of training continues, at least to some degree because of the discrepancies of available resources and expertise in different areas of the world. These culturally embedded professional associations provide a way to negotiate regional needs and capacities to provide relevant TL education and professional development support. Their actions can provide a possible way to reconcile universal principles of teacher librarianship and culturally appropriate professional practice.

Several professional school librarianship associations are pursuing PD initiatives. Increasingly, these organizations are providing online webinars about current school library topics and tools (e.g., American Association of School Librarians, International Society for Technology in Education). IFLA has established a series of workshops to build strong library associations, and the School Libraries and Resource Centers Section has partnered with IFLA to build an IFLA module for school libraries. An IFLA monograph on school library issues (Marquardt & Oberg, 2011) mentions several other activities: The European Network of School Libraries and Information Literacy (ENSIL) has focused on advocacy, providing meetings to exchange ideas; Britain’s School Library Association has partnered with several library organizations to provide PD on literacy and advocacy; and the Russian School Library Association has also held PD events to solve the programs of school libraries and develop school library policies.

Particularly as professional associations are expanding their training function, systematic study of the role of professional associations in TL pre-service education and in-service PD is called for. Research could also examine the relationship between the existence and efficacy of professional associations and the quality of TLs and school libraries.

**References**

http://www.ala.org/educationcareers/sites/ala.org.educationcareers/files/content/careers/corecomp/corecompetences/finalcorecompstat09.pdf


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