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## REVIEW ARTICLE

# RECOGNIZING THE PERSONAL COMPETENCIES OF FUTURE INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

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## ARTICLE DETAILS

## ABSTRACT

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Information agency basic responsibility focuses on the creation, acquisition, organisation, storage, dissemination and maintenance of information in whatever format, printed or digital. They required all related knowledge and skills to perform their roles in this emerging world of technology. Personal competencies are essential skills requirement seek by employer in selecting their employees. Personal competencies of students are considered greatly important for the effectiveness of learning process. It is also important skills for students to acquire for their future career. This concept paper aims to investigate the personal competencies of future information professionals. The nine (9) domains of personal competencies (critical thinking, interaction skills, relationships skills, leadership skills, presentation skills, media literacy skills, and written skills) in this paper was determined based on the selected literature on communication and personal competencies. This paper would bring benefit to all future information professional as it can view future graduate preparedness to enter the industry.

## KEYWORDS

Personal competency, communication skills, information professionals.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Information agency basic responsibility focuses on the creation, acquisition, organisation, storage, dissemination and maintenance of information in whatever format, printed or digital. This responsibility is being carried out by information professionals such librarians, information specialist, records manager and knowledge officer. They required all related knowledge and skills to perform their roles in this emerging world of technology. Information professionals have experienced rapid changes for the past three decade's outcomes of rapid development of information and communication technologies that directly effecting how libraries and information centre operate. This was also affecting existing information professionals' knowledge and skills to work in libraries and information centre [1]. Therefore information professionals need to expand the boundaries of their professionals' skills and personal competencies in the ever changing world of technology [2-4].

In different aspect, education institutions such university must produce graduates that not only having specialised knowledge of their field of study, but also having great human communication and personal skills such critical thinking skills, interaction skills, leadership skills and presentation skills. Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA is one of the predominant faculties in producing future information professionals in Malaysia. The faculty not only cultivating students towards excellence in technical knowledge and skills of information science but also focusing on building the personal competencies for students through activities and assignments. Singh and Pinki define skills as practical ability that facilitate in implementing an action while competency is define as feature that influences individual to use skills and interact with the worlds [4]. Previous researches focused on assessing competencies of information professionals in the industry has indicated one of the main competencies for information professionals were personal competencies [2, 5-7]. Personal competencies are essential

skills requirement seek by employer in selecting their employees. Personal competencies of students are considered greatly important for the effectiveness of learning process. It is also important skills for students to acquire for their future career. In order to increase the employability, students should pose not only technical skills, but also skills of communication, literacy of speaking, writing and reading. Misra and Khurana postulated that personal skills such emotional literacy, self confidence and self control; and generic skills such leadership, team working and oral communication skills are skills that students need to acquired for their future career [6].

A group researcher identified four essential qualities of personal characteristics required of LIS professionals for job listings which are communication skills, flexibility, and the ability to work under pressure and deal with a range of users [5]. In addition to that, Thanuskodi stated that in order to fulfil the as informational roles, the future librarians require two main competencies; (a) professional competencies which consist of librarian's knowledge of various information sources, technology, management and research and (b) personal competencies set which consist of skills attitudes and values that enable librarians to work efficiently and be good communicators [8]. Cherinet (2018) suggested top ten insightfully future roles and skills required by librarians to meet the ever-changing users' need in the modern library landscape [2]. The skills were hard skills, soft skills, leadership skills, twenty-first century skills, civic skills, research skills, learning skills, survival skills, trans literacy, and cultural intelligence. Tanloet and Tuamsuk suggested that in term of evaluation, competencies can be used as the criteria as well as for the development of potential of information professionals [7]. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the personal competencies of future information professionals

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Critical thinking

Critical thinking consists of logical, reasonable, unbiased and intelligently thinking. Without having a sense of critical thinking, there is no content exchange of idea among professionals [9]. Critical thinking is a logical and judgment-based way of making decisions and always performed by anyone in organization [10]. As a future information professional, they need to have this strong character to cope with the real working environment.

### 2.2 Creative thinking

Creative thinking is the process of modifying ideas from an existing knowledge base with the ability to form or bring forth a new thought by using imagination and intellect. It is a part of an individual's intellectual personality that can be applied to everyday situations [10]. By having the new ideas, these imaginative people will absorb all the information around them, processing then disseminate it as new ideas together with the solution if the problem occur.

### 2.3 Interaction skills/Relationship skills

Interaction/ relationship skills required future information professionals to build ease, comfort, and effectiveness among members within organization. It will lead for build friendship and life-long relationship. These skills most important competencies for organizational success and as a part of business competence [11]. By having these competencies, it will be initiating, maintaining, repairing relationship of all kinds.

### 2.4 Leadership skills

Leadership skill enable leader to communicate with the subordinates effectively. In a workplace, these skills are very important to influence others. Leadership skills seems important for managing library operation as a whole. Previous study reported that information professionals, specifically librarians should have good interpersonal and management skills to become competent in managing information and decision making [8]. *Leadership is a matter of intelligence, trustworthiness, humaneness, courage, and sternness and this is important for students to develop it.* This is especially true for library leaders in the coming years [12].

### 2.5 Presentation skills

As a future information professional, student who is getting to start on this career field should take the opportunity in any activities that developed communication skills in a wider and complete aspect so that communication skills can be fully developed such presentation activities. Presentation is an academic activity that is used often in class. Apart from that, the presenter needs to have public speaking skills [13]. By having the presentation activities in classroom, future information professionals will perform and practised through the interviews and get to acquaint with communication situations in the real world.

### 2.6 Media literacy skills

It consists of good competence in dealing with media technology. These skills will help information professionals how media operate and how can be a more effective media creator. With the current phenomena, media perform the best channel to convey the message in the organization. Instead of just accepting what the media tell you, media literacy required the information professionals understand the purpose of media message and able to analyse it for truth and fairness. On the other hand, many library staff believe that, like it or not, the internet is in the library and the library is in the internet, and librarians must not only learn to use Google but become Google specialists [14]. A resource provided by a number of university libraries is the so-called "learning center" which puts "learning, writing, research and technology together in a consortium located in the main library" and is under the concept called "academic literacy" [15].

### 2.7 Cultural sensitive/ intelligence

Culturally sensitive and cultural intelligence is understanding, acknowledges and adapts to cultural differences. It also consists of an attitude and way of behaving in which you're aware of and acknowledge cultural differences without negative evaluation [9]. The increasing diversity in society makes intercultural capability a significant skill set for all peoples, especially young people preparing to enter the workforce. In a modern library environment, synergy of passion, skills, knowledge and cultural intelligence enable librarians to serve better diversified users.

Cultural intelligence is an quality that admits librarians to value diversity of users and appreciate multiple realities, which in turn enable them to provide cultural sensitive and inclusive information services for the wider users [2].

### 2.8 Effective listener

As a librarian, listening skills need to be practise since this profession deals with the patrons. Information is an intangible substance that must be sent by the speaker which is librarian and received by an active listener (patron). This skill is important to ensure the entire of library workers have mutual understanding and reliance on teamwork. Supported by Pecchioni and Halone, the influence of listening on everyday relations is also related to the nature of the relationship between the listener and sender.

### 2.9 Negotiation skills

The negotiation skills are important for the librarians that have the relationship with the users and suppliers. For this profession, this skill required two or person have mutual needs and interest and the lead for final agreement. For Library professional, Velmurugan and Manjula mentioned the negotiation skills are needed on special activities such as handling bulk purchases, specialized databases subscription with vendors and so on and sometimes in delicate situations like library committee meetings or avoiding undue requirements from arrogant users [19]. Cherinet, proposed a set of 21 future librarian roles and skills required for further revision such survival skills, life and care skills and etc [2]. these skill will might the entire library organization well manageable towards real modern library landscape.

## 3. METHOD

The questionnaire will be developed based on the available literatures on competencies of information professional and based on discussions among researchers in the team. The nine (9) domains of personal competencies (critical thinking, interaction skills, relationships skills, leadership skills, presentation skills, media literacy skills, and written skills) in this paper was determined based on the selected literature on communication and personal competencies discussed earlier. Five-point likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, agree and strongly agree will be used. The completed questionnaire will then be sent to three experts in the field of communication for validation. The validated questionnaire will be pilot tested among students which not in the final year diploma and degree program. Questionnaire then will be distributed among final year students for (semester four and five) diploma and degree program (semester five and six) of Faculty of Information Management, across Malaysia.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This paper would bring benefit to all future information professional as it can view future graduate preparedness to enter the industry. For universities that offer program of information profession would also greatly beneficial for the curriculum development planning in the field of information management. Furthermore, the personal competencies of information professionals could be use as guideline in shaping the individual not only poses good quality of knowledge, but also skilful and meet the professionalism. Therefore, these information professionals could directly contribute to their organization that they served.

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