LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (LIS) EDUCATION IN INDIA: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SYLLABUS AND MARKET DEMANDS FOR THE LIS PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT: - *LIS education in India has undergone substantial growth since its independence. The increase in number of LIS departments in the universities and institutions offering specialized courses (e.g. DRTC, NISCAIR etc.), distance education offered by open universities (e.g. IGNOU, Annamalai University) as well as regular universities and also the certificate course as offered by BLA, DLA and other organizations are some of the contributing factors for its increased growth in India. Research has also been initiated and accelerated in different facets of the subject with the support of the universities and different funding agencies like UGC, CSIR, DRDO etc. To evaluate the progress in LIS, the paper aims at mapping the resources used for teaching LIS by comparing the syllabus of different institutions and universities. The extent to which these resources co-relate in channelising LIS education in accordance with present market demand for the LIS professionals has also been analysed. The goal is to study the shortcomings and also the recommendations in order to overcome the lacunas. The basic issue addressed in this paper is the relation between LIS education and the requirements of professionals in order to transform India into a knowledge society.*

KEY WORDS – LIS education, syllabus, growth, LIS professionals, market demand, knowledge society.

1. INTRODUCTION

Library and Information Science (LIS) education in India is presently growing very fast as a subject with a multidisciplinary approach. Now-a-days LIS education not only includes library related subjects but it has so many extensions like computer application, statistics, mathematics, management studies and operational research. LIS education in India has expanded since independence in the form of increase in number of

LIS departments in the universities and institutions offering specialized courses in LIS and in the increase in number of students as well as courses. Research has also been initiated and accelerated in different facets of the subject with the support of the universities and different funding agencies (Satija, 1993). But the woeful truth is that the growth has not been consistent enough. Large disparity prevails in the quality of LIS education offered by various universities and institutions of which few universities and institutions are maintaining good standards whereas others are ordinary or average. There is also lack of frequent Industry-LIS interaction which leaves the LIS departments ignorant of the current requirements and job-market. The situation demands re-evaluation of the internal quality assurance and recommendation of LIS education in India.

2. BACKGROUND

Library science education in India was started in the year 1911 by Sayaji Rao Gaikwad II, the ruler of Baroda State. He started a library science school at Baroda with the help of William Alenson Borden. The next school of library science was started in Punjab University (presently at Lahore) in the year 1915 under the guidance of an American Librarian Asa Don Dickinson. First certificate course started by Madras Library Association in 1929 and it was taken over by Madras University in 1931 by Dr. S.R. Ranganathan. Later, this course was

converted into a post graduate course of one-year duration in 1937. Bengal Library Association also started certificate course in 1935. Some others universities like Andra University(1935), Banaras Hindu University (1941), University of Delhi(1947), Aligarh Muslim University(1952) also started library science courses. The M.Phil course was first started by University of Delhi in the year 1977.

3. CURRENT TRENDS

In India about 118 universities and institutions are offering Library and Information Science (LIS) education. While Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) is offered by 105 universities, Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) courses is provided by 78 universities and 21 universities offer two-year integrated courses. Seventeen universities provide M.Phil in Library and Information Science, 53 universities provide Ph.D in Library and Information Science and 2 universities provide D.Litt Degree (Jain, Kaur, &Babbar, 2007).

4. DIFFERENCE COURSES OF LIS

The different LIS courses available in India, including regular and distance education, are as follows:

 i) Certificate course in Library and Information Science (C.Lib.Sc)

 ii) Diploma in Library and Information Science

 iii) B.Lib.Sc. /BLIS (Bachelor Degree in Library and Information Science)

iv) M.Lib.Sc. /MLIS (Master Degree in Library and Information Science)

v) MS-LIS (Master of Science in Library and Information Science)

vi) M.Phil (Master of Philosophy) in Library and Information Science

vii) PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) in Library and Information Science

viii) D.Litt in Library and Information Science (Banaras Hindu University and Utkal University)

5. LIS SYLLABUS IN INDIA

As the LIS course titles vary from one curriculum to another, the concepts listed below may not be an exact match of the terms found in the respective curriculums. In the process of regular revision, the new concepts (listed below) are added in the curriculums to match job market requirements.

Traditional Concepts	Modern Concepts
Foundation of Library and Information Science	Digital Libraries
Fundamental of Computers Theory and Practical	Networks, Networking and Consortia
Cataloguing Theory and Practical	Technology for Information Management
Library Sources and Services	Technical Writing
Knowledge Organization Theory and Practical	Content Management System
Library Management	Institutional Repository
Library Automation Theory and Practical	Emerging Technologies in Libraries
Library and Users study	Information Management System

Academic Library System	Semantic Web and Ontology
Information Retrieval and Processing	Web 1.0,Web 2.0,Web 3.0
Research Methodology etc.	Internet and Electronic publishing etc.

Digital Library seems to be the most valued course content followed by networking, content management system, web 1.0, web2.0, web3.0 etc. It is difficult to assess the impact of the newly added LIS course content in the job market but it is clear that initiatives have been taken to meet the job market demands. At the same time, the traditional concepts are indispensable because they are the building blocks of the subject. Hence, the topics namely classification, cataloguing, library management, research methodology etc. are part of all LIS curriculum.

6. CASE STUDY OF LIS MASTER'S DEGREE COURSES IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES/INSTITUTIONS

A case study of the LIS syllabuses of three major state universities/institutions of India has been presented here. Three universities of West Bengal (University of Calcutta, Jadavpur University and Rabindra Bharati University), one of Karnataka (Documentation Research and Training Centre) and one of Delhi (IGNOU, an open university) have been considered for the study. The selection is made on the basis of variation in course structures. Convenience sampling logic is followed for selecting the universities. In West Bengal, University of Calcutta introduced 2 years

course on Master of Library and Information Science (MLISC) whereas Jadavpur University and Rabindra Bharati University introduced one year course on MLISC. Together they represent the state of West Bengal in the table below. Documentation Research and Training Centre (DRTC) conducts 2 years Master of Science in Library & Information Science (MSLIS) and the only institution offering stipend to the students. IGNOU offers distance education.

Table2: Comparison of different University/Institution syllabuses

Sl. No.	Topics covered by universities	DRTC	University of Calcutta	Jadavpur University	Rabindra Bharati University	IGNOU
1.	Information Processing, Storage & Retrieval	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
2.	Content Management System	Y	N	N	N	N
3.	Informatics and Scientometrics	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
4.	Data Structure and Computer Programming	Y	N	Y	N	N
5.	Elements of Mathematics	Y	N	N	N	N
6.	Statistics & Research Methodology	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
7.	Dissertation/ Project	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
8.	Digital Library	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
9.	Semantic Web & Ontology	Y	N	Y	N	N
10.	Data/Text Mining	Y	N	Y	N	N
11.	Knowledge Management	Y	N	Y	Y	N
12.	Technical Writing	N	Y	Y	N	Y
13.	Networking Technology & Library Networks	Y	N	Y	N	N

From the above table it could be inferred that Information Processing, Storage & Retrieval, Statistics & Research Methodology, Digital library, Dissertation/Project are part of all the courses. However, Elements of Mathematics is included only in the DRTC course structure. The topics namely Content Management System and Semantic Web & Ontology are exclusively included in the DRTC course structure and Jadavpur University course curriculum. Data/Text Mining are included in both DRTC and Jadavpur University course curriculum. IGNOU course structure mainly includes the traditional topics.

7. LIS EDUCATION: PROBLEMS IN UNIVERSITIES/INSTITUTIONS

LIS education in India encounters lot of hurdles and challenges. Some of the major problems are listed below:

i) Lack of technological infrastructure in most of the LIS departments.

ii) Lack of funding in the universities.

iii) Lack of professional stuffs and teachers in the universities/institutes.

iv) Gap between job market and LIS curriculum of universities.

v) Non uniformity in the medium of instruction.

vi) Employment of LIS students, specially for freshers.

vii) Problem of nomenclature and determination of discipline.

viii) Asymmetrical treatment of the subject under different universities.

 ix) Lack of exposure.

8. LIS EDUCATION AND EMPLOYABILITY

University Grants Commission (UGC) announced in 2013 that the candidates qualifying National Eligibility Test (NET) would be eligible for jobs in the public sector undertakings (PSUs). The same is applicable in the field of Library and Information Science. Presently, employers are looking for LIS professionals who are well versed with scientific and methodical skills of management technique to provide best services to their clients. Apart from basic IT skills, a trend is starting to emerge whereby the LIS professionals are expected to have advanced IT skills and proficiency in areas of web development, web design skills, computer hardware, integrated library systems, and of course internet (Batool&Ameen, 2010).

8.1 WHAT TYPE OF JOBS ONE CAN DO AFTER STUDYING LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE?

Librarianship as profession provides different kinds of job opportunities. There are good career prospects in Library and Information Science. An individual pursuing LIS may aim to become a professor, be a library professional or enter the corporate sector as well. Each of these has their respective criteria and nature of career advancement. The key deciding factor is the individual's knack and thrust area. LIS professionals may have different designations depending on their qualifications, achievements, experience, working sector. Each of which is part of a hierarchical structure. The designations could be as follows:

•Assistant/Associate/Professor of LIS.

•Content Manager

•Documentation Officer

•Networking Manager / Relationship Manager/Knowledge Manager

•Library Assistant/Assistant /Deputy Librarian/Librarian

•Records Manager / Database Developer

•Scientists

•Taxonomist

•Vendor Relationship Manager etc.

The different sectors include: schools, colleges, universities, NGO's, in various projects, museum and archives, special libraries, public libraries, business houses, banks or any other financial institutes, information centres, media, national

centres (like DRDO, BARC,ISRO etc.), international centres (like UNO, UNDP, OCLC etc.), library networks, embassies etc.

8.2 PROBLEMS OF LIS EMPLOYABILITY

There are several issues regarding the employment of LIS professionals. Some of them are listed below:

i) Placement opportunities for fresher's. In India, on campus placement facility is very less in the field of Library and Information Science. It is a problem for freshers.

ii) Industry-LIS Interface. The industry and LIS field is not yet properly linked to each other. There should be a proper linkage between them. Most of the LIS professionals are engaged in public sector jobs. They are unaware of the jobs in the industries. It is a serious problem. Many job opportunities could be created in the private sector also.

iii) Information Literacy (IL) as a part of LIS curriculum in India. The lack of IL programmes in Indian universities is a serious problem. India needs today a strong movement of IL. University Grants Commission (UGC) should take initiative in directing the higher educational institutions to integrate the IL across the curriculum by designing a separate paper for the undergraduate and postgraduate level students. Universities should have a role in the systematic assessment of students' information competence in order to develop benchmarks.

iv) Lack of training. Training is the platform that leads to the successful onset of career. LIS sector is no exception. The conventional course structure usually does not habituate students with the practical operations of libraries. So, at least 6 months of hands-on experience is required for learning and getting acquainted with the different library operations.

v) Lack of experience among freshers. It is big concern for the freshers. Experience may be applicable for private jobs but sometimes it has been noticed that some government institutes prefer candidates having experience rather than fresher's.

vi) Often the requirement of essential qualification is first class in the 3 years Bachelor's degree. Since the person concerned is involved with LIS field and his/her 3 years Bachelor's degree has got no direct relevance, hence logically the requirement should be first class in the Bachelors and/or Masters of LIS. However, throughout a good academic record may be desirable with the growing competitive scenario.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION IN LIS CURRICULA

National Knowledge Commission (NKC) has made the following recommendations to ensure sustained attention for the development of libraries:

i) Set up a National Mission on Libraries

ii) Prepare a National Census of all Libraries

iii) Revamp Library and Information Science education, training and research facilities

iv) Re-assess staffing of libraries

v) Set up a Central Library Fund

vi) Modernize library management

vii) Encourage greater community participation in library management

viii) Promote Information Communication Technology (ICT) applications in all libraries

ix) Facilitate donation and maintenance of private collections

x) Encourage public-private partnerships in development of library and information services.

10. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The LIS syllabus of the universities/institutions has not been explicit enough in inferring the topics included by some other name. Convenience sampling logic (Only 3 states have been considered for the study) is followed for selecting the universities, which is not a preferred sampling method due to involvement of bias. The purview of the study can be extended further. All the topics could not be included in the study. In spite of these limitations, I hope that the discrepancies in LIS syllabuses are depicted in this study.

11. SUGESSIONS

The progress of LIS profession has not yet gained momentum. The responsibility lies on the shoulder of not only the LIS professionals but also the students who are the futures. Before redesigning the LIS curriculum we need to clarify

the following things:

i) LIS education is not about the service alone but also a distinct academic discipline.

ii) LIS curriculum must be committed & accountable.

iii) The sophistication and prestige of the LIS professionals should be increased. It should be at par with any other subject as well since to be appointed as college Librarians the qualification criteria is same as that of Assistant Professors. Hence there should not be any discrimination in terms of status and respect.

iv) It is important to raise the awareness of the importance of LIS professionals.

v) We the LIS professionals need to learn respecting our own profession and the responsibilities shouldered on us before expecting the desired prestige from others.

vi) Training should be provided to the LIS students in the last semester, either in academic libraries/institutions/industries so that they can get an essence of the jobs they need to perform.

vii) No work can be done in an isolated way so prominent academicians from science, social science and humanities must be consulted to make the curriculum meaningful for the society and the profession as a whole.

12. CONCLUSION

The state of LIS education in India is still traditional. Following the trends of the rest of the world, it is attempting to be increasingly ICT driven. If the LIS schools equip their students

with theoretical and practical aspects of the model IT components, then they can compete with the national and international job market requirements. The importance of libraries and LIS professionals are heavily underlined till date. Despite being a noble profession with good remuneration, job-security etc., LIS professionals still encounter crisis due to perceived lack of glamour/sophistication and prestige. It is high time that people realise the worth of LIS professionals. The whole-hearted support of the professors, scholars and students would be highly appreciated since they are the ones who can maximize the utilization of libraries and recognize the indispensable role of libraries and hence the LIS profession finally. The fervent activities of National Knowledge Commission (NKC) under the dynamic leadership of Mr. Sam Pitroda, has raised a lot of hope in the heart of the LIS students and professionals. Along with the educators, LIS professionals have been asked to facilitate an inclusive society where knowledge is accessible by all. The creation of the proposed Indian Institute of Library and Information Science by NKC is supposedly going to be the much awaited break through. Every Indian library professional is vehemently and frantically looking forward to it.

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