

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN BANGLADESH: AN OVERALL SITUATION

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Abstract. This study has made an attempt to explore the library and information science (LIS) education system in Bangladesh. This paper also identifies the different levels of LIS education, continuing education and training facilities in Bangladesh. At the same time we have tried to find out the existing problems, which create barriers for quality education as well as professional development. In the conclusion, some necessary recommendations have been given for the development of LIS education system and professional development in Bangladesh.

Introduction

Library education means educating the students for being qualified librarians or information scientists through organized instruction and training. The library education system was started in Bangladesh before her independence. The country has almost fifty years of education history in LIS. We have an education system from certificate course to PhD in LIS. Two universities offer B.A. (Honours) and M.A. in LIS and twelve institutes offer diploma courses. In recent times, some private universities are also offering diploma and certificate course in LIS. About five hundred LIS professionals are being produced from these educational institutions every year. But this number is not sufficient to meet the information requirements of one hundred and forty million people of Bangladesh. Not only that, the quality of LIS professionals is not up to the mark but also we have to work hard for the overall development from education system to professional development.

Methodology

This study is based on primary data gathered through a short questionnaire, interviews and observations. A pre-structured questionnaire was prepared with both open & close-ended questions to collect data on different variables concerning the articles. Furthermore, the authors have gone through a lot national and international articles and books on the related topics that have been used as secondary source.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are set as follows:

- a) To provide an overview about the LIS education system in Bangladesh;
- b) To evaluate the present education and training facilities in different educational institutions/organizations in Bangladesh;
- c) To find out the problems in the existing LIS education system in Bangladesh.
- d) To assess the employment and career development opportunities for the LIS professionals in Bangladesh
- e) To put forward some suggestions regarding what measures should be implemented to solve the existing problems.

Levels of LIS Education in Bangladesh

The levels of LIS education in Bangladesh are of the following categories:

a. Certificate Course in LIS
b. Postgraduate Diploma in LIS
c. B.A. (Honours) in LIS
d. M.A. in LIS
e. Master of Philosophy(M.Phil)
f. Doctor of Philosophy(PhD)

a) Certificate Course in LIS: A certificate course in librarianship was commenced by the Librarian of Dhaka University Library in 1952 that was not continued after conducting one session. Then The Library Association of East Pakistan started its certificate course in 1958. The duration of the course is six months and those who have Higher Secondary Certificate or equivalent certificate. At this moment some other institutes also offering the course. University of Science and Technology (USTC), one of the oldest private universities in Bangladesh is offers certificate course in LIS and the course giving emphasis to create library assistant for medical libraries.

b) Postgraduate Diploma Course in LIS: A Department of library science was established in 1959 at the University of Dhaka and the Post Graduate Diploma Course was introduced in 1959-60 patterned on the University of London Library School. Then The Library Association of Bangladesh (LAB) began Post –Graduate Diploma course in 1989-1990 sessions. The same course introduced at the University of Rajshahi in 1991 (*Uddin, Md.Hanif. and Rahman. Md.Anisur*). Some Institutes of Bangladesh are offering a one-year postgraduate diploma course under National University. These institutes are as follows:

Serial No.	Name of the Institute	Location	Inception Year
01	Institute of Library and Information Science (ILIS),	Nilkhet, Dhaka	It started its diploma in 1989-1990 under LAB but it began diploma under national university in 2000.
02	Institute of Library and Information Science		1997
03	Institute of Library and Information Science (ILIS),	Chitagong,	2002
04	Institute of Library and Information Technology (ILIT),	Chitagong,	2002
05	Institute of Library and Information Studies (ILIS)	Rajshahi,	2000
06	Bangladesh Education Training and Research (BETAR),	Rajshahi,	2000
07	S.B. Science college and Technology,	Bogra,	2000
08	Institute of Library, Arts, Commerce & Science (ILACS),	Khulna,	2000
09	Institute of Education Library, and Management (IELAM),	Khulna,	2001
10	Institute of Library and Information Science, Barisal,	Barisal	2002
11	Institute of Library and Information Science, Mymensingh.	Mymensingh	2003
12	Institute of Library and Information Science, Jessore.	Jessore	2004

These institutes are producing 300 to 350 LIS professional on an average every year. All of the above mentioned institutions/colleges are privately running and their infrastructural facilities are not satisfactory and most of them have no full time faculty members.

Darul Ihsan University of Bangladesh (a private university) started one-year postgraduate diploma course in library and Information Science in 2004.

c) B.A. (Honours) Course: The University of Dhaka inaugurated three-year B.A (Hons) course in 1987-88 and the name of the Department was changed to Department of Library and Information Science. To cope with the changing situation in the field of information communication technology and to keep pace with the modern world, the university initiated four-year integrated (Hons) course in 1997-1998 sessions and total marks of the honours course have been 1900. It is also worth noting that the Department had been renamed as Information Science and Library Management (ISLM) in 2001.

Another public university in Bangladesh namely University of Rajshahi began three -year B.A (Hons) course in 1992-1993. Now B.A (Hons) course has been converted into four-year course at the University of Rajshahi.

Only one private University of Bangladesh namely Uttara University introduced four-year B.A (Hons) course in Library and Information Science but due to high tuition fees and other cost associated with the university, it did not get minimum number of students to run the programme. Royal University Of Bangladesh (Private Univ.) is also planning to introduce the course in future.

d) M.A. in LIS: The Department of Library Science of Dhaka University began its one-year postgraduate diploma course in 1959 that became a Master's degree programme in 1962 (*Foote & Mannan*). After the independence of Bangladesh two-year master's course was introduced in 1976 at the same university for those who have graduation degree. Then the university stopped the two-year master degree programme in 1994-1995 sessions and continue one-year master's programme for the honours graduate only. Students of Maser's can have the thesis paper if they acquired 55% marks in their Honours final examination and this opportunity was remained closed/off after the commencement of B.A. Honours in 1987-1988.

The University of Rajshahi started one-year master degree programme in 1995-1996 academic session. The total marks of the master's programme are 500, including thesis paper. It is also to be noted that Lalmatia Girls' College started two-year master degree programme under the National University of Bangladesh in 2002-2003 session.

e) M.A. (Evening) Programme: After a long period, the University of Dhaka again began two year master degree programme namely M.A. (Evening) Programme for the professionals who have already completed post graduate diploma in Library and Information Science. After one and a half year this programme has been opened for all graduates and only for those honours graduates who have already completed certificate or postgraduate diploma course. All the students of the programme are not having the residential facilities in the university halls (dormitories).

f) Master of Philosophy (M. Phil): Master of Philosophy (M. Phil.) programme in library science was approved by the Dhaka University during the 1974-75 session but it commenced in the session 1976-77(Ahmad, N. 1987:175). It started the two-year M. Phil programme with coursework. One year is for coursework and another year is for thesis. The students of the dept. of information science and library management who have secured 55% or above marks in their master's programme can apply to enroll in the M. Phil. They will have to appear at the written test and face a viva voce to be enrolled in M. Phil.

g) Doctor of Philosophy (PhD): The Doctor of Philosophy programme in library science was approved by Dhaka University during the session 1978-1979 began the doctoral Program in 1979 (Ahmad, N. 1987:175). In the PhD programme 'no coursework is required for the PhD candidates generally work on a thesis topic with an advisor for two to four years' (*Foote & Mannan*). So far the department of ISLM of Dhaka University has awarded three Ph. D degrees.

Continuing Education in LIS

Continuing education by definition is the provision of opportunities for people to continue their learning (*Ramaiah and Moorthy*). Nowadays it is very familiar as continuing education and life long learning. Changes and developments come very sharply to LIS. So all the universities and institutions should offer regular and diverse continued education programmes in order to refresh and update the knowledge of past graduates, professionals and teachers.

Sincerely speaking, this education is almost absent in Bangladesh. Both Dhaka and Rajshahi University do not offer continuing education for their previous graduates or the professionals. In the recent past, the dept. of LIS of Dhaka University, organized a one-day international seminar on "Library Automation" held on 30 June 1998. Since then the dept. has not taken any initiative to organize seminar at national and international level.

Training Opportunities For Professionals And Students

The training opportunity for the LIS students and professionals in Bangladesh are not satisfactory. At this moment, both the university does not offer any training programme. The dept. of LIS, university of Dhaka organized some training programme on CDS/ISIS, but due to lack of infrastructural facilities and initiative from the faculty members, the programme did not continue.

There are some leading libraries in Bangladesh which offer training programme for the LIS professionals and students, but most of them are confined on CDS/ISIS training. International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR, B) Library, Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) Library, Community Development Library (CDL) and Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) library offer training course on CDS/ISIS subject to availability of the participants. But due to high course fees, the LIS professionals cannot afford to take part in the course. Two libraries in Dhaka, name ICDDR,B & IUB also offer library attachment training, but the participation of the course is not satisfactory level due to high course fee.

Another leading private university, North South University started certificate course on "Online and Digital Librarianship" in 2004. Some other libraries also organize training programme, but the total effort is far below than the requirement.

Status of LIS Journals in Bangladesh

The Department of Library and Information Science published "Bangladesh Journal of Library and Information Science" for the first time in 1998 Vol. 1, No.1, December 1998 to bring the articles to light of a one day international seminar on library automation. Unfortunately, the journal has not been published after the first issue. The East Pakistan Library Association which is renamed as Library Association of Bangladesh (LAB) published another journal namely 'The Eastern Librarian' in 1961 and the publication of the journal is not continued. 'The last issue of this publication was a combined volume 20-22, published in the spring of 1998(Sharma, R.N.). The LAB is planning to publish the journal and it is expected that the journals will get success and will be published continuously.

Employment & Career Development

In Bangladesh, the number of public libraries is very poor, so job opportunity in the public library is very limited. On the other hand, it is hard to find any business firm that has a library and is being operated by LIS professionals. So, most of the LIS professionals are working in the educational institution and special libraries in Bangladesh. But the Government of Bangladesh has no standard rules for the educational institutions that ensure the existence of library in every school or college and there must be a librarian or an information officer. So the scopes of employment of LIS professionals are very limited. The LIS professionals are working in some academic institutions but their pay structure and other facilities are far below standard. It is also worth noting that we have many research organizations/institutions where many LIS professionals are having the opportunity to work but their salary and other facilities are different from one to another and these facilities are determined by the willingness of the authority of the organizations or institutions as the Govt. of Bangladesh has no strict policy for the LIS professionals. As a result, the LIS professionals are not getting proper employment and career development opportunity from the country.

Problems

There are many problems in the LIS education system in Bangladesh. The major problems are as follows:

1. Lack of infrastructural facilities: The majority of the institutes, which are offering postgraduate diploma, have no adequate classroom, lab for practicing cataloguing and classification, and even the department of ISLM of Dhaka University has no sufficient classroom.
2. Inadequacy of reading materials: Sufficient books, classification and cataloguing tools (DDC, LC, CC, Sears list of subject headings) are not available in all the library and information science insti-

tutes in Bangladesh. The two public universities don't subscribe any journals, which are most important for the students as well the researchers.

3. Inadequate full time faculty member/teacher: Specially, the library and information science institutes are running the postgraduate diploma course with the part time faculty member. All of them have very few full time teachers. So the students are not getting required assistance or academic support from the part time faculty members.
4. Insufficient attention to research and its facility: The Dept. of LIS in Rajshahi University does not offer M.Phil and PhD. degree. On the other hand, the department of ISLM in Dhaka University is offering those degrees, but the independent researcher does not get proper facilities at they lack of research equipments and lack of necessary fund to run the research project.
5. Lack of faculty members obtained PhD from the first world countries: There are seven PhD holders on library and information Science in the dept. of ISLM in Dhaka University. Only one of them obtained from U.K, and the rest of them are from Indian sub-continent. It is to be mentioned that there is no PhD. degree holder faculty member in LIS dept. in Rajshahi University.
6. Lack of attractive job facilities and social status for the library professional: The library and information professionals in Bangladesh are not having attractive and suitable job and the people of the country are not eager to show due respect to the librarians or information professionals and even the Government of Bangladesh is not also sincere to provide proper facilities to the information professionals. So brilliant students are not got themselves into the LIS profession.
7. Big gap between the Academician and the professionals: There is no means/ways of getting together all academicians and professionals in Bangladesh at one time in a year. So the sharing and exchanging of information and experience is totally absent in Bangladesh between the Academician and the professionals.
8. Lack of career development facilities: As there is a scarcity of continuing education and training programme, so the LIS professionals are lagging behind regarding their knowledge and other necessary skills. Moreover, the organizations or institutes where they are doing job are not providing any facilities to enhance their professional skills.
9. Absence of national policies: There is no govt. policy for LIS education system and LIS professionals in Bangladesh. So this has led to loose or decrease the professional dignity of the LIS professionals.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It appears from the findings of the study that both the LIS departments of two public universities are trying to maintain the quality of LIS education in Bangladesh. But all the LIS institutes of Bangladesh are not concern about quality education. It is also to be noted that there is no organization on the national level responsible for review, approval and accreditation of any programme including LIS education in Bangladesh. The University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh merely serve an advisory role.

In order to overcome the above problems the study is included with the following recommendations:

1. The Infrastructural facilities in all LIS educational institutions in Bangladesh should be provided by the Government as well as the authority of the concern institutes.
2. Adequate reading materials from textbooks to foreign journals both Bengali and English in print and digital format should be available in all the institutes.
3. There must have full time qualified faculty members at the LIS institutes.
4. The essential research facilities especially in the LIS department of two public universities should be increased and there should have monthly research allowance for the faculty members so that they can accelerate their research work without facing any financial crisis.
5. It is a recognized fact that the quality of degree from the first world countries is very high and they are providing quality education indeed. If more faculty members involved in LIS education in Bangladesh would get the facility to acquire their PhD degree from those developed countries, the LIS educators in Bangladesh get very much benefit from them (faculty member).
6. International collaboration like exchange of faculty members and students should be ensured both in Dhaka and Rajshahi University.
7. The Government of Bangladesh and the concerned authority should be more sincere to establish the dignity and social status of LIS professionals by formulating appropriate and equal policy to the other professionals.

8. There should have the arrangement of seminar, symposia and conferences very frequently for greater cooperation among the professionals and the academicians. It will also enable the LIS professionals to enrich their professional skills and knowledge and would be capable of maintaining a global view and an appreciation of the importance of the field internationally.
9. The opportunity of LIS education in university level (both public and private) should be expanded to produce more qualified LIS professionals.

We can conclude that time seems ripe for fleshing out the recommendations listed above and paying the way for overall development in LIS education system in Bangladesh.

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