MASTERS LEVEL LIS EDUCATION: AN EVALUATION OF UNIVERSITIES IN KERALA

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Abstract

The paper is based on a survey among the working librarians and the Faculties of Colleges and teaching departments which offers the master level programmes in LIS in Kerala. A structured, descriptive questionnaire was distributed for collection of data. The analysis reveals that the curriculum lacks the latest technologies in the field and should include more IT applications relevant in the field. The study discloses the demands for more hours for the practical training in the area of digital collection development, digitization of documents, new technology based services emerging in the field. The survey repots the lack of the permanent, experienced and qualified strength of teaching staff in all the LIS departments in the state.

Keywords: library Science, LIS education

1. INTRODUCTION

We are living in the era of most modern technology. These technologies are influenced by each and every thing in the world. LIS education also influenced and attracted towards these technological developments. Library and Information Science education and the librarians are gained more attention in this age and play a crucial role in the society. So LIS education programmes should take advantages of the global technological developments and must be matched with the contemporary information systems (Malhan, 2009) because of the information available in various formats. So preparing the Information professionals has become very important in this age. Innovative, dynamic and challenging professionals are in need of this era. For that, LIS schools have to take more care towards the molding of librarians and the information professionals. So in order to compete with the present day requirements, the course content and the curriculum followed by the LIS schools are to be up to date and needs regular revision. Many universities and other institutions/ organizations offering LIS courses from the certificate level to the PhD level programmes in the country. We have to evaluate the quality of the course curriculum whether it is need based to the present day information requirements. LIS education demand 3 components such as Core knowledge, application of Information Technology and the knowledge organization behavior and management which includes the domain knowledge of the host organization (Siddamallaiah & Karisiddappa, 2006). For providing better need based services to the users of the library, we should have the professionals of highly qualified, eminent, skilled, efficient, and

motivated in the field. The present age is the information age and the information professionals are to be open always to learn the technological advancements and the emerging trends in the field. Information personal may handle any type of knowledge based information independently.

The research and development in the computer communication technology affects the developments in the Library and Information Science Profession positively. So, we have to adopt the latest technologies emerging in this millennium for the better, precise and fast dissemination of knowledge. Incorporation of these technologies in the curriculum is a must and we should not turn our face from this.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

a) To asses the LIS curriculum in the Universities in Kerala.
b) To evaluate the incorporation of new technology in the LIS curriculum of In Kerala
c) To analyse the effectiveness of Library and Information Science education in the state.
d) To verify the professionals passed out of the LIS schools are competent in the present information age.

3. METHODOLOGY

The survey based on a structured, descriptive questionnaire has distributed among the faculties of the departments where Post graduate programmes in LIS is taught in the state. The colleges affiliated to the M.G. University and Calicut University where only undergraduate courses are offered are omitted from the survey. The St. Berchman's college Changanachery and Rajagiri College Kalamasserry under M.G. University and Farook College under Calicut University are conducting master's degree in LIS at the college level and so included in the survey. The colleges affiliated to the University of Kerala and Kannur University are not offering LIS courses and only the university departments are conducting the courses.

Another structured, descriptive questionnaire is distributed among the working librarians in Kerala as random sample for the assessment of present day information needs of the librarians which is to be included in the syllabus of LIS.

4. LIS EDUCATION IN INDIA

Library and Information Science is well established in India. The credit of which goes to Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, the father of library science in India who is responsible for the establishment of three library schools, namely madras library school, Delhi library school and the documentation Research and Training Centre, Bangalore(Kumar & Sharma, 2009). In India, as we all know, the LIS education has emerged as a formal course by the effort of W.A. Borden and A.D. Dickinson. In 1911 Borden introduced a training course in the central library and the Dickinson in the Punjab University in 1915 for the LIS. The Punjab University School is placed second after the Columbia School which is the first library school known in the world (Alimohammadi & Jamali, 2011). From 1911, the LIS

education has undergone a gradual development and in 2011 we have celebrated 100 years of LIS education in our country. After these hundred years, we have to evaluate the development, quality and importance of LIS education in the country. Many universities, institutions and other organizations are conducting LIS courses in India at different levels.

UGC appointed a committee of experts including teachers, practicing librarians and scientists which made an effort in designing the national curriculum for LIS education. The modular curriculum developed by the committee by keeping in view of the contemporary developments in the market and examining the existing curriculum in the developing countries (Karisiddappa, Pors & Niels, 2004).

5. LIS EDUCATION IN KERALA

There are four Universities, Institute of Human Resources Development (IHRD) and the state library council is conducting LIS courses in Kerala. The state library council, IHRD and the continuing education centre of the University of Kerala offering certificate course in Library and Information Science. The four Universities are offering Master level, M Phil and PhD courses in Kerala. The details of the courses offered by different universities and colleges are given in the table1.

Table 1. LIS courses in Kerala

Sl. No.	Name of University/ College	Affiliated University	Courses Offered	Duration of Courses	No. of Faculties	
					Permanent	Guest
1.	University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram	University of Kerala	MLISc,	2 Years	2	2
			MPhil	1Year		
			PhD	5 Years		
2.	Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam	Mahatma Gandhi University	BLISc	1Year	-	5
			MLISc	1Year		
			PhD	5 Years		
3.	St. Peters College Kolancherry	Mahatma Gandhi University	BLISc	1Year	-	2
4.	St. Berchmans College, Changanacherry	Mahatma Gandhi University	BLISc	1Year	-	3
			MLISc	1Year		
5.	Ettumanoorappan College, Ettumanoor	Mahatma Gandhi University	BLISc	1Year	-	3
6.	Rajagiri Colege, Kalamasserry	Mahatma Gandhi University	BLISc	1Year	-	4
			MLISc	1Year		
7.	University of Calicut	University of Calicut	MLISc	2 Years	2	3
			MPhil	1 Year		
			PhD	4 Years		
8.	Farook College, Calicut	University of Calicut	BLISc	1Year	2	3
			MLISc	2 Years		
9.	Christ College, Irinjalakkuda	University of Calicut	BLISc	1Year	-	2
10.	Kannur University	Kannur University	MLISc,	2 Years	1	4
			MPhil	1Year		
			PhD	5 Years		

The two colleges, MAJLIS Arts and Science College, Valanchery and Kuriakose Elias (K. E College) College Mannanam, have removed the LIS departments because of the non-availability of students for the course. The college is affiliated to University of Calicut and M.G. University respectively. In both of the colleges the course was under Self Finance Scheme of courses.

Library and Information Science education demanding the regular revision and updation of the course content with the incorporation of new technologies in the field. For molding the new generation information professionals, we have to take utmost care because they are the information providers of today's and tomorrows fast moving community. So every person in the LIS field should be competent enough for the today's information age. And should have open for improving their skills and updating the knowledge.

6. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Separate questionnaires were given for the Teaching staff and the working professionals. There are 31 Faculties in total of the four Universities and colleges which offering LIS education in Kerala. So total 31 questionnaires distributed of which 30 are returned. The no. of teaching staff of the colleges affiliated to the university is kept under the head of the concerned university for analysis.

6.1. Opinion collected from the teachers

From the survey, it is clear that all the faculty members have working experience as librarian in various institutions before joining as teaching staff. The course in the M.G. University is self financing and the faculties of the university campus do not posses a doctorate degree or UGC (NET) qualified except the head of the department and in the SB College all the 3 faculties are qualified UGC (NET). They are only attending the seminars but not presenting any paper. In Kannur University, There is only one permanent faculty who is with UGC(NET), but not a doctoral degree and is the Head of the department. It reveals that the exposure towards the profession is very less and the steps to be taken to improve this condition. On the other hand the teaching fellows of Kerala University are actively participating in the seminars, conferences/workshops, presenting the papers in that and all of them having the doctorate degree.

All the universities are following UGC model curriculum and which is revising on a regular basis. The incorporation of the latest developments in the information communication technologies are included in the syllabus whenever it is revised. But still it is not adequate for the future professional competency. The all faculties expressed their interest to have the regular continuous education programmes/ training in the emerging technologies.

Almost all the faculties are responded towards all the 3 schemes of classification like C.C., DDC, and UDC for the teaching of theory and practical. Only one respondent in university of Kerala has opinioned that DDC is good for practical and the C.C. is best for theory. In Kerala university, there is one month internship programme is given as part of the curriculum. Kannur University providing 15 days internship programme in the selected, well established libraries to have a fresh hand experience to the students. The

Calicut university alsoBut there is no such provision for the course training or internship programme for the students of M.G. University.

Table 2. Mode of Teaching

Sl. No.	Teaching methods followed	responses			
		M.G. University	Calicut University	Kerala University	Kannur University
1.	Lecture Method	12(100%)	10(100%)	4(100%)	5(100%)
2.	Hands on session	-(0%)	8(80%)	4(100%)	2(40%)
3.	Lecture &demonstration method	7(58%)	6(60%)	2(50%)	3(60%)
4.	Seminar presentation	12(100%)	10(100%)	4(100%)	5(100%)
5.	Assignments	10(83%)	7(70%)	3(75%)	5(100%)

From the table it is clear that the teaching methods followed by the two universities are slightly varies. The lecture method and the seminar presentation is the mostly followed means of teaching and the hands on session is also opting in the Kerala University but is negligible in the other one. Giving assignments are the other mode opted in both the universities.

Table 3. Updating the knowledge

	Means of updating the knowledge	Responses			
		M.G. University	Calicut University	Kerala University	Kannur University
1.	By training	10(100%)	9(90%)	2(50%)	1(20%)
2.	By refresher course	5(50%)	7(70%)	3(75%)	1(20%)
3.	Self learning	10(100%)	8(80%)	4(100%)	2(40%)
4.	Surfing internet	9(90%)	10(100%)	4(100%)	5(100%)
5.	Referring journals	4(40%)	6(60%)	4(100%)	2(40%)
6.	From colleagues	3(30%)	2(20%)	3(75%)	1(20%)
7.	Seminars/conferences/ workshops	8(80%)	5(50%)	4(100%)	3(60%)

The table implies that the way of updating knowledge in the profession is varies from the teaching staff of the four universities. As per the table, in MG University, Self learning and training (100%) is the most preferable way of updating their information. Internet

(90%) and seminars/conferences (80%) stand the second and third position. Only half of teachers respond towards Refresher course (50%) in this regard. But the other three university faculties opinioned that internet surfing (100%)is the most suitable means of updating their knowledge. Training (90%), self learning (80%), Refresher course(70%), referring journals(60%) and seminars/ conferences/ workshops(50%) takes respective position of 2nd,3rd,4th 5th and 6th in the University of Calicut. Learning by self, seminars/ conferences/ workshops and the referring the journals are the means for knowledge updating knowledge of the Kerala university faculties along with the surfing internet. Refresher course and the colleagues are the second choice and the training is the third position in Kerala University. For Kannur University, seminars/ conferences/ workshops are the second choice after the internet learning by self and journals are the next choice and all others are of negligible number in Kannur University.

A question was given to the respondents so that if they have an opportunity to revise the syllabus, what will be the topics they wish to include in that. The opinion was towards the IT. They want to include the cloud computing, open source softwares, Information Communication Technology, modern trends in managements like crisis management, space management, quality management etc.

The opinion of teachers of LIS favouring unanimously for the information technology, seminars/ conferences/ workshops, refresher course/ continuing education programmes in the latest technological advancements etc. for getting updated and for improving their efficiency. The faculties of the universities are not favoring the distance education and off campus mode of teaching. All are equally responded that it is to be banned and opinioned that being a professional course it should be studied as a regular course otherwise the quality of education will be decreased. So it is better to stop these types of courses.

6.2. Opinion from the librarians

The opinion of the working professionals in the field in Kerala is collected by a questionnaire which is distributed by hand and via email by taking random samples. 75 questionnaires are distributed of which 69 are returned. The responses are analysed.

Table 4. Experience of librarians

Sl. No	Experience in Years	Responses	
		No. of responses	Percentage
1.	Up to 5 years	11	15
2.	6 to 10 years	37	54
3.	11 to 20 years	17	25
4.	21 to 30 Years	4	6
	Total	69	100

More than half of the respondents are within 6 to 10 years of experience in the field and was about 54%. The next to that comes 25% in the category within 11 to 20 years. Then 15% of them are within the experience of 6 to 10 years. The highly experienced people are least in number and of 6 %. From this we can assume that the young librarians are the major respondents and have a medium number of years of experience.

Sl. No.	Knowledge in the ICT and the practice in the digital environment	Responses			
		Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
1.	Is the library automated	46	67	23	33
2.	Familiarization with the automated environment	66	96	3	4
3.	Gained training in the digitization	13	19	56	81
4.	Knowledge in the RFID, Web 2.0 and 3.0, Cloud computing	3	4	66	96
5.	Confidence to manage a full fledged digital library independently	1	1	68	99

Table 5. ICT Knowledge of the respondents

TThe 67% library is automated and the soft wares used are different for different libraries such as Koha, Libsoft, Libmas, Soul, Libsys etc. The 96% librarians are worked in the ICT environment and only 19% got training in IT applications. The knowledge of latest developments like, RFID, cloud computing, web 2.0 library 2.0 technologies are not known for 96% of the librarians. The lion's portion (99%) of the librarians is not confident in handling the full-fledged digital library independently.

7. FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Most of the teaching staff is worked as librarians before joining in the teaching departments. It implies that they have practical knowledge as well as the teaching ability in the field. Even though they are following the UGC model curriculum there should be more incorporation of the technological innovations and developments in the field. The curriculum is revising on a regular basis in these universities and including some I T aspects in that. But still it lacks the new topics such as web 2.0, cloud computing, major digital library soft wares like Green stone, D space, new trends in the area of library management etc. More hours should be given for the hands on session of the IT applications like library soft wares, digital library, digitization techniques, etc.

Almost all teachers are confident in the professional coming out of these LIS schools are competent enough in this field. But none of the library professional is confident that they can handle a full-fledged digital library independently. They unanimously opinioned to have some additional practical training are needed for that in the area of digitization techniques, digital collection developments, its processing, retrieving and handling etc.

The internship programme should be included in the syllabus of M.G. University and the training must be given in developing the technological skills in the digitization area and ICT applications in addition to usual library work and services in a well established library. The total duration of the internship should be minimum of 3 months which is only one month in the Kerala University and 15 days in Kannur university.

The teaching methods may include the areas for the personality development, communication skills, customer relations, group discussions, seminar presentations etc. in addition to the usual lecturing, assignments and practical sessions.

The lack of qualified teachers and well established infrastructure is a problem for every institution. Facilities like a well-equipped computer lab, adequate financial support, etc. are important.

7.1. Suggestions

1. 1.Timely revision and updation of the syllabus with ad on topics like web designing tools, techniques and languages, knowledge management, customer relations, cloud computing, Web 2.0 etc.
2. The ICT applications in the networking environment, hard ware and network maintenance, installation of soft wares, Operating systems and its maintenance, etc should be included in the syllabus.
3. Provision should be given for adequate funds in the budgets for the purchase of quality books, journals and for the development of infrastructure facilities of the department.
4. Well equipped computer lab should be set up for the hands on session in the department.
5. Appoint the qualified and dynamic personal as teaching staff and duty leave should be given for attending the seminars and workshops as a motivation.
6. The Faculty exchange programme can be introduced with the LIS schools in foreign countries in order to attain the skills in different area.
7. One month study tour can be introduced as part of the course for visiting the well established library outside the country and a project report should be submitted based on this and marks/ grade should be given for this.
8. The departments should organize international seminars every year.
9. The off campus and distance education courses should be stopped in order to avoid the substandard professionals.
10. A central accreditation agency in the national level is a must in the LIS similar to the medical council of India, bar council of India, etc. This accreditation should be equivalent to the other LIS schools in the world. Steps should be taken to equate the courses of other LIS schools like ALA accreditation.

11. It is appreciable to start five year MLISc course after the plus two and abolish the certificate courses from the universities.
12. Student exchange programmes can be introduced.

7.2. Conclusion

The experiences and the challenges faced by the working library and information professionals can be consider while framing the course contents of the LIS education. Only the working professionals can know what is to be needed for the users and what may be the problems faced after having the degree. After having the LIS degree, a person should be confident enough to handle any type of library independently. For that the authority should take care of the regular revision of the course content with latest developments in the field and adequate hands on experience must be provided..

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