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The Role of Library and Information Science Education in National Development

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Introduction

Information is a crucial factor in national development, and the ability to use information tools is considered a source of power (Bordbar, n.d.). In the 21st century governments must recognize this need for information use and literacy as a means of development (Noruzi, 2006). Librarians and information experts play a key role development. The cooperation and assistance of librarians is a basis for any movement to gain development. By this cooperation and the provision of useful information in economic, cultural, social and political contexts, development becomes possible (Bordbar, n.d.).

The essential role of librarians in providing access to information for development means that LIS departments must provide dynamic educational systems. This discusses the changes needed in LIS education and the necessity of basic changes in the curricula in this field in Iran as a key factor in national development, including some guidelines for these objectives.

Defining Development

“Development” is gradual growth toward advancement and power (Zahedi Mazandarani, 2003). Development has economical, political, social and cultural aspects. Rapid expansion of knowledge and technology creates complexities in determining which factors have an effect on development. Considering factors such as culture, economy, hygiene, education, etc., leads to a broad but unified concept of development (Bahramzadeh, 2003). Taken as a whole, development is all actions that lead society toward an organized system of individual and collective living conditions relating to desirable values (Sharif al Nasabi, 1996).

Influential Factors in National Development

Resources and institutions are two important influences on national development.

Potential and actual resources are the determining factors for achieving goals. Developing countries need quick access to resources, including natural resources, advanced technology, and managers and skilled workers who are motivated ("Human Resource Development," 2002).

Human resources are particularly crucial for this effort. There is a direct connection between the quality of human resources and the structural evolution of countries. A technical and modern curriculum is important for LIS. This kind of education should be supported by higher education and programming administration.

Curricula should include skills related to designing, consulting, and improving information systems. Librarians should be qualified to make decisions on operational, executive, and technological topics, and on organizing and managing libraries and archives.

Librarians should participate in the following activities:

- Hierarchical: higher level informational management, responsibility for organizing information
- Research in LIS topics
- Technical: Execution of system operations (application)

Having the skills to participate in these activities will help librarians contribute to national development

Professional, scholarly, and scientific institutions and agencies are a key factor in development. Library organizations can serve as operational arms in development. They can adopt the goals and policies that will facilitate national development and advancement.

Selected Research on LIS Education

Change and reform in LIS education are always popular topics in the literature. Ghanjian (1974), Ebrami (1975), Dayani (2000), and Keyani (2003), all emphasize the importance of LIS and the need for intellectual and knowledgeable graduates. Fattahi (2002) reviews reforming LIS curriculum looking at the quantity and quality of the LIS teachers' skills. Mortezaie (2001) did a comparative study that analyzed LIS training in different countries, whose outcome can be used for designing a new program. Nowkarzi (2004) refers to a comparative study of an LIS BA before and after the Islamic revolution. There have been no remarkable changes in curricula during that last four decades

Challenges to LIS Education

LIS faculty have many different kinds of training and skills, but their training may not be appropriate for the current needs of society. Many librarians who have completed an LIS program do not consider this discipline an advanced and crucial field, but regard librarianship as a simple duty. Instructors who lack expertise and the lack of interaction between the computer colleges and communicative sciences (Ghardirian and Asili, 2005), has also delayed the reformation of LIS programs (Fattahi, 2006). Accepting students to LIS programs without an interview or other rigorous screening (23:4) is another challenging issue. LIS programs have not responded to the expectations of the profession or of the university community. It is necessary reform the organization, curriculum, training material and equipment, and instructor preparation.

Requirements for Change in LIS Programs

It is necessary to reform LIS education, creating new interdisciplinary courses and teaching new methods of providing information services. With continuously changing technology, the need for reformation is crucial. We need new fundamental principles for LIS education.

The classical view has many shortcomings including:

- Little attention to theory
- Creative thought not encouraged
- Training programs did not lead to research activities.

For reaching the ideals of national development, curricula should be designed to make students think about fundamental theories and concepts, and think creatively about the changes and challenges that are occurring, and simply to use tools better (14:21). There have been changes in recent years, and all have improved LIS education and its impact on national development.

Curriculum reform has many advantages. It can have a benefit for human resources and human capital (Hayati 2008). Instructors must have both the knowledge and experience, to train students to handle, manage, and analyze data in the most efficient way. Universities should apply reforms that shape the attitudes that lead to professionalism, and there must be supervision and evaluation of LIS curricula.

Scientific and professional associations can help with teaching methods and curricula for the BA through doctorate levels with the purpose of training professionals and providing continuing education. That includes international seminars and conferences on educational topics for the profession (Dayani, 2005).

The Relationship between Development and LIS

Until now, science and technology was regarded as the most important element in development, and it was given priority in universities. The process of advancement depends on knowledgeable, creative, responsible, and self confident people. Progress relies on the power of people. That includes librarians who are providing useful information for individuals and organizations who play a crucial in development. Libraries provide an environment where every user can flourish (Nowkarzi, 2004). To play this role in development, librarians must receive the appropriate professional education. Changes to the structure of higher education should be in harmony with the ideals of national development and rapid social change.

Librarians and library associations should consider the following suggestions for LIS education:

- Training in critical thinking, applying creativity in problem solving, logical reasoning, and analyzing scientific information
- Increasing the extent of studying and research
- Fostering skills in self-study as well as group study
- Extending the boundary of intellectuality and reasoning beyond mere recitation
- Training in effective interview
- Accepting social duties in a positive and responsible manner
- Thinking globally and act locally
- Respecting other notions and ideas (Sariolghalam, 2001)

These skills are also a necessary part of LIS education:

- Knowledge of evaluation and assessment
- Knowledge of designing and programming systems, cost processing, profit and cost analysis strategies, the ability to analyze theories in LIS and related fields (Fattahi, 2006)

- Knowledge of the relationship between national information systems and communication structures, and national and international guidelines in the information field.
- Skill in information technology
- Communication skills, including meetings, personnel supervision interdisciplinary research, writing, audiovisual techniques, training for system users (19).

Discussion and Conclusion

“Development” is a desirable goal for most people and nations. While development is associated with economic progress, the economy is not the only factor. There are other factors involved, including life skills and security (127:15). Science and technology, and access to information are crucial factors in development. To achieve the goal of development, professional education is essential, and we must make fundamental changes in higher education systems.

LIS is vitally important for development. Therefore librarians, libraries, and library associations, as well as information systems, all play a role in fostering creativity, innovation, and dealing with people's needs and expectations. LIS can overcome its problems and shortcomings and meanwhile adapt itself to rapid social changes. Librarians should consider what is needed for national development and train sophisticated professionals to deal with development issues (234). This requires qualified LIS teachers who have adequate knowledge and experience to train the best students.

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