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Perception of LIS Graduates on Library Internship with Special Reference to Bishop Heber College, Tiruchirappalli: A Case Study

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1. Introduction

An internship is hands-on experience training for many professional jobs, similar to an apprenticeship, more often taken up by College and University students during their undergraduate or postgraduate programme to supplement their formal education and expose them to the world of work. Employer too benefits from an internship arrangement as it gives access to interns with skills to execute relevant tasks for the employer. Many interns end up with permanent service with the same organisation in which they are interned. An internship may be compensated, non-compensated or sometimes paid to some extent. Paid internships are usually the norms found in the fields like medical and health sciences, media and in journalism whereas unpaid internships are common in academic institutions. An internship may be part-time or full-time; in general, a part-time internship is possible during the academic year and a full-time internship is on the summer vacations.

2. Library Internship

Owing to the ever-changing need of employers and the proliferation of related courses and programmes to librarianship, several changes have taken place in the field of librarianship. These changes have created a divergence between library employers and library science schools on best practices. Library employers prefer to appoint librarians who can discharge the tasks/duties of their particular institution, while LIS schools hope to encompass theory based on the curriculum and impart training in particular duties/tasks to the upcoming library employer needs. LIS graduates need to be exposed to the constantly changing trends in librarianship. The gap between the theoretical concepts taught by the LIS schools and the practical exposure expected by the employers could be achieved only through the library internship programme.

3. Bishop Heber College: A Profile

“Bishop Heber College is a religious minority educational institution established by the Tiruchirappalli - Thanjavur Diocese of the Church of South India. Its main objective is to cater to the higher educational needs of the members of the Church of South India and seeks to provide for them the best possible higher education. The revived college celebrated its Silver Jubilee in 1992, the 40th Anniversary in 2006, and the Golden Jubilee in 2016. The college offers undergraduate, postgraduate and postgraduate diploma programmes of study besides research

programmes leading to M. Phil. and Ph. D. degrees. The college was recognized by the UGC as "College of Excellence". In the 3rd cycle of reaccreditation, the NAAC awarded the college 'A' grade. The college has already established a great reputation for its high academic standards and attracts students from all over India and abroad. The college with the spirit of a goodwill ambassador has cut across boundaries to propagate its educational mission. In keeping with the present educational trend, the college has signed a number of MoU's with various universities, colleges, institutions and other agencies of international repute. (www. bhc.edu.in, 2020).

3.1. Department of Library and Information Science

Department of Library and Information Science was established in the year 1983. The department had been offering B.Sc. Library and Information Science was the first of its kind in the country till 1992. The same year a two-year integrated Master's Degree programme was introduced, later the department stepped up as a full-fledged research department offering M.Phil. and Ph.D. programmes. The department celebrated its Silver Jubilee in the year 2009. The department along with its alumni body Alumni Association of Library and Information Science (AALIS) has been organising a National Conference every year on recent trends in the field since 2002. The department has introduced three months of field-work training and a one-month internship during the final semester. The final year students of the department can take internship training from diverse libraries across the country to gain practical experience on a real-time basis. The students undergo internship training on their choices to all leading libraries, especially in the national importance institutions like, IITs, IIMs, IISER, IISc, etc.

4. Review of Literature

A literature survey was conducted to get hold of the gaps between conventional classroom teaching and the practical experience expected by employers in the academic and private industry. The following studies emphasize the need for internships for LIS graduates. Ochiagha⁵ opined the necessity of practical knowledge to the LIS graduates. Practical knowledge involves developing skills through the use of tools or equipment to perform tasks that are related to a field of study. Nse also identified the skills/knowledge required to the interns to achieve efficiency in the place of work and most of the graduates are not often enthusiastic to face the realities of the world of work until some level of an internship is provided for them. Rahman,

Momena Khatun & Mezbah emphasised the need for library schools to ensure their graduates with practical experience before they accept professional positions and they also pointed out that the public and private libraries need to appoint fresh graduates as interns and train them for their own sake as well as the benefit of the interns at large the LIS profession as a whole. Chambers examined that, interns were not exposed to core practicable principles expected at workplaces in service delivery. Library internships allow students in the master and specialist degree programmes to working in real-world settings, guided by experienced supervisors and help them in exploring career options. Edonkumoh, Nwachukwu & Agyo found that internship experience gets students exposed to modern ICTs used in librarianship and recommended that placement of interns are done by the supervisor by considering interns' health status, work/study issues and a suitable participating library and poor timing of the internship is the main problem faced by the interns. Ugwuanyi and Ezema pointed out that LIS graduates are exposed to their relevant occupational areas in the real library work situation, graduates are expected to have good understanding between theory and practice to develop good work habits. Oyedele explored that the interns learn to assume responsibilities, develop the knowledge and attitudes required for successful job performances, cultivate good work habits and explore the fields in which their career. Recently, Jeske Debora highlighted the emergence of a new form of internship (virtual or e-internship) which outlines the characteristics and how e-internship is unique compare to traditional internships, thus providing insight for practitioners and also revealed the role of students' past internship experience and prior knowledge as potential factors that influence acceptance of e-internship.

5. Methodology

Descriptive research design was adapted to the current study. The study is conducted on the basis of three objectives, namely to identify the usefulness of library internship, to find out the constraints against library internship and to suggest the ways to improve the library internship. A structured questionnaire was evolved to collect primary data from the respondents. A sample of 120 questionnaires was distributed among the postgraduate students who have studied Masters' degree in Library and Information Science in Bishop Heber College during the four academic years (2016 and 2020). 100 (83.3%) filled-in questionnaires were received from the respondents were taken for analysis and interpretation of data.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1. Usefulness of Library Internship Programme

S. No.	Usefulness of Library Internship	VHL	HL	ML	LL	VLL	Mean	Remark
01	Learned to perform the house keeping operations under real library environment	40 (200)	57 (228)	3 (9)	-	-	4.37	Accepted
02	Developed desirable work habits and attitudes	49 (245)	43 (172)	3 (9)	5 (10)	-	4.36	Accepted
03	Learned skills required to the present day job markets	34 (170)	60 (240)	3 (9)	3 (6)	-	4.29	Accepted
04	Knew the characters of library staff and their attitude towards work	42 (210)	49 (196)	3 (9)	6 (12)	-	4.27	Accepted
05	Became aware of the link that exists between theory/practice	39 (195)	47 (188)	4 (12)	8 (16)	2 (2)	4.13	Accepted
06	Learned how to manage the library more effectively	42 (210)	48 (192)	6 (18)	4 (8)	-	4.28	Accepted
07	Kept abreast of current trends in librarianship	38 (190)	50 (200)	4 (12)	8 (16)	-	4.18	Accepted
08	Got exposed to ICTs used in librarianship	39 (195)	45 (180)	5 (15)	8 (16)	3 (3)	4.06	Accepted
09	Developed confidence to manage the resources available in the library	37 (185)	51 (204)	5 (15)	4 (8)	3 (3)	4.15	Accepted
10	Learned skills required for librarianship	41 (205)	46 (184)	5 (15)	8 (16)	-	4.20	Accepted

(VHL= Very High Level, HL= High Level, ML= Moderate Level, LL= Low Level, VLL=Very Low Level)

It is observed from the above the table on the usefulness of library internship programme, 57 interns got highly benefited with regard to performing housekeeping operations under real library environment, 49 interns benefited at a very high level with regard to developing desirable work habits and attitudes, 60 interns benefited at a high level in acquiring skills required to the present-day job markets, 49 interns learned the characters and attitude towards work at a high level, 47 interns have become highly aware of the link that exists between theory/practice, 50 interns learned how to manage the library more effectively and keep abreast of current trends in librarianship at a high level, 45 interns highly exposed to ICTs, 51 interns highly benefited in building confidence to manage the resources available in the library and 46 interns highly benefited specializing in an area of librarianship, especially skills required for librarianship.

Table 2. Constraints against Library Internship Programme

S. No.	Constraints against Library Internship	SA	A	MA	D	SD	Mean	Rank
01	Wrong placement procedure	22 (110)	52 (208)	10 (30)	10 (20)	6 (6)	3.74	3
02	Lack of supervisory role of the teachers	22 (110)	48 (192)	11 (33)	12 (24)	7 (7)	3.66	5
03	Limitations in the internship libraries	27 (135)	44 (176)	14 (42)	13 (26)	2 (2)	3.81	2
04	Lack of funds in the interning library to cater to the needs of interns	20 (100)	31 (124)	13 (39)	28 (56)	9 (9)	3.28	7
05	Poor exposure of interns to acquire practical work experience in the library	28 (140)	22 (88)	5 (15)	29 (58)	16 (16)	3.17	8
06	Poor working relationship between librarians and interns	12 (60)	27 (108)	10 (30)	23 (46)	28 (28)	2.72	10
07	Insensitivity of the library to the interns' problems	23 (115)	24 (96)	9 (27)	27 (54)	17 (17)	3.09	9
08	Diversification of learning facilities in the interning library	20 (100)	36 (144)	9 (27)	28 (56)	7 (7)	3.44	6
09	Internship period is not convenient	23 (115)	51 (204)	5 (15)	12 (24)	9 (9)	3.67	4
10	No monetary benefits to the interns	28 (140)	45 (180)	11 (33)	15 (30)	2 (2)	3.85	1

(SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, MA= Moderately Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree)

It is found from the above table on constraints against library internship that No monetary benefits to the interns are ranked first (mean rank:3.85) followed by limitations in the internship libraries ranked second (mean rank:3.81), wrong placement procedure ranked third (mean rank:3.74), internship period is not convenient ranked fourth (mean rank:3.67), Lack of supervisory role of the teachers ranked fifth (mean rank:3.66), diversification of learning facilities in the interning library ranked sixth (mean rank:3.44), lack of funds in the interning library to cater to the needs of interns ranked seventh (mean rank:3.28), poor exposure of interns to acquire practical work experience in the library ranked eighth (mean rank:3.17), insensitivity of the library to the interns' problems ranked ninth (mean rank:3.09) and poor working relationship between librarians and interns ranked tenth (mean rank:2.72).

Table 3. Ways to improve Internship Programme

S. No.	Ways to improve Internship	SA	A	MA	D	SD	Mean	Rank
01	Placement for internship should be done in recognised libraries	20 (100)	57 (228)	12 (36)	4 (8)	7 (7)	3.79	4
02	Interns should be monitored by the teachers and send report to the LIS Schools	36 (180)	49 (196)	7 (21)	3 (6)	5 (5)	4.08	1
03	Interns would be involved in the placement and avoid anxiety over placement	36 (180)	44 (176)	5 (15)	2 (4)	3 (3)	3.78	5
04	Allowances / stipends should be given to the interns by the Internship libraries	32 (160)	50 (200)	5 (15)	11 (22)	5 (5)	4.02	2
05	Health of the Interns would be considered before placement	32 (160)	41 (164)	10 (30)	7 (14)	10 (10)	3.78	5
06	Libraries would be funding to the interns and enable access to all the library facilities	22 (110)	44 (176)	10 (30)	15 (30)	9 (9)	3.55	8
07	Interns permitted to undergo training in the libraries of the parent institution	21 (105)	59 (236)	5 (15)	9 (18)	6 (6)	3.80	3
08	Library school would have liaison with libraries to ensure proper training of the interns	23 (115)	51 (204)	10 (30)	12 (24)	4 (4)	3.77	6
09	Interns should undergo training at least one and half months	33 (165)	39 (156)	2 (6)	17 (34)	9 (9)	3.70	7
10	Poor working habits/truant behaviours of the interns should attract the disciplinary measure as the same for the library staff	29 (145)	46 (184)	8 (24)	11 (22)	5 (5)	3.80	3

(SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, MA= Moderately Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree)

It is clear from the above table on ways to improve internship that interns should be monitored by the teachers and send report to the LIS Schools ranked first (mean rank:4.08) followed by allowances / stipends should be given to the interns by the internship libraries ranked second (mean rank:4.02), interns permitted to undergo training in the libraries of the parent institution and poor working habits/truant behaviours of the interns should attract the disciplinary measure as the same for the library staff ranked third (mean rank:3.80), placement for internship should be done in recognised libraries ranked fourth (mean rank:3.79), health of the interns would be considered before placement and interns would be involved in the placement and avoid anxiety over placement ranked fifth (mean rank:3.78), library school would

have liaison with libraries to ensure proper training of the interns ranked sixth (mean rank:3.77), interns should undergo training at least one and half months ranked seventh (mean rank:3.70), libraries would be funding to the interns and enable access to all the library facilities ranked eighth (mean rank:3.55).

7. Findings and Discussion

The participants' demographics indicate that more than half (56%) of the LIS graduates were female. Female students preferred to study the M.Lib.I.Sc programme in Bishop Heber College than male students. It is identified that more than one-third (34.5%) of the graduates belong to the 2015-2017 batch. The department has admitted more students during the academic year 2015-2017. It was clear that the majority (62%) of the graduates hail from urban areas. Urban students were well informed of the conduct of the Library and Information Science programme in the college. It was also inferred that majority (77%) of the LIS graduates underwent internships inside the Tamil Nadu region and neighboring states of south India.

Findings related to the usefulness of a library internship programme that more than half (57) interns got highly benefited with regard to performing housekeeping operations under real library environment, majority (60) interns got highly benefited in skills required to the present-day job markets, exactly half (50) interns have learned at high level on how to manage the library more effectively and keep abreast of current trends in librarianship, more than half (51) interns got highly benefited building confidence to manage the resources available in the library.

The constraints against library internship was ranked one to ten based on the mean value of the score. No monetary benefits given to the interns were ranked first, followed by the various limitations in the internship libraries were ranked second, wrong placement procedure ranked third, internship period is noted inconvenient was ranked fourth, lack of supervisory role of the teachers was ranked fifth, diversification of learning facilities in the interning library was ranked sixth, lack of funds in the interning library to cater to the needs of interns were ranked seventh, poor exposure of interns to acquire practical work experience in the library was ranked eighth, insensitivity of the library to the interns' problems were ranked ninth and poor working relationship between librarians and interns were ranked tenth.

The study suggests a way to improve the internship and listed the factors in ascending order based on the mean value of the score. Interns should be monitored by the teachers and send

report to the LIS Schools were ranked first, allowances/stipends should be given to the interns by the internship libraries were ranked second, interns permitted to undergo training in the libraries of the parent institution and poor working habits/truant behaviours of the interns should attract the disciplinary measure as the same for the library staff were ranked third, placement for internship should be done in recognised libraries were ranked fourth, interns are involved in a placement to avoid anxiety over placement and health of the interns should be considered before placement was ranked fifth, library school would have liaison with libraries to ensure proper training of the interns were ranked sixth, interns who should undergo training for at least one and half months were ranked seventh and libraries would be funding to the interns and enable access to all the library facilities were ranked eighth were the suggestions given by the interns to improve the library internship.

8. Summary and Conclusion

The study concluded that the demographic details of the respondents reveal that more than half of the female students prefer to study M.Lib.I.Sc programme at Bishop Heber College. LIS graduates underwent internship inside the Tamil Nadu region and in neighboring states. It was revealed that interns were willing to undergo internship in the reputed institutions libraries in the southern part of India. LIS graduates got highly benefited through the internship and majority of the interns got highly benefited in skills required to the present-day job markets, more than half of the interns got highly benefited with regard to performing house-keeping operations under real library environment and more than half of the interns got highly benefited building confidence to manage the resources available in the library.

The study identified the major constraints against library internships that no monetary benefits to the interns, the various limitations in the internship libraries and wrong placement procedures. The study also suggested ways to improve the internship training, viz. Interns should be monitored by the teachers and send reports to the LIS Schools, allowances/stipends should be given to the interns by the internship libraries, interns permitted to undergo training in the libraries of the parent institution.

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