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Library Education in Bangladesh: Strengths, Problems, and Suggestions

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Introduction

Libraries are important social institutions. No community is considered complete without a library. The spread of democracy, the extension of education, the intensification of research activities, and the rapid increase in the production of recorded knowledge, have led to the enormous expansion of libraries and the development of their services. The communication of ideas is one of the most significant achievements in the cultural development of the human race. The library one of many means of human communication (Johnson, 1973) and is an important centre for disseminating knowledge.

Library development in Bangladesh is closely related to the library movement in the Indian sub-continent. Libraries in India can be traced from the history of ancient Indian libraries furnished by the travel diary of the famous Chinese traveller Fa-Hien, who visited India in 399 AD (Mishra, 1979). The British settled and stayed on for nearly two hundred years, initially for trading. They subsequently started to establish academic institutions and libraries on a small scale (Kabir, 1987).

Bangladesh emerged as an independent and sovereign country in 1971. It had been part of India until August 1947 and part of Pakistan after that (Islam, 2003). Before the mid- 19 th century, most libraries in Bangladesh were privately owned and available to certain groups (Mannan and Begum, 2002). Years of effort by librarians and other concerned citizens have radically changed this insignificant role and have made the library a widespread and vital service institution. Just one year after the enactment of the public library act in the UK, the first non-government library of the Bangladesh was established at Jessore in 1851 (Alam, 1991). Thereafter, three other non-government public libraries-- Woodburn Public Library at Bogra, Barishal Public Library at Barisal, and Rangpur Public Library at Rangpur were established in 1854 (Khan, 1984). During 1851-1955, a good number of private and non-government libraries were established. The first government public library was established in Dhaka in 1955, and opened to the public in 1958 (Foote, 1995). After 1955, the development of the library profession has been closely

linked with the efforts made by the Library Association of Bangladesh (LAB) (formerly EPLA: East Pakistan Library Association) since its establishment in 1956 (Hossain, 1980). In 1952, library education in Bangladesh started with the 3-month certificate course-training program initiated by the central library of University of Dhaka (Mirdah, 1969). The University of Dhaka (est. 1921) is commonly referred as Dhaka University.

Methodology

The study is based on a comprehensive review of literature, computation of secondary information, and treatment of primary data collected by field visits to different library education institutions. This is the result of meticulous literature search, not only of published materials but also of all unpublished sources and archival reports and documents available. A number of institutions have also been visited to examine their situation. Conversation and informal interviews with leading library educators, eminent educators, and scholars interested in libraries and working library professionals were carried out.

Findings

Library education in Bangladesh has received very little attention, although libraries need dynamic people with the proper education to achieve their goals. Library science programs have not conducted surveys to determine the needs of the country's libraries and information centers, to determine the qualifications needed to staff such institutions.

Library Education

“Education” and “Library” are two indivisible concepts, fundamentally related to and co-existent with each other. Neither is an end itself; both together are a means to an ultimate end. One survives as long as the other exists. One dies as soon as the other perishes. Education is an aggregate of all the ways in which a person develops abilities, attitudes, and other forms positive value to society. Education is the result of acquired knowledge and the accumulation of observation and experience. Education cannot exist alone in the absence of library, and library has no meaning if it cannot impart education (Islam, 1968).

Library education means educating students to be qualified librarians or information scientists through organized instruction and training. It represents a synthesis of professional action and testifies to the importance, value, and necessity of libraries for the present and the future. According to UNESCO, the goal of library education is to develop professionals who are qualified to establish, manage, operate, and evaluate user-oriented information systems and services (Large, 1987). In addition, the program should familiarize students with the role of information in society and make them fully aware of sources of information and develop skills for exploring these resources.

Library and Information Science (LIS) includes academic studies on how library resources are used and how people interact with library systems. The organization of knowledge for efficient retrieval of relevant information is also a major research goal of library education. At the same time, it should not be confused with [information theory](#), the mathematical study of the concept of information, or [information science](#), a field related to [computer science](#) and [cognitive science](#). Library education is interdisciplinary, and overlaps to some extent with the fields of [computer science](#), various [social sciences](#), [statistics](#), and systems analysis.

Development of Library Education Systems in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has had a slow and steady growth of library education, which started before independence. The country has nearly fifty-six years of history in library education. The last quarter of the 19th century was a flourishing period of innovation in general library practice in the west. After World War

I, there was a steady and gradual development of libraries in western countries. The library schools in western countries reshaped their curriculum and soon a new breed of more progressive, positive, and service-oriented librarians was produced. These remarkable developments in western library practice had no impact on Bangladesh (then part of India) during the first part of the 20 th century when the territory was under British colonial domination (Hossain, 1985). Under British rule there was noticeable development in the education in liberal arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, but, paradoxically, absolutely nothing was done regarding education for librarianship. There were libraries in the middle of the 19th century but no growth in the techniques of librarianship, which are the foundation for library development and management.

The first part of the 20 th century may be termed the “dark age” for education and training for librarianship in Bangladesh. There were libraries but not the methods and techniques of librarianship for systematic services by professionally qualified manpower (Ahmed, 1982). The concept of librarianship and the necessity of library science education were felt intensely. The awareness of urgent necessity was discernable in the learned community, but there was a lack of leadership and momentum. Bangladesh had more time to wait even after the partition of India in 1947. No major and consistent steps were taken until 1952.

First decade: 1951 - 1960

Librarianship training started with the first three-month certificate course in librarianship at the central library of the University of Dhaka in 1952. The university made provision for the institution of certificate course in librarianship under the Faculty of Arts (Khorasani, 1986; University of Dhaka, 1957). The course started with the assistance of Fulbright scholars and has been called “Fulbright Course in Librarianship”. Four Fulbright courses were conducted successively under the supervision of the then librarian of University of Dhaka, from 1955 –59 (Ahmed, 1994). The university took the opportunity to broaden the scope of library science teaching so that a number of schools were enabled to send teachers for training as school librarians.

The Fulbright courses drew a large number of candidates who were interested in librarianship. These courses testify to the growth and development of library systems and services in the country. The main objective of the course was to train the service employees of different libraries.

Table 1: Number trained

Year	Name of Courses	No. of persons trained
1952	First Certificate Course in Librarianship	03
Fulbright Courses		
1955 – 56	First Fulbright Course	08
1956 – 57	Second Fulbright Course	35
1957 – 58	Third Fulbright Course	30
1958 – 59	Fourth Fulbright Course	34
	Total:	110

The table indicates that library education in Bangladesh started formally in 1952 with the first certificate course in librarianship. The period 1952 – 59 is significant for library education, with 110 people receiving formal training.

The four successful Fulbright certificate courses led to the institution of one-year Post-Graduate Diploma (PGD) course in library science beginning in 1959-60 based on the University of London model

(Ahmed, 1981). There was no training facility apart from this course available in Bangladesh until 1958 when the LAB instituted a six-month regular certificate course in library science as the University of Dhaka suspended the Fulbright certificate course and took steps to launch PGD (Ahmed, 1990). The certificate course is still in place through eleven institutions that are affiliated with the LAB.

Second decade: 1961 - 1970

A one-year Masters of Arts (MA) course in library science was formulated at the University of Dhaka in 1962, for students who had completed the PGD (University of Dhaka, 1962). Beginning in 1962-63 with the services of distinguished American, British and Bangladeshi librarians, the MA course started on a more extensive scale.

The session of 1964-65 was a landmark in the development of library education in Bangladesh. In this session, programs and courses were recognized as a full-fledged "Department of Library Science" under the Faculty of Arts (University of Dhaka, 1965). This was the first time a university in Bangladesh established a department for library education.

Third decade: 1971 – 1980

In 1974-75, the University of Dhaka approved a two-year Master of Philosophy (MPhil) program (University of Dhaka, 1974), beginning with the 1975-76 session (University of Dhaka, 1976). At the end of 1975-76, the University of Dhaka endorsed a two-year MA course, called a "Master of Arts in Library Science." The first year was designated MA Preliminary and the second MA Final (University of Dhaka, 1977). At the same time, the PGD course continued and the successful students of PGD course could be admitted to the 2 nd year MA course. A Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program in library science was approved by the same university beginning in 1978 -79 (University of Dhaka, 1978).

Fourth decade: 1981 – 1990

During 1987-88, a three-year Bachelor of Arts (BA) with honours in library and information science began at the University of Dhaka (University of Dhaka, 1988). The department was re-named "Library and Information Science," to keep pace with the changes in information technology. The university suspended the PGD course and requested that the LAB launch that course beginning in 1989-90 (Khan, 1992).

Fifth decade: 1991 – 2000

Library and information science was introduced as a subsidiary subject in degree (pass) and honours level for affiliated colleges beginning in 1991-92 (University of Dhaka, 1990). The university started the two-year MA course in 1994-95. The one-year MA course was restricted to library and information science graduate students (University of Dhaka, 1995). In 1997-98, to align itself with the western education system, the university initiated a four-year BA (honours) course in information science and library management to replace the three-year BA (University of Dhaka, 1999). In 1999-2000 the four-year BA was declared the professional degree, to take effect in 1997-98 (University of Dhaka, 2000).

The University of Rajshahi (est. 1953), in the northwest region of the country, started a one-year PGD course in library science beginning with 1991-92 (University of Rajshahi, 1992). The university added a three-year Bachelor of Social Science (BSS) with honours in library and information science from 1992-93 under the Faculty of Social Science and established the full-fledged Department of Library and Information Science in that same session (University of Rajshahi, 1993). In 1995-96 a one-year Master of Social Science (MSS) course was introduced for its own library science graduates only (University of Rajshahi, 1996). After that, the bachelor program was converted into a four-year course beginning with 1997-98 (University of Rajshahi, 1999).

National University (est. 1992) began to offer 400 marks in library and information science as an optional subject in the BA (pass) degree beginning in 1998-99. Three different colleges under the National University will offer that program before the end of this decade.

Sixth decade: 2001 –

This is the sixth decade for library education in Bangladesh. From 2001-02, the department of University of Dhaka had the new name “Information Science and Library Management” (University of Dhaka, 2002). From that same session, the University of Rajshahi did away with the PGD course.

Table II: Library education programs offered

Name of University/Institute, Location, Year of establishment	Certificate Course 1 (6 months)	Post Graduate Diploma 2 (1 year)	BA (Pass) Course (3 years)	BA/ BSS (Hons.) (4 years)	MA/MSS (1 years)	MA (2 years)	MA (Evening) (4 semester/2years)	M. Phil. (2 years)	Ph.D. (2-3 years)
Bangladesh College of Technology & Education (BCTE), Rajshahi. 2000	v	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bangladesh South West Model Institute (BSWMI), Jessore. 2004	-	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bogra Library Science College (BLSC), Bogra. 2004	-	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Institute for Library and Information Management (ILIM), Dhanmondi, Dhaka. 1997	v	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Institute for Library and Information Science (ILIS), Nilkhet, Dhaka. 2000	v	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Institute for Library and Information Studies (ILIS), Rajshahi. 2000	v	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Institute of Education, Library and Management (IELAM), Khulna. 2000	v	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Institute of Library and Information Science (ILIS), Mymensingh. 2001	v	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Institute of Library and Information Science (ILIS), Chittagong. 2002	v	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Institute of Library and Information Technology (ILIT), Chittagong. 2002	v	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Institution of Library, Arts, Commerce and Science (ILACS), Khulna. 1999	v	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Library and Information Science Institution (LISI), Nuria, Barisal, 2002	v	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pabna Al-Amara Ideal Library and Information Science College, Pabna. 2004	-	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

S. B. Science and Technology College, Bogra. 2002	v	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Zia Education Development Institute, Choumohony, Noakhali. 2005	-	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Darul Ihsan University, Dhaka 1993	-	v	-	-	-	v	-	-	-
University of Dhaka, Dhaka. 1921	-	-	-	v	v	-	v	v	v
International Islamic University of Chittagong, Chittagong. 1995	-	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi. 1953	-	-	-	v	v	-	-	v	v
Royal University of Bangladesh, Dhaka. 2002	-	-	-	-	-	v	-	-	-
University of Science & Technology of Chittagong (USTC), Chittagong. 1992	v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Barmi Degree College, Shreepur, Gazipur	-	-	v	-	-	-	-	-	-
Basail Emdad - Hamida College, Tangail	-	-	v	-	-	-	-	-	-
Barhatta College, Netrokona	-	-	v	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fulbaria College, Mymensingh	-	-	v	-	-	-	-	-	-
Joypara Degree College, Dohar, Dhaka	-	-	v	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kalihati Degree College, Tangail	-	-	v	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lalmatia Girls College, Dhaka	-	-	v	v	-	v	-	-	-
Sathkhira Degree College, Sathkhira	-	-	v	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sufia Mohila College, Madaripur	-	-	v	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total:	12	17	09	03	02	03	01	02	02

Source: Brochure 2007 of Library Association of Bangladesh; Annual reports of National University and present survey.

The table shows that 30 institutions are providing library science education.

The National University introduced a two-year MA course in library and information science in 2003-04. From 2006-07, the university is also offering a four-year BA (honours) course in the same subject. The Lalmatia Girls' College has taken the opportunity to start both the MA and BA (honours) courses under the National University. The University of Dhaka started a two-year MA (evening) course in 2004-05 (University of Dhaka, 2005). From 2006-07, the University of Dhaka introduced a semester system for the BA (honours) course. The University of Rajshahi introduced MPhil and PhD courses for library science graduates from 2006-07. In July 2007, the University of Rajshahi re-named the department of Library and Information Science "Information Science and Library Management."

Among private universities, in 2005 Darul Ihsan University (DIU) started a PGD course in library and information science, and in 2007, a two-year MA course. Royal University of Dhaka (RUD) introduced an MSc in library management and information science in 2005. International Islamic University of Chittagong (IIUC) launched a PGD in library and information science in 2007.

In this decade, six more institutions have been established and received affiliation from LAB to start the certificate course. Four more colleges have begun to offer library and information science as an optional subject for their BA (pass) students under the National University.

Current State of Library Education

Library education in Bangladesh may be categorised as follows:

Table III: Patterns of library science education

Level of education	Nomenclature	Name of Degree	Duration of Course
Certificate	Certificate in Library and Information Science	CLIS	6 months
Post Graduate Diploma	Post-Graduate Diploma in Library and Information Science	PGDLIS	1 year
Bachelor	Bachelor of Information Science and Library Management	BA (Hons.)/BSS (Hons.)	4 years/ 8 semesters
Bachelor	Bachelor of Library and Information Science	BA (Hons.)	4 years
Bachelor	Bachelor of Arts (Pass) (Optional subject)	BA (Pass)	3 years
Master	Master of Information Science and Library Management	MA/ MSS	1 year
Master	Master of Information Science and Library Management	MA (Evening)	2 years/ 4 Semesters
Master	Master of Library and Information Science	MA	2 years/16 months
Master	Master of Science in Library Management and Information Science	MSc	2 years
Research	Master of Philosophy	MPhil	2 years
Doctorate	Doctor of Philosophy	PhD	2-3 years

Library education in Bangladesh is offered at several levels, including certificate, master's, and doctorate. There are at least three (MA, MSS, MSc) types of master's degree programs. Duration of courses ranges from six months to four years. The same certificate, diploma, or degree course name, and name of awarding certificate or degree can vary among universities and institutions. Numbers of credits can also vary.

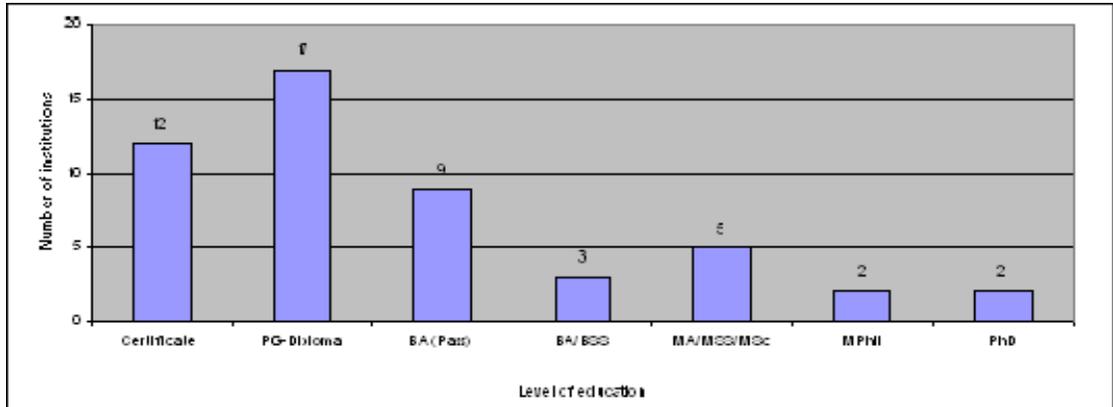


Figure 1: Library education programs offered by number of institutions

Among public universities, the University of Dhaka offers a four-year BA (honours) course, one-year MA, two-year MA (evening), two-year MPhil, and two-to-three-year PhD program. The University of Rajshahi offers the same (although degree names differ) except for the MA (evening) program. Among private universities, the University of Science & Technology Chittagong (USTC) offers a certificate course but it emphasises medical libraries (Islam and Chowdhury, 2006). International Islamic University of Chittagong (IIUC) offers a one-year PGD course. Royal University of Dhaka has introduced a two-year MSc in library management and information science; Darul Ihsan University has a one-year PGD course and two-year (4 semesters) MA. Among 30 educational institutions, only two government universities are involved in library education and the rest are all private institutions.

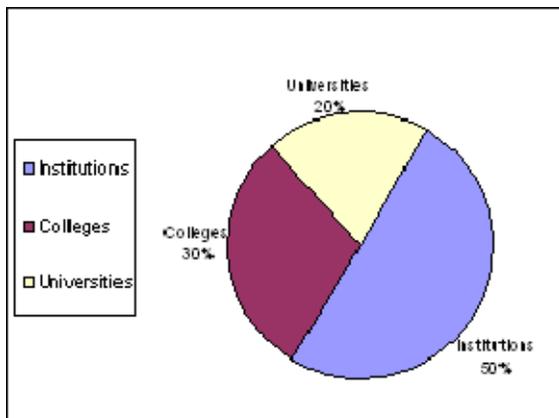


Figure 2: Educational institutions involved in library education

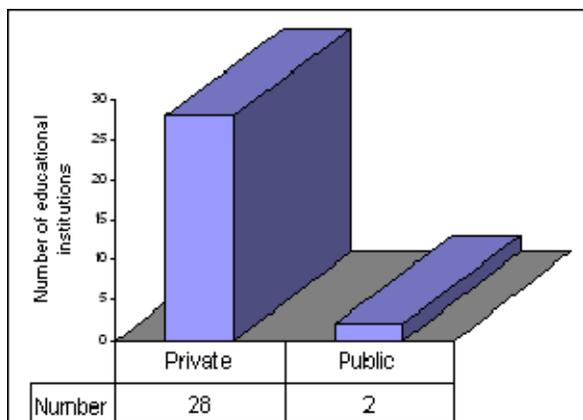


Figure 3: Public and private institutions

With the permission of the Ministry of Education, LAB has affiliated eleven institutions to conduct the certificate course. Fifteen institutions, with the affiliation of National University, conduct post-graduate diploma courses. Nine colleges offer library and information science as an optional subject in BA (Pass) course. In addition 99 institutions (14 government and 85 non-government) teachers training colleges (BANBEIS, 2008a) offer a Bachelor of Education (BEd), Bachelor of Education (BEd) with honours, and Master of Education (MEd) programs in Bangladesh under National University. In these programs library and information science is an optional subject bearing one hundred marks in their syllabus (National University, 2007).

Strengths of Library Education in Bangladesh

Library education is a relatively young field of study though it has existed nearly six decades in Bangladesh. Departments, institutions, and educators have an important responsibility, not only to teach but also to keep with the changing environment and trends in the field. It is very important to attract the best students to the program, those who have excellent knowledge of the issues and technology and who can perform well in the shrinking global society. The teaching departments should aim at high and make sure that their graduates are paid well in any type of library. The image of librarians in Bangladesh, and as a whole in the sub-continent, is not very high. It is the responsibility of departments and professional organizations like LAB and BALID (Bangladesh Association of Librarian, Information Scientists, and Documentalists) to improve the image. It is crucial to update the curricula including courses on technology in libraries. There should also be high standards for admission, performance, and the latest technology and other materials should be available to students.

Research and publication are an integral part of academia. Publication of excellent articles and books helps students to learn more and to appreciate and respect their professors. Graduates should also be able to do quality research, publication, and teaching, if required. At present in Bangladesh, there is no regular journal dedicated to library science. *Eastern Librarian* (started in 1961), the oldest library journal of Bangladesh, published by the LAB, and very much irregular at present. The last issue was volume 20, number 1 and 2, published in 2006, after long eight years since 1998, though it is scheduled to be published twice in a year. Moreover, the *Bangladesh Journal of Library and Information Science* (Vol. 1, No.1, December 1998) published by the Department of Information Science and Library Management of the University of Dhaka has not published an issue since the first one. As a result, faculty members have published in non-library science journals like *University of Dhaka Studies* and *Rajshahi University Studies*, *Journal of Asiatic Society*, *Journal of Centre for Development Research* (CDR), etc., where single author student or library professional articles are not entertained.

Similarly, only few quality books on library and information science are published in Bangladesh. Students depend on foreign library journals and books, which are expensive. Foreign books and journals should be used to gain knowledge of international library education and librarianship. Similarly, abstracts and indexes should be published in time for the benefit of researchers. Professional associations and academic departments must publish journals or newsletters on a regular basis, to keep professionals informed about developments in the field.

There has been a proliferation of library science institutes in the country. Many institutes were started without proper facilities and faculty. This has caused problems and affects the standard of library education. National University and LAB administrations have allowed institutions to develop like mushrooms, without securing proper staff, skilled faculty members, adequate preparation, and facilities. Certainly this is not the right way to provide the training that will equip librarians sufficiently. There is an urgent need for the consolidation and improvement of existing training programs and to ensure that quality is maintained.

Academic institutions and professional associations must make government aware of the importance of library education, libraries, Internet access, database development, and library networking. The government must provide proper funding for library science institutions, which are responsible for training and producing future librarians, library administrators, and library educators; otherwise, it will be difficult for them to catch up and compete in the competitive and changing modern world.

Continuing education for faculty should be an integral part of all library institutions and associations. It will help the faculty to learn teaching methods with the latest electronic tools rather than depending on their old hand-written notes, to teach courses in the fast changing field of library science.

Problems and Suggestions

Bangladesh does not have a well-developed library and information system. Library services are inefficient and do not function well, with few exceptions. Education for librarianship in Bangladesh is overwhelmed with shortfalls at all levels. library education is still facing multiple problems, e.g.:

Mission, Goals, and Objectives

There is no formal document stating the mission, goals, and objectives for library education in Bangladesh. The mission of library education programs should be clearly stated in a publicly-available formal document. It should address the purpose of the educational program in the larger political, social, economic, and technical context, and should be consistent with the non-discriminatory values of the profession. It should identify the constituencies being served and should be responsive to the needs of the country, and unless it is an independent, freestanding organization, should be consistent with the values of its parent institution. The programs should state its goals and identify specific objectives, derived from its goals, addressing philosophy, principles, and methods of the program; areas of specialization; level of preparation provided; teaching, service and research values; and the perceived role of library services in the society. The goals and objectives should be consistent with published education policy statements from recognized official bodies.

Accreditation

Library education programs must meet uniform standards for admission, curriculum, awarding of degrees, recruitment of faculty, excellent library collections, research facilities, and availability of computers for students and faculty. There is a need for an accrediting body to monitor the progress of departments and institutions, and to guide, monitor and approve their activities. There is an urgent need for a national level accrediting body. It would evaluate all programs at regular intervals make sure that quality and standards are maintained. The Bangladesh University Grants Commission (UGC) has done

an excellent job of guiding higher education in Bangladesh. The time is ripe to appoint special bodies for certification and accreditation of library science departments and institutions.

Teaching

The lecture remains the predominant teaching method. Lecture classes last for fifty minutes in all levels. This is not enough at the bachelor or master's level. Departments or institutes do not organize any seminars, colloquia, or workshops to supplement lecture classes. Classes in computer applications relevant to library and information science are totally absent except at the University of Dhaka. Presentation skill is a growing demand in librarianship, but the faculty members do not ask for a single presentation on any topic from the students.

Methods of teaching and assessment should be designed to develop or enhance students' interpersonal skills, ability to work in teams, and time and task management skills. Students should also be encouraged to participate in discussion and presentations, since much of professional library work is done publicly and verbally. Class hours should last from two to three hours, giving enough time to students for preparation.

Evaluation

The students are usually not given weekly/fortnightly/monthly/bi-monthly assignments that are part of their final grade. The evaluation of students is done by formal final examination only, sometimes including an oral examination. There is no provision of evaluation of faculty members by students.

Written assignments, group assignments, and individual projects should be assigned on current topics to help students develop their writing skills as well as the understanding of the subject. Evaluation should be done continuously on the basis of tests, assignments, projects, oral presentations, class performance, class attendance, and a formal examination. To maintain the quality of education and performances of faculty members, students should have the opportunity to appraise their teachers at the end of each course. These concepts are not new in Bangladesh. Many private universities are already practicing this.

Full time Faculty

Most institutions primarily use part-time faculty for the certificate course and post-graduate diploma course. They have an insufficient number of full-time skilled and experienced faculty members. As a result, the students are not getting the kind of assistance or academic support that they could expect from full time faculty members.

The reputation of any discipline depends on a teaching standard that presupposes adequate faculty strength with a good academic record, up-to-date knowledge of the subject, and adequate teaching experience. The number of teaching staff should be sufficient to accomplish program objectives. The qualifications of each full-time faculty member should include research-based competence in the designated teaching areas, technological proficiency, effectiveness in teaching, a sustained record of publications, and active participation in appropriate professional associations.

Information Technology Courses

The field of librarianship has changed tremendously in the last ten years because of growth of information technology and its application in the libraries. Only 10 - 20 percent of courses in all programs have any relationship with technology.

In order to remain competitive, programs must include more courses (at least 50 percent) on information technology. Necessary computer hardware, software, and multimedia resources should be made available and be sufficient for the level of use required for coursework.

Infrastructure

Institutions offering certificates or postgraduate diplomas have no space, adequate classrooms, laboratories for cataloguing and classification, and so on. Even the departments of the University of Dhaka and University of Rajshahi have an insufficient number of classrooms. Not only that, in most cases the full- or part-time faculty do not have their own desks, let alone own a room where students can meet and talk with their teachers.

The lack of adequate classrooms and facilities is an impediment to learning. National University and LAB should specify and provide adequate classrooms and labs for the institutions that provide certificates or postgraduate diploma. UGC should monitor and make it obligatory that departments have a sufficient number of classrooms for their students. All institutions and departments should provide space for faculty member, for their own sake as well as for interaction beyond formal class lectures.

Computer Labs and Practical Tools

A majority of institutions do not have well-equipped computer labs or a sufficient number of computers for students. Competent professionals cannot be produced with merely theoretical exposition; they also require adequate practical exposure by working in a well-developed computer laboratory. A sufficient number of classification and cataloguing tools (DDC, LC, CC, Sears list of subject headings) for practice are also not available.

Departments and institutions must fund well-equipped computer labs to provide students first-hand experience in information technology. A sufficient number of practical tools should be made available, because they are too costly for students to buy.

Library Collections

For library science students, the library is like a workshop or a laboratory. Many institutions have either no library at all, or a library with an inadequate collection of textbooks and reference books. Availability of the latest editions of textbooks and reference sources is altogether out of the question. Access to electronic databases is still limited or not available to most students due to lack of institutional subscriptions to expensive foreign databases.

Collections of library resources should be of sufficient depth, quantity, and accessibility to support the courses and research efforts of the institutions. These should include monographs and serials, in print and electronic formats; a range of bibliographical tools to support teaching and research; and other appropriate media. Departments should subscribe to library-related indigenous and foreign journals (print and electronic), which are most important for students and researchers. A procedure for access to additional resources from other locations should also be in place.

Curriculum

The curriculum of library science programs is quite old and needs to be restructured with redefined objectives. There is more emphasis than necessary on cataloguing and classification, which has less importance where online catalogues are available from other libraries. The syllabi are not based on market demand, as no survey has been done to discover the workforce needs of growing library and information centres.

There is an urgent need to conduct a survey to determine the staffing needs of the country's libraries and information centres. The results could be used to redesign the curricula.

Specialization

Libraries of all types have many things in common, but services are different from library to library, and among library types. No provision for specialization has been made in the syllabus; rather, all are trained in traditional librarianship. Insufficient library education programs are a hindrance to the production of a professional workforce for the development of libraries and librarianship.

Traditional courses are not effective in real life library management. Library education requires specialization. Students should specialize in a particular sector to be effective in that sector rather than jack of libraries and master of none.

Research

The LIS departments of the University of Dhaka and the University of Rajshahi work with limited resources and personnel. Sufficient attention has not been given to research work in university departments. The number of MPhil and PhD students and graduates is not encouraging. Only two MPhil students and about ten PhD students came from University of Dhaka up to February 2008. Moreover, MA, MPhil, and PhD students do not get research facilities or encouragement due to the lack of research tools and funding for research projects. The number of supervisors is too low due to pressure of undergraduate and graduate programs and the shortage of fulltime teachers.

At the postgraduate level, emphasis should be given to developing students' analytical and problem-solving skills. Research-based master programs should be promoted more. Prospective students and library professionals should be actively encouraged to pursue the MPhil and PhD. For researchers, a sustained record of scholarship is expected from both the private and public sector.

Internship and Training

An internship is a pre-professional work experience that provides students and recent graduates with the opportunity to gain experience in a particular career field. For students, internships also supplement academic classes and, in some cases, earn marks. Fresh graduates of any professional discipline are not ready to work productively until they receive training. Training provides experience in the field while academic education or knowledge give an understanding of how to perform. Intensive programs of lectures, seminars, and mentoring help a new professional to develop an early career. Both education and training are needed. Aside from the University of Dhaka and University of Rajshahi, there is no provision of internship in any syllabus from certificate to master's level.

Departments should make sure that their graduates have practical experience before they accept professional positions. Public and private sector libraries of all kinds should come forward to appoint fresh graduates as interns and train them for their own sake as well as for the development of the profession. LAB and BALID should arrange professional training on various topics including current trends in librarianship.

Continuing Education and Training

There is a scarcity of professional development training in Bangladesh. There are many library professionals who have had not training except formal library education.

In order to assist practicing librarians and information specialists and keep educators aware of issues and trends in practice, there should be a suitable number of workshops and short courses. Educational institutions and professional associations must take responsibility to train their future generation about current trends in library development, research, writing, and publishing.

Enrollment Criteria

There is no rigid criterion for student enrollment at the certificate and post-graduate diploma levels. As a result, 300-350 students per year are admitted to these institutions to be paraprofessionals or semi-professionals.

Criteria for admission should be maintained strictly to produce quality library support staff. Low quality students should be discouraged, because the profession is too much dynamic and needs high quality students to handle the upcoming situation in information management or knowledge management.

Uniformity of Degrees

There is no uniformity in the name of programs or degrees offered by various department and institutions. Library education programs are known as either Library Science (LIS) or Library and Information Science (LIS) or Library Management and Information Science (LMIS) or Information Science and Library Management (ISLM), etc. This causes confusion both in- and outside the profession. The University of Rajshahi offers the degree BSS (Hons) and MSS, under the Faculty of Social Science. The Royal University of Dhaka offers MSc, where other universities (private or public) offer BA (Hons.) and MA under the Faculty of Arts.

From certificate to post graduation level, programs should be known by one name, e.g., Information Science and Library Management. Degrees should be given under a particular faculty, consistent with the developed world as well as the Bangladeshi context, e.g., Faculty of Arts.

Number of Institutions

Only 6 (both public and private) out of 75 universities (UGC, 2008) and 16 out of 1,581 (both public & private) degree colleges (BANBEIS, 2008b) offer library science education. Among them, only two public universities offer undergraduate to PhD level, two private universities at Master's level, one private university at the certificate level, and one offers a post-graduate diploma. Among nine colleges, only Lalmatia Girls' College offers undergraduate and postgraduate programs under National University. More programs are needed.

More institutions should offer BA (hons) and MA programs in library science. UGC should create initiatives to open "Department of Information Science and Library Management" in public universities like Jahangir Nagar University, Khulna University, Chittagong University, and Shahjalal University of Science and Technology.

Library Education Policy

The government Bangladesh approved a National Book Policy in 1996 and a National Library Policy in 2001, but there is neither a National Policy for Library Science Education nor any initiatives taken to create one.

LAB and BALID should communicate the necessity and importance of national policy for library science education. Institutions related to library science education should join with these professional

bodies and to achieve a well-defined national policy for the sake of well-organized and developed library education system.

Professional Status

No separate cadre has been made for the recruitment of librarian in government institutions through Bangladesh Public Service Commission (PSC). As a result, library graduates join another cadre or take other public and private sector jobs that are not relevant to their education. Library education does not attract young talents because of its low status, low pay scale, and limited opportunities for promotion.

Creating a cadre service through PSC for library science graduates is essential to keep library graduates in the profession. In doing this, the government can get a return on its investment. Government policymakers should be aware that this is the information age, and the days when the library was a storehouse are gone. Before it is too late to attract young talents to the profession, the government must work on uniformity in pay scale, equivalence with other professions, and rationalised library structures..

Professional Associations

LAB and BALID are not working to popularize the profession and library education in the country. Many library science graduates do not join these professional associations, because there is no obligation to belong to them in order to get a library-related job.

Both associations should be more active in the development of library education. They must take a leading role in and outside the country. Members of both associations should choose dynamic personalities as their executives and leaders. Having elected officers from professional members, who work for the association in "spare" time, is not sufficient. There is a need to appoint a fulltime paid executive director. Membership in a library association should be required for a library graduate to get a library job. Library and information centres must stop the recruitment of non-professionals.

Conclusion

This study takes a historical look at library education, with a general outline of the challenges in Bangladesh. It is evident that library education is an evolving and dynamic field in Bangladesh which has not been given special attention. A comprehensive library science education system with adequate training facilities is very much needed. There is a healthy controversy about what should constitute education in these areas. Information professionals are being called upon every day to perform new tasks. The change is the result of factors such as new technologies for information and knowledge management, and the multidisciplinary nature of information science.

The present situation is not hopeless, but the essential characteristics of library service have not been developed in terms of number of libraries, skilled workforce, systematic operation, modern technology, usefulness of the system, etc. The profession is now attracting people from different social backgrounds with good academic qualifications. In the coming years, new professionals will be able to organize the entire library system of Bangladesh in a better way.

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