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Changing Needs of Library and Information Science Curricula in India

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Introduction

Curriculum guides student activities and develops instructional procedures for realizing educational objectives. Curriculum models are part of instructional design. Formulating theories of teaching, learning, and instruction begins with what is known about learning and instruction. Teaching models are the basis of teaching theories. Curriculum models are a way of expressing teaching theories.

Ocholla (n.d.) states that,

A curriculum is a fundamental part of any education or training programmes largely because it provides not only a list of courses or modules offered in a programme, but it also gives information on content, purpose, method, time/duration, trainers and location or situation of a programme or course - all of which are essential in a successful dispensation of manpower training and education."

The twenty-first century information professional must possess skills in selection, content management, knowledge management, organization of information, research services, developing and maintaining digital libraries, and bringing information resources to the desktop. People with the right skills are crucial to the success and competitiveness of contemporary information environments (Varalakshmi 2006).The jobs of the librarians have become more competitive with similar professions such as those in information technology. Library professionals must acquire the relevant skills and expertise to be competent in a digital culture.

Most of the curriculum followed in Indian LIS programs is outdated with little or no focus on the requirements of libraries or IT organizations. Programs may have traditional courses like classification and cataloguing, reference, bibliographic searching, and professional values, but the curriculum does not reflect the current needs of LIS field.

What is Curriculum

Curriculum is not easily defined. Debates are carried on over the child- versus subject-centered approach, as well as the activity-centered approach, integrated approaches, transmission of culture, or

the totality of learner experiences. The curriculum may define essential skills to meet some level of independence, and what further skills are desirable. Curriculum defines the skills and objectives to reach an optimal level of independence.

Curriculum is the Latin word for "course," which comes from Latin "currere," "to run." Historically, curriculum means classified selections of accumulated knowledge in academic subjects. Curriculum is the totality of influences and experiences, selected and unselected, conscious, subconscious, and even unconscious, and planned and unplanned, which the pupil receives through the school, in the classroom, library, laboratory, workshop, and playground and in the informal contacts between teachers and pupils.

Curriculum Development Process

Dash (2007) discusses curriculum development:

- Curriculum should be dynamic to meet the problems of the students. It should be treated differently.
- Curriculum development should be viewed at an ongoing, dynamic process, always be in a state of planned changes.

The process of curriculum design should be adoptable and applicable to many different subjects and situations. The teacher should have a primary role in the design process. They should not be relegated to a secondary position in identifying appropriate curriculum for their students

LIS education in India

The development of LIS as a field of study began with the basic skills of classification, cataloguing, indexing, reference, bibliographical search, and professional values. Dr. S.R. Ranganathan played a vital role in the development of library education, libraries, and the library profession in India. Formal LIS education in India is nearly 100 years old.

LIS Education before Independence (1910-1947)

Library education programmes started in several places long before independence in 1947. It is estimated that there were five universities conducting a diploma course before independence. In India, more professionally-trained librarians are being graduated than elsewhere in Asia, probably due to a longer-established tradition of British-inspired university organization and scholarship (Gilter 1967). In the past there was little emphasis on library service in the modern sense. Library training was not necessary and an apprenticeship in a library was sufficient. Library science training in India dates back to 1910, with formal from 1911, when the Gaekwad of Baroda, Shivaji Rao II, invited W.A. Bordon who was a librarian of the Young Man's Institute, New Haven, Connecticut, USA and a pupil of Melvil Dewey. He spent his three years organizing a library system for the State of Baroda and started the first training course for library professionals at Central Library in Baroda in 1911. Another American librarian, Asa Don Dickinson, was appointed by the Indian Government in 1915 at the University of Punjab (now in Pakistan) to organize and catalogue its library. He introduced a course of training in library methods, which was considered to be the second library school in the world, the first being at Columbia University in the US. In 1919, University of Punjab awarded a certificate in Modern Library Methods. The University of Madras began a three month certificate course in librarianship in 1929 which were inspired by Dr. S.R. Ranganathan. In 1937, it changed to a one-year graduate diploma course, which served as a model for the development of library science education courses in the country. The Banaras Hindu University began a one-year diploma course in 1941 and in 1946 Bombay University also started a diploma course in Library Science (Shrivastava 2007).

LIS Education after Independence

At the time of independence, there were five universities in India with a diploma course in library science. After independence in 1947, LIS schools in India proliferated. A master of library science program was started in 1948 at Delhi University by S.R. Ranganathan. It was the first department of library science to be constituted as a teaching department. In 1978, Delhi University also introduced the first M.Phil. course in library science in India. More new departments of library science came into existence between 1956 and 1959 (six), 1960 (nineteen), 1970 (twenty), and after 1970 (twenty-four), respectively (Shrivastava 2002).

At the present it is estimated that 120 universities offer a bachelor's degree, 78 a master's degree, 21 a two-year integrated master's degree, 16 an M.Phil., and 63 a PhD in library and information science (Sarkhel 2006).

Other degrees include certificate course, diploma and post diploma, and honors course in library and information science, a BLIS, certificate in ICT application in libraries (CICTAL), and a P.G. diploma in library automation and networking (PGDLAN). The library and information science courses are offered in face-to-face and distance mode. The LIS schools are scattered over the states and union territories of India. This depicts the mushrooming growth of LIS education in India within a span of about 50 years. There are also various advanced short-term training programmes offered as continuing education. These are run by institutions and organizations where infrastructure and facilities are available, such as NISCAIR, New Delhi, SAARC DOC Centre (SDC), New Delhi, INFLIBNET, Ahmedabad, NASSDOC, New Delhi, DELNET, New Delhi, IIM, Lucknow, SENDOC, Hyderabad, and associations such as ILA, IASLIC, and SIS. University LIS departments also conduct short training courses (Mahapatra 2006).

Some universities have also introduced correspondence courses in LIS. Indira Gandhi National Open University and some open universities are providing library courses to distant learners. The courses offered by correspondence are generally based on print material. Some of these institutions are providing short term contact classes as well. The courses offered by open universities, on the other hand, are quite innovative. They use multimedia packages for teaching and learning. Most of these institutions are using self- instruction course materials, audio and video, radio and television broadcasting, and counseling sessions. Apart from these facilities, the Indira Gandhi National Open University is using video conferencing on a regular basis. As a tool for teaching and learning, electronic networks are the most effective and quickest method of communication with distance learners. It has become essential to use such developments in LIS education to distance learners in India (Kanjilal 1998).

Lee and Chuang (1997) predicted four trends in LIS education:

(1) Developments in information technology and services have a major impact on curriculum design, and it is common for a curriculum to change with the time and technology.

(2) It becomes harder to determine the core while electives tend to be the mainstream in course selections.

(3) There appears to be an increasing emphasis on theory and research in course content.

(4) Lifelong learning becomes the focal point in curriculum development (Chu 2006).

LIS Education Infrastructure

The department of Library and Information in all the universities in India have Inadequate infrastructure to achieve the goal of modern Library and Information Science education in digital era in India. Only to review the curriculum can't be able to achieve the goal. We can design the curriculum but

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there should be adequate infrastructure to implement it. "Infrastructural facilities available Adequacy of infrastructural facilities is one of the important elements for offering qualitative teaching. The infrastructure includes the teaching and other non-teaching staff and laboratory equipments. It is noticed that except few university departments, the majority of the departments do not have the proper infrastructure facilities" (Kanjilal 1967).

LIS departments in Indian universities have inadequate infrastructure to achieve the goal of modern education in the digital era. This goal cannot be reached simply by reviewing the curriculum. There must be adequate infrastructure to implement it. Kanjilal (1967) remarks that, "infrastructural facilities available Adequacy of infrastructural facilities is one of the important elements for offering qualitative teaching. The infrastructure includes the teaching and other non-teaching staff and laboratory equipments. It is noticed that except few university departments, the majority of the departments do not have the proper infrastructure facilities."

Teaching departments are suffering from having a small staff and a lack of expertise in ICT. Many LIS programs in Indian universities have only two or three teachers available to teach and for research work. Some have most faculty on a contractual basis. Limited non-teaching staff are available for office, library, and computer labs work.

There are insufficient classrooms for the BLIS and MLIS students, and not enough rooms for research scholars and teachers in the departments. There is inadequate infrastructure for student seating as well as for teachers.

The laboratories attached to the teaching departments have an inadequate number of computers and other equipment. Some university departments, polytechnic institutes etc., have no computers, Internet, or library software for students, although they are conducting library courses through distance as well as in person.

Many university departments have very limited space for a library, and have a very small collection as well. Some departments have no library, and students can use only the central library of the university.

There are inadequate training facilities to update the professional competence of in-service teachers. Existing UGC refresher courses fail to provide needed expertise and skills to meet the growing complexities of information environment. The UGC is trying to develop comprehensive and proper training facilities for in-service training of LIS teachers.

History of LIS Curriculum Development in India

LIS curriculum change has been an inevitable continuous phenomenon in India. At the university level, the UGC mainly controls the general course structure of curricula. Since its inception, UGC has given due emphasis to curriculum design for LIS departments, along with developments in university and college libraries, as evidenced in the following committees.

Ranganathan Committee on Development of University and College Libraries (1959)

Ranganathan committee was constituted for the development of University and college libraries in 1959.

Ranganathan Committee on Library Science in Indian Universities (1965)

The existing curriculum of most universities isbased on the recommendation of the Ranganathan Committee and the committee set up by the UGC in 1978. The recommendations made by these committees where mainly for bachelors level courses, which are outdated and irrelevant in the present day. In the 1980s, a marked change in LIS education programmes was required due to the introduction of information technology into the field. As a result, the next revision was initiated by the UGC in the early 1990s (Ranganathan 1965, Mahapatra 2006).

Kaula Committee on Curriculum Development in Library and Information Science(1993)

To bring a uniform national pattern to LIS education in India, the UGC appointed the Curriculum Development Committee (CDC) in 1990 to restructure the curriculum under the chairmanship of Prof. P.N. Kaula. The report of this committee was published in 1993 under the title "Report of the curriculum development committee on library & information science" (Kaula 1993). The publication of this curriculum helped university departments update their syllabi; however, the report was found unsatisfactory and was not adopted by most universities (Mahapatra 2006).

Karisiddappa Committee on Curriculum Development in Library and Information Science (2001)

Many changes have occurred in the ICT sector, which has had a direct impact on libraries. This caused the UGC to undertake a study on the previous CDC report. The committee discussed all aspects of the curriculum and proposed modular syllabi for Indian universities (Karisiddappa 2001). The CDC (2001) recommended that "in view of the emerging network environment, in view of the fundamental shift in the goals of the library, and in view of the changes in information storage and delivery mechanisms, the educational programmes should cater the needs of these changed settings by including in their course contents, the knowledge and skills required to function effectively in such an environment". This curriculum enumerated in detail the contents of each module, along with objectives and expected outcomes. The report contains a detailed syllabus for a 2-year integrated programme leading to an MLIS, along with the marking pattern, number of credits, and number of hours of teaching theory and practice. This syllabus has proved useful, and soon after its publication, a majority of Indian universities modified their course structure to adopt it. Now, almost all LIS departments in India have common syllabi for teaching the LIS subjects. There are still some gaps in curriculum, and further revisions and updates are still needed.

Efforts of other National level Professional Associations and Organizations

Professional associations and organizations such as ILA, IASLIC, IATLIS, and SIS are also helping to revise curricula to meet current demands. ILA organized the 22nd All India conference, "Library and Information Science curriculum for 3rd World Countries," in 1987. IASLIC organized a conference on "LIS Profession in India: Vision 2010." IATLIS organized a national seminar in 2000, "Infrastructure Facility for LIS Education and Research in India." SIS also organized a conference in 2000, "Accepting the Challenges of IT Re-inventing the LIS Profession in the New Millennium." LIS education in India would benefit from translating the contents of these events into action. The traditional LIS curriculum followed by most schools in India demonstrates an urgent need to develop a model curriculum to meet contemporary needs. UGC Model Curriculum 2001 has become outdated because of the technological gap between 2001 and the present.

Need to Develop Model Curriculum for Indian Library Schools

Information professionals may be technologically ready to face challenges in the digital era. The emergence of electronic media has opened up new avenues, and the time is ripe to consider these things in framing a curriculum for LIS. Librarians without ICT knowledge and skills encounter problems in

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employment. The employers are not satisfied with the skills of LIS graduates, and prefer candidates with specialized training. LIS schools face the question of how prescriptive they should be about the curriculum in order to have market for their products. The importance of employability has been given new emphasis in all professions, and LIS is no exception. The focus is current and future trends in recruitment and the skills required to meet employers' needs.

While libraries in India are increasingly using IT products and services, library schools are slow in restructuring their curriculum in the light of the changes taking place. Fresh graduates find themselves bewildered when they are in libraries using computers and other IT products and services (Arora and Mujoo-Munshi 2000).

Objectives of the LIS curriculum are:

- Review the existing techniques and methods for education and training.
- Scan the skills and competencies currently desired in the LIS job market.
- Study and review existing LIS curricula in selected institutions.
- Identify existing courses which need updating.
- Identify areas where LIS staff need new knowledge and skills and on this basis identify areas where new courses need to be developed.
- Explore issues in and ways of adapting LIS courses to the requirements of the digital era.
- Explore the issues of accredition of LIS courses in India to ensure reasonable standard and quality of output.

Problems in UGC Model Curriculum Development

Some problems in curriculum development are:

UGC modular approach was based on local conditions and needs

The model curriculum of LIS suggested by the CDC was based on a modular approach and the modules incorporated in the model curriculum could be used as a basis for designing an actual curriculum, keeping in view local conditions and needs (UGC 2001). The curriculum must be be global in nature with local suitability.

UGC model curriculum was not adopted

In most universities, this model curriculum was unfortunately not adopted, as the role of the UGC was to make recommendations rather than accrediting. An accrediting body like ALA in the US should be created for uniform adoption of a standard curriculum.

Role of the NAAC

NAAC has two types of accreditation: institutional and departmental. Internal quality assurance and accreditation of higher education through an external agency have become part of the campus lexicon. Standards and norms for LIS education should be set by an external agency and thereafter adherence to them may be made mandatory (Baradol, 1999). Accreditation is a set of processes whereby an outside agency like ILA or some other body like an LIS commission can play a major role (Sarkhel 2006).

Centralization of curriculum

There should be uniformity in LIS curriculum throughout the country. It should be designed to fill the national needs of libraries. The efforts of the UGC in setting up curriculum development committees in various disciplines and bringing out model curricula indicates its leaning toward centralization, but in practice it has not yet happened.

No continuous efforts in monitoring the developments in the discipline

The discipline must be continuously monitored, including weaknesses and strengths of course content, suggestions from teachers with regard to the utility, sustainability, and duration of teaching of each topic, additions and deletions needed. This requires customization of courses in LIS.

Implementation of model curriculum

The model curriculum was only a model and there was no effort to enforce its implementation, because all universities are autonomous and have their own board of studies (Kumar 2004).

Conclusion

From the above discussion it is clear that the LIS curriculum requires monitoring and a statutory body like ALA to accredit programs according to an international standard. LIS professionals lack ICT skills and encounter problems in the job market. Employers are not satisfied with the skills of information professionals. Information literate professionals must have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. UGC must appoint review committees to regularly take stock of the situation in the LIS curriculum.

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