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LIS Education in India: Is it Fostering Leadership?

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Abstract:

LIS professionals today are not only required to be good information managers but also good team leaders, decision makers, motivators, collaborators and promoters of LIS. This study is an attempt to find out whether the LIS programs offered by central universities of India have curriculum to develop these leadership competencies in students. The study shows that the library management is an integral part of the curriculum. Information literacy has also been introduced in the syllabus. Field training is addressed through internship and education tours to some extent. But communication skills, personality development and skills for social interaction and responsiveness need to be addressed. LIS educators have opined that incorporating communication skills, personality development, field training, information literacy, interdisciplinary course, induction program, mentor-mentee programs and student society can enhance leadership in students. It is also suggested that international standard should be followed in the development of curriculum. Involvement of librarians will help develop curriculum in accordance to demand and bring field experience to classroom. Also, student exchange program, international internships and collaborative research needs to be promoted.

Keywords: LIS education, Leadership, Library Leaders, LIS Curriculum

Introduction

Leadership is the ability to motivate team members to achieve a common goal. It not only requires vision but also requires commitment, dedication and empathy. Leadership is a set of skills that has to be nurtured. It can be taught and enhanced through observation, participation and practice. Educators emphasize that leadership training should be integrated into the curriculum in school and college education to help students develop into leaders.

Libraries are changing and with that the demands of the profession are also changing. Leadership competencies are now essential requirements. LIS students are expected to be library leaders, who not only possess technical skills but also possess leadership skills to be part of and/or to lead a team to successful achievement of assigned goals. As they are expected to assume leadership roles at national and international level, it is imperative that LIS curriculum should cater to this need and have elements that will foster leadership in LIS students.

Leadership comprises of many competencies like team management, time management, coaching and mentoring, communication skills, etc. These competencies can be taught as a course but can also be learned through field training, mentorship and activities conducted by student organization.

This study will help redesign the LIS curriculum to effectively incorporate leadership training. This will ensure that LIS Schools produce LIS professionals groomed to adjust and adept to the demands of the dynamic society. LIS students will emerge as competent professionals who will be able to sustain and survive in today's competitive world. Keeping the bigger picture in mind, it will also ensure that LIS professionals from India will be able to take up leadership roles at national and international level in future.

Literature Review

Leadership is an integral part of any social system and so it is in a library (Gertzog, 1992). Jonge (2012) believes that leadership plays an important role in libraries where group work and team effort is required. He lists ability to develop team spirit, adaptability to change, openness to new ideas, result oriented approach, high professional morale, self confidence and morality as leadership qualities required by LIS professionals. Jatinder Kumar and Narang (2016) have listed technical and professional competencies, sense of responsibility, vision, enthusiasm, communication skills, flexibility and high ethical standards as leadership qualities that librarians should possess.

Information revolution has brought revolutionary changes in the functioning of libraries. To be able to deal with these changes and prepare for future, library managers need to resort to strategic management which requires envisioning, planning, communicating and implementing (Verma, Sharma and Madan, 2009). We now require a new set of professionals who can contribute to organisational effectiveness through cooperative relationship, shared decisions, total quality management, networking, initiative and user-oriented approach. This is possible through research, education and training (Kamila and Bhattacharjee, 2015).

In India, the government has launched the Digital India program which envisages implementation of e-governance and bringing the services of the government within the reach of every citizen by the application of ICT. Bajpai, Upadhyay, Mal and Tailang (2012) feel that libraries can play a pivotal role in achieving the government's this objective by acting as repository as well as communicator of government's information to the rural people. Librarians can act as motivators to help people to connect to government projects and services.

Datta and Choudhuri (2019) state that "sustainability is of utmost concern in every sphere of modern civilization, so it is for libraries". They suggest that libraries should play the role of community's sustainability pleader by taking part in urban and rural sustainability

policy making. They should also collaborate with local administration and other libraries and library networks, at national and international level, who are working in this direction.

So, librarians today have many roles to play and for this they have to be good leaders. Trevor (2015) believes that some qualities of leaders are innate but several leadership qualities can be taught or developed and can be nourished under the right circumstances. He stresses on planning, volunteering and participating in new activities, providing opportunities to lead and organize, mentoring and continuing education to develop leadership qualities. LIS departments can incorporate the above in the curriculum to develop leadership qualities in students.

Palomino's (2002) study shows that library employers would prefer LIS programs to prepare students to be able to work in unstable environment. It is suggested that LIS curriculum should incorporate elements to enhance communication skills, problem solving, group work, lifelong learning, creativity, risk taking capacity, innovation and intuition.

Mark (2005) has stressed on the need to prepare students for positions of responsibility as professional managers. He has suggested including internship experience, mentoring by knowledgeable professionals, in-house training and other professional development activities. He also advocates teaching ethical librarianship for effective library management and leadership roles. Muthu and Jadhav (2015) also believe adherence to professional ethics can lead the profession to excellence.

Jange (2012) conducted a study and found that leadership skills possessed by LIS professionals in Bangalore city is moderate and one of the factor responsible for it is the lack of leadership training in LIS programs. He suggests incorporating communication skills, effective public relation, marketing strategy and professional commitments in the LIS curriculum.

Librarianship competency among librarians will remain the centre of importance for academic institutions. So, it is of utmost importance to guide budding librarians to enhance their leadership skills for creating better work environments (Jatinder Kumar and Narang, 2016).

Globalisation is increasing and its effect can be seen everywhere in the society. Now the world is more interconnected and interdependent. Bansal (2004) laid emphasis on accreditation of LIS schools in India. He suggested enacting an Act titled "National Council of Library and Information Science Act", on the pattern of other Acts for different professional courses in India. This he felt would bring control and standardization in LIS profession and education and also pave way for national-international collaboration. Unfortunately, we still don't have an accreditation agency in India to bring uniformity in LIS curriculum and ensure standardization. Amit Kumar and Sharma (2016) opine that to best serve their users the libraries also need to have a global perspective. Global collaboration, leadership and new innovations need to be encouraged. They suggest that LIS curriculum should be regularly updated to incorporate new skills.

Objective

This study aims at studying the LIS Curriculum being presently followed in the Central Universities of India to find out how, through which courses and activities, it helps

develop leadership competencies in LIS students. It also aims to get the opinion of LIS educators in this regard and suggest ways to develop leadership in students.

Methodology

There are 41 Central Universities in India, established by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development. The website of these universities was scanned to identify the universities which have LIS departments offering LIS programs. The curriculum and syllabus of undergraduate and postgraduate LIS programs, of these Central Universities, was downloaded from the official website of the Universities. The curriculum was studied to find out if it had elements that could enhance leadership qualities in students. Questionnaire was also administered to teaching faculty of LIS departments of central universities and LIS faculty of some state universities, states where central universities don't offer LIS programs, to get their opinion and suggestions on the subject. The data thus obtained was analysed to identify the elements that should be included in the LIS curriculum to develop leadership qualities in the students.

Data Analysis

It was found that, out of 41 Central Universities in India, 18 Central Universities offer LIS programs through their LIS Departments. The curriculum and syllabus of undergraduate and postgraduate LIS programs, of 17 Central Universities, was downloaded from the official website of the Universities. Curriculum and syllabus of one university could not be procured.

The information about the LIS departments available on the website and the curriculum and syllabus of LIS programs was studied to identify the presence of elements that could help develop leadership qualities in the students. The data so obtained is given in Table 1.

Leadership Developing Elements in LIS Curriculum

Curriculum Content	No. of Central Universities in which it is	
	Included	Not Included
Course on Leadership	Nil	17 (100%)
Course on Library Management	17 (100%)	Nil
Course on Communication Skill & Personality Development	05 (29.42%)	12 (70.58%)
Course on Communication Skill	03 (17.64%)	14 (82.36%)
Course on Technical Writing/Communication	06 (35.29%)	11 (64.71%)
Communicative English	01 (05.88%)	16 (94.12%)
Course on Information Literacy	09 (52.94%)	08 (47.06%)

Compulsory Course from Other Discipline	02 (11.76%)	15 (88.24%)
Interdisciplinary Research Project	Nil	17 (100%)
Field Training/ Internship	09 (52.94%)	08 (47.06%)
Educational Tour	05 (29.42%)	12 (70.58%)
Induction Program	Nil	17 (100%)
Mentor-Mentee Program	Nil	17 (100%)
Student Society	02 (11.76%)	15 (88.24%)
Extension Services and Public Relation (Practical Training)	Nil	17 (100%)
Sustainability Issues (Role of Libraries)	Nil	17 (100%)

Table 1: Leadership Developing Elements in LIS Curriculum

The above table shows that none of the central universities have a course on leadership development. But, all the universities have a course on library management, though different universities follow different names for that course. The course on library management introduces the student to the various sections in the library and their functioning; various aspects of management like human resource development, financial management, etc; and new concepts like TQM, SWOT, information marketing, etc have also been addressed by the course in most of the universities.

Course on Information Literacy is introduced by 09 (52.94%) universities and it was also observed that in 06 (35.29%) universities it has been introduced as a part of a course. This shows that importance of information literacy and lifelong learning is being realized by LIS departments.

Field training is introduced by 09 (52.94%) universities and educational tour by 05(29.42%) universities. One university has introduced earn-while-you-learn program where students work in the university library for 1-2 hours every day. This provides an opportunity to students for in-field learning but this program is not available to all the students. So, to some extent there is an effort to introduce field experience in the LIS curriculum.

But, course on communication skill and personality development is introduced in only 05 (29.42%) universities and 03 (17.64%) universities have introduced a course on communication skill. It was also observed that some aspects of communication are being addressed by universities as part of different courses. Course on technical writing is introduced by 06 (35.29%) universities. Communicative English is introduced by only one university and one university has introduced English coaching classes for needy students.

Table also shows that not much has been done to introduce social interaction and responsiveness as course from other discipline is introduced in only 02 (11.76%) universities

and Interdisciplinary research project is not introduced in any university. Practical training in providing extension service and developing public relation; role of libraries in promoting sustainable development; induction program and mentor-mentee program has also not been introduced in the curriculum of any university. Student society activities provide ample opportunities to students to interact and learn to be responsive to situations but only LIS departments of 02 (11.76%) universities have student society.

Elements of Curriculum developing Leadership Qualities: LIS Educators Opinion

Questionnaire was administered to 100 LIS educators; 68 teaching faculty of LIS departments of central universities offering LIS programs and 32 teaching faculty of LIS departments of state universities, to get their opinion on elements of curriculum that enhance leadership in students.

The responses have been tabulated below in table 2. It reveals that, in the opinion of 88% LIS educators' communication skills, personality development, Extension Service and Public Relation (Practical Training) and Interdisciplinary Course/Research Project play an important role in developing leadership qualities in the students.

Also, 86% LIS educators opine that Field training/internship, induction program and Team Activities; 84% LIS educators opine that development of student societies and Mentor-mentee program; and 82% LIS educators opine that Educational Tour help in developing leadership in students.

Elements of curriculum	Very Important	Of Fair Importance	Of Average Importance	Of Little Importance	Not Important at all	No Response	Total
Communication Skills	31 (62%)	10 (20%)	3 (06%)	1 (02%)	0 (0%)	5 (10%)	50 (100%)
Personality Development Activities	31 (62%)	10 (20%)	3 (06%)	1 (02%)	0 (0%)	5 (10%)	50 (100%)
Extension Service and Public Relation (Practical Training)	24 (48%)	14 (28%)	6 (12%)	1 (02%)	0 (0%)	5 (10%)	50 (100%)
Interdisciplinary Course-Research Project	13 (26%)	23 (46%)	8 (16%)	1 (02%)	0 (0%)	5 (10%)	50 (100%)
Educational Tour	19 (38%)	12 (24%)	10 (20%)	3 (06%)	1 (02%)	5 (10%)	50 (100%)
Field Training/ Internship	26 (52%)	11 (22%)	6 (12%)	4 (08%)	1 (02%)	2 (04%)	50 (100%)
Induction Program	17 (34%)	19 (38%)	7 (14%)	1 (02%)	1 (02%)	5 (10%)	50 (100%)
Development of Student Societies	11 (22%)	19 (38%)	12 (24%)	2 (04%)	1 (02%)	5 (10%)	50 (100%)
Mentor-Mentee Programs	14 (28%)	17 (34%)	11 (22%)	5 (10%)	1 (02%)	2 (04%)	50 (100%)
Team Activities (Assignments, presentations, projects, etc.)	25 (50%)	10 (20%)	8 (16%)	5 (10%)	0 (0%)	2 (04%)	50 (100%)

Table 2 : Elements of Curriculum Developing Leadership Qualities

Even though Table 1 shows that many of the above mentioned aspects are not included in the LIS curriculum of central universities, Table 2 shows that LIS educators believe that inclusion of these aspects in the curriculum can enhance student's leadership qualities.

Course on Leadership in LIS Curriculum

Course on Leadership	Response
Required	22 (44%)
Not Required	26 (52%)
No Response	02 (04%)
Total	50 (100%)

Table3.: Course on Leadership

The importance of developing leadership qualities among students is recognized by the respondents. The need for a separate course on leadership development is felt by 44% respondents. Even though 52% of the respondents feel there is no need for a separate course on leadership development, they opine that there is a need to introduce elements in the curriculum that will help enhance leadership qualities in students.

Promotion of International Librarianship

Activities	Response
Follow International Curriculum	24 (48%)
Conduct Promotional Activities	21 (42%)
Involve in Collaborative Research	39 (78%)
Involve in Volunteering Activities	13 (26%)
Promote International Internships	33 (66%)
Student Exchange Programs	41 (82%)

Table 4: Promotion of International Librarianship

Now the world is a global village. To cater to demands of our users it is imperative that we network and collaborate. Advocacy is also need of the hour. Table 4 clearly shows that LIS educators are well aware of this demand and prefer *Student Exchange Programs* (82% respondents), *Involve in Collaborative Research* (78% respondents) and *Promote International Internships* (66% respondents) as effective methods to promote international librarianship.

Involvement of Librarians

Involvement of Librarians	Absolutely Essential	Very Important	Average Importance	Of Little Importance	Not Important at all	No Response	Total
As guest faculty	8 (16%)	14 (28%)	19 (38%)	3 (06%)	2 (04%)	4 (08%)	50 (100%)
As BOS member	8 (16%)	14 (28%)	16 (32%)	5 (10%)	3 (06%)	4 (08%)	50 (100%)
In workshops, seminars, projects, etc	12 (24%)	20 (40%)	12 (24%)	3 (06%)	1 (02%)	2 (04%)	50 (100%)

Table 5: Involvement of Librarians

It can be clearly seen from the above table that more than 75% LIS educators under the scope of study feel it is important to involve librarians as guest faculty, as member of Board of Studies (BOS) and in activities like workshops, seminars and projects.

Discussion and Recommendation

Data analysis shows that a course on library management is an integral part of the LIS curriculum of all the universities. But as pointed out by Holley (2015), a well taught management course is important for introducing students to management concepts and encouraging students to evaluate their own management potential but no claims should be made that the basic course will provide students with the skills needed to be successful managers.

Libraries in India are in the process of transformation from traditional to digital. So, librarians are working in a very dynamic environment where they have to face many challenges like increasing user demands, decreasing budgets and staff, increasing pressure to perform, increased responsibility and accountability and also cut-throat competition. Today library professionals not only have to be very good information managers but also very good leaders who can manage their team efficiently and achieve the targets. Librarians require multifaceted competencies.

Leadership concepts can be taught but leadership competencies like team-management, time-management, initiative, decision making, innovation, risk taking capabilities, time management, etc have to be practiced and nurtured. LIS educators agree that introducing communication skills, personality development, interdisciplinary course and project; and field experience through induction program, internship, education tour and dissertation can help develop leadership qualities in students. Mentor-mentee program and practical training on providing extension service and developing public relation will help develop skills for social interaction and responsiveness. Student societies will give students opportunities to conduct various activities and learn leadership through practice.

Involvement of librarians as guest faculty, as BOS member and in activities like workshops, conferences, etc. will provide an opportunity for students to learn about the practical problems of the field and prepare them for the future. Practical experience of librarians will help in developing LIS curriculum as per the profession's demand. Involvement of librarians is important, is also opined by LIS educators. This will also help in collaboration between LIS educators and librarians which in turn will facilitate better LIS education and research and help promote LIS in India.

In this time of globalization we need to think from a global perspective. It is important to incorporate international standards while developing curriculum so that our LIS programs stand at par with LIS programs of other countries and our students find opportunity globally. Respondents have suggested that we need to promote collaborative research, internships and student exchange programs at national and international level. LIS associations should play a proactive role in this direction.

Conclusion

With the changing times, leadership has become integral to library management. It would be not possible for a library professional to secure a job, execute his responsibilities and survive in the competitive environment without being a good leader. A young LIS professional is expected to be a good leader. So, it is imperative that LIS departments design and develop a curriculum which is able to foster leadership qualities in the students. The curriculum should incorporate elements which will ensure a smooth transaction for a LIS

student from student life to professional life and prepare him/her to take up leadership role at national and international level in future.

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