

Road to Meet 21st Century Challenges: A scenario on LIS education in Bangladesh

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Abstract:

In this modern era, due to extensive growth and expansion of technology and its application the role of librarians is also changing. The profession is in its most diversified form in this century where the librarians need to break the shackles of traditional approach. The nature of education and training also needed to be upgraded.

This paper aims to provide the present scenario on LIS education in Bangladesh which will include present status of LIS education, possibilities and as well as challenges. This paper will also demonstrate some recommendation for the development of LIS education particularly for Bangladesh and as well as for other developing nations as a whole. The methodology includes a qualitative approach. The study was carried out through the compilation of observation method, field survey, and interview method.

In Bangladesh, many institutions provide LIS education which offers different degrees ranging from certificate courses to Ph.D. Another fact is that only few (5) public and private universities provide honours and master degree on this subject. Although the possibilities regarding this subject has increased in recent years in Bangladesh. The information scientists of Bangladesh have felt the necessity of modernizing the LIS curriculum to meet the challenges of 21st century. The curriculum has extensively changed to incorporate the modern courses like integrated library management system, server administration, database management system, Information architecture, data mining, web based applications for library services, programming languages and so on. This study also identifies some issues which obstacles the development of LIS education in Bangladesh and recommends some measures to solve those issues.

This paper is unique in terms of representation of an overall scenario of LIS education in Bangladesh which will surely add value to know the current status of developing nations in providing LIS education.

Keywords: LIS education, Bangladesh, Prospects of LIS, Challenges in LIS education.

Introduction

The term ‘information explosion’, ‘information society’, ‘information age’ etc. have been frequently used in recent literature. Information is considered to be a key ingredient of development. Those who have more information are more powerful in the context of this 21st century. There are innumerable sources of information. The authentication of these sources, as well as the information, must be ensured. Library and Information Science (LIS) education mainly deals with this basic theme or objective. The main target of LIS education is to create skilful professionals who will be able to provide the right information to the right person at the right time through the right channel. Library education means educating the students for being qualified librarians or information scientists through organized instruction and training (Islam & Chowdhury, 2006). LIS education has been constantly changing reflecting emerging trends of modern time. The change has extended from curriculum to teaching methods. In Bangladesh, LIS education at all level is playing a vital role in creating skilled information professionals. In view of this, the present study intends to explore the current status of LIS education in Bangladesh with the possibilities and constraints associated with it. The rest of the paper will demonstrate comprehensive review of relevant literature on LIS education in the world and in Bangladesh, a brief historical background of LIS education in Bangladesh, a glimpse of the objectives and research questions that direct the study, methodology of the study, present scenario of LIS education in Bangladesh, existing problems in LIS education of Bangladesh and possible recommendations to improve overall scenario of LIS education in Bangladesh. LIS education in Bangladesh is gradually being developed and popularized. It is important to know the present scenario of LIS education, its prospects, and challenges. Thus, this study will give the opportunity to the respective authority to act accordingly based on the findings of the study to develop LIS education further in Bangladesh.

Literature Review

Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science (2002) defines Library Science as “*the professional knowledge and skill with which recorded information is selected, acquired, organized, stored, maintained, retrieved, and disseminated to meet the needs of a specific clientele....*”. Library and Information Science (LIS) includes academic studies on how library resources are used and how people interact with library systems (Rahman, Khatun & Islam, 2008). LIS education has an immense impact on the overall development of services in library and information institutions. Several studies recognize the dearth of literature on LIS education status and practices in different countries (i.e. Boyd and Cramer, 2016 in USA; Olaka, 2008 in Rwanda; Joshi, 2010 in India; Anh and Gorman, 1999 in Vietnam; Ocholla, 2008 in Africa; Ocholla and Bothma, 2007 in Southern Africa; Haycock, 2007 in Canada), internationalization of LIS education (i.e. Abdullahi, Kajberg and Virkus, 2007; Shuva, 2010), Europeanisation of LIS education (Tammara, 2011), issues in LIS education (Abdullahi and Kajberg, 2004) etc. Different schools in universities of the United States are considered as the pioneer of LIS education. Systematic library training in the USA was initiated and started by Melvil Dewey in 1887 (Malik, 2016). There are a lot of changes in LIS education have undergone in the USA to suit the pace of the recent world. The

implication of technology in LIS education, changes in skills, re-envisioning of LIS curriculum, etc. are some of its example (Boyd and Cramer, 2016). In this regard, McInerney, Daley and Vandergrift (2002) mentioned that new information and technology-oriented programs for undergraduates can dramatically change the nature, skills and self-perception. Haycock (2007) highlighted the unique characteristics and homogeneity of the Canadian accredited programs in LIS compared with those programs in the USA. He also pointed out that the history of the development of Canadian graduate programs and the national context has resulted in programs that are more homogenous than diverse. The programs are housed in public research institutions, with competition for spaces. Ocholla and Bothma (2007) identified that new qualification programs have been developed to provide opportunities for further specialization. In many cases departments have changed their names to reflect these new focus areas and extensions, and in many cases, departments have realigned themselves within their universities. Tammaro (2011) stressed on the mutual trust among schools of Europe to adopt a well-developed and compatible LIS platform. Along with researchers around the world. Bangladeshi researchers have also identified, different aspects of LIS education in Bangladesh (Roknuzzaman & Umemoto, 2013; Shuva, 2010; Rahman, Khatun & Islam, 2008, 2009).

The above review of the literature clearly indicates that there are a wide number of studies on LIS education conducted all over the world. Some works have also been done in Bangladesh as well but there is a lack of recent literature regarding the present status of LIS education in Bangladesh. Thus, this study is a timely attempt to evaluate the present status of LIS education in Bangladesh.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to-

1. Describe the historical perspective and present scenario of LIS education in Bangladesh
2. Challenges in promoting and developing LIS education in Bangladesh
3. Possible recommendations to improve the overall scenario of LIS education

Research Questions

To attain the above-stated research objectives the following Major Research Question and Subsidiary Research Questions (SRQs) needed to be answered:

MRQ: What is the present scenario of LIS education in Bangladesh?

SRQ1: What are the specific challenges faced by the library and information professionals in promoting LIS education?

SRQ2: What measures are needed to be undertaken to solve the problems associated with LIS education in Bangladesh?

Methodology and Sample of the Study

The methodology includes a qualitative approach. The study was carried out through the compilation of observation method, field survey, and interview method. For collecting the historical background of LIS education in Bangladesh extensive literature review has been done. For gathering information on the LIS education in Bangladesh review of secondary literature (i.e. websites, books on LIS, etc.) was done and also field survey method has been deployed and lastly, for determining the problems of LIS education in Bangladesh, a questionnaire was used. The data was collected from total thirty-seven (37) respondents among which library and information professionals are twenty-five and senior faculty members of LIS in Bangladesh are twelve in number.

Historical Perspective of LIS Education in Bangladesh

Bangladesh began its journey as an independent nation on 16 December 1971 after the end of the liberation war of nine months which started from 26 March 1971 (Banglapedia, 2016). However, the journey of LIS education in Bangladesh started way before its independence. The gradual development of LIS education can be described under the following broad headings-

Certificate course in librarianship: LIS education began its journey with the certificate course in librarianship. The duration of the certificate course was three month and was conducted by the library of the University of Dhaka (Khorasani, 1986). The course has been called “Fulbright Course in Librarianship” (Ahmed, 1994).

Establishment of Information Science and Library Management Department at the University of Dhaka: The University of Dhaka established “Library Science” department in 1959 with a diploma course (Islm.du.ac.bd, 2016). One-year Master’s program in Library Science soon evolved in 1962 (University of Dhaka, 1962) and approved a two-year Master of Philosophy (MPhil) program in 1974-75 (University of Dhaka, 1974). In the academic year 1978-79, the PhD program in Library Science was approved. In 1987, the department changed its name to the Department of Library and Information Science and started offering a B.A Honours course. The Department of Information Science and Library Management of the University of Dhaka currently offers honours, masters, MPhil and PhD degree (Islm.du.ac.bd, 2016).

Establishment of Information Science and Library Management Department at the University of Rajshahi: The University of Rajshahi, another public university of Bangladesh started a one-year PGD course in library science in the academic year 1991-92 (University of Rajshahi, 1992). Soon three-year Bachelor of Social Science (BSS) with honours in Library and Information Science started under the Faculty of Social Science and established the full-fledged Department of Library and Information Science in the session of 1992-93 (University of Rajshahi, 1993). In the academic year of 1995-96, a one-year Master of Social Science (MSS) course was introduced for its own library science graduates only (University of Rajshahi, 1996). Finally, the bachelor program was converted into a four-year course beginning with 1997-98 (University of Rajshahi, 1999).

LIS program at National University: National University began to offer 400 marks in the library and information science as an optional subject in the BA (pass) degree beginning in 1998-99. (Rahman, Khatun & Islam, 2008). The National University of Bangladesh had also started other programs like On-Campus Post Graduate Diploma (PGD) course, Masters in Advance Science (nubd.info, 2019).

Private University Initiatives: Due to the increasing demand for LIS professionals for effective management of information resources Kawaja Younus Ali University first introduce this course in the private sector. After that among the leading and top-ranked private universities in Bangladesh East West University has opened a four-year honours degree in 2016. The Royal University of Dhaka also started to offer a Masters of Science in Library Management and Information Science (MSLMIS, 2019).

Present Scenario of LIS Education in Bangladesh

The present scenario of LIS education in Bangladesh can be discussed in the following sub-points:

Categories of LIS education in Bangladesh: In Bangladesh, generally six categories of education on LIS are providing by different institutions. The duration of different categories of LIS education in Bangladesh is also different. The duration for the certificate course is six months, one year for PGD, four years for BA/BSS honours, one or two years for MA/MSS program, two years for MPhil and two to three years for PhD. These can be shown as a pyramid based on the hierarchy of the course module:

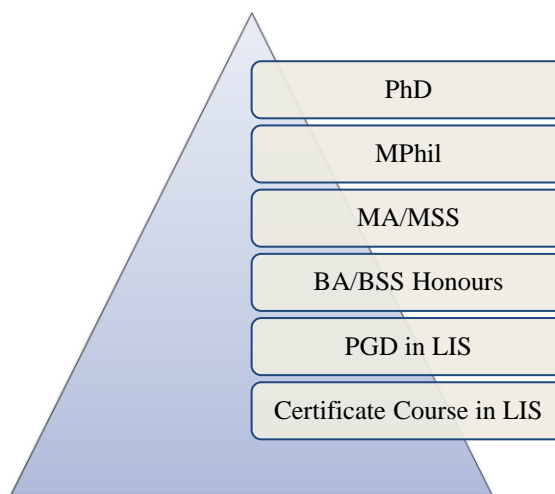


Figure-1: Levels or Categories of LIS education in Bangladesh

Table-1: List of Universities offering LIS Education at Honours and Masters Levels in Bangladesh

Name of the University	Department Name	Degree Offered	Nature	Year of Inception
University of Dhaka (DU)	Information Science and Library Management	Honours, Masters, MPhil, PhD.	Public	1959
University of Rajshahi (RU)	Information Science and Library Management	Honours, Masters, PGD	Public	1991
Noakhali Science and Technology University (NSTU)	Institute of Information Science (IIS)	Honours,PGD	Public	2016
National University	Library and Information Science	BA (Pass), MAS, PGD, MPhil, PhD	Public	1998
East West University (EWU)	Information Studies and Library Management	Honours	Private	2016
KhwajaYounus Ali University (KYAU)	Library and Information Science	Honours, Masters, PGD	Private	2013
Royal University of Dhaka	Library Management and Information Science	Masters	Private	2005
North Bengal International University, Rajshahi	Library and Information Science	Masters	Private	2013

Table-2: List of Institutions offering LIS Education at PGD, Certificate Course and other levels in Bangladesh

Name of University/Institute	Course offered and duration
Daffodil International University, Dhaka	PGD, 1 year
Dr. M. Mizanur Rahman Professional College	Diploma Course, 1 year.
Institute of Library and Information Science, Nilkhet High School Building, Dhaka	PGD, 1 year
Bangladesh South West Model Institute (BSWMI), Jessore	PGD, 1 year
Bogra Library science College (BLSC), Bogra	PGD, 1 year
Institute of Library & Information Management (ILIM), Dhanmondi, Dhaka	PGD, 1 year
Institute for Library and Information Science (ILIS), Nilkhet, Dhaka	PGD, 1 year
Institute for Library and Information Studies (ILIS) Rajshahi	PGD, 1 year
Institute of education, Library and Management (IELAM), Khulna	PGD, 1 year
Institute for Library and Information Science (ILIS), Mymensing	PGD, 1 year
Institute for Library and Information Science (ILIS), Chittagong	PGD, 1 year
Institute for Library and Information Technology (ILIS), Chittagong	PGD, 1 year
Institute of Library, Arts, commerce and science (ILACS), Khulna	PGD, 1 year
Library and Information Science Institution (LISI), NURIA, Barisal	PGD, 1 year
Pabna Al-Amana Ideal Library and Information Science College, Pabna	PGD, 1 year
B.S Science and Technology College, Bogra	PGD, 1 year
Zia Education Development Institute, Choumohony, Noakhali	PGD, 1 year
International Islamic University of Chittagong, Chittagong	PGD, 1 year
Barmi Degree College, Shreepur, Gazipur	BA (Pass) (3 years)
Basail Emdad – Hamida College, Tangail	BA (Pass) (3 year)
Barhatta College, Netrokona	BA (Pass) (3 year)
Fulbaria College, Mymensingh	BA (Pass) (3 years)
Joypara Degree College, Dohar, Dhaka	BA (Pass) (3 years)
Kalihati Degree College, Dhaka	BA (Pass) (3 year)
Lalmatia Girls College, Dhaka	BA (Pass) (3 years), Honours (4 years), Masters (Previous and Final)
Sathkhira Degree College, Sathkhira	BA (Pass) (3 year)
Sufia Mohila College, Madaripur	BA (Pass) (3 year)

LIS Curriculum Overview and Development

With the advent of ICTs and the internet, the library and information science curriculum has also changed in Bangladesh. Through the passage of time, the LIS curriculum has embraced all the recent trends that will help to build library and information professionals for the 21st century. In Bangladesh, now the curriculum is not limited within the traditional subjects that are focused on library management. But this scenario is not the same at all levels of education on LIS in Bangladesh. After the content analysis of different level course curriculum, it is found that although a noticeable change has taken place in the curriculum for honours and

master's degree but no significant changes have made towards the certificate, PGD and pass courses as Rahman, Khatun & Islam in 2009 mentioned that the curriculum is still traditional. But the analysis of the honours and masters syllabus of different universities depicts a totally different scenario where this curriculum can be capable of producing skillful library and information professionals. As discussed earlier, the degrees like certificate and PGD includes traditional courses like classification theory and practical, cataloging theory and manual cataloging practical, information sources and services, traditional indexing and abstracting theories, library management and administration etc. But the degrees like honours and masters included different innovative and futuristic courses for its students like database management system, use of internet and other technologies in library services, automated cataloging practices, system analysis and design, computer hardware and networking, digital library systems, information retrieval techniques, development and customization of Library Management Software (LMS), research methods and application in libraries etc. Courses focusing on emerging topics like information literacy and knowledge management have also been included in the curriculum. The behavioral studies of the users are also included in the course. The 21st-century management and marketing aspects of library services have also been introduced. All these courses truly indicate the multidisciplinary approach of LIS in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi institutions are trying to keep themselves up to date with the developed nations LIS education. There are also arguments among the senior faculty members regarding the inclusion of too many technology-oriented courses in LIS. They think this will endanger the identity of LIS. Others have the opinion that technological applications are inevitable for proving modern-day library services. Some universities like EWU and NSTU have introduced some really substantial courses like server administration, integrated library system development, content management systems and web-based technologies for library services, programming languages etc.

Teaching Methods and Evaluation Criteria in LIS

The teaching method, teaching instruments and evaluation criteria have also radically changed in Bangladesh for LIS education. Through interview and observation it is found that teachers are mainly using PPT slides for making the learning environment more effective. Although some faculty members opine that this creates boredom and lack of innovation in the classroom. According to them, in this method, the students limit themselves in slides. However, this method is popularly used by the faculty members of LIS in different institutions. It is also found from the interview that the teachers also used task-based or assignment based activities which requires students' involvement in finishing the task. Other than this, almost all the universities have their computer laboratory where students of LIS are given practical orientation with different topics and also given hand-on training for different topics. This is surely beneficial and has added a new dimension for creating skilled LIS professionals. It also incorporates field activities like visiting different libraries and information institutions, knowing their activities, gaining practical experiences etc. which allows users to learn by seeing and doing rather than by thinking of it. In almost every university there are theory exams, practical/Lab exams, assignments/ fieldwork, presentations and viva-voce. In this regard, it is found that the Department of Information Studies and Library Management of EWU has introduced Kahoot which is a game-based platform for taking quizzes and exams.

Faculty and Students in LIS Education

Faculty and students are the centers of concentration for any education in any country. Since the students do not have any orientation with the LIS in their secondary and higher secondary certificate they have very less idea during the admission into this department. But this

scenario is changing day by day albeit slowly. In almost every institution, students need to appear in the competitive examination to study this subject. Therefore, the students in this program are capable of implementing the learnings. The study also found that there are highly qualified faculty members for the purpose of providing LIS education in Bangladesh. It is also worth mentioning here that most of the faculty members have PhD degrees along with the huge experience in research fields.

Workshops, Training Programs and Conferences in LIS

Workshops and training programs give a hands-on review for different issues. A conference is also an important tool where knowledge from scholars, best practitioners, experienced professionals are shared. In developing the LIS education in its current state the influence of these programs is very significant. In this regard, the private universities i.e. East West University, Daffodil International University, BRAC University, North South University, South East University are playing a major role by facilitating different types of workshops and training programs on a different aspect of LIS education. The early career LIS professionals are being benefited from this. They are able to learn emerging issues and technologies in library services and also gets the hands-on-training opportunity.

Table-3: Seminar, workshops and conferences in LIS held in Bangladesh

Theme	Organizer	Place	Year
International Seminar on Digital Library & Information Support for Nation Building	Information Science and Library Management, DU	Dhaka	2009
International Conference on Information Literacy	Independent University of Bangladesh (IUB)	Dhaka	2009
International Workshop on Health Information Literacy	East-West University & IFLA	Dhaka	2011
International Seminar on Digital Library for Building Digital Nation	Library Association of Bangladesh	Dhaka	2012
The 1 st International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management (i-IKM)	East West University and Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC)	Savar, Dhaka	2019

Professional Associations for Promoting LIS education

There are different types and patterns of LIS professionals associations in Bangladesh. Two large and effective professional associations are Library Association of Bangladesh (LAB) and Bangladesh Association of Librarians, Information Scientists and Documentalists (*BALID*) who are pioneering and contributing for the development of LIS education in Bangladesh. The aim of the Library Association of Bangladesh is to deliver leadership for the development, promotion, advancement and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all (lab.org.bd, 2019). *BALID* is a national association of librarians, information scientists and teachers of information science and library management. It is the only full-fledged professional body in Bangladesh in the field of library and information management (Balid.org, 2019). These associations are closely working with different issues i.e. curriculum development movement, the arrangement of talks, dialogs and seminar to solve the issues related with LIS, organizing training and education for LIS professionals etc. for the development of LIS education.

Journals for Research and Innovation

It is to be said that education is the backbone of a nation and research is the backbone of education. Research helps to incorporate innovations and new practices in education. It is evident from the profile of the faculty members and LIS professionals in Bangladesh that they are committed to doing research in different aspects of LIS and thus actively contributing LIS education in Bangladesh. Although the LIS faculty members and professionals are publishing their work in international journals, the present scenario of publishing national journals on LIS is not satisfactory as well. Currently, there are two mainstream journals on LIS in Bangladesh named 'Bangladesh Journal of Library and Information Science' and 'The Eastern Librarian'. Both of these journals are not regularly published. While interviewing the corresponding authority of these journals they expressed their positive attitude towards taking initiatives for publishing these regularly. It is needed to maintain the continuity of such publication to promote research in Bangladesh. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the Department of Information Studies and Library Management of EWU expressed their positive intention to publish an international journal on LIS.

Problems and Obstacles for LIS education in Bangladesh

Bangladesh needs a large pool of trained information specialists to cope with the recent trends, and to carry out extensible responsibilities of the information centers in making the community ranging from rural to urban as information literate. For this purpose, a huge amount of students are engaging themselves at different levels of LIS education. The LIS faculty members and LIS professionals are also contributing to the promotion of LIS education in Bangladesh. Despite all these possibilities, the interview clearly depicts that LIS education in Bangladesh still faces some problems and obstacles. These are listed as follows:

- ***Negative attitude towards LIS education:*** Negative and traditional attitude and mindset of people regarding LIS education and profession is the major obstacle in the path of LIS development. Also the lower social status of LIS education and professionals is promoting the negative attitude. Another cause for this negative attitude is low and ununiformed patterns of salaries for LIS professionals in maximum institutions.
- ***Ununiformed patterns of LIS education:*** The pattern of education at different levels in different institutions is not uniform. Again, there is no professional accrediting body for the approval of LIS education and its curriculum. Infrastructure for PGD, certificate courses are also not satisfactory. This also results in a lack of quality LIS education in different institutions.
- ***Absence of co-operation among different units:*** Conflict of interest among LIS associations and professionals is another drawback. There is also a growing distance between library professionals and faculty members.
- ***Lack of educational and professional opportunities:*** The number of public and private universities who are offering Honours, Masters, MPhil, PhD is very few in numbers in Bangladesh. There are also fewer opportunities for an internship at different national and international organizations. It has also been seen that LIS professional jobs and posts are filling up by non-professionals in Bangladesh.
- ***Lack of Dynamism in LIS education:*** In Bangladesh, still less emphasis is given on innovation in LIS education. There is also a slow and irregular updating of the LIS curriculum among the institutions. Lack of scholarly publication on LIS by the LIS institutions is another obstacle.
- ***Lack of Initiatives by the government:*** No visible initiatives are taken by the government for the overall development of the LIS education and profession in Bangladesh.

Recommendations and Conclusion

In order to overcome the above obstacles and problems, this study is come up with the following recommendations and suggestions:

Problems	Relative Recommendations
Negative attitude towards LIS education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social awareness and movement should be made to change the attitude of the people • National policy should be made by the government to improve the positions of the LIS professionals in Bangladesh • There should be a standard and uniform salary structure for LIS professionals working at different institutions
Ununiformed patterns of LIS education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniformity should also bring in providing degrees, curriculum etc. • There must be a professional accrediting body for the approval of LIS education and its curriculum • Development of Infrastructure for different courses
Absence of co-operation among different units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gap between faculty members and professionals needs to be bridged by providing LIS professionals with appropriate respect. • Initiatives from the different national associations of Bangladesh needs to be taken for the overall development
Lack of educational and professional opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More universities should run LIS education. Associations can play an important role in this regard to propose this to the government. • Continuous training for the professionals and students should be incorporated • International conference, seminar, the workshop should be conducted on a regular basis to promote LIS education nationally and internationally • Creating more opportunities for internships of LIS students
Lack of Dynamism in LIS education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be a curriculum development committee at the national level who will be responsible for regular updating of curriculum • Regular publication of journals maintaining the highest quality • Emphasis should be given more on innovation rather than practicing traditional services at libraries and information centers
Lack of Initiatives by the government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cadre service should be introduced for this subject • The LIS professionals should protest and raise their voice against the replacement of professionals by non-professionals

This is high time for the LIS professionals and faculty members to respond to the challenges hindering the advancement of LIS education in Bangladesh. As the preceding discussion shows, the LIS professionals need to work for eradicating these problems with a positive attitude. With combined effort, the problems can surely be solved and a new era in LIS education in Bangladesh can be initiated.

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