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Accreditation system of Library Education in India

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**Abstract**

This paper reviews the difficulties faced by the students of LIS during and after completion of their course in the environment when there is no LIS education accreditation in India. The focus has been given to find the solution of present problems related to LIS education through LIS accreditation. After reviewing it has been revealed that in the absence of quality and standards in the LIS education, the professional course lacks in its professionalism and the students of this course are much behind as compared to development in the LIS field. To be concluded that LIS accreditation is the immediate demand to empower LIS education in India and accreditation can be of great help to make the LIS education a professional course with quality, standards, principles and better output.

**Keywords:** LIS education; Accreditation; LIS Accreditation; Library and Information Science in India.

**Introduction:**

In India, number of universities and institutions conducting library and information science courses are increasing rapidly along with good number of intakes. Library and information science is a professional course and almost all pursuing LIS courses have optional this for getting job. But does this so called professional course really show its professionalism? Do Indian LIS professionals match the standards of LIS professionals of developed countries? Most of the students do not show professionalism through their conduct, knowledge or by any other means after completion of LIS studies. The present state of library and information science education in India in comparison to standards approved by developed countries is not satisfactory. LIS education is lacking in empowering environment as very less number of LIS institutions are “At or above graduate level”. Some uniform standard strategies in LIS education that would facilitate change and remove barriers for obtaining optimum quality is need to be benchmarked. The LIS professional course itself should have enough calibre in it to strive for creating a culture that embraces change, promotes dynamic continuous

improvement and environment that promotes expectations that all students could find their way by their own in the LIS job market in a welcoming and smooth manner.

**History of LIS education in India:**

The first training course in Library Science in India was established at the Central Library, Baroda in 1911 by W. A. Borden and at Punjab University in 1915 by A. D. Dickinson. Presently in India many universities facilitate number of LIS courses. Different types of courses that are currently running in India are:

Certificate course in Library and Information Science

Diploma in Library and Information Science  
B.Lib.Sc./BLIS

M.Lib.Sc./MLIS

PGDLAN

M.Phil. In Library and Information Science

Ph.D. in Library and Information Science

D.Litt. in Library and Information Science

**Problems faced by LIS students during their course period:**

Education of Library and Information Science (LIS) has several problems that are caused by the changing nature of the discipline and the social, economic and cultural contexts in which LIS departments

function. The aim of this article is to enumerate and discuss some of the common problems of LIS education in India.

There is Lack of Independence among the universities as they have to rely on government funding.

Due to absence of accreditation system LIS departments experience a mushroom growth as a result there is imbalance between the growth rate of the students and the growth rate of LIS departments which results in unemployment of a large number of students.

Students cannot switch courses due to inflexibility in educational system.

Indian LIS departments have lack of facilities, resources and library buildings.

Adequate staff is one of the attributes of accredited LIS departments. Sometimes, a given type of monopolistic behavior is experienced and faculty members in a department may not be interested in acceptance of new members.

There is a diverse range of courses and degrees that meet different needs of the job market. Indian LIS departments suffer from lack of diversity.

There are many Indian LIS departments that execute an outdated program through which no qualified person could be educated for the third millennium.

LIS education is widely capable of accepting new information and communication technologies (ICTs). The situation in different Indian developing states is that they are not accepting the technological changes.

#### **Problems faced by the LIS students after the course completion:**

The performance of most of the LIS graduate students in the competition of job market has been found poor mainly due to lack of basic knowledge and awareness. This is the time when the student gets up and aware about the drawback of out dated curriculum they had pursued in their course, which is now acting as one of the major barrier in job achievement. After getting the job they face the real world of LIS without any practical knowledge. In addition to the practical knowledge of computer application and LIS software covered in the course curriculum. The unnecessary demand in the job market to do one-year certificate course of computer application from any recognized computer centre also disappoints the students.

#### **Problems faced by the LIS faculties/educators:**

The major problem of LIS faculty is the work load due to insufficient number of teachers and in some places due to an additional dual responsibility as a Library-In-Charge.

Lack of learning resources, information literacy and compulsion to teach non-interested subjects and lack of support from management degrades the LIS educators. Librarians want to understand usage beyond what the current COUNTER reports deliver, e.g. they want to know which articles are being read, in what disciplines, by which type of patron, in which faculty.

An educator also faces challenges at low performing schools and struggles to find ways to empower their departments.

In spite of the best efforts by the faculty the admission of poor qualities of students makes the output performance of some LIS students' miserable and in the case of less dedicated faculty members, may lead to learning that is not of an acceptable standard or quality makes the situation worse. This creates lots of stress and uncertainty among devoted faculties.

#### **Overall Problems in LIS field:**

There are several challenges in keeping the LIS education programs relevant to new kind of jobs in the market and new work performance requirements at work places. Whenever, some changes are introduced in the educational programs, needs for more changes emerge to align such programs with the job markets as well as new roles and responsibilities in the libraries and information centres. So long as the information environment remains fluid, LIS education programs will remain in a state of flux, demanding constant change and adaptation to new developments, technologies and desired service levels. However, there was ever no time in the history as to-day when library and information science educators are able to offer broad based, flexible and diversified LIS education and training programs that can suit the manpower requirement for knowledge management in different sectors of economy. Further, the courses of study can be tailored to any requirement of imparting specific need based skills and competencies.

In the constantly changing landscape of information, library professionals are facing instability but not insecurity.

Today several Indian LIS schools are not preparing their students to use the upgraded technologies.

There is definitely a shortage of manpower having desired skills and competencies.

With the expansion of education, increasing information needs and growing breadth of knowledge applications, the major challenge for library schools is to what limits the courses can be offered and how to facilitate infrastructure especially the faculty to meet the growing requirement of the diversity of courses and flexibility in education.

Several people in India are not able to make adequate use of even existing information facilities due to lack of information literacy.

#### **What does Accreditation mean?**

Accreditation is the act of granting credit or recognition (especially with respect to educational institution that maintains suitable standards). Literally Accreditation means; Recognition and guarantee of minimum quality. A process of quality assurance, giving credit where it is due for some clearly visible and demonstrable strategies of academic activities and objectives of the institutions, known to be honestly pursued and efficiently achieved by the resources currently available with a potential for continuous improvement in quality for effective growth.

#### **LIS Accreditation in International level:**

‘Accreditation is a voluntary, non-governmental and collegial process of self-review and peer review. It assures students that accredited courses meet the standards of the profession they are about to enter’. (CILIP)

‘Accreditation is a voluntary system of evaluation of higher education institutions and programs. It is a collegial process based on self-evaluation and peer assessment for improvement of academic quality and public accountability. Accreditation assures that higher education institution and their units, schools, or programs meet appropriate standards of quality and integrity. Accreditation is both a process and a condition. The process entails the assessment of educational quality and the continued enhancement of educational

operations through the development and validation of standards. The condition provides a credential to the public-at-large indicating that an institution and/or its programs have accepted and are fulfilling their commitment to educational quality.’ (APA)

#### **LIS Accreditation in National level:**

There is no accreditation agency in India like the American Library Association (ALA) Committee on Accreditation in USA and Canada to ensure reasonable standards and quality of educational programme. The report of the Committee on National Policy on Library and Information System (NAPLIS) stressed the need for such a body. The University Grants Commission, India appointed a Committee “UGC Review Committee on Library Science in Indian Universities” under the Chairmanship of Dr.S.R.Ranganathan in the year 1961 and the report published in 1965. So far departments of LIS in the universities have broadly adopted the schemes of papers recommended by UGC Review Committee on Library Science in Indian Universities, 1965. But still higher education is accredited in India through NAAC (1994). It is autonomous body established by UGC of India to assess and accredited institutions of higher education in the country. It is an outcome of the recommendation of the national policy in education (1986) which laid special emphasis on upholding the quality of higher education in India.

#### **Value and Importance of LIS Education Accreditation:**

There are several types of values of accreditation like it -

Encourages confidence that an institution’s or program’s presentation of the education it provides is fair and accurate, including the description of services available to students and the accomplishments of its graduates.

Assures that a neutral, external party (the accrediting organization) has reviewed the quality of education provided and has found it to be satisfactory, based upon appropriate peer expertise.

Confirms that institutions and programs have processes in place to meet changes in thinking within the academy and in the public’s expectations;

Provides for eligible students to have access to federal financial aid if they attend institutions accredited by accreditors that are "recognized" or scrutinized for quality by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE).

Assists with transfer of credits among institutions or admission to graduate school, with student mobility more likely to be successful among accredited institutions as compared to unaccredited institutions.

Aids with entrance to a profession, when a particular field may require graduation from an accredited program or institution.

Signals prospective employers that an educational program has met widely accepted educational standards.

Accreditation is important because it:

Helps determine if an institution meets or exceeds minimum standards of quality.

Helps students determine acceptable institutions for enrolment.

Assist institutions in determining acceptability of transfer credits.

Employers often require evidence that applicants have received a degree from an accredited school or program.

Involves staff, faculty, students, graduates, and advisory boards in institutional evaluation and planning.

Creates goals for institutional self-improvement.

Provides a self-regulatory alternative for state oversight functions.

Provides a basis for determining eligibility for federal student assistance

### **Recommendation for improvement of LIS education in India:**

Accreditation can play a major role in raising the quality and status of LIS education. The following factors could be taken.

**k. 1. Student factor** – the admission procedure for the course should be revised so that it can locate and select qualified individuals who along with the educational prerequisites have the interest and self-motivation to pursue careers in LIS. They can also be given chance to prove their candidature again to judge them as right person for the LIS course. In addition, the typical suitability requirements particular to employment in the field should be brief to students in advance 'merit should not be the only criteria for admitting the students. Admission test and interview should be

adopted to select appropriate students with pleasant personality, good General knowledge, communication skill, aptitude towards librarianship and desire to serve others'.

The LIS-IT application practice should be of national acceptance and students need not have to produce on additional certificate of computer/IT skills to get the job. The course shall provide adequate student support services including personality development, communication skill, basic knowledge of English, and academic advising services for career and placement.

The student shall have the right to file complain or give suggestion in writing to the University/College. The University/College shall maintain a record of all complaints and suggestions, as well as the resolution of those complaints and suggestions. The University/College shall demonstrate that the LIS courses pass out degree holders have a basic foundation in the LIS field and necessary problem-solving skills.

**k. 2. Faculty's factor**-Although UGC has already started to evaluate and improve the qualification of faculty through API but still there is need to officially approve the faculty throughout its tenure for continuous professional development and for the sake of better education. LIS faculties have to move out of their traditional comfort zones and ensure that they keep up-to-date with developments to guarantee quality teaching and research. LIS professional have to take responsibility for their own education and training through a policy of life-long learning. Each faculty member teaching the course must have expertise, professional credentials and certifications, professional experience, on-going professional development contribution to discipline, teaching effectiveness and communication skills. The faculty must be in sufficient number to maintain continuity and stability of classes, student's interaction and advising. Total credit hours taught and the teaching methodology of the faculty should be monitored and evaluate in a regular basis to attain academic excellence. The faculty have to be capable enough to at least to clear the concept of the topics covered in the paper and also to give proper guidance to expand students' knowledge base through self-study.

For assuring the quality of teaching there should be a choice-based credit system and internship programmes in the interested fields, so that they can show their improvements in their teaching and in their knowledge base.

**k. 3. Other factors-**LIS education must show standardization and uniformity in course duration, content of syllabus, selection criteria for admission, intakes, and methods of evaluation of performance of students and in research programmes. LIS associations in India must play their role actively for the publicity of LIS profession. Experience, however, appears to remain the biggest single factor in the current job market, and LIS programs may want to put a high priority in their curricula emphasizing internship, networking, mentoring and leadership skills. The revision of curriculum devotes adequate attention and time in every three years. Modern learning tools and computing resources appropriate to the programme must be available, accessible, systematically maintained and upgraded to support the scholarly and professional activities of the students and faculty. The feedback mechanism from students, alumni and employers could play a vital role in improvement of LIS education and profession.

**Conclusion:**

In India, until today LIS education is been taken lightly by the government especially by the state government and its adverse effect can be seen at the time of admission to the LIS program in India where LIS education stands last in the list of job oriented professional course in any way encounter struggles in the society to keep their position high as a LIS student during the course duration and after the course completion. LIS education in India must be reshaped after identifying its new components to make the course job oriented professional course in actual. The emphasis should be given to the development of LIS education according to the emerging job market. Accreditation of LIS education will give a public recognition to the education institution and program assuring quality as they have to need to undergo certain standards or criteria regarding student's curriculum, faculty, facilities and support, ensuring a quality

educational experience. The Accreditation of LIS education could certainly be a step towards the bright future of survival of LIS profession and professionals in India and abroad and in making the LIS professionals a global competitor.

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