

LIS Education in Odisha: Issues & Challenges for professionals in the Digital Era

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Abstract

Library & Information education in Odisha is undergoing rapid change with difficult challenges to overcome. The history of LIS education in Odisha is around four decade old. This paper traces the current status, different patterns and levels of LIS education as well as the research programme being offered by various Universities of Odisha. It deals with the preparing LIS graduates for leadership and management roles to support national and economic development in Odisha. It also discusses the recent emphasis given on e-learning in LIS education in India, the impact of LIS education on the work ,the job market for LIS professionals, competencies needed and continuing professional development of LIS Professionals. It describes the products of the LIS schools in Odisha are placed at different academic, research and corporate organizations of national repute and other institutions, still much more effort is required regularly.

Key words: LIS education, e-learning, research programme

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1. INTRODUCTION

Libraries & Information Centers need professionally educated and trained personnel who expected a scholar with love for books, a sociologist with an understanding of society to whom he/she has to serve; a scientist and researcher for further education and development of subject, and an administrator with a special knowledge of scientific management. The last two decades have definitely witnessed the tremendous change in the higher education system in Odisha, particularly in its size and growth. The history of LIS education in Odisha is around four decades old. However, within this short span of time much progress has been made in the field of LIS. Education in the state of Odisha and there are still a lot to achieve. The paper deals with the Library and Information Science (LIS) education and LIS professionals in Odisha. It deals with the preparing LIS graduates for leadership and management roles to support national and economic development in Odisha. It also discusses the recent emphasis given on e-learning in LIS education in India, the impact of LIS education on the work ,the job market for LIS professionals, competencies needed and continuing professional development of LIS Professionals.

The basic objectives of LIS education is to provide trained manpower to manage different types of libraries, information and documentation centers which over a period of time have undergone changes in terms of needs , functions, types and range of services offered as well as tools and techniques being used when offering the services. LIS education also redefined .The students need to be more practical oriented and should be equipped with intensive and extensive knowledge on the use of IT in libraries. The basic objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To trace the trend of growth of LIS Education in Odisha;
- To make an assessment of course content of various LIS programmes run by different institutions/ organizations in Odisha;
- To explore the apprenticeship/training facilities and placement opportunities for the LIS students in Odisha;
- To investigate the adequacy of teaching faculty and other infrastructure pertaining to effective teaching and research;
- To suggest adequate knowledge of computers (including hardware), computer and communication technologies, networks and networking operating systems, Internet concepts, database management systems, with practical exposure to handle these technological devices given to students.

2. METHODOLOGY

Survey method has been adopted to accomplish the study. In the present study the questionnaire method has been adopted to collect information from the respondents. A well structured questionnaire covering the Department profile, faculty, students, academic programme etc has been prepared and distributed among the LIS schools in Odisha.

3. LIS SCHOOLS IN ODISHA

The Department of LIS, Sambalpur University is the first Postgraduate Department in the State to start a Bachelors Degree Programme in LIS (BLISc) in the year 1976. After that Utkal University, PNCLIS affiliated to Utkal University, SMIT affiliated to Berhampur University, AWDI affiliated to Sambalpur University, North Odisha University, Udayanath Autonomous College of Science and Technology and Library & Information Sc as a subject at pass & Honors level at S.B.Womens college Cuttack. Besides, IGNOU, Berhampur University and Fakir Mohan University run BLISc and MLISc Course under distance mode. This provides facilities to library personnel working at the lower level to improve their qualifications and upgrade their limited knowledge and skills. Master of Library and Information Science (MLISc), Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) and PhD. The Utkal University, Sambalpur University, SMIT (Berhampur) University, North Odisha University offers postgraduate courses and PhD Programmes in Odisha.

Table No.1: LIS Schools in Odisha

Name of the Institute	Year of Establishment	Courses Offered	Affiliating University
DLIS, Utkal University	1981	2 yrs MLISc (Semester System) 1 yr M.Phil *PhD(one semester course work) D.Lit.	Utkal University
DLIS, Sambalpur University	1976	2 yrs MLISc (Semester System) 1 yr M.Phil **PhD(one semester course work) D.Lit. PGDLAN	Sambalpur University
S.B. Women's college, Cuttack	1976	Honours and pass at +3 level (graduate level)	Utkal University
Vedavyas	1981	Pass at +3 level	Sambalpur University

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college,Rourkela			
PNCLIS,Bhubaneswar	1981	1 yr. BLISc	Utkal University
SMIT,Berhampur University, Berhampur	1983	1 yr BLISc 1 yr MLISc	Berhampur University
AWDI ,Rourkela	1984	1 yr BLISc	Sambalpur University
DLIS,North Odisha University(DE)	1999	Semester System 1yr BLISc 1yr MLISc	North Odisha University
***D.I.E.T Jharsuguda	2000	1 yr BLISc	Sambalpur University
Berhampur University(DE)	2000	1 yr BLISc	Berhampur University
****Polytechnic ,Rourkela (Undergraduate Course)	1966	2yrs. Diploma 1 yr.post Diploma	State Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training
Bastiya		1 yr BLISc	Sambalpur University
Naba Bharati, Rourkela		1 yr BLISc	Sambalpur University
U.N.College of Sc & Technology,Adaspur	2007 2010	Honours and pass at +3level (graduate level) 1 yr BLISc	Utkal University
IGNOU (Distance Education under counseling system)		1 yr BLISc 1yr MLISc	Indira Gandhi Open University
Baikuda Women's College	2008	Pass at +3 level (graduate level)	Utkal University

*No admission has been taken, as the teachers of the dept. has no vacancy to be enrolled as PhD students in 2012.

**No admission has been taken, as the teachers of the dept. has no vacancy to be enrolled as PhD students in 2011 and 2012.

*** 1 yr BLISc programme was discontinued from 2006.

**** The Diploma in Library Science programme was discontinued from 2004.

3.1 Academic Programmes of LIS Education

LIS Education was imparted in Odisha since 1976 by the different Universities and other institutions affiliated to these universities. The LIS education in Odisha is offered at various levels such as Degree, M.Phil, Ph.D. and D.Litt. These programmes are carried out on regular basis as well as through correspondence courses and distance education. The details about the various courses are enumerated as under:

(a) Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLISc) and Master of Library and Information Science (MLISc)

Initially many universities & colleges are offering BLISc & MLISc courses have now switched over to a two-year integrated course. In Odisha, Pandit Nilakantha College of Library & Information Sc. (PNCLIS) Bhubaneswar, Sanjay Memorial Institute of Technology (SMIT) Berhampur, Asian Workers Development Institute (AWDI) Rourkela, U.N. College of Science & Technology are offering BLISc on regular basis, where as Fakir Mohan University, Balasore only IGNOU offering both BLISc and MLISc courses under distance education mode. However Utkal University and Sambalpur University are offering such courses under 2 years integrated courses.

(b) M.Phil in Library & Information Science

This is a research programme offered by university departments of Utkal and Sambalpur Universities to the students who have completed MLISc. The basic requirement for admission is an Entrance Test, career and viva voce and duration is similar in both the universities.

(c) Ph.D. Programme

This is an advanced level research programme being offered to the candidates as full time scholars who have possessed MLISc or M.Phil degree in library science. At present Utkal University, Sambalpur University, Berhmpur University are providing such facilities for the Ph.D. programme. However since 2011 a candidate has to qualify in the Entrance Test to take admission in Pre-Ph.D.course (1 semester) to be eligible for Ph.D. registration only after completion of the course work.

(d) D.Lit. Programme

This research programme being offered after the completion of Ph.D in Library Science. Three Universities are offering such programme to the part time scholar till 2011.

(e) Post Graduate Diploma in Library Automation & Networking (PGDLAN)

This is a one year advanced training course in Library Automation & Networking is provided by the Dept. of Lib & Inf.Sc Sambalpur University, Jyoti Vihar under the Director, Distance Education mode.

Table No.2: Academic Programmes / courses offer by the LIS Schools in Odisha

Institutions	Courses Offered				Duration			
	BLISc	MLISc	M.Phil	Ph.D./D.Lit.	BLISc	MLISc	M.Phil	Ph.D./D.Lit.
DLIS,UU	x	√	√	√		2yrs	1yr	1 semester
DLIS,SU	x	√	√	√		2yrs	1yr	1 semester
DLIS,NOU	x	√	x	x		2yrs	x	
IGNOU	√	√	x	x	1 yr	1yr	x	
PNCLIS, Bhubaneswar	√	x	x	x	1 yr	x	x	
SMIT, Berhmpur	√	√	x	√	1yr	1yr	x	
AWDI,Rourkela	√	x	x	x	1yr	x	x	
UACT,Adaspur	√	x	x	x	x	x	x	

To achieve academic excellence, it is of utmost importance that standards and norms of education are prescribed and adherence to them be made mandatory .The universities and colleges offering LIS Education in Odisha more or less follow the UGC-CDC pattern of syllabus. The postgraduate Departments of LIS in Odisha also develop their curriculum as per the UGCNET syllabus. Keeping the changing requirements of the libraries in mind, the curriculum is modified, updated and revised from time to time. The most common papers included at BLISc or in the first two semesters of MLISc are Library Classification Theory and Practice, Library Cataloguing Theory and Practice, Library and Society, Library Management, Reference services, IT Theory and practice etc. At M.Phil level in 2nd semester each student has to submit a dissertation/project report on topics in the recent trend and research in LIS.

3.2 Course Content

Curriculum reform has many advantages. It can have a benefit for human resources and human capital (Hayati 2008). LIS schools should also develop a body of knowledge that creates substantial demand in the market place and fetch high salaries for graduates. Besides technical knowledge, soft skills also play crucial role in an individual's performance at work place. In addition to lack of soft skills, a gap exists between what the LIS professional can do and the expectations and perceptions of information user seekers. Group discussions can make them more open and confidence. Therefore innovative teaching methods must be used to involve students in the process of teaching and

learning. "While the educational authorities are keen to recruit the students with best academic qualifications, the LIS educators too expect their students to possess developed extroverted personalities ,entrepreneurial flair and an ability to work well as a team member because these are valued by the world of work. It is essential for the library schools to attract students with these qualities if they are to be taken up by the employment market (Wijetunge, 2009). It is a pioneering effect made for the first time in the country by Utkal University has introduced Library & Information Science at +3 level both as a pass and also Honours subject. The pass course contains 4 papers carrying 100 marks each namely 1.Fundamentals of Librarianship, 2.Cataloguing Theory, 3. Classification Theory, 4. Classification and Cataloguing practical .The Honours course contains 4 papers in addition to these above 4 pass course papers of 100 marks each, such as 5. Information Sources & Services, 6. Computer application in Library,7. Information systems and Programmes, 8. Library & Information Centres Management. In Honours there are 6 semesters, each year it has 2 semesters. If a student desirous of taking Library and Information Science as a pass course, he/she has to choose only 4 papers prescribed, for pass course and in case of Honours, he/she has to take altogether 8 papers.

At the B.LibSc Level, all the six Universities of Odisha (Utkal University, Sambalpur University, Berhampur University, North Odisha University, Fakir Mohan University, Indira Gandhi Open University) are now having almost nearly same course content such as (1) Library and Society (2) Library Management (3) Library Classification Theory (4)Library Classification Practice (5) Library Cataloguing Theory (6) Library Cataloguing Practice (7) Computer Application (8)Records and Assignment.

The Universities offering LIS Education in Odisha, follow as far as possible the UGC-CDC pattern of syllabus. The Postgraduate Departments of LIS in Odisha also develop their curriculum as per UGC NET syllabus. Keeping the changing requirements of the libraries in mind, the curriculum is modified, updated and revised from time to time. The curriculum of MLISc includes papers on both traditional librarianship as well as papers on application of IT. The most common papers included at BLISc are taught in the first two semesters of MLISc. Similarly in one year MLISc or in the third and fourth semester of MLISc ,papers on Research Methodology ,Digital Libraries, Internet and Web resources ,Information Storage and Retrieval, Networking and Telecommunication, Data Transmission and Library systems are included one year MLISc. In final semester, each student has to submit a dissertation/project report on topics in the recent trend and research in LIS.

At the M.Phil Level, the Two Universities of Odisha (Utkal University and Sambalpur University)are now having almost same course such as (1) Research Methods & Techniques (2) Advances in information Organization & Retrieval (3) Current Trends in Library & Information Science & Services (4) Project.

After having admitted each candidate enrolled for Ph.D shall be required to undertake coursework on a regular basis for a minimum period of one semester in the P.G. Department of the University .The coursework shall be treated as Pre Ph.D preparation. The papers are included at Pre Ph.D course work are (1) Research Methodology (2) Computer Application to Library (3) Review of Literature (4) Seminar.

3.3 Teaching Faculty in LIS Schools

For any educational system to be effective, adequate number (both in quality and quantity) of teaching and other supportive staffs are required .According to UGC norms and guidelines, a dept.

having both BLISc and MLISc should have a professor, Two readers and Three lecturers. As LIS curricula are becoming more flexible and choice-based, LIS schools are experiencing need for specialized faculty from areas such as Management, Information Technology, and Psychology etc. Faculty is the first pillar of excellence and there should be no compromise in recruiting competent and committed faculty. "The areas of major concern in excellence in higher education have been: the faculty, the curriculum, the learning resources and the students. Each of these areas needs to be developed, cared for and brought to a level where their synergy results in high quality education. Teachers, at any level of education, without doubt, are the critical resource. They are the ones who develop the curriculum, learning resources, and students. Any nation, that engages weak teachers will, sooner or later, destroy itself" (Anwar, 2008, p.109). Table-3 cited below indicates the number of teaching staffs of different LIS institutions of Odisha.

Table No.3: Teaching Faculty in LIS Schools in Odisha

University/Colleges/Schools	No. of Teaching Staff	Highest Qualification		
		Ph.D	M.Phil	MLISc
DLIS,Utkal University	3	2	-	-
DLIS,Sambalpur University	4	3	1	-
DLIS,North Odisha University	2	2	-	-
SMIT,Berhampur University	3	2	-	-
PNCLIS,Bhubaneswar	3	-	1	3
AWDI,Rourkela	1	-	-	1
U N College of Science & Technology , Adaspur	1	-	-	1
S.B.W College,Cuttack	1	-	-	1
Vedavyas College,Rourkela	1	1	-	-

The teaching staff must be sufficiently qualified, experienced and must have ability to update themselves with the changing need for professional development. The above table 3 indicates the number of teaching staff of different LIS institutions of Odisha.

3.4 LIS Students

The basic criteria for admission into LIS courses in the P.G departments is that the applicant must have passed graduation with second class honours or 50% marks in aggregate. The selection for admission is made strictly on the basis of a written test and career marks. The courses in LIS are open to any graduate from arts, science and commerce stream. LIS education is currently facing a turning point. Various factors have contributed to bring about the change from the conventional to an automated library operation. Most of the computerized libraries suffer from paucity of competent personnel at top and middle level managerial positions. The nature of job of the profession in the digital environment has also been a key factor for increasing the number of students for LIS courses in the state as it is a professional course. In the years ahead, LIS schools will be competing like business corporations hiring the best possible faculty, setting standards, benchmarks, and attracting the best students. Students are realizing that they should get value for their time and money, and should strive hard to acquire adequate skills for profitable employment. "They will expect their educational opportunities to be based on assessed knowledge, competency and skill and not on the time spent on tasks as quantified in credit hours .They want their education to be more experimental, fun, collaborative and game like. Students want much more flexibility and learning options than just going to lectures , writing a paper , and taking an examination" (Sweeney , 2005) . Inclusion of IT papers with the traditional Library Science subjects expanded its demands more and more as it suits the IT market and IT based libraries.

Table No.4: The intake capacity of students in different Universities and institutions (only regular courses)

Institution	No. Of Seats			
	BLISc	MLISc	M.Phil	Ph.D
DLIS, Utkal University	-	24	08	09
DLIS,Sambalpur University	-	20	05	08
DLIS,North Odisha University	-	20	-	
SMIT,Berhmpur University	48	24	-	
PNCLIS,Bhubaneswar	48	-	-	
AWDI,Rourkela	32	-	-	
UACT,Adaspur	48	-	-	
Total	176	88	13	

From the above table, it observe that every year 128 students getting BLISc,88 students MLISc and 13 students M.Phil degrees from different LIS schools of Odisha. Besides IGNOU and Berhmpur University and Fakir Mohan University also supply a few BLISc and MLISc students every year. However in S.B.W College the no.of student strength is 16 in pass & honours and 24 students in +3 pass only in Vedavyas College.

3.5 Facilities

In the present IT and Digital era, the application of information and communication technologies has revolutionized the whole concept of libraries, the system of information storage and retrieval and ways to access the information. Therefore, the objectives of LIS education have been revolutionized with the E concept. LIS students are presently given more practical oriented computer knowledge equipped with intensive and extensive use of IT in libraries. Different LIS institutions and organizations of Odisha should be equipped with the basic infrastructural facilities such as libraries, computing facilities lab, software packages, teaching aids, workshop etc. No LIS schools in Odisha is running any program that may prepare the LIS professionals for organizing information literacy courses regularly. Otherwise also the quality of LIS research in Odisha is not up to the mark. “The best instruction in universities is refreshed with the results of penetrating and relevant research recently conducted and published. In LIS it rarely occurs. Despite time-consuming lectures of ‘research methodology’ there is little sign that (a) research quantitatively has expanded or (b) that it has improved qualitatively. Too many theories on this subject are delivered in lectures that require to be complemented with the ‘how’ (in practical workshop demonstrators) of managing the work without which credible research cannot be achieved (Bowden, 2009). There is also lack of research effort for development of information products and services. Table- 5 depicts availability of educational facilities in different LIS schools in Odisha.

Table No.5: Infrastructural facilities at the LIS schools in Odisha

Facilities	DLIS,UU	DLIS,SU	DLIS,NOU	PNCILS,BBSR	SMIT,BAM	AWDI,RKL	UACT,Adaspur
Computer Lab	√	√	√	x	√	√	√
Workshop	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Seminar Library/Book Bank	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Teaching Aids	√	√	√	x	√	x	x
Seminar Hall	√	√	x	x	√	x	√

3.6 Problems of LIS Education in Odisha

Library Science programmes at the university level have existed for more than four decades and have strong roots, but the profession still suffers from many problems, which are affecting the status of LIS education. There is a need that all the organizations running LIS courses without adequate facilities be abandoned. UGC Guidelines, norms and conditions, rules for affiliation and concurrence should be followed strictly before permitting the university or other institutions to open LIS courses.

(a) Inadequate Faculty Strength

Reputation of any course depends on the teaching standards which presuppose the adequate faculty strength with good academic record, up-to-date knowledge of the subject and adequate teaching experience. The curriculum Development Committee (CDC) in 1992 recommended for a department running BLIS (having not more 40 students) and MLIS (having not more than 15 students), one professor, one reader and three lectures (1:1:3) and a provision should be made for one additional teacher for every 10 students after 40 for BLIS and 15 for MLIS. Many institutions started LIS courses with just one lecturer with few inexperienced part-time lecturer or guest faculty; ultimately it has enormous negative effect on the standard of teaching and the future of products.

(b) Lack of Library Facilities

Many LIS schools have either no library at all, or a library with inadequate collection of text-books, reference books and practical tools (classification schemes, cataloguing codes and list of subject heading). Basic infrastructure for effective teaching and research: Computer laboratory, books, journals internet connectivity, workshops and seminar space gives rise to vast multitude of problems both for the students and teachers.

(c) Information Technology Laboratory

Unfortunately, most of the schools do not have well-equipped computer laboratory .Competent professionals cannot be produced with merely theoretical exposition; they require sufficient practical exposure by working in a well-developed computer laboratory. Practical training for computerized routines such as house-keeping jobs, provision of information services, Internet access, Online and CD-ROM searching etc, is required. It is necessary that LIS departments have an IT laboratory with network facilities. UGC Model curriculum committee (2001) has strongly recommended that apart from enriching the contents, it is necessary that LIS departments have an IT laboratory with network facilities. Terminal facility should be available in the ratio of 1:5 that is minimum one computer terminal for every five students. The laboratory should be further supported with standard software packages including one or two library application software packages.

(d) Curriculum Revision

LIS syllabi regularly need to be restructured with redefined objectives to accommodate emerging changes in the libraries and expectations of users. Adoption of well-designed curricula will ensure quality education, resulting in quality products, suitable both for the practicing librarianship as well as teaching staff.

(e) Internship or Apprenticeship Programme

All professional courses need adequate practical training as merely theoretical exposition in the classrooms do not make the students proficient to handle the live situations or practical librarianship. System of apprenticeship or practical training must become an essential component of the programme. This would make them more confident and competent to face the challenges of librarianship when they enter the profession later. So while continuing such course ,credits/marks should be allotted for learning and working in different types of reputed libraries in all sections at least for 3 weeks and obtain a certificate from the Librarian about his performance.

(f) UGC NET Exam

The products are required to prepare for UGC-NET exam by supplying them with relevant books, CD's and guidance by the faculty which lacks in many LIS Schools.

(g) Placement and Library Trainee Cell

Library and information science is slowly becoming popular, students with better qualifications are joining the course but they are not enthusiastic in opting for library science as their first choice. Therefore, more attention towards placement criteria is needed to attract the best brains. Constitution of a placement cell for promoting the training and placement facilities to students in academic, professional Govt. and research organizations including in IT industry .Besides just after the completion of the course ,the dept should contact the libraries of IIT,NIT , Engineering and Management institutions for appointment as "Library Trainee".

4. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Although the products of the LIS schools in Odisha are placed at different academic, research and corporate organizations of national repute and other institutions, still much more effort is required regularly. To maintain quality and standard in LIS education in Odisha, the following measures to be undertaken

- Strengthening the LIS schools with number of teachers as per the norms and recommendations;
- Basic infrastructure for effective teaching and research: computer laboratory, books, journals, internet connectivity, workshops and seminar space overhead projector and LCD.
- Organization of a placement cell for promoting the training and placement facilities to students;
- Interdisciplinary collaboration with other teaching Departments and industry.

The biggest challenge for the LIS education providers in Odisha is how to eliminate the shadow of gap between theory and practice on the one hand, and between push and pull technology on the other.

5. CONCLUSION

Science and Technology ,and access to information are crucial factors in development. To achieve the goal of development, professional education is essential. Now a days LIS profession has attained the status of a full-fledged discipline in Odisha . However, it has low recognition and has not been regarded at par with other well known professions. As a result most students do not opt for librarianship as a first choice of study. LIS can overcome its problems and shortcomings and meanwhile adapt itself to rapid social changes. Attention should focus on the adoption of relevant and up-to-date curricula, qualified faculty, willing students and good infrastructure is needed in every schools. This is necessary to improve the quality of the products , creating better job opportunities in various sectors and raising the social status of the Library profession in Odisha.

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