LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES IN BANGLADESH AND MALDIVES: A COMPARISON

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the process by which the intellect is trained and it is the cultivation of intellectual powers. Education is a social process by which a society and a nation impart and transmit knowledge on life and society. Education is not static but dynamic and it evolves with changing needs, hopes and aspirations of the individuals and the society (Munshi, 2008). A society is gradually transformed by modernization and a balanced emphasis is given on liberal as well as special education. One very important branch of specialized education is professional education, which prepares a particular human being for a specific profession/ job.

The rapid proliferation of information produced a heavy demand on the organizer and disseminator of knowledge, universally known as librarians and/or information professionals. Libraries are important social institutions. No community is considered complete without a library (Rahman, Khatun and Islam, 2008) Therefore, the diverse and changing needs of each society reflect on the current trends in library education and training (Ahmed, 1981). The spread of democracy, the extension of education, the intensification of research activities and the rapid increase in the production of recorded knowledge, have led to expansion of libraries and the development of their services. The communication of ideas is one of the most significant achievements in the cultural development of the human race. The library is one of the many means of human communication (Johnson, 1973) and is an important centre for disseminating knowledge.

The purpose of this paper is to contextualize the library and information science (LIS) education development and trends in

parts of the Asian subcontinent, specifically Bangladesh and the Maldives; with a view to identify the opportunities and challenges ahead in this endeavour. It will specifically look at the short term in-service LIS education provision as well as professional accredited long-term programs offered in both countries.

2. EMERGENCE OF LIBRARIES & THEIR ROLE IN SOCIETY

A library and information service as a profession is a recent phenomenon in the Maldives. The early developments of education in the Maldives as well as library service provision was highly dependent on neighbouring Sri Lanka; with the local school libraries being managed by expatriate library professionals from Sri Lanka (Hockly, 1949). Library development in Bangladesh is closely related to the library movement in the Indian subcontinent. Libraries in India can be traced from the history of ancient Indian libraries furnished by the travel diary of the famous Chinese traveller Fa-Hien, who visited India in 399 AD (Mishra, 1979). The British settled and stayed on for nearly two hundred years, initially for trading. They subsequently started to establish academic institutions and libraries on a small scale (Kabir, 1987).

Libraries have been considered as the storehouse of human thoughts, their highest aspirations, their wisdom, knowledge and art since the time of the earliest civilization. The book whether made of clay, papyrus, parchment or paper has always kept 'thought' alive, kindling new ideas even in the period of apparent stagnation (Khanna, 1965). The basic responsibility of libraries has, therefore, been to collect documents and organize records of human thoughts and behaviour, whose existence has, in turn, been determined by, among other things, intellectual und aesthetic modes, individual sensibilities, political and commercial exigencies and technological possibilities (Hessel, 1978). Library is thus, the place of culture and civilization.

Librarianship, which combines system of Library and Information Science education and services, is purely a technical profession that acquired special skills and facts through specialized intellectual study, teaching and research for particular service to be rendered. It is a profession wholly directed towards the progress of culture and civilization. It knows no limit of national

identity, race, or language. It contributes its full share to the progress of science and technology and attains its goal for national development. Wilson (1966) rightly opined that a thorough-going and comprehensive program of investigation and research in the field of library and information science will yield the following results: (a) the practical improvement of library service growing out of services studies; (b) the extension of knowledge of the social and governmental significance of the library as a social institution; (c) the development of scientific spirit in the library profession by means of which librarians will be brought to a better understanding of the ideals and procedures of the colleagues in other disciplines and in the business world; and (d) the enrichment of library school curricula by virtue of the fact that the teaching of yesterday is vitalized by the scientific practices and discoveries of today.

3. LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION

'Education' and 'Library' are two indivisible concepts, fundamentally related to and co-existent with each other. As Islam (1968) outlines neither is an end itself; both together are a means to an ultimate end. One survives as long as the other exists. Education is an aggregate of all the ways in which a person develops abilities, attitudes, and other forms of positive value to society. Education is the result of acquired knowledge and the accumulation of observation and experience. Education cannot exist alone in the absence of library, and library has no meaning if it cannot impart education (Islam, 1968).

Library education means educating students to be qualified librarians or information scientists, through organized instruction and training. It represents a synthesis of professional action and testifies to the importance, value and necessity of libraries for the present and the future. According to UNESCO, the goal of library education is to develop professionals who are qualified to establish, manage, operate and evaluate user-oriented information systems and services (Large, 1987). In addition, the program should familiarize students with the role of information in society and make them fully aware of sources of information and develop skills for exploring these resources.

4. LIS EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN BANGLADESH

4.1 BACKGROUND

Bangladesh is one of the developing countries of the Third World with an estimated population of 142.319 million crowded into an area of 147,570 sq. km. (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011). The literacy rate is 57.53% for the population aged 7 plus and of 59.82% for the population aged 15 plus (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2010). The library movement of Bangladesh started in the mid-19th century with the establishment of four public libraries in the district towns of Jessore, Bogra, Barisal and Rangpur (LAB, 1992). Over the last 37 years, a good number of different types of libraries were established in the country, and a satisfactory number of library and information science institutions as well as schools were established throughout the country.

As detailed by Ahmed (1993), the library and information science education in Bangladesh began in 1952 when its London-trained Librarian, Mr. Fazal Elahi, introduced a 3-month training course for the library staff at the Dhaka University Library. The course was discontinued after only one session. Between 1955 and 1959, four 3-month subject-wise training courses were conducted with the help of Fulbright scholars under the supervision of Mr. M. S. Khan, Librarian, Dhaka University Library. These courses drew the attention of a satisfactory number of library staff and persons interested in librarianship. There was no training facility apart from this course available in Bangladesh until October 1958, when the newly formed East Pakistan Library Association (EPLA-1956), now the Library Association of Bangladesh (LAB), instituted a regular 6-month Certificate Course in librarianship. It was the precursor of regular library education at undergraduate level in Bangladesh.

The accomplishment of the courses convinced the University authority and ultimately led to the introduction, in 1959, of a one-year Postgraduate Diploma Course in Library Science at the University of Dhaka under the direction and guidance of its UK trained Librarian, Mr. M. S. Khan. This course was subsequently elevated to a Master's Degree Course in 1962, M. Phil in 1976 and PhD Degree in 1979 (Ahmed, 1987). The available training

programs for school librarianship at the National Institute of Educational Administration Extension and Research (NIEAR), Dhaka, now National Academy for Education Management (NAEM), began in 1963 and four Teachers Training (TT) colleges from 1975. The Bangladesh Library Council (BCL) organized a 6-month certificate course in 1972 (Ahmed, 1987).

4.1.1 *COURSES OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION*

Revised courses of studies of 1982-1983 of the University of Dhaka were modified in 1987-1988 and 1997-1998 consecutively and this was followed by both undergraduate and postgraduate levels:

Diploma in Library Science (1 year)

The Diploma course offered at the University of Dhaka included the following courses: history of books and libraries; classification (theory and practical); cataloguing (theory and practical), bibliography and reference; library administration evaluation and selection of library materials and viva-voce (University of Dhaka, 1982). The Diploma Program was handed over to the Library Association of Bangladesh (LAB) by the University of Dhaka after introducing 3-years BA (Honours) courses during 1987-1988 sessions.

Masters Degree in Library Science (2 years)

The Master if Arts Preliminary course (first year) offered at the University of Dhaka includes the following courses: social functions of libraries; classification (theory and practical); cataloguing (theory and practical); bibliography and reference; library administration and organization; audio-visual aids in libraries; archives; abstracting and indexing and viva-voce. The department abolished MA Preliminary courses introducing 4-years integrated BA (Honours) program 1997-1998 session.

The Master of Arts Final course (second year) offered at the University of Dhaka includes the following courses: advanced classification (theory and practical); advanced cataloguing (theory and practical); research methods; documentation and information retrieval, library systems and services (any one): national library; public library; special library; academic library, medical library;

guided research and viva-voce. This 2-years masters degree courses were replaced by introducing 4-years integrated BA (Honours) and a 1-year Masters Degree program in 1997-1998 session.

Master of Philosophy in Information Science & Library Management

The university has been providing 2-years M. Phil degree since 1976. There are two alternative courses in the first year, and in the second year a dissertation is written on any aspect of Information Science & Library Management. The course includes: social functions of libraries; organization of knowledge; principles of research methods; comparative librarianship; current trends in technical services in libraries; advanced bibliography and literature searching, education for library and information science; library networking and resource sharing and viva voce (University of Dhaka, 2003).

Doctor of Philosophy in Information Science & Library Management (2-5 years)

The department has also introduced PhD degree program in 1979. Since then the department has been providing a good number of Ph. D in accordance with the Ordinance and Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) of the University of Dhaka, a candidate is required to submit a thesis/dissertation on an approved research topic in information science and library management within 2 or 4 years after registration at the University for awarding Ph. D degree (University of Dhaka, 2008).

BISLM Honours Course (4 years)

During the session 1997-1998, the Department of Information Science & Library Management abolished 3-years B.A honours courses. At the same time, the University has introduced 4-years honours courses at undergraduate level leading to Bachelor of Information Science and Library Management (BISLM) with new syllabus designed to combine the fundamental 'core subjects' and 'specialized subjects' of modern librarianship with major adjustment of comparative subjects of other disciplines. The department also introduced the semester system in both honours and masters program during the session 2006-2007 and the

syllabus was redesigned with several of modern librarianship as follows (University of Dhaka, 2007).

First Year (Honours) 1st Semester	
ISLM 101	Basics of information science and library Management
ISLM 102	English Language
ISLM 103	Bengali Language
	Class attendance and participation
	Viva voce/presentation
Total Credit = 13 (3 full units and 1 partial unit)	
First Year (Honours) 2nd Semester	
ISLM 104	Organization of information
ISLM 105	Information sources and services
ISLM 106	Information resources development
	Class attendance and participation
	Viva voce/presentation
Total Credit = 13 (3 full units and 1 partial unit)	

Second Year (Honours) 3rd Semester	
ISLM 207	New technologies and current trends in information system
ISLM 208	Information and society
LSLM 209	Socio-political history of Bangladesh
	Class attendance and participation
	Viva voce/presentation
Total Credit = 13 (3 full units and 1 partial unit)	

Second Year (Honours) 4th Semester	
ISLM 210	Records and archive management
ISLM 211	Computer hardware maintenance and trouble-shooting
ISLM 212	Writing, editing and publishing
	Class attendance and participation
	Viva voce/presentation
Total Credit = 13 (3 full units and 1 partial unit)	

Third Year (Honours) 5th Semester	
ISLM 313	Indexing and abstracting
ISLM 314	Automation of information institution
ISLM 315	Management of information institutions
ISLM 316	Information production, marketing and public relation
	Class attendance and participation
	Viva voce/presentation
Total Credit = 17 (4 full units and 1 partial unit)	

Third Year (Honours) 6th Semester	
ISLM 317	Information science, documentation and communication
ISLM 318	Database design and application in information systems
ISLM 319	Organization of knowledge (Classification theory)
ISLM 320	Organization of knowledge (Cataloguing theory)
	Class attendance and participation
	Viva voce/presentation
Total Credit = 17 (4 full units and 1 partial unit)	

Fourth Year (Honours) 7th Semester	
ISLM 421	Research methodology
ISLM 422	Comparative study of information systems
ISLM 423	Practical classification
ISLM 424	Practical cataloguing
	Class attendance and participation
	Viva voce/presentation
Total Credit = 17 (4 full units and 1 partial unit)	
Fourth Year (Honours) 8th Semester	
ISLM 425	Applied statistics
ISLM 426	Information networking and resource sharing
ISLM 427	Analysis and design of information systems
ISLM 428	Internship in libraries and information institutions
	Class attendance and participation
	Viva voce/presentation
Total Credit = 17 (4 full units and 1 partial unit)	

** 4 Years - 8 Semesters - 28 Full units and 8 partial unit courses
Total Credits = 120   Total Marks = 3000
[**N.B.** AIL the full units carry 100 marks]

The Department of Information Science and Library Management at the University of Rajshahi has also introduced a 4-years honours course and a 1 year Masters Degree course since 1997-1998 session. Earlier, the department provided a 3-years honours course and a 1-year diploma course. Rajshahi University Syndicate has abolished the diploma course in 2001. The department has modified the courses in its syllabus at similar to Department of Information Science and Library Management of the University of Dhaka.

Masters Degree (1-year)

University of Dhaka as well as Rajshahi University have introduced a 1-year Masters Degree program for the 4-years graduate students. The Department of Information Science and Library Management of Dhaka has included the following courses (University of Dhaka, 2005):

Masters Degree (1-year)	
MISLM 501	Advanced classification (Theory)
MISLM 502	Advanced cataloguing (Theory)
MISLM 503	Internet studies and web design
MISLM 504	Information retrieval techniques
MISLM 505	Library systems and services or Dissertations
MISLM 506	Library software packages and applications
MISLM 507	Comprehensive
MISLM 501 (A)	Advanced classification (Practical)
MISLM 502 (A)	Advanced cataloguing (Practical)
Viva-voice	
Total Marks = 500	

[N. B. The semester system will be introduced in MA in Information Science and Library Management during the session 2010-2011]

With the affiliation of the University of Dhaka, the Department of Information Science & Library Management has started (as private basis paid program) a 2-years MA (Evening) Program since 2004-2005 session with the students those who have secured a Postgraduate Diploma Degree in library and information science or a graduate degree from any university with 6 points. Darul Ihsan University, Royal University of Dhaka and Lalmatia Mohila College have also been offering Masters Degree program in Library and Information Science. Very recently Asian University of Bangladesh has got the permission from UGC to introduce Masters Degree in Library and information Science.

Post Graduate Diploma in LIS (National University)

At the request of the University of Dhaka, the Library Association Bangladesh (LAB) began the 1-year Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) Course from the session 1989-1990. The National University affiliated the Diploma course during 1997-1998 session and a good number of students have been securing Postgraduate Diploma

Degree every year, from thirteen Postgraduate Library and Information Science Institutions throughout the country. Besides these, all these institutions have also conducted 6-month certificate course under the LAB. International Islamic University of Chittagong is offering one-year PGD program. Royal University of Dhaka has introduced two-year MSc in library management & information science. Darul Ihsan University is offering one-year PGD and two-year (4 semesters) MA program. Asian University of Bangladesh is offering two-year MSS in information science & library management from the year 2008 (Rahman, Khatun and Islam, 2011).

Library and Information Science Course in Degree Colleges

The National University has introduced Library and Information Science as an optional paper (with four courses and 100 marks of each course) in B.A (Pass) course curriculum. Around seventeen degree colleges have already started the Library and Information Science course. One of these colleges e.g. Lalmatia Mahila College (LMC), Dhaka has already started a Masters Degree Program during the session 2003-2004 targeted for students who have a Postgraduate Diploma Degree (Lalmatia Mahila Collage, 2003).

Besides these, the courses of studies of Library Training Education at Teacher's Training (TT) Colleges were introduced for graduate teachers undergoing training for a period of 10 months, normally commencing from July each year, as an optional paper in the course curriculum. Eight TT Colleges have already introduced Library Training Education Course. The courses are identical with those of the National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM), hut more stress was given on classification, cataloguing, bibliography, reference, book selection and library management (NAEM, 2003).

4.1.2 *LIBRARY TRAINING PROGRAMS*

There is no national organization or central coordinating body for providing training programs for librarians of Bangladesh. NAEM has been providing continuing education and training programs for college and madrasah (religious education) librarians of the country (2-4 weeks). Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) and the Library Association

of Bangladesh (LAB) have arranged two training programs for college librarians in 1998 and 2002 respectively. The UNESCO funded these two training programs. The Bangladesh Central Public Library organizes 1-month training programs on "Library Operation and Management" for the public library staff twice or thrice in a year. The Development Project under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs has been funding the training program. With the financial affiliation of the same ministry, The National Book Centre has also been arranging two weeks long training program (once in a year) for the librarians of district public libraries of Bangladesh. Department of Informal Science & Library Management arranged a one month training program on "Library Database Management System and Programming Languages" for the MA Final examinees every year. But now it is not continuing. Moreover, Bangladesh National Scientific and Technical Documentation Centre (BANSIDOC), Library and Information Service Unit of ICDDR,B and CIRDAP Library have been arranging regular library based computer training programs for both students and the library professionals. Besides these, a number of private university libraries provide training programs in different times on library-based software and their application. North South University Library has been providing a 14-weeks certificate course on "Digital and Online Librarianship" in each semester. Recently, a training program on Content Management System (CMS) by Joomla was completed jointly by the Library Association of Bangladesh (LAB) and Community Development Library (CDL) and department Information Science and Library Management, University of Dhaka separately.

A number of non-government organizations (NGOs) have been providing training programs for school librarians of Bangladesh. Human Development Foundation (HDF), Bangladesh has been arranging training programs on librarianship under "Rural School Library Enhancement Program (RSLEP)" for non-government school teachers in rural areas since 1986 (HDF, 2004). At a time, HDF selects 50 to 60 non-government schools from deferent rural areas and one teacher from each school for training programs. So far, HDF has provided training programs and contributed different reading materials to about 300 rural schools in Bangladesh. Recently, a NGO named - PRAKRITAJAN has started "Training of

Secondary School Teachers under Volunteers for Bangladesh and PRAKRITAJAN School Assistance Program." They have selected 23 schools from rural to provide loading materials for them (Prakritajan, 2004).

4.1.3 *APPROPRIATENESS OF LIS EDUCATION AND TRAINING*

The present system and courses of studies of library education and training in Bangladesh have been illustrated above; and the following is an evaluation of how far these courses, at different levels of education for librarianship, are appropriate for Bangladesh in the content of her socio-economic, socio-cultural and educational conditions. In this context, we should remember the following objectives as identified by Ahmed (1993):

- to impart principles and theories of library and information science;
- to transmit knowledge that is expected subsequently to be useful in the lives of the recipients of such knowledge; and
- to produce the required and necessary manpower to handle the many aspects of library and information science and services.

To make the library education and training programs appropriate for library and information professionals in Bangladesh, taking the above objectives into consideration, we will evaluate the same with due emphasis on two factors: (i) the needs of our society on the one hand; and (ii) the focus on more progressive curricula of developed countries on the other.

In the context of organization and management of libraries in Bangladesh, it is strongly felt that our librarians and information professionals must be equipped with quality as well as professional skills in performing modern technological activities. The present technology-based profession demands new skills, methods and new approaches for information. The mental attitudes and thinking have to be transformed to cope with the challenges from technology, environment and users. It is essential for each and every library and information science professional from top to bottom to underline the use and benefits of modern information technology and how to provide better library and information services, the role of the library is, thus, changing, so

the library and information science schools in Bangladesh need to modify their curricula to prepare their students, so that they are capable of handling many aspects of modern technology and library and information science and services (Munshi, 2008).

4.1.4 *CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING*

The librarians are increasingly required to provide rapid and accurate information within the shortest possible time. On the basis of current need and demand of the users, the librarians or information professionals are also being increasingly required to demonstrate their ability to use various types of information technologies (IT) and others facilities. The potentiality of professional librarians and information scientist regarding IT is a very crucial aspect for installation and implementation of IT in libraries and information centres. Library and information science education, thus, warrants continuing education to cope with the rapid developments in the profession. As such, the following measures need to be taken for continuing process of library and information science education (Ahmed, 1993):

- provision for higher education and training facilities for the teachers, researchers, instructors as well as librarians;
- provision for research facilities in the library and information sciences schools at postgraduate level;
- provision for in-service naming and refreshers' course for the library professionals;
- provision for exchange program of higher education, research and training for better understanding among the library and information professionals at home and abroad; and
- provision for scholarships, fellowships and stipends for the students for creating future leadership in the profession.

4.2 *CHALLENGES*

The aim of education is to train the students to become responsible citizens who, in future, will take part in the nation building activities. By memorizing, one can pass the examination but, for getting better results in the examination for enriching one's own knowledge and also for promotion of education, research development, the importance of libraries and library education have been recognized by the educationalists, the

intellectuals, the social scientists and the like. The following have been identified from some personal observations; also Rahman, Khatun & Islam (2011), Munshi (2008), and Islam & Chowdhury (2006) identified the following major problems of library and information science education in Bangladesh:

- In the present age of information superhighway the whole world has given priority to build up well set and IT based libraries in the society for creating reading habits among the users; whereas in Bangladesh most of the libraries are traditional in nature.
- There is no national commission for development of libraries and library education in Bangladesh.
- Lack of proper initiatives, efforts and plans improving library and information science profession by the government at national level.
- Although different Education Commission Reports stressed to establish library in every school and college of the country, the government have not allocated enough funds for establishing libraries in the last Annual Development Program (2007-2008).
- There is no prescribed salary structure for librarians at the national level. It varies from one institution to another and even within the government departments.
- Absence of a national body or coordinating committee to advise the government for the development of libraries, librarianship, library and information science education and related affairs.
- Low professional status, poor working conditions and insufficient infrastructural facilities make the professionals depressed.
- Lack of appropriate leadership in library and information science education and library profession of the country.
- As there is a scarcity of continuing education and career development facilities, the LIS professionals are lagging behind regarding their knowledge and other necessary skills. Moreover, the organizations or institutes where they are doing job are not providing any facilities to enhance their professional skills.

- There is no ways of getting together all academicians and professionals in Bangladesh at one time in a year. As such, the sharing and exchanging of information and experience is lacking in Bangladesh between the Academician and the professionals.
- The majority of the institutes, which are offering postgraduate diploma, lack adequate infrastructural facilities such as classrooms, and lab for practicing cataloguing and classification.
- There is a shortage of fulltime faculty members; especially the library and information science institutes are running the postgraduate diploma course with the part time faculty members. This affects students adversely as they do not get sufficient assistance or academic support from the part time faculty members.
- Lack of faculty members who have obtained PhD from the first world countries. There are nine PhD degree holders on library and information Science in the Department of ISLM in Dhaka University. Only one of them obtained from UK, one from South Africa and one from Japan. Beyond this, one is pursuing PhD in Japan. The rest of them are from Indian sub-continent. It is to be mentioned that there is only one PhD degree holder faculty member in ISLM department in Rajshahi University.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The objectives of library and information science education and training in Bangladesh requires to be harmonized with the needs and nature of its own society (Ahmed, 1992). Problems are, of course, too many, but any organized and planned education and training program in library and information science must have permanent value for future prospect of librarianship in the country. In the existing situation, the following recommendations would make much progress for library and information science and training, in particular, and library service in general, in Bangladesh:

- A need-based survey should be conducted to determine the current and approaching needs of the country's libraries and information institutions and required type of personnel to administer such organizations. Findings of the survey can be

helpful for library educators who might be interested in developing and designing skill upgrading courses, as well as to review and develop library education system in Bangladesh.

- The mission of library education programs should be clearly stated in the syllabus. It should address the purpose of the educational program in the larger political, social, economic and technical context and should be consistent with the non-discriminatory values of the profession.
- The programs should state its goals and identify specific objectives, derived from its goals, addressing philosophy, principles and methods of the program; areas of specialization, level of preparation provided, teaching, service and research values, and the perceived role of library services in the society.
- More emphasis should be given on practical application of computers and related technologies, digital libraries courses in forthcoming syllabus. At least 50% of the syllabus should be covered by the use and application of information technology to strengthen the program. There are many standards and protocols such as Z39.50 standard, interlibrary loan standards, circulation interchange protocol, Dublin core metadata standard etc, and the teaching of them within the syllabus is necessary. Practical application of computers should be given more importance than theoretical discussion.
- There must be provision for continuous review of the curriculum in both keeping it up-to-date with current development and trends in librarianship and related disciplines and to use the new techniques of instructions.
- Special attention should be paid to research concerning the content of the curricula of postgraduate library and information science institutions and future schools/departments in other universities of Bangladesh in order to meet the needs and demands of the community.
- Both quality and quantity must be ensured in library education in the country. To provide quality education, we need to establish a number of departments of library and information science having modern courses of studies.
- The government should pay more attention to the development of a library-based education in the country as proposed by the National Education Commission Report -2003 by Miah (2004).

- National Commission for Library Education and Library Development in Bangladesh need to be established as immediate as possible. The commission will advise the government on the effects and benefits of library and information science education in Bangladesh.
- A national training institute for library and information science should be established for providing training programs of professional librarians on the use and application of modern information technology (IT).
- Provision of higher education, student scholarship and fellowships at all levels needs to be made to encourage the better calibre persons towards library and information science profession in Bangladesh.
- Refreshers' training course and advanced professional education need to be instituted to create the scope for specialization within librarianship in a variety of formal programs introduced by the library science and public libraries and the Library Association of Bangladesh.
- Library associations, leading libraries and library educational institutions/departments need to organize meetings, seminars, symposia, conferences, lecture series and other programs in different times to create awareness among students, teachers and general people of the country.
- The government of Bangladesh needs to make provision of funds in the annual budget for the development of libraries as well as library and information science education in the country.

The above mentioned suggestions are not at all imaginative, far-reaching or impracticable, though the current need to economize may make some of them difficult to implement but not impossible. Some are in place here and there. All together their impact could be considerable. It needs to be emphasized that changes in attitude and practice on the part of library practitioners are at least as necessary as on the part of educators; practitioners have generally been keener on criticizing the department than on doing something positive to improve the quality of their resources and their own works.

As seen in the above sections, Bangladesh LIS education sector has gone through a number of years to evolve to what it is today. And

even as such, there are a number of challenges to overcome and a number of initiatives that can be put in place for further improve the Bangladesh LIS sector.

Learning from more experienced countries like Bangladesh is of essence to achieve swift developments for countries like Maldives to catch up with the other developing and developed countries.

5. LIS EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE MALDIVES

5.1 BACKGROUND

Maldives is a small island developing nation in the Asian subcontinent. The country faces considerable challenges in the provision of equitable services and opportunities to its population of slightly over 300,000 people due to the dispersed nature of its geographical layout; the country is made up of 1,192 islands with people living on 196 of them (MPND, 2007). Challenges in equal service provision is experienced in all spheres of life, also including education, functional literacy, ICTs and access to information (Riyaz & Smith, 2012).

The country boasts a literacy level, in the local language, of 98% for both male and female (MPND, 2005). There is virtually no difference between the literacy rates for the urban capital and the outer islands. However, an information survey by Riyaz (2009) found that there was a significant difference in functional literacy among the urban and the rural as well as among the young adults and mature adults. This could to some extent be attributed to the shortage of tertiary education avenues until recently.

Library science is yet an emerging discipline in the Maldives. *Dhaulathuge Kuthubukhana* (Government's Library), the forerunner to the present National Library of the Maldives, established in 1945 is the oldest library in the country (National Library, 2007). In its early days it served an elite group of the community and in the late 1970s the library was restructured and opened its services to the general public. Since then, it has been operating as the national library as well as the public library

serving the entire Maldivian community[12]. The other major library in the country is the library at the Maldives National University (MNU) with seven branches spread throughout the country. The MNU, established in 1998 as the Maldives College of Higher Education, is also the major tertiary education provider in the country. There are a number of other small libraries, mainly in schools and government offices.

5.2 *THE EMERGENCE OF LIS EDUCATION SECTOR IN THE MALDIVES*

LIS education first came into existence in the Maldives in the early 1980s when with the assistance of a library development consultant from overseas, Mrs. Ardith Betts, a librarian training program was conducted for National Library staff. Following this, in the late 1980s with the assistance of another expatriate library advisor, Ms. Janet Mary Fleming, the National Library introduced "Basic Course in Librarianship", "Intermediate Course in Librarianship" as well was an Advanced level program[13]. These were offered as 4-10 weeks programs. These trainings came into existence with the establishment of the Maldives Association in 1987. The short term training programs offered at that time were ad-hoc and infrequent due to a number of constraints, mainly attributed to lack of monitoring and follow-up action (Diyasena, 1995).

In an effort to address this shortcoming, the Maldives National Library and the Maldives Library Association (MLA) deliberated with Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA) whereby MLA became the mediator for the SLLA Distance Education program in the Maldives (Yapa, 2003). This program was initiated in 1995 with over 30 participants. The three-year program extended over 7 years, with large gaps between each year of the program due to financial constraints as well as other logistic issues; the last year of the program was offered in 2002 with only five[14] of the initial

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[12] *There appears to be a few small public libraries in the outer islands of the Maldives. However, there appears to be no documentation about these libraries.*

[13] *Documentations do not appear in the public sphere to clearly ascertain how many programs were conducted and how many people were trained under these programs.*

[14] *Two more graduated later with further examinations.*

participants graduating with SLLA Diploma qualification in 2003 (Gross and Riyaz, 2004). Since then, the Ministry of Education of the Maldives, coordinated with SLLA and offered the first year of the 3-year course in 2004 specifically targeted for school librarians. Those participants did not get the opportunity to complete their diploma as the subsequent two-years of the program were not offered by the Ministry. The lack of a follow-up of a similar endeavour by the National Library or the Maldives Library Association, or even the Ministry of Education is not clear as no documented evidence can be traced. However, discussions with the National Library management staff as well as with MLA Council members reveal that difficulty in accrediting the SLLA qualification by the MQA at Diploma level, the difficulty in coordinating online education, the lack of funding, the poor level of interest by the required cohort group of school completers are some of the constraints.

More importantly, the difficulties in conducting these trainings highlights the difficulties in conducting training in an area where the country lacks adequate qualified human resources and also experiences professional isolation due to its geographical location and dispersed layout of the country (Riyaz, 2009). There are only a handful of qualified[15] library professionals in the country, with two people holding a Masters Degree, two people with a Bachelors Degree & seven Diploma holders in LIS field as their highest qualification. These developments occurred from 2001 onwards (with the majority getting their qualification in the last 5 years) and with this, the library sector of the Maldives has witnessed a drastic change in the outlook of the profession as well as pursuit of professional development opportunities by the existing library workforce. This is reflective in the increased demand for a local course in LIS by individuals as well as education providers.

Accordingly, the first long-term LIS program in the Maldives was introduced in February 2010 at the MNU[16] as the "Advanced

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15 The defining qualification here is considered as Diploma and above in a library related field of study.

16 At the time of introduction of the course the MNU was known as the Maldives College of Higher Education (MCHE). MCHE gained University status in February 2011 and was renamed the Maldives National University.

Certificate in Library and Information Services" (ACLIS) course. Prior to this, and even up to this date, Maldivians had to go overseas to get a recognized qualification in LIS discipline.

The MCHE initiated discussions with the National Library of Maldives in 2006 on curriculum design for a Diploma program in library studies[17]. A number of challenges were faced in the process of curriculum design due to the lack of expertise in the area of curriculum development by the library professionals assigned with the task, as well as the effort in conformity to international library courses in Asia as well as the Developed countries, and conformity to the Maldives Qualification Framework's requirements. The impediment in the curriculum design, and the completion of the paper work, required the MCHE to adopt a different strategy and to launch the first year of the program as "Advanced Certificate", with the second year leading to Diploma qualification to be offered later.

With the experiences learned from the execution of the first year of the program in two batches in 2010 and 2011, and the overwhelming interest received from the education sector and from the public for this program, the MNU launched the second year, leading to a Diploma, of this program in January 2012.

5.3 LIBRARY TRAINING PROGRAMS
This section briefly outlines the LIS education/training programs currently available locally in the Maldives, with some details on the curriculum content and its applicability.

5.3.1 SHORT-TERM TRAINING PROGRAMS

Basic Course in Library Services
The Basic Course initiated in the 1987 by the Maldives Library Association and the National Library, has continued to be offered, at an-hoc mode. The program is made up of 42 hours of instruction in the wide area of library service provision. The program is at present halted to offer it as a Certificate I accredited program. The

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[17] *The two local authors of this paper (Aminath Riyaz & Aminath Shiuna) are among the leading members of the Curriculum Development team for the University's library course.*

Basic course was last offered in 2010 and is a much awaited program given the lack/shortage of any other training avenue in LIS.

Attachment training program (in-service)

To counteract the shortage of training opportunities, the National Library of Maldives has continuously attempted to offer attachment training opportunities for working librarians. The program is similar content wise to that offered by the MLA at basic level. This program is also run ad-hoc based on demand from individual libraries.

5.3.2 LONG-TERM ACCREDITED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The one-year Advanced Certificate in Library and Information Services (ACLIS) program offered at the Maldives National University can be completed as a stand-alone Certificate program or can be continued on to a Diploma education with a further one year of study. Likewise, the diploma qualification can be completed in one year if the applicants possess the necessary general education at Advanced Level.

The Certificate program concentrates more on practical approach while the Diploma year is more theory oriented with the practical component imparted through the placement at different libraries as Practicum.

The following curriculum structure was utilised for the 2010 and 2011 batches of ACLIS. Based on the lessons learnt from these two years and also based on the University's requirements the structure was revised for the 2012 intake.

Advanced Certificate in Library and Information Services 2010 & 2011 Program (this was revised for 2012 intake)		
IST101	Cataloguing and Classification	15 Credit Points
IST103	Introduction to Library Services	15 Credit Points
CPT101	Computer Applications	15 Credit Points
ENG105	English for Advanced Studies	15 Credit Points
IST105	Library Resources and Services	15 Credit Points
IST107	Information Literacy Skills	15 Credit Points
MGT101	Office Administration	15 Credit Points
IXP109	Industry Placement	15 Credit Points

The ACLIS and the Diploma curriculum structure for 2012 are as follows:

Advanced Certificate in Library and Information Services (1-year) 2012 Program		
ENG017	English for further Studies (English 1)	15 CP
GEN001	Study Skills	15 CP
IST001	Cataloguing and Classification for Beginners	15 CP
IST003	Collection Maintenance	15 CP
CPT101	Computer Applications	15 CP
MGT001	Office Administration	15 CP
IST005	Library Client Services	15 CP
IST007	Library Display and Promotion	15 CP
Diploma in Library and Information Services (1-year)		
IST109	Introduction to Library and Information Society	15 CP
IST111	Information Organization	15 CP
DHI109	Dhivehi for Professionals	15 CP
HIS102	20th Century Maldivian History	15 CP
IST###	Library Management Basics	15 CP
POL101	Civics	15 CP
BIS101	Information Systems	15 CP
IST115	[Library] Industry Placement	15 CP

According to the Faculty of Arts of MNU, this Diploma program will be articulated to a Bachelor Degree with two further years of study. The Diploma will be considered as the first year of the Bachelor Degree.

The curriculum development for the remaining two years is in the developmental stage and the University hopes to launch the program within the next few years. The proposed tentative subjects for the two years include:

▪ Information Organization (classification), Recordkeeping concepts and practice, Information Communication Technologies, Information Organization (cataloguing), Information Management, and Psychology/ Sociology/ Journalism subject as an elective [in the 2nd year of Undergraduate program].
▪ Bibliographic Control, Research Methodology, Archives concepts and practice, Information Literacy, Digital Libraries, Computer Programming basics, Logical Database design, and Maldives History (elective) [in the 3rd year of Undergraduate program].

The curriculum team examines different LIS education programs on offer at various institutions and universities overseas as to benchmark it at international level. The current course curriculum is

mainly concentrated on similar programs conducted at Canberra Institute of Technology, Curtin University of Technology, and Diploma program of the Sri Lanka Library Association.

5.3.3 *EVALUATION OF THE MNU COURSE ON LIS*

A quick review of the course content of ACLIS program in terms of its usability for the graduates of the program and applicability of what they learnt to their workplace was assessed with a sample of 8 students. The sample was selected randomly from the 15 students of the 2010 batch of students from the ACLIS course.

A review was also made of the employer perception of the graduates from this cohort group. Three out of the five organizations responded: one from the Maldives National University Library, one from Hithadhoo School, and one from the National Library of Maldives.

Student perceptions

The student perception of the overall satisfaction of the course in terms of usability, applicability and the instillation of a desire for further studies in the area, received positive comments. While all the participants indicated that the course met their expectations and increased their confidence, half of the respondents said the program meets the course objectives at an 'excellent' level with the other half of the respondents indicating that level of match between the program and its objectives were 'good'.

The students indicated the 'library resource and services' and 'cataloguing and classification' units as the significant areas of study.

In general, graduates had positive comments about their experiences after the course completion. Graduates most frequently mentioned about the new knowledge gained within the subject discipline, importance of librarianship and technical skills that they learnt. Some graduates mentioned that they need more resources and support from the management of their workplace to apply their skills and knowledge they have learnt.

Employer perceptions

The responses from the 3 organizations that responded show positive results, with two of the organizations stating that the ACLIS graduates incorporate much of the concepts learned during the course into library work, with one organization stating that the graduate's performances are better than they expected.

The organizations expect the ACLIS graduates to be able to come up with completely new ideas and develop concepts of their own on a practical basis. Some organizations suggested the inclusion of a research component, and to enhance the computer application component and internet applications into the ACLIS program.

The study included a question about staff development programs in the individual institutions; the Maldives National University Library stated that they have provisions to allow two staff to join the MNU library courses each year while the other organisations has no such plan. The National Library of Maldives stated that plans are underway to accredit the Canberra Institute of Technology's library level 2-4 course material according to Maldives Qualification Authority, to be offered locally in the Maldives.

5.4 *FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS*

It is believed that LIS education should encompass all broad areas addressing information culture, as the purpose of providing LIS education is to advance the provision and access of information by the populace for a meaningful information exchange.

The current long-term program has shown positive outcomes from both student and employer perceptions. A quick follow-up with the introduction of the Degree program is imperative to build confidence of the current Diploma students as well s future prospective candidates to join this area of study.

As seen from the review above, it is clear that there are not enough avenues of training and education in LIS within the Maldives. The focus is mainly on long-term programs which will require library workers to take time off from work for an extended period. This might not be feasible for the entire community given the risks of job security. Furthermore, due to the geographic dispersion of the country, the concentration of the library training programs in the capital city, Malé poses difficulties for the library practitioners working in the rest of the 193 islands of the country. Therefore, distance mode or block-mode study opportunities need to be introduced in the future to cater for the existing gap of LIS education for working librarians.

Given this scenario, there still is a greater need for short-term library training opportunities.

6. CONCLUSION

The comparison highlights that Bangladesh has been in this field much longer than the Maldives. One of the noteworthy observations is the role of independent or non-governmental organization in leading the introduction of such programs, to be later adopted by University or state bodies.

Also, the developmental stages of the programs appear to be taking a similar path with the introduction of short-term ad-hoc programs later being transformed to more structured programs. To countries like Maldives, experiences from other countries provide valuable opportunities to overcome identified shortcomings.

The challenges and recommendations identified by an experienced country like Bangladesh highlights the importance of introduction of different disciplinary angles into the LIS curricular. This is also seen in the curriculum development of other countries like Australia. The findings of the cursory review of the ACLIS program assure that Maldives LIS education has started on a strong foothold.

Library and information science education must be an essential part of our society, culture, and education to keep the libraries alive in the society for its well-set and development. The area of library and information science is currently experiencing a rapid and dynamic evolution. In agreement with the requirements of modern information environment, libraries and library professionals need to respond with the pace of evolving information and communication technologies. The developmental milestones by the Maldives in comparison to Bangladesh is taking a similar approach; evolving from short-term courses to tertiary level education. It also follows similar pattern in the non-governmental sector taking the lead in offering the initial ad-hoc programs, to be later expanded and adopted by the state.

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