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Paper: Sustainability

Threats and opportunities in library education in Sri Lanka: with special reference to Department of Library and Information Science, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

The principal aim of this study is to identify the threats and opportunities faced by the library education movement in Sri Lanka with special reference to the Department of Library and Information Science (DELIS), University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. The paper explores how DELIS could counter these threats with the help of new steps and strategies.

The objectives of the study were to identify what the library education movement is, to study threats and factors affecting library education, and to explore how DELIS can overcome these threats and develop a library education model.

The three principal contributors to library education movement in Sri Lanka are DELIS, Sri Lanka Library Association, and National Institute of Library and Information Science (NILIS). National Library and Documentation Services Board in the country plays a mediatory role in library education.

The factors and threats affecting library education in Sri Lanka can be categorized in two aspects as micro and macro. Micro aspects are grass root level factors and threats like rapidly changing subject knowledge content and relevancy, lack of communication and ICT skills among the Library and Information Science (LIS) students, lack of cooperation prevailing among the principal library education contributors, negative thinking and attitudes among LIS professionals. Macro aspects are non recognition and non-identification of the library sector in the government hierarchy, dubious beauracracy.

DELIS is in the process of revising its LIS curriculum drastically, to suit the current demands and requirements. The others are the inclusion of extraordinary course units, revising curriculum every four years, empowerment of industrial training component, identification, introduction of series of competencies, allocation of more ICT course units, inclusion of English course unit every semester, introduction of more practical course units particularly in Classification, Cataloguing, compilation of bibliographic tools, ICT, and communication skills. It is proposed to empower the curriculum evaluation process and further propose to set up a Curriculum Revision Committee with representation from the principal library education contributors in Sri Lanka, library professionals, and the government and private sector. It is observed that a benchmarking system is necessary with local and foreign exposure.

Keywords: Library education, Curriculum development, Competencies, Sri Lanka, Training and development, Professional education