

Threats and opportunities in library education: new strategies in the Curriculum Development in the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The principal aim of this study is to identify the threats and opportunities face by the library education movement in Sri Lanka with special reference to Department of Library and Information Science (DELIS), University of Kelaniya Sri Lanka and to investigate the measures and strategies for answering them. The paper explores how the DELIS could counter these threats with the help of curriculum development strategies. Objectives of the study were to study threats and factors affecting library education with special reference to DELIS, to explore how DELIS overcome these threats and to develop a model of a curriculum design system. Methodology adopted in the study comprised the analysis of vision, mission, stakeholder, content and SWOT. The factors and threats affecting the library education in Sri Lanka can be categorized in to two aspects as macro and micro. Macro aspects are non-recognition and non-identification of the library sector in the government hierarchy particularly the higher education sector, dubious bureaucracy, and lack of cooperation among the principal library education contributors. Micro aspects of threats are the grass root level factors. These threats are rapidly changing subject knowledge content and relevancy, lack of communication and ICT skills among the Library and Information Science (LIS) students, perennial decrease of library science students' intake, negative thinking and attitudes among LIS professionals. Identifying this critical situation, the DELIS is in the process of revising its LIS curriculum drastically suiting to the current demands and requirement in the Student Centered Learning (SCL) context. The others measures for answering these threats are the inclusion of extraordinary course units, revising curriculum at every four year period, empowerment of industrial training component, identification of series of competencies, allocation of more ICT course units, inclusion of project based English course unit at every semester, introduction of more practical project based course unites particularly in Classification, Cataloguing, compilation of bibliographic tools and Literature survey project reports in Science and Technology, Social Sciences and Humanities. ICT, communication, management and language skills are some of the essential soft skills which should inculcate among the undergraduates. It is proposed to empower the curriculum evaluation process and further propose to set up a Curriculum Revision Committee with the representation from the principal library education contributors in Sri Lanka, library professionals and the government and private sector. It is observed that a benchmark system introduced so far has to be revised accordingly. These are some of the new strategies in the curriculum development in the Department and they could be applied in the other curriculum development processes. Academic feedbacks well received and responded by the audience in International conference on Social Sciences and Humanities, on 8th, 9th and 10th September, 2014, Istanbul, Turkey. They suggested to consider Industrial Training (IT)

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be mandatory and let it be given the students for a whole semester free of lectures. Their view was to oversee Industrial Training process very carefully. They informed it is better to students be given a trainee allowance. Innovative ideas they pointed are making a fixed time period for syllabi revision, allowing students to develop their soft-skills within and outside the curriculum, conducting SWOT, Need Analysis getting more feedbacks from library education stakeholders such as LIS teachers, library professionals, library schools etc. The suggestion to include a course unit on Knowledge management and Indigenous knowledge system was well responded by the audience. Since the internet and ICT development makes a radical development in the libraries and information sector, they suggested considering giving a higher weightage to that component in curriculum development. They endorsed the fact that Outcome Based Education could be achieved using Student Centered Learning. One value added emphasis was the utilization of Online Learning Management System (OLMS) for undergraduate education.

Keywords: Library education, Curriculum development, competencies, Sri Lanka, Training and development, professional education