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Service Learning In Lis Education

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Abstract: The study aims to identify the necessity and exact provision of 'Service Learning' in LIS education. The universities offering Library & Information Science courses in the state of West Bengal, India, have been selected as the study population. The syllabi of the BLIS and MLIS programs from all universities offering LIS courses in West Bengal were collected and analyzed. A survey method was used, with a questionnaire on Google Forms, to gather information related to internships from alumni of the MLIS program at the University of North Bengal. The data collected was analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The experiences gained from monitoring interns who were given opportunities to work in our college library, providing services to users, were used to frame the nature and types of tasks to be included in the service learning. The study recommends incorporating internship/service learning as part of the curriculum with a considerable credit allocation and suggests implementing a uniform structure for the same across all LIS programs in the universities.

Index Terms: Service learning, internship, library and information science

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite earning an advanced degree in Library and Information Science, securing a library job without practical experience remains challenging. Candidates with hands-on-experience have a clear advantage in the competitive library profession. Even those luckily manage to secure a job without prior experience often struggle to carry on their role and responsibilities in their initial days. They have to seek guidance from experienced staff and take the initiative to undergo training to perform their duties effectively.

This challenge arises primarily due to the significant gap between the theoretical knowledge imparted in academic curricula and the practical skills required in professional settings. In India, most of the universities do not integrate practical training or internships extensively into their LIS programs. Even when such opportunities are offered, they are often insufficient. As a result, students face difficulties when transitioning into the professional field.

"Service Learning is an educational approach where a student learns theories in the classroom and at the same time volunteers with an agency (usually a non-profit or social service group) and engages in reflection activities to deepen their understanding of what is being taught. It is a cycle of theories, practices, and reflection tools to broaden knowledge and critical thinking skills for social change." Elmhurst University

Jacoby (1996) provided the definition in the volume 'Service Learning in Higher Education' as "Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning."²

'Service learning' in LIS implies when students of LIS courses provide services to a library and its users and also learn from the experiences acquired there.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The gap between Library and Information Science (LIS) education and practical work has long been a subject of discussion among library researchers (Stephens, 2013). Numerous scholars have explored this issue through extensive literature reviews, including Ball(2008), Becker (2000), Cuban and Hays (2001), Furco (1996), Eyler et al. (2001), Riddle (2003), and Yontz and de la Pena McCook (2003).

Furco (1996) defined service learning as an approach that equally benefits both the provider and the recipient, emphasizing the mutual enhancement of service and learning. Riddle (2003) examined the role of academic libraries in service learning, proposing a model for engaged library instruction. Yontz, E., & de la Peña McCook, K. (2003). Opined that LIS educators should share their experiences regarding internship through writing and presentations in seminars. They said that service-learning movement was natural in Library & Information Science education offering the methodology to improve students' learning of course contents, a vehicle for wider communications and an opportunity to contribute in a growing national movement. Stoffle and Leeder (2005) highlighted the distinction between education and practical training, stating that education imparts professional knowledge, while practical training focuses on job-specific skills. Vassallo (2005) reinforced this idea by differentiating education as "knowing" and training as "doing". Collaboration between librarians and educators is essential for advancing the library profession, as suggested by Crowley(2005). Ball (2008) described service learning as a subset of experiential learning where the relationship between those serving and being served is reciprocal. She emphasized that service activities should be tied to specific learning objectives and reflected upon throughout the semester. Glassman (2011) argued that practical training enhances students' employability, while Cooper (2013) explored internships as a form of service learning, concluding that hands-on-experience significantly enriches student learning. Bird and Crumpton (2014) conducted the "Real Learning Connections" project, advocating for closer collaboration between LIS faculty and practitioner librarians. They emphasized the importance of mutual learning, joint supervision of student internships, and curriculum reforms to strengthen the library profession. Sawant, S. And Sawant, P. (2018) studied about the status of job placement and internship activities in the LIS schools of Maharashtra. They concluded that theoretical knowledge is not sufficient to survive in the job market without certain important employability skills. They also suggested including well-planned activities designed by collaborating with different types of librarians in LIS internships to be more effective.

III. AIMS & OBJECTIVES:

AIMS: To identify the necessity and exact provision of 'Service Learning' in LIS education.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To identify the provision of internship/service learning in course-curricula of different universities of West Bengal.
2. To identify the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical work.
3. To identify the importance and necessity of service learning in LIS profession.
4. To suggest the nature/type of work to be included in service learning.

IV. METHODOLOGY:

The universities those offer Library & Information Science courses in the state of West Bengal, India, have been selected as population of study.

1. Collected and analyzed the syllabus of BLIS and MLIS of all universities offering LIS courses in West Bengal.
2. Used survey method with the help of a questionnaire in Google form to collect the information related to internship from the passed out students of MLIS from University of North Bengal and analyzed those using Microsoft excel.
3. Used the experiences gathered while monitoring the interns given opportunities in our college library to learn and provide services to the users in framing the nature/type of works to be included in the service learning.

V. COURSE CONTENT OF DIFFERENT UNIVERSITIES IN WEST BENGAL:

The universities of West Bengal which offer Library & Information Science courses are listed below:

1. University of North Bengal (NBU)
2. Vidyasagar University (VU)
3. Jadavpur University (JU)
4. University of Calcutta (CU)
5. West Bengal State University (WBSU)
6. University of Kalyani (KU)
7. Burdwan University (BU)
8. Rabindra Bharati University (RBU)
9. Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University (CBPBU)
10. Seacom Skills University (SSU) (Private University in Santiniketan)
11. Netaji Subhash Open University (NSOU)
12. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)

a) BLIS Syllabus

Comparing the BLIS syllabus of the universities it is found that there is no provision of internship or field survey in WBSU, CU, BU, RBU, NBU, KU, NSOU and SSU. The provision of field survey of 50 marks is included in the BLIS syllabus of VU, JU, and CBPBU. BLIS course of IGNOU has included internship of credit 4.

Calcutta University provides different type of courses in library and Information Science after H.S. and B.A./B.Sc. degree of which BLIS and MLIS course have no provision of field visit or internship. There is one paper carrying 50 marks of internship in the course 2-year integrated BLIS-MLIS course, one paper of field visit and internship carrying 25 marks each in the course 3-year B.A./B.Sc. (Hon) in Library and Information Studies, one paper of field visit and/or internship and viva voce carrying 50 marks in the course 5-year integrated MLIS of CU. MLIS course too of IGNOU includes internship of credit 4. RBU Syllabus of MLIS includes 120 hrs of internship in 15 working days and of credit 4. MLIS course of NBU has included one paper for field survey/Library survey and one paper for internship (to be done in NBU library only) of 100 marks and 4 credits each.

No internship in MLIS course of KU, JU, BU, VU, CBPBU, NSOU, SSU and MLIS (Digital Library) syllabus of JU. JU includes only field work of 25 marks and 1 credit in its MLIS. VU also includes Field study of 50 marks. BU includes library community development program of 25 marks and 2 credits.

Table 1: Provision of field survey and internship as a part of syllabus

Sl. no.	NAME OF THE UNIVERSITY	Integrated MLIS		BLIS		MLIS	
		Field Survey	Internship credits	Field Survey	Internship credits	Field Survey	Internship credits
1	University of Calcutta	50 marks and/or	50 marks	No	No internship	No	No internship
2	University Of North Bengal	NA	NA	Theory	No internship	50 marks	4 credits (only in NBU library)
3	University of Kalyani	NA	NA	No	No internship	No	No internship
4	West Bengal State University	NA	NA	No	No internship	NA	NA
5	Burdwan University	NA	NA	No	No internship	25 marks (2	No internship

						credits)	
6	Rabindra Bharati University	NA	NA	No	No internship	No	Credits 4
7	Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University	NA	NA	50 marks	No internship	No	No internship
8	Vidyasagar University	NA	NA	50 marks	No internship	50 marks	No internship
9	Jadavpur University	NA	NA	50 marks	No internship	25 marks (1 credit)	No internship
10	Netaji Subhash Open University	NA	NA	No	No internship	No	No internship
11	Indira Gandhi National Open University	NA	NA	No	4 credits	No	Credits 4
12	Seacom Skills University	NA	NA	No	No internship	No	No internship

So, it is found that only IGNOU that is an open university has provision of the internship in its BLIS course. Others have no provision. MLIS courses of NBU, RBU, and IGNOU assign 4 credits for internship and integrated MLIS course of CU have the provision of internship carrying 50 marks. Among them NBU allows to do internship only in NBU library. RBU provides opportunity of doing internship in Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Kolkata.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS

Google forms were distributed among the alumnus of University of North Bengal. 110 persons responded. The data analysed as below:

Table 2: Employment status of the respondents

Employed /Non-Employed

Category	Number	Percentage
Employed	35	31.82
Not employed	75	68.18
Total	110	

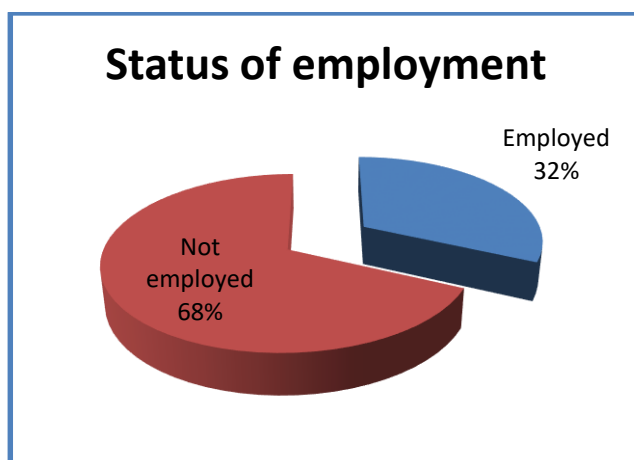


Chart 1

Table 3: Numbers of respondents who have done internship after MLIS.

Internship done after MLIS

	Number	Percentage
Yes	50	45.45
No	60	54.55
Total	110	

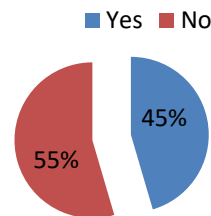
Internship done after MLIS

Chart 2

Table 4: Willingness of the respondents to do internship

Willingness to do internship

	Number	Percentage
Yes	95	86.36
No	1	0.91
May be	14	12.73
Total	110	

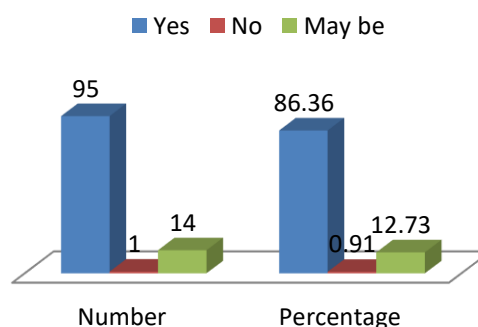
Willingness

Chart 3

Table 4: The respondents were given 5 options to choose they are agree with. They were free to choose multiple options.

The options are:

- A:** There are huge differences in theory learnt and practical work
- B:** One has to face problems to get job on the basis of degrees only
- C:** One without any practical experience, has to struggle a lot in real situation
- D:** Advanced Information Technology increases the necessity of doing internship
- E:** Only theoretical learning is sufficient to get and do a job in any library

Opinion of the Respondants

	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Number	100	65	72	72	1	110
Percentage	90.91	59.09	65.45	65.45	0.91	

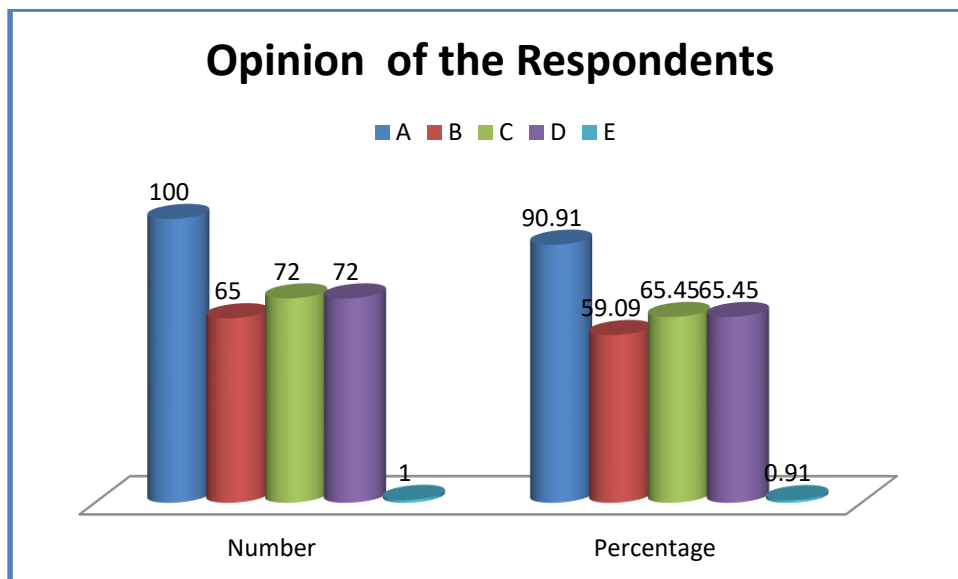


Chart 4

Table 5: The question was “Do you recommend internship as a part of syllabus?”

Respond	Number	Percentage
Yes	108	98.18
No	2	1.82
Total	110	

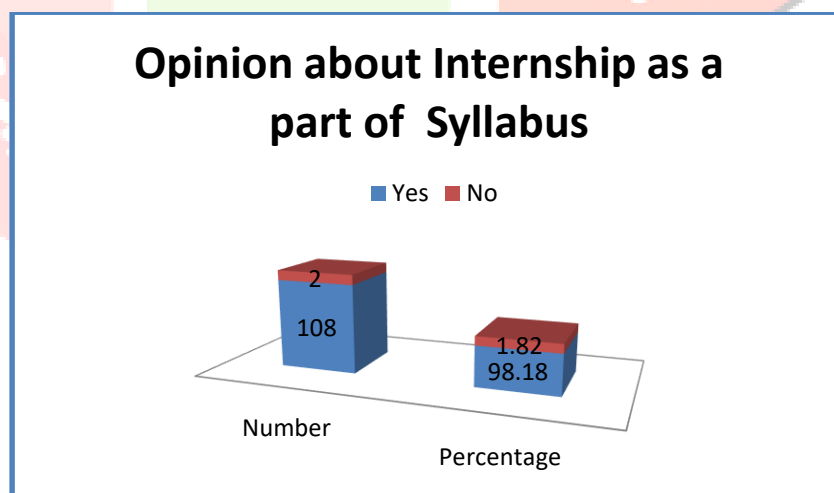


Chart 5

VII. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS**Findings**

1. There is no uniformity among the syllabuses of different universities of West Bengal regarding internship.
2. Except IGNOU, there is no provision of internship in BLIS courses of the universities. 3 universities have included field survey.
3. IGNOU, RBU and NBU have the provisions of internship of 4 credits in their syllabus of MLIS. The different courses of CU have different policies regarding internship. However 2 year integrated MLIS course includes the internship but 5 year integrated MLIS course has the alternative options of field survey

- and internship. NBU limits their internship opportunities within their central library whereas RBU sends their students to ISI, Kolkata. Otherwise the rest maximum universities don't have such provision.
4. From the survey and the experience it is found that though the MLIS students of NBU do internship in NBU central library, but they don't get equal opportunities to do work and learn in every department of work and hence can't fulfil their needs.
 5. It is found that a considerable amount of students (45.45%) are doing internship after passing MLIS with their own initiatives. Other few students are not getting internship though they are willing to do so.
 6. When asking about their willingness to do internship, maximum percentage i.e. 86.36 % students expressed their willingness whereas another 12.73% students said they may do internship. Only 0.91% i.e. 1 among 110 expressed their non-willingness.
 7. 90.91% students opined that there are huge differences between theory learnt and practical work. 65.45% students told that one without any practical experience has to struggle a lot in real situation as well as advanced Information technology increases the necessity of doing internship and 59.09% students opined that one has to face problems to get job on the basis of degree only.
 8. 98.18% (108) students recommended internship within their syllabus. Only 1.82 %(2) students answered negatively.
 9. From personal experience it is found that most of the students are very much eager to gather practical experiences even without any stipend or remuneration.
 10. After having internship they are getting ready for real situations both in terms of technical & administrative skills and soft skills.
 11. If students get opportunities to do internship they get advantages of learning various skills including communication skills, technological skill, administrative skill, facing users in real situations, etc. and become confident. On the other side, the institution those extend the opportunities to them also gets advantages of availing their free services. Hence it can be denoted with the terminology "Service Learning" i.e. learning while giving services.

Suggestions

1. The provision of internship/service learning should be incorporated in each & every course of LIS of each university.
2. The internship should have a considerable credit allocation.
3. The universities should frame a uniform structure of internship/service learning in their syllabuses.
4. The universities may go for a MOU with several types of libraries and students should be given scope to choose library according to their choices.
5. The students should work in every department of any library while in service learning so that they can be acquainted with every type of work done in a library.
6. The nature of works to be done while in service learning should be framed by the teachers of the courses with after having suggestions from the librarians of different types of libraries.
7. The following works can be enlisted in a service learning:
 - Accessioning
 - Stamping
 - Data entry in OPAC
 - Pasting barcode and spine
 - Barcode, spine generation and printing
 - Shelving
 - Circulation
 - Member entry
 - Member card generation
 - Involvement in process of book selection and purchasing
 - Interaction with users
 - Reference services
 - Journal acquisition and entry
 - Current awareness service
 - Information service about new arrival and others
 - Advisory services
 - Knowledge regarding Library promotion
 - Dealing with administration from observation

Knowledge about preservation technique
Stock taking

VIII. CONCLUSION

From the above detailed discussion, it can be concluded that students are willing to do internship and they also prefer to do the internship as a part of their syllabus. But the universities in West Bengal have no uniformity or equal opportunity in this issue. Maximum universities don't provide their students an opportunity to do the internship. In BLIS also internship is necessary as with the BLIS degree students get eligible for school library as well as public library. But no university has such provision except IGNOU. The universities should take an initiative to design a uniform structure of internship in their syllabus. We can find even in one university different courses have different structures. NEP, 2020 also emphasizes on student internship while doing their bachelor's degree. NEP, 2020 also recommended paying the students if taking their services than availing free services. Several bachelors' courses even if not vocational or professional course, have also included the provision of internship and credit in their syllabuses. In comparison, LIS courses can be considered as vocational or professional courses as students do these courses only to get jobs directly after the completion of the courses. If the universities include the mandatory provision of internship in their LIS syllabus uniformly, then the students will be benefited as well as the institutions also can avail their services with no cost or minimum cost.

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[learning/#:~:text=Service%20Learning%20is%20an%20educational,of%20what%20is%20being%20taught.](https://www.elmhurst.edu/blog/what-is-service-learning/#:~:text=Service%20Learning%20is%20an%20educational,of%20what%20is%20being%20taught.)

