

Full Length Research

LIS EDUCATION THROUGH DISTANCE MODE: NSOU & IGNOU

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Nowadays Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system of education is rapidly growing and it has considerable effect on education delivery system. The basic conception of Open and distance learning (ODL) in education system engrossed an open access to learning to make the learners free from the limitation of time and place. In this ODL system students and teachers has not limit like traditional classroom rather they are connecting from home. Including all other subject library and information science is also taught through distance mode in different universities. In this article a comparative study of LIS education in IGNOU and NSOU is discussed. It is also discussed that what are the drawbacks of distance education and try to give some suggestion to overcome the drawbacks.

Keywords: LIS education, Distance education, IGNOU, NSOU, Open and Distance Learning

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INTRODUCTION

In the world India has one of the largest educational systems. The Open and Distance Learning (ODL) System has emerged as a vibrant and dynamic component of Higher Education Infrastructure in the country. The number of distance education programmes are growing up in India to meet the growing demand for higher education. The growth and expansion of distance education programmes have generated considerable interest in student support services in general, and library and information services in particular. As a result, someone pursuing a degree or trying to keep pace with new developments in their profession can often study the required courses without needing to enroll in a conventional campus-based course. LIS education in India is currently passing through a turning point and has become a fast developing subject with a multidisciplinary approach. Today LIS education not only includes the library specific subject but it also has been extended to subjects like computer application, statistics, information science, management studies and operation research. With the changing scenario modern librarianship has become a profession with a diversity of opportunities and challenges for LIS students and professionals.

Objectives of the study

1. To highlight LIS education through distance mode in some universities of India.
2. To find out comparative study of syllabus.
3. To find out comparative study of evaluation.
4. To find out comparative study of others different criterion.

LIS distance education in India

Library and information science (LIS) education in the country has a history of a century. LIS education in the country can be traced back to 1911 when W A Borden initiated a training programme at Baroda to create a cadre of men to manage the libraries in the state library system. Thereafter, many associations, institutions/ libraries conducted training programmes for librarians. A regular certificate course was started by Madras Library Association (MALA) in 1929 which was taken up by the University of Madras in 1931 and continued on a regular basis. It was 1937, when at the initiative of S.R.Ranganathan University of Madras started one Post-graduate Diploma Course of one year duration replacing the certificate course. It was the beginning of the library and information science education at the University level. Thereafter, Banaras Hindu University and University of Bombay started Post-graduate Diploma in 1942 and 1943, respectively. The University of Delhi started P.G. Diploma in Library Science in 1947 which was later upgraded to Master Degree in Library Science in 1949. Thereafter many Universities came forward to start library and information science courses of different level and the number of institutions and number of courses offered increased gradually. Presently about 150 universities/ associations/ institutions/ libraries are offering courses in library and information science of various levels from certificate level to doctoral level. Upto mid-1980s, LIS education expanded in India in the form of face-to-face stream, but new beginning in the form of correspondence course started taking place in library and information science. Establishment of Andhra Pradesh Open University (APOU) (in 1982) made an important stride forward in offering library and information science with the launch of BLIS course in 1984. Later IGNOU started BLIS in 1989 and MLIS in 1994. VMOU and many other open universities and distance education institutions in the country started courses in library and information science. A novel development occurred when the Andhra Pradesh Open University (APOU) now known as the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU) began to offer Library and Information Science at the bachelor level via distance education.

LIS education through distance mode in some universities of India:

Name of the Open University	Year of estd.	Type	Home page URL
Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad, A.P.	1982	State	www.braou.ac.in
Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi	1985	Central	http://www.ignou.ac.in/
Vardhman Mahaveer Open University, Kota, Rajasthan	1987	State	http://www.vmou.ac.in/
Nalanda Open University. Patna, Bihar	1987	State	http://www.nalandaopenuniversity.com
Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, Nashik, Maharashtra	1989	State	http://ycmou.digitaluniversity.ac
Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University, Bhopal, M.P.	1991	State	www.bhojvirtualuniversity.com
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat	1994	State	www.baou.org

Karnataka State Open University, Mysore, Karnataka	1996	State	http://karnatakastateopenuniversity.in/
Netaji Subhas Open University, Kolkata, W.B.	1997	State	http://wbnsou.ac.in/wbnsou/
K. K. Handique State University, Guwahati, Assam	2006	State	http://www.kkhsou.in/main/about.html
The Global Open University, Nagaland	2006	State	http://www.nagaland.net.in/

Levels of Courses Offered by Different Universities/Institutions:

- Certificate Course
- Diploma Course
- B. Lib. Sc. or B. LIS.
- M. Lib. Sc or M. LIS.
- M. Phil.
- PhD (Doctorate in Philosophy)
- D. Litt
- Associateship course
- In-service Trainig
- Short term course

Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU):

Netaji Subhas Open University is the premier State Open University in India. The year 1997 was the birth centenary year of NetajiSubhas Chandra Bose. The Chief Minister of West Bengal made an announcement at a State function that an Open University would be set up soon and dedicated to Netaji's hallowed memory. The Higher Education Minister, Govt. of West Bengal spearheaded the idea after his visit to the Open University in U.K. Under his instruction was set up a ten-member steering committee headed by late Dr. Bhaskar Ray Chowdhury, former Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University.

Following this, a State Act (W.B. Act (XIX) of 1997 and Recognised by U.G.C.) was passed on the 20th August 1997 in favour of opening a University for imparting Distance Education. NetajiSubhas Open University was established by bifurcated Netaji Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) and in terms of the Act of West Bengal State Legislative Assembly and is housed in Historic building of Sri Sarat Chandra Bose, elder brother of Netaji. The University started functioning with effect from July 1998 Semester, only with the Bachelor's Degree Programme in Arts & Commerce to provide an opportunity of higher education in the vernacular medium to various disadvantaged groups of aspiring learners. It is the tenth Open University of the country and the ninth State Open University.

Visions: Netaji Subhas Open University, the state university of West Bengal, will contribute to the building up the quality human resources base of the State and collaborate with other open universities of the national and state levels towards the improvement of the quality of distance education and to promote and develop appropriate technology to create the distance education scenario of an international standard in our country keeping in view of the demands of the knowledge seekers for education appropriate to the twenty first century.

Mission: To spread higher education in different parts of the state and to cooperate with universities to provide access to higher education and to different skill enhancing educational programmes Netaji Subhas Open University shall:

- Provide quality education in a flexible mode to serve the aim of establishing an equitable knowledge society within the state; provide higher education through distance learning through the language of the state, i.e. Bengali
- Make education affordable to disadvantaged

- Provide facility for lifelong education to intending learners
- Strive for upgradation of technology without compromising the basic values of the society
- Contribute to the development of the state and the nation and motivate learners to strive for secular, scientific and democratic education.

In order to provide individualized support to its learners, the University has a large number of study centres through the state. The methodology of instruction in this University is different from that of conventional universities. The Open University system is more learner-oriented and the learner is an active participation in the teaching and learning process. Most of the instructions are imparted through distance education methodology rather than face-to-face communication. The university follows a multimedia approach for its instruction. It comprises:

- Self Instructional Material
- Audio-Video CD
- Personal Contact Programme
- Gyan Vani FM Channel
- Interactive Radio Counselling

Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLISc):

Course content:

Paper I: Library and Society

Paper II: Library Management

Paper III: Library Classification Theory

Paper IV: Library Cataloguing Theory

Paper V: Reference and Information Service

Paper VI: Classification Practice

Paper VII: Cataloguing Practice

Paper VIII: Computer Basics and Application

Admission Requirements:

For BLISc:

For fresher candidate: Hons. Graduate with 45% marks Pass graduate with 50% marks

For in-service candidate: any graduate with three years' experience in a library or similar other organization in a salaried post, not below the category of clerical cadre.

Intake capacity: No limit

Minimum Age: No bar

Duration: Minimum 1 year and Maximum 3 years.

Course fee: 3000/- (approx)

Master of Library and Information Science (MLISc):

Course content

Paper I: Information, Communication and Society

Paper II: Information Sources, Systems and Services

Paper III: Information Processing and Retrieval (Theory)

Paper IV: Information Institutions, Products and Services

Paper V: Management of library and Information Centres

Paper VI: Information Technology: Application

Paper VII: Dissertation

Elective Paper (Any two):

E1: Preservation and Conservation of Library Materials

E2: Research Methodology

E3: Academic Library System

E4: Public Library System

Admission Requirements:

For MLISc: Bachelor's Degree in Library and Information Science / Other Graduate (10+2+3) with at least 300 marks of study in Library Science/ Library and Information Science/ Information Science.

Intake capacity: No limit

Minimum Age: No bar

Duration: Minimum 1 year and Maximum 3 years.

Course fee: 5700/- (approx)

Evaluation Method: Evaluation will be made on the basis of internal assessment as well as theoretical and practical examination held on completion of the course. 20% marks are reserved for internal assessment in each paper. Pass mark 40% in each paper. The final grade is determined by the 20% of assignment marks and 80% of term end examination. The final gradation system is divided as follows:

- **70% and above : A+**
- **60% to below 70%: A**
- **55% to below 60%: B+**
- **40% to below 55%: B**

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU):

The Indira Gandhi National Open University was established by an Act of Parliament in 1985 to achieve the following objectives:

- democratising higher education by taking it to the doorsteps of the learners
- providing access to high quality education to all those who seek it irrespective of age, region, religion and gender
- offering need-based academic programmes by giving professional and vocational orientation to the courses
- promoting and developing distance education in India
- setting and maintaining standards in distance education in the country as an apex body.

IGNOU has certain unique features such as:

- international jurisdiction
- flexible admission rules
- individualised study: flexibility in terms of place, pace and duration of study
- use of latest information and communication technologies
- nationwide student support services network
- cost-effective programmes
- modular approach to programmes
- resource sharing, collaboration and networking with conventional Universities, Open Universities and other Institutions/Organisations
- socially and academically relevant programmes based on students need analysis
- convergence of open & conventional education systems

Bachelor's of Library and Information Science (BLIS):

The Bachelor's Degree in Library and Information Science Programme comprises nine courses; of these seven courses deal with theoretical aspects of this discipline, while two courses are meant to provide practical exercises to the learners. Out of seven courses on theoretical aspects, one course (BLIS-07) also includes practical component. Medium of instruction for this programme is English and Hindi.

Course content:

Paper I: Library and Society

Paper II: Library Management

Paper III: Library Classification Theory

Paper IV: Library Classification Practice

Paper V: Library Cataloguing Theory

Paper VI: Library Cataloguing Practice

Paper VII: Reference and Information Sources**Paper VIII: Information Services****Paper IX: Information Technology: Basics****Admission Requirements:****For BLIS:**

For fresher candidate: Hons. Graduate with 45% marks Pass graduate with 50% marks

For in-service candidate: any graduate with three years' experience in a library or similar other organization in a salaried post, not below the category of clerical cadre.

Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS):

The general objective of this programme is to contribute to building of professional human resources to meet the varied demands for information handling in libraries and information centres in the country. The programme comprises Core Courses and Elective Courses. The medium of instruction for MLIS programme for the time being is English. The Programme is also being offered online. There will be 7 Courses (6 Core Courses + 1 Project) for this programme which is compulsory. The areas covered in the core courses are: Information, Communication and Society, Information Sources, Systems and Services, Information Processing and Retrieval, Management of Library and Information Centres, and Information Technology.

Course content:**Paper I: Information, Communication and Society****Paper II: Information Sources, Systems and Services****Paper III: Management of Library and Information Centres****Paper IV: Information Processing and Retrieval****Paper V: Fundamentals of Information Communication Technologies****Paper VI: Information Communication Technologies: Applications****Paper VII: Project**

Electives: (Out of the following six electives, a learner has to opt for any two)

Paper I: Preservation and Conservation of Library Materials**Paper II: Research Methodology****Paper III: Academic Library System****Paper IV: Technical Writing****Paper V: Informetrics and Scientometrics****Paper VI: Public Library System and Services****Admission Requirements:****For MLIS:**

For fresher candidate: Hons. Graduate with 45% marks

Pass graduate with 50% marks

For in-service candidate: any graduate with three years' experience in a library or similar other organization in a salaried post, not below the category of clerical cadre.

Evaluation System:

The system of evaluation in IGNOU is also different from that of conventional universities. IGNOU has a multitier system of evaluation.

1. Self-assessment exercises within each unit of study.
2. Continuous evaluation mainly through assignments which are tutor-marked, practical assignments and seminar/workshops/extended contact programmes.
3. The term-end examinations.
4. Project works

The evaluation of learners depends upon various instructional activities undertaken by them. A learner has to write assignment responses compulsorily before taking term-end examination from time to time to complete an academic programme. A learner has to submit TMA responses to the Coordinator of the Study Centre concerned to which s/he is attached. A learner should keep duplicate copies of assignment responses of TMA that may be required to be produced at Student Evaluation Division on demand. Term end examination is conducted at various examination centers spread all over the country and abroad in June and December.

IGNOU uses the following system of "Grading" for evaluating learners's achievement

Letter Grade	Qualitative Level	Point Grade
A	Excellent	5
B	Very Good	4
C	Good	3
D	Average	2
E	Unsatisfactory	1

For Bachelors' and Masters' degree programmes, normally the system of numerical marking is followed, and the marks secured in assignments, TEEs, etc. are later converted into grades as per the five-point grading scale given above. However, if required by the learner, the university provides numerical marks and division (I, II or Pass).

Major challenges of distance education:

Many obstacles exist in library and information science professionals to meet the present and future condition and put forward in quality both in teaching and learning. The main objective of any course or programme including library and information science is to make eligible for employment and marketable. Now a days , maximum number of open universities have no limit in intake, age etc of students thus producing huge number of students with higher degrees and also with good percentage, but the main issue is that less and unproductive in the professional work which leads to unemployment problem.

Following are other challenges and issues that the LIS education system is facing nowadays:

Inadequate Infrastructure: Generally in most of the universities, study centers are conducting LIS education in India, which are not adequately established with well furnished computer laboratory and library facilities because the administration does not feel any need to provide computer lab facilities, library facilities, communication equipments, other information science components and necessary infrastructures required for LIS departments. The major constraint e-learning systems face in the Indian environment is the lack of infrastructure. E-learning requires a certain investment in hardware, software, and support staff. While much of the hardware/software investment already have been committed as part of the organizations' existing infrastructure facility, very few study centers have a well-organized computer laboratory along with fulltime Internet connectivity.

Lack of Knowledge and Training: One of the main constraints of e-learning systems is that students need to know how to use the particular information technology. Much more attention will be required in the future web based training that will be delivered over the internet using the non propriety www server and client technology. Despite the increase in the number of institutions offering distance programs, little is known about the teaching practices that contribute to effective online course design and delivery.

Insufficient Contact Classes: Being a practical oriented course, LIS education required computer training and practical classes for classification and cataloguing with personal contact between teacher and student, but the number of days for contact classes is very limited. Some universities are not even insisting that students attend contact classes. There is no provision of Credit Hours for individual papers in the distance program.

Lack of High quality teaching Staff: Most of the LIS departments have senior teachers of old age and they are not ready to accept the changing nature of the subject. Few departments have skilled fresh faculty and an innovative nature but they stand as juniors and work under pressure of seniors. Experienced regular teachers are not much involved in the distance education program, working librarians, fresh postgraduate students and research scholars are handling most of the classes.

Lack of Permanent Faculty for Distance Program: Teaching as a process that involves helping learners to create knowledge through interactive and authentic learning experiences. There are no full time faculty in the schools who conduct correspondence courses, except IGNOU, New Delhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad which will adversely affect giving attention to the individual students. Students characteristics and past experiences will help the instructor to determine how best to promote learning through various learning activities. Another common limitation is the lack of sufficient opportunity for the interaction between the learner and the subject expert

Lack of Evaluation: There is no mechanism of assessing teaching effectiveness and quality of study materials of distance program courses. Students' evaluations of teaching will help to provide instructors and course designers with feedback about the quality of their efforts.

Lack of Admission Policy: No restriction for admitting the number of students to Bachelor and Postgraduate courses, a whole class might comprise 100 to 150 people. Offering a distance programme is a good business decision for most institutions in India. Recent order of the University Grants Commission from exempting Mphil/PhD holders from NET, that was essential for entering the teaching profession and for graded library posts, led to an enormous increase in the number of Mphil/PhD aspirants. Profit making universities plan to start correspondence PhD training programs this session onwards.

Nomenclature, curricula and duration of LIS courses: Curricula of BLISc and MLISc are not uniform in library and information science schools, very little emphasis is given to the components that the LIS professionals need to carry out the tasks in the library when they join the given job. However, one of the problems with e-learning in India is the lack of course content, especially outside the mainstream focus areas of IT education, English-language content, and tutorial-like courses. There will be a high demand for people who can develop multi-lingual courseware that addresses various topics. The course duration at each level is also not uniform in the LIS schools. The correspondence courses had made their own style of nomenclature, curricula and duration. Most of the LIS schools have Masters level of one-year/two semesters. Only one-year duration is not enough for a student to learn all the things at an advanced level.

Medium of instruction: The majority of students study in Hindi or regional languages. The expected English knowledge of the students is not sufficient to comprehend most of the LIS materials published in English. Therefore the students have to depend largely on the lecture notes given during the contact classes by the teachers who have other commitments in addition to teaching. For this reason a good part of the library professionals have very limited notes based knowledge.

Absence of Accreditation body at National Level: There is no accreditation agency in India like the ALA Committee on Accreditation in USA and The Institute of Information Scientists (IIS) and the Library Association (LA) in U.K to ensure reasonable standards and quality of output in the LIS education like nomenclature, curricula and essential resources. In view of the fast growing number of schools imparting training in librarianship, emerging diversity of standard and the recent trend of training through correspondence, there is a strongly felt need for regular control and enforcement of minimum standards in training and education for librarianship.

Lack of supporting policy at National Level: There is pressure to have quality assurance in LIS programs but the government hasn't implemented any policy at national level that may support LIS Education. National coordination and a planning program are needed to gain maturity. A general program can reduce waste and make the fullest use of existing academic and technological resources.

Lack of a global Perspective: There is a lack of coordinated and effective programs of international studies in Library and Information Science Education in India to future oriented programs that are clearly defined in the mission, goals and objectives. Internationalizing means having a program in which faculty, staff and students maintain a global view and an appreciation of the importance of the field internationally without which library and information science studies will be incomplete.

Lack of Library Visits: Educational tours and Library visits are compulsory in regular library science courses to understand about various services and routine work in the libraries. But there is no such provision in Distance education programs.

Suggestions:

- Admissions should be done through admission tests or based on good academic record. Duration of the contact classes, especially practical hours should be increased and attendance should be made compulsory.
- IGNOU/NSOU may take up broadcasting lessons through EDUSAT, Gyandharshan, FM-Radio etc. that would reach the entire section of a student community.
- IGNOU/NSOU should have permanent faculty. The availability of high caliber permanent teachers should be made a precondition for starting courses in LIS.
- It is urgently needs an educational reform towards open, flexible, student-centered learning, moving away from imparting bookish knowledge to inculcating skills in self-study, creativity, vocational efficiency and self-reliance. The teaching style must be innovative to face the changing environment.
- Mobile based learning should be encouraged. The success of the Mobile (Cell) phone and subsequently SMS (Short Message Service) in remote parts has demonstrated the functionality of portable communication devices.
- Online discussion groups can be used in conjunction with face-to-face courses. This are conducted via electronic mail and seem to be making the greatest impact in the areas of student writing, content discussion, and class dynamics.
- Instead of organizing contact classes, study centers can manage regular evening classes in selected major cities for the convenience of the working class.
- A national policy has to be evolved/formulated for LIS education in distance mode in the changing context of librarianship in modern India, under various kinds of establishments with varied functions and responsibilities and there should be some concrete efforts to make grants available. The policy should emphasize the need for practical training and necessary infrastructure requirement. The UGC is supposed to be the most suitable organization to take up formulation of such a policy.
- It is very essential to establish some professional agency at the national level, which can undertake the work of accreditation of the courses in LIS that may maintain the standard in LIS curricula, nomenclature, and duration and course fee. There should be a common platform for all open universities that conduct correspondence courses.

CONCLUSION

Distance education system and its potential to provide expanded educational opportunities are recognized by educators and the government. Distance education also helps to reduce the inequalities that exist in the education. There are strength, weakness, opportunities and limitations in both distance and general education but particularly in distance education in India. Presently the method of distance learning is very traditional rather than replaces them. Thus the IGNOU/NSOU has a mandate to plan and organize distance education to overcome the challenges.

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