

Doctoral Research in Library and Information Science in Bangladesh: An Analysis on Trends and Development

Anwasha Jadab*, Rajesh Kumar Das**

Abstract

The objective of the present paper is to examine the trends and developments in doctoral research of Library and Information Science (LIS) in Bangladesh. It also aims to examine the issues for consideration in advancing research in this country context. Several methods like historical method, literature search, personal observations, and involvement were used to achieve the objective of this study. This study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Qualitative data is collected through literature reviews and personal observations and involvement. Total enumeration sampling technique is used for collecting the quantitative data in which the whole of the population were considered as the sample. The result of this study showed that from 1985 the steady rise is reported in research activity and a total of 17 doctoral degrees in LIS were awarded. The subject area 'library and information systems and services' is at leading position in research activity among the PhD researchers during the period of study. Besides traditional areas (like public library system, cataloguing, library education); library marketing, information seeking behaviour, library networking, service quality etc. are at leading position in research activity. This study also found that no coursework is required for Ph.D. in LIS in Bangladesh. A separate coursework programme for Ph.D. should be formulated to cater for a higher research activity.

Keywords: Library Education in Bangladesh, LIS Education, LIS Research, Doctoral Research, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

Introduction

Education has been considered as a driving force for inclusive growth and sustainable development in today's world. Every nation and also individual institutions

from respective countries have been giving importance to human capital for competing in the global economy (Fairweather, 2006; Jongbloed, 2010; Fairweather & Blalock, 2015). Higher education is also considered as a foundation for the recruitment of individuals to different positions in society and a prerequisite for every profession (Nilsson, 2007). Therefore, higher education institutions have been giving much attention to fulfil the needs of every professional practice. According to Conant, cited by Konnur (1997), "Education to any profession has to perform three basic functions viz. (a) determining who enters the profession and what qualifications and standards they must meet to qualify for professional practice; (b) providing formal instructions to those who seek to qualify for professional practice, and (c) supplying the profession with qualified people, providing continuing education, defining the objectives of the profession and anticipating its future needs." So to accomplish these functions, every profession has to rely on its system of education in order to meet the demands encountered by the prospective professionals from different professional education programmes, and librarianship is no exception.

The history of education for librarianship or Library and Information Science education may be traced back to the mid-1800s, when the first library conference held in 1853 (White, 1976; Lynch, 2008). But the formal higher education and research in LIS were started through the establishment of Library School at Columbia University in 1887 and the publication of the first issue of 'Library Journal' in 1876. The establishment of Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago was indeed a landmark to incorporate academic study and research in librarianship through colloquia and scholarly communication (Lawal,

* Library Officer, Asian University for Women, Chittagong, Bangladesh. Email: anwasha.jadab@auw.edu.bd

** MPhil Research Student, Department of Information Science and Library Management, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Email: rajeshk.das@yahoo.com

2009). First PhD in library science was awarded to Eleanor Upton on the topic “A Guide to 17th Century Materials in the Reports of the Historical Manuscripts Commission of Great Britain to Date” by the University of Chicago in 1930 (Bobinski, 1986; Richardson, 2010). Today the need for research in Library and Information Science has become even more critical because of the integration of a whole new discipline of information science into the field of library science in the 1960 and the technological and scientific revolution viz. Internet, WWW and search engine in the 1990s. The internationalisation of LIS field has been contributed to the origin and development of library education and research almost all the nation across the globe (Abdullahi, 2013).

Library and Information Science (LIS) Education in Bangladesh

Bangladesh gained its independence in 1971. The new Bangladesh started its development programme to achieve the new educational, cultural and economic objectives at the national level. Such developments at these institutions contributed to the development of more libraries, which in turn had to accept new responsibilities to meet society's changing needs and demands. Libraries are recognised to play an important role in education, scientific research and social-economic development of a country through making available and exploiting information and managing the resources (Line, 1983; Malekabadizadeh, Shokraneh, & Hosseini, 2009). This envisages the need for professionally qualified personnel to manage and run the libraries and information centres effectively and efficiently. In order to feed the growing number of libraries, more trained library professionals were needed. For this purpose, library science departments started springing up, and library science developed into a distinct field of specialisation with its own normative principles, theories, techniques, and practices that were deemed sufficient to meet the growing dimensions of library services. Handling of recorded knowledge in modern libraries has given birth to the functional aspects of collecting, organising and promoting the use of reading materials relevant to the users through information transfer activities. These activities, no doubt, assist in defining the spectrum of studies for librarianship in Bangladesh.

The library and information science education in Bangladesh actually 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 (Sarker, 2005; Mannan & Begum, 2002). The year 1954 was indeed a landmark in the history of library development when two eminent scholars were deputed for foreign training in Library Science - Mr. Ahmad Hossain for training in USA and Mr. M.S. Khan for training in UK (Rashid, 2010). After completing a two year course on ‘The theory and practice of university Librarianship’ in the London School of Librarianship and Archives under the supervision of Irwin, during 1954-1956, Mr. M.S. Khan joined the DU Library as librarian in 1956 (LISwiki, 2011). In 1957, the U.S.E.I. in Pakistan deputed Mrs. Willa Boysworth, Head Librarian, Huntigton Colleges, Montgomery, Alabama, U.S.A. She conducted a short course on “Reference and public relation in libraries” in cooperation with the Dhaka University. Certificates were awarded to 30 candidates after the completion of course. Miss Letitia G. Willet a Fulbright grantee was deputed to the Dhaka University library in 1958 and she conducted a short course in “School Librarianship” (Dhaka University Annual Report, 1958).

In the meantime, Library Association of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan Library Association), first national association of librarians, library personnel and those interested in libraries and librarianship in Bangladesh was formed in 1956 (Hossain, 1980). The objectives of the association are promotion of library service to the people in East Pakistan, improvement of status of library personnel, provision of library-training facilities, and co-operation with library organisation and association for advancement of library services (Siddiq, 1966). In that year M. S. Khan joined the association and two years later in 1958 the institution instituted its certificate course (Moniruzzaman, 1994). It was a course of six months and the teachers were- Mr. M.S. Khan, Mr. Ahmed Hussain, Mr. A.M.M.S. Khan, Mr. A.R. Mirdah, Mr. Rakib Hussain, and Mrs. Letita G. Willet, a Fulbright lecturer in Library Science. During the period of 1955-59 four Fulbright courses were conducted successively under the supervision of the then librarian of University of Dhaka (Ahmed, 1994). But library activities of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) came to the limelight, when Mr. M.S. Khan attended the conference of Asian Federation of Library Association in Tokyo from 4 to 13 November, 1957 and elected as one of the vice-president of the federation for a period of three years (Siddiq, 1966).

Through the previous phase of development, the Department of Library and Information Science at University of Dhaka came into being in 1959. The department was established with 12 students and 5 teachers for educating them (Rahman, 2001). The first chairman was Mr. M.S. Khan and he acted from 1959-1972. But actually during the session of 1964-65, programmes and courses were recognised under full-fledged “Department of Library Science” under the Faculty of Arts (University of Dhaka, 1965). It was a landmark in the development of library education in Bangladesh as it was the first time a university in Bangladesh established a department for library education (Rahman, Khatun, & Islam, 2004).

After independence, new colleges, universities, educational institutions and learned societies were emerging and the need for professionally qualified personnel to manage their libraries was realised. Library association of Bangladesh started providing training courses. After successful completion of a two-year Master of Philosophy (MPhil) programme at the session of 1974-75 and a two-year MA course, called “Master of Arts in Library Science” at the session of 1975-76, the Doctor of Philosophy programme in library science was approved by Dhaka University during the session 1978-1979 and began the doctoral programme in 1979 (Ahmad, 1987). During 1987-88, a three-year Bachelor of Arts (BA) with honours in Library and Information Science began at the University of Dhaka (Dhaka University annual report, 1988). The department was renamed “Library and Information Science,” to keep pace with the changing nature of library in connection with the information technology (Rahman, Khatun and Islam, 2004). In 1997-98 University of Dhaka initiated a four-year BA (honours) course in information science and library management to replace the three-year BA and integrated it with previous one year MA degree (Dhaka University Annual Report, 1999). From 2001-02, the department of Library and Information Science was renamed as “Information Science and Library Management” (Dhaka University Annual Report, 2002). Through the pace of time, it has now turned into one of the most prominent institutions of imparting higher degree in the discipline. At present, the LIS education in Bangladesh is offered at various levels ranging from certificate, diploma, degree, M.Phil and Ph.D. dissertation. Course are offered on regular basis as well as through correspondence. In Bangladesh it varies from Certificate course in LIS, Postgraduate diploma in

LIS, B.A (Honours) in LIS, M.A. in LIS, M.Phil and Ph.D.

Table 1: Present LIS programmes Offered in Bangladesh

Programmes offered	Duration	Year/Session of Inception
Certificate course	06 months	1952
Postgraduate Diploma	01 year	1959
BA (Hons.)	04 years	1987-88
BSS (Hons.)	04 years	1993
MA	01 Year	1962
MS	20 months	2005
MSS	01 year	1997
MPhil	02 years	1976
PhD.	02-03 years	1979

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Problem Statement

Research in library and information science in Bangladesh is relatively new. It was M. S. Khan (1910-1978), Father of Library Science in Bangladesh who lifted librarianship in Bangladesh and thus opened a new dimension for library education and research (Khan, 1987). First Ph.D. dissertation of LIS was done by Serwar Hossain at University of Dhaka in the year of 1985 and then Seventeen doctoral dissertations were awarded in Bangladesh so far. But, no work has been attempted to give any account of LIS doctoral research from 1985 to present in Bangladesh. Therefore, based on the current gap of literature, the present study analyses the LIS doctoral dissertation in an effort to determine the trends and developments in doctoral research of Library and Information Science (LIS) in Bangladesh.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

- know the origin and growth of doctoral programme in LIS in Bangladesh.
- analyse the research trends of doctoral dissertation of LIS in Bangladesh.
- provide suggestions for the advancement of doctoral research in LIS in Bangladesh.

Research Methodology

The research was conducted from February 2016 to December 2016. Three types of research methods were adopted in this study.

First of all, a thorough research of the literature on the history of library education in Bangladesh has been done. Besides the article on library education in Bangladesh, researchers also went through UGC curriculum reports, annual reports, LIS curricula of universities, annual or perspective plan of the departments of Library and Information Science and universities.

A survey was conducted to know the existing status of LIS education system in Bangladesh. Besides this, the researcher availed an opportunity to meet the faculty members, passed students and library employers to gain an understanding of perspectives and issues related to LIS education in country context.

The bibliographic research followed a documentation of data of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) dissertations in the subject of Library and Information Science available in Universities of Bangladesh. Doctoral dissertations awarded to LIS researchers from foreign universities have not been included in this study. It is worthwhile to mention that Dhaka University is the only university that offers PhD programme in Library and Information Science field in Bangladesh. Therefore, only Dhaka University was selected as the site for conducting this study. Total enumeration sampling technique was used for this study in which the entire population were considered as the sample. Therefore, total number of Ph.D. dissertation in LIS found in the Central Library of University of Dhaka was counted as sample for this study. For collecting data primarily, a literature search was done at Dhaka University Central Library and a comprehensive list of Ph.D. dissertation was collected by the researcher. A detailed study of sample was done to observe the perspectives and changing trend of LIS research. Collected data were analysed using Microsoft Excel 2013 to validate information about chronological growth, decade-wise growth, university-wise, and subject-wise distribution of doctoral research. Content analysis technique was also used to determine the topic and research methodology used in the dissertation.

Results

Chronological Distribution of Research activity

Table 2 depicts the number of doctoral degrees awarded in the field of LIS in University of Dhaka starting from the year 1985 till 2014. It is evident from the table that there are altogether 17 doctoral dissertations were awarded in University of Dhaka. It is very clear from the table that research activity was in quite good form at the early years where 4 Ph.D. degrees were awarded in 1985. The research productivity had not so much increased after 1985 onwards. But, 2003 and 2011 were quite satisfactory in research activity where 2 Ph.D. degrees were awarded in each year. Except that, only one Ph.D. degree was awarded in each year of study. It indicates the slow and steady growth of librarianship in the country.

Table 2: Chronological Distribution of Research Activity

Sl. No.	Year of Award	No. of Degree Awarded	Percentage (%)
1	1985	4	23.53
2	1988	1	5.88
3	1996	1	5.88
4	1997	1	5.88
5	2002	1	5.88
6	2003	2	11.76
7	2007	1	5.88
8	2010	1	5.88
9	2011	2	11.76
10	2012	1	5.88
11	2013	1	5.88
12	2014	1	5.88
	Total	17	100.00

Decade-wise Growth of LIS Research

Fig. 1 depicts the decade-wise distribution of Ph.D. dissertation in LIS in University of Dhaka. It is observed that there is quite a number of Ph.D. degrees produced after 1985 till date. Further it is evident from the table that total 88.23% of the research output was contributed during 1st, 3rd and 4th decades. So these three decades ranked

same in Ph.D. research activity. Yet another 11.46% of the research output was made during the 2nd and 4th decade. From this, it is evident that more than 88.23% of the Ph.D.

degrees were awarded during the period 1981-1990 and 2001-2010. It is worth mentioning here that only 11.77% research output contributed in 1991-2000.

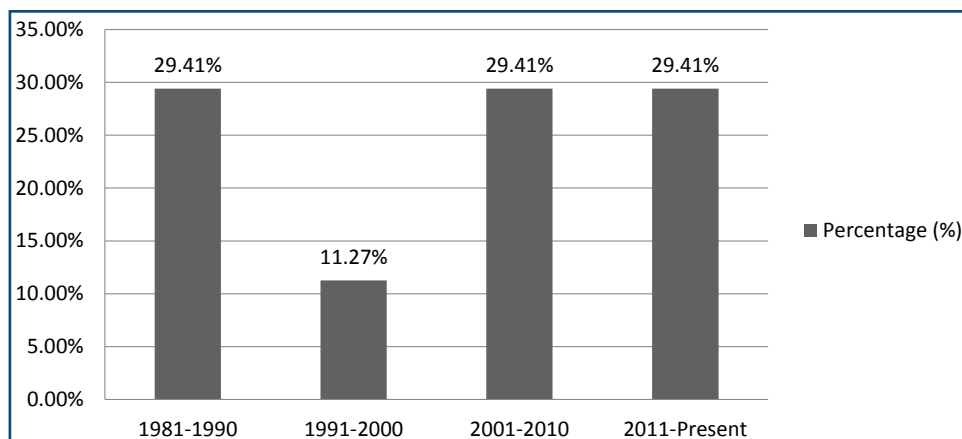


Fig. 1: Decade-wise Growth of PhD Research

Research Activity by Topic

From Table 3 it appears that the highest number of Ph.D. were awarded on library and information systems and services (3 dissertations, 17.65%), followed by library education (2 dissertations, 11.76%), information needs and seeking behaviour (2 dissertations, 11.76%), and service quality in libraries (2 dissertations, 11.76%). The remaining topics were library and information marketing, public library systems, library cataloguing, library planning, library automation. These topics were adopted by researcher in equal percentage that is 5.88%. From the study it is revealed that the research activity was more in “library and information systems and services” than any other topic.

Table 3: Research Activity by Topic

SL. No.	Topics of research	No. of Dissertation	Percentage
1	Lib. Networking & Resource Sharing	1	5.88
2	Library and Information Marketing	1	5.88
3	Public Library Systems	1	5.88
4	Library and Info. System & Services	3	17.65
5	Library Education	2	11.76
6	Library Cataloguing	1	5.88

SL. No.	Topics of research	No. of Dissertation	Percentage
7	Library Planning	2	11.76
8	Service Quality in Libraries	2	11.76
9	Information Seeking Behaviour	2	11.76
10	Library Automation	1	5.88
	Total	17	100.00

Use of Research Methodology

By far the most frequently used research method was survey research, accounting for 41.17% of all dissertations, followed by historical research in 29.41% of the articles (Table 4). Interview method (11.76%) was the next most frequently used research methods. All other methods were reported in 5.88% of the dissertations. These findings suggest that while survey research consistently ranks high as a research methodology, historical research was also considered popular method by the researchers.

Table 4: Methodology Used for the Research

Research methodology	No. of dissertation	Percentage
Survey method	7	41.17
Historical method	5	29.41
Interview method	2	11.76

Research methodology	No. of dissertation	Percentage
Case study	1	5.88
Observation	1	5.88
Questionnaire	1	5.88
Total	17	100.00

Suggestions and Conclusion

The study showed the details of the PhD research activities in LIS in Bangladesh. The study revealed some problems and based on that the study has initiated the researcher to put forward some suggestions. At the postgraduate level, emphasis should be given to developing students' analytical and problem-solving skills. Research-based master programmes should be promoted more. Both the private and public sectors should come forward providing a sustained record of scholarship to the researchers. More than 50% research work was carried out in traditional areas and modern/current technological and managerial areas are less covered. There is a need to increase research in new areas. For this purpose, research guides from the Department of Information Science and Library Management in University of Dhaka are to be included in the research guides panel. Universities of Bangladesh should look at wider aspects of the currency like ICT and web-based concepts. Current trends in LIS education, technologies and management tools are now more applied in LIS but its research element is reflected very little in doctoral study e.g. consortia, resource sharing, library networks, information searching, open access, using free information software, and tools application in LIS. ICT and IR are such research elements which need to be more practical to LIS and need to be considered by the researchers.

It is strongly suggested that university libraries and other organisations awarding Ph.D. Degrees in LIS should develop their own web page and provide the updated data for the research completed and ongoing research in their universities and make the data available to others. This will definitely be useful for developing databases, providing links, and also very useful to the researchers and research guides in avoiding duplication efforts. Responsible for the administration, authorities should take into account the state of the art knowledge in various conditions of the curriculum in order to correspond to the study of knowledge creation according to the library and information science disciplines. The relationship between

the study of LIS and the library services in the libraries should be done together as the information technology is changing rapidly.

The system of preservation should be changed. It is the fundamental responsibility of the University authority to preserve these valuable rare materials. The authority should be more careful to save these materials for the greater interest of the University. Some Ph.D. dissertations have destroyed from the Central Library. The Central Library was not properly organised and managed from its very beginning. The authority feels the necessity of professional staff in the Central Library. No coursework is required for Ph.D. in LIS at University of Dhaka. The university should formulate a programme for Ph.D. to cater to a higher research activity in tandem with its status as a research university. Much attention should be paid by researcher while selecting research topics. So it was difficult to achieve a commonality and sense of identity among both researchers and practitioners. Department of Information Science and Library Management, University of Dhaka needs to not only strengthen and develop the academic position of library and information science, but also to develop more practical applications.

Research and development is the index of prosperity of the nation. The LIS research in Bangladesh has gained much attention among researchers in Bangladesh. The number of researchers registering for doctoral research is increasing over the years. Though the output is increasing over the years, the productivity of individual universities is not very encouraging. Universities and research supervisors can play a vital role by taking stock of current status of research and initiate corrective measures to improve the productivity of qualitative research. There could be more factors contributing to this situation. The current government of Bangladesh pledged to convert Bangladesh into "Digital Bangladesh" by 2021, which is the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh Independence. As part of the government's initiative to build "Digital Bangladesh", several initiatives have been undertaken in different sectors. The Bangladesh University Grants Commission (UGC), the statutory apex body in the field of university education in Bangladesh, has also been working to support the mentioned goal through enhancing and strengthening the quality of higher education in Bangladesh (UGC, 2016). UGC can play a pivotal role in ensuring quality education and research in LIS in Bangladesh. A national accreditation body

can be formed by UGC for the evaluation of quality of LIS programmes and research at regular intervals at accredited universities and institutions. Special emphasis on interdisciplinary and technology-based research can also be given by UGC for strengthening the Library and Information Science research as well as achieving national strategic objectives. The two national bodies of library professionals, Library Association of Bangladesh (LAB) and Bangladesh Association of Librarians, Information Scientists and Documentalist (BALID) should form a National Committee to promote research activities in LIS in Bangladesh. All library schools, senior professionals, educators can also work together to provide training on practical knowledge and skills in research process, research methodologies, latest data analysis tools and technologies. It is the demand of time for collaboration with each other to further research and development in LIS in Bangladesh.

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Appendix 1: List of PhD Dissertation

SL. No.	Name of the Scholar	Year	Title	Supervisor
1	Sarwar Husain	1985	A doctoral thesis on national plans for library development in Bangladesh (1947-1983)	Dr. Kazi Din-Muhammad
2	K. M. Saiful-Islam	1985	A code for cataloguing and indexing Bangladeshi Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist names.	Dr. Muhammad Mostafizur Rahman & Dr. Md. Enamul Haq
3	Nasir Uddin Ahmad	1985	Education for librarianship in Bangladesh: a historical study (1947-1982).	Dr. Muhammad Moniruz-Zaman
4	Afifa Rahman	1988	An analysis of the functions and workings of university libraries in Bangladesh.	Dr. K. M. Mohsin
5	Muhammad Azizul Hakim	1996	History, problems and prospects of public libraries in Bangladesh.	Dr. Muhammad Moniruz-Zaman
6	S. M. Mannan	1997	Networking and resource sharing among the libraries in Bangladesh: present situation	Dr. Syed Manzoorul Islam
7	Muhammad Abdus Sattar	1985	The problem and prospects of new technologies in libraries and information services of Bangladesh.	Dr. Serwar Husain
8	Muhammad Hanif Uddin	2002	Assessment of information needs for the agricultural scientists and researchers in Bangladesh.	Dr. Serwar Husain
9	Muhammad Nasir Uddin Munshi	2003	Marketing of information products and services: a study on some selected special libraries in Bangladesh.	Dr. S. M. Mannan & Dr. Haripada Bhattacharjee
10	Muhammad Harun or Rashid	2003	National educational information system of Bangladesh: A critical study.	Dr. Serwar Husain
11	Muhammad Saiful Alam	2007	Information systems for health and population sector in Bangladesh: evolution, structure, gaps and need based design.	Dr. S. M. Mannan & Dr. Abul Barkat
12	Muhammad Shariful Islam	2010	Impact assessment of rural libraries in Bangladesh.	Dr. S. M. Zabed Ahmed
13	Muhammad Nasir Uddin	2011	Automation in the public libraries of Bangladesh: a plan for development.	Dr. S. M. Mannan
14	Kazi Mostak Gausul Hoq	2011	Information for rural development: assessment of needs and designing a dissemination system for Bangladesh.	Dr. S. M. Mannan
15	Muhammad Jaber Husain	2012	Measuring service quality and satisfaction on user-focused marketing in academic libraries of Bangladesh.	Dr. Nasirud-Din Munshi
16	Muhammad Zillur Rahman	2013	A plan for modernisation of university libraries in Bangladesh.	Dr. S. M. Mannan