Design and Implementation of Competency Based LIS Pedagogy: An Experiential Approach with DLIS Centre at Rajagiri College of Social Sciences (Autonomous) Kerala, India-A Case Study

Neethu Mohanan
Rajagiri College of Social Sciences,Ernakulam,Kerala, neethu@rajagiri.edu

Vijesh P V
Rajagiri Business School,Rajagiri Valley P.O, Kakkanad, Kerala,682039, vijesh@rajagiri.edu

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Neethu Mohanan

Asst.Professor, Department of Library and Information Science
Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery, Kerala, 683104
Email-neethu@rajagiri.edu

Vijesh P.V

Librarian, Rajagiri Business School, Rajagiri Valley P.O, Kakkanad, Kerala,682039
Email-vijesh@rajagiri.edu

Abstract

Utilization of collective manpower in an effective manner is the key to the success of every organization. LIS Students need to be more practical and trained with intensive and extensive knowledge about the use of IT, Communication as well as Soft skills. A competency-based pedagogy and interdisciplinary approach within the institutions can deal with all these. Pedagogy is the approach to learning, refers to the theory and practice of learning, and how this process influences the social, political and psychological development of learners. LIS schools have redesigned their teaching-learning techniques to a great extent to keep track of the latest updates in the knowledge world. This paper discusses the status, developments and opportunities of library and information science education, curriculum, training and employment opportunities in DLIS at Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kerala, India. It also provides a brief overview of the historical perspective of LIS education and the LIS curriculum development processes in India and Kerala. The paper also discusses the importance of Competency-Based LIS Curriculum and its involvement in the development of professional growth and how interdisciplinary subject approach will help in this process within the campus.

Keywords: LIS education, LIS Curriculum, Competency based LIS pedagogy, Inter-Disciplinary subject approach, Rajagiri Model

Introduction

Education is a lifelong process. It treasures and instils moral values, spreads knowledge, extents information relevant to its institutions and retains the spirit of creativity and sustainability. Global education is not just about where learners go to learn and the teaching methods, but also about what they learn and how they are equipped at the end of their studies. Today academic knowledge of the students alone may not serve the purpose. Educationists and faculty members have also to think critically about growing their employability and to equip them with skills they need to succeed*(Dasgupta, 2009.)* Library and information science education in India has played a substantial role in the development of information society through its focused efforts. However, the advent of the Internet and Information Communication Technologies has drastically changed the beliefs of professional librarianship. The complexity of the information world is now requiring multi-skilled candidates that can adapt to the information sector's diverse nature. Today's management looks not only for an academically high candidate but also a person with good computer and communication skills who can develop and manage information delivery systems based on IT.

Accordingly, the challenge before contemporary LIS education is to train future information managers in traditional principles as well as in Information Communication Technologies. This requires a curriculum that gives creative thinking alongside the knowledge and technical skills which will encourage students and enable them to deal with the challenges that are emerging. LIS education in India has seen its independence grow substantially. The growing number of LIS departments offering specialized courses of the universities and institutions offering specialized courses with interdisciplinary nature is affected by the incessant evolution of technologies.*(Varalakshmi, 2007.)*

However, the studies have found that pure research, research innovations and publications in the LIS field is very low compared to other disciplines. Through the interdisciplinary subject approach, LIS professionals can meet the present challenges. LIS department at Rajagiri College Sciences' adopts some strategy to deliver the curriculum and training and is taking all possible measures to provide world-class LIS education and to promote research and publication; and internationalization. In the next level, the department will stress the importance of international opportunities in serving as essential components in educating and training library and information professionals. To meet the current challenges, some strategy must be adopted to deliver as much as possible into the curriculum and training.

Definition of Key Terms

The word 'competency' has its roots in a Latin word 'competent' that implies "having the right to speak" or "being authorized to judge". Thus, they are abilities, traits, skills or knowledge that are considered favorable for good job performance. Competencies are factors contributing to high levels of individual performance, and therefore, organizational effectiveness *(Armstrong, Michael, 1999.)*

Pedagogy is a word of Greek origin made from 'paidos' (child) and 'agogos' (leader.) So, it's a reasonably fancy word that describes the science and art of education and learning theory. The definition of pedagogy includes the idea and practice of teaching, the strategies employed to show, the precise interaction of teacher and students, the instructive content used, the combined goals of the learner and teacher and therefore the way the content is presented and delivered to the learner. Pedagogy in education describes the carefully thought-out process an educator will use to show their students, taking under consideration prior learning, classroom context, end goals and more.

This one word describes the study of teaching, and the way content is presented and delivered to a learner. It's the creation of an academic process that results in knowledge gain within the learner.

(https://servelearn.co/blog/pedagogy-in-education/)

The word curriculum is not easily defined. Debates are carried on over the child- versus subject-centred approach, as well as the activity-centered approach, integrated approaches, transmission of culture, or the totality of learner experiences. The curriculum must define essential skills to meet some level of independence, and further skills desirable. The curriculum defines the skills and objectives to reach an optimal level of independence. The curriculum is the Latin word for "course," which comes from Latin "currere," "to run." Historically, curriculum means classified selections of accumulated knowledge in academic subjects.

The curriculum is the totality of influences and experiences, selected and unselected, conscious, subconscious, and even unconscious, and planned and unplanned, which the pupil receives through the

school, in the classroom, library, laboratory, workshop, and playground and the informal contacts between teachers and pupils.*(J. Singh & Shahid, 2010.)*

Need for Interdisciplinary-Competency-based LIS Curriculum

The LIS education aims to deliver skilled manpower to manage innumerable kinds of libraries, information and documentation centres that have changed in terms of the needs, functions, types and range of services offered, as well as the tools and techniques used in the provision of services. The application of ICT has revolutionized the whole concept of libraries, the information storage and retrieval system and ways of accessing information. Therefore, a redefinition of the objectives of the LIS curriculum is also required. Students need to be more practical and should also be trained with intensive and extensive knowledge about the use of IT in libraries, communication and soft skills. Technology application has opened up new perspectives and therefore all LIS schools should be thinking seriously about the changing context. Students must have adequate knowledge of computers (including hardware), computer and communications technologies, networks and networking, operating systems, Internet concepts, database management systems, with moderate practical exposure to handling these technological devices.*(S. P. Singh, 2003.)*

The LIS education in India should have the following vision to improve its curriculum, especially in the digitized environment

- Introducing the e-education programme for LIS education and developing Virtual Learning Tools (VLT).
- Strengthening of research components within the areas focusing on the necessity for the approaching problems associated with information users and innovating new curriculum and teaching techniques within the digital environment.
- Imparting training in modular courses to satisfy diverse types of users and libraries in India.
- Outsourced teaching pattern of teachers and trainers to inculcate the use of new IT / ICT tools and techniques through the industry-academia-interface.*(Mahapatra,2006.)*

In a modern curriculum, the interdisciplinary approach has become an important and challenging technique. The interdisciplinary approach synthesizes more than one discipline and creates teacher and student teams which enrich the overall educational experience. Many researchers encounter many advantages of interdisciplinary studies as well as disadvantages. Student education has suffered from the inferior pedagogy of traditional methodologies which specifically focuses on one discipline only. The interdisciplinary approach offers several advantages which turn into much-needed lifelong learning skills which are necessary for a student's future learning.*(Jones, 2009.)*

The Idea of Integrating multi curriculum in one domain is not a new concept. Those who have attempted to integrate various curriculum areas have always faced the question of which subjects lend themselves to the present endeavor and the way those subjects could be most advantageously combined. Meeting the interdisciplinary needs of today's library users begin with understanding the activities that create them and their place in the knowledge system. An Interdisciplinary curriculum is aimed at helping students to find connections between subjects and to use different ways of knowing. *(Arthur K Ellis,2001.)*.

In institutions, the interdisciplinary method continues to create the characteristics and methods of various disciplines while developing lifelong learning skills, interdisciplinary curricula is time-consuming and requires collaborative teamwork, which can appear to be a difficult and exhausting, but the interdisciplinary approach ultimately exhibits many favored skills. Students and their instructors will progress in the use of interdisciplinary approaches of critical thinking, collaboration, imagination,

pedagogy and necessary education. Using this approach offers one a deep background of epistemology. For LIS students and teachers, it's stimulating and motivating. Generally speaking, setting up interdisciplinary groups and classes is better than setting up a comprehensive school curriculum if full-fledged programs are offered on campus.

Library and information science education in India: A brief overview

Imparting of formal LIS education in India is a century-old development. It began to cater to the necessity emerged from managing libraries with professionally qualified hands. At present LIS education in India covers a wide spectrum of courses ranging from low-level certificate and a diploma in library science to bachelor and master degree in library and information science and high-level MPhil and PhD programmes. In India, at present LIS education is provided regularly in more than 100 universities and some national and regional training institutes. Apart from these a few national open universities, Deemed to be universities as well as some state universities, also offer various LIS courses through distance mode of learning to meet the demand of growing job market in the field. *(Pr*adhan, 2014.) .

An outline of LIS Education in Kerala

The University of Kerala was the premier institution in Kerala which started one-year bachelor's degree programme in Library science ie, B.Lib.Sc in 1961 under the leadership of Prof.K.A Issac, who was then the University librarian of the Kerala University. There are four Universities in Kerala ie, Kerala University, Calicut University, Mahatma Gandhi University and Kannur University, which conducts bachelor, master level and research programs in Library and Information Science. In addition to this several affiliated colleges also offer bachelor and master level programs in LIS. Some of the prominent colleges conducting LIS programs are Rajagiri College of Social Sciences(Autonomous), Kalamassery, S.B College, Changanassery, Ettumanoorappan College, and St.Peters College Kolenchery under M.G University, Farook College, Crist College etc under Calicut University. Besides these courses at the professional level, some organizations conduct LIS courses at a semi-professional level as well. i.e., The state library council, IHRD and the continuing education centre of the University of Kerala offer a certificate course in Library and Information Science. The above mentioned four Universities are offering Master level, MPhil and PhD courses in Kerala.

Rajagiri School of Library and Information Sciences (DLIS)-Background

In the wake of great demand in the present-day business and education industries for Knowledge Managers, the bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLISc) program was started at Rajagiri College of Social Sciences in 2005 and the MLISc program in 2014.

The school envisions delivering world-class professionals in the field of Knowledge management for the ever-increasing market for such managers. In 2020 academic year, the department started a new PG programme (M.Lib.I.Sc) of 2-year duration incorporating new trends in the field of library education replacing the existing BLISc and MLISc programmes. The BLISc and MLISc programmes offered at Rajagiri College of social sciences affiliated to the Mahatma Gandhi University equips the learners with the ability to function dynamically and acquire the requisite knowledge and skills to manage libraries and information systems. The school is keen on conducting workshops, seminars and skill development programs for library and information science professionals and students.

Curriculum Development Process in LIS department at Rajagiri.

Department adopted the M G University Syllabi (BLISc and MLISc) from 2014 onwards. In the year 2018-19 department adopted the revised M G University Syllabi for BLISc and MLISc programmes. In the year 2020, the department developed a new syllabus for M.Lib.I.Sc 2 year programme incorporating new trends in LIS field. The board of studies and academic council reviewed and analyzed the scheme and specific changes and the addition of new courses and electives introduced in the syllabus revision. From 2020, valuation is based on the direct grading system.

In the view of **Dash**, the curriculum should be dynamic to meet the problems of the students. It should be treated differently. Curriculum development should be viewed as an ongoing, dynamic process and always be in a state of planned changes. The process of curriculum designs should be adaptable and applicable to many different subjects and situations. The teacher should have a primary role in the design process. They should not be relegated to a secondary position in identifying appropriate curriculum for their students.

Design and Implementation of competency based LIS Pedagogy -A Rajagiri Model

Library and Information Science education demands the regular revision and update of the course content with the incorporation of new technologies in the field. For moulding the new generation information professionals. The School has to take utmost care because they are the information providers of today's and tomorrows fast-moving community. So every person in the LIS field should be competent enough for today's information age, and be opened to improving their skills and updating their knowledge.

Worldwide LIS schools have been redesigning their curricula to keep track of the latest developments in the information world and keep their teaching market-related. They are more concentrated on inter-disciplinary subject approach for the enhancement of competency among LIS Students. New qualification programmes have been developed to provide opportunities for further extensions. In many cases departments have changed their names to reflect these new focus areas and extensions. From the last decade, LIS schools have taken the challenges of the changing information environment very seriously, and have adapted their curricula, their names and their institutional alignments to reflect these changes.*(Ocholla & Bothma, 2007)*

LIS department in Rajagiri offers a revised curriculum to the students including new technologies, global competency needed and inculcating values among society. Every activity is organized by the department through strategic planning. The areas concentrated in strategic planning are academics, students' excellence, faculty research and publication, infrastructure etc. Every action taken will be analyzed and reviewed. Department also offers a blended learning approach to pedagogy that combines online educational materials and opportunities for interaction online with traditional place-based classroom methods. It ensures their students' competency level through internships, field projects/live projects, earn while you learn the programme, industrial visits and also provides coaching for UGC NET/JRF, PSC, UPSC, KV exams for enhancing the competency level of students. Department maintains a strong relationship with their alumnus for the development of the department. Department offers scholarships for eligible students and the college given rewards for academically high performing students. It also aims at imparting crucial job skills to the students through various value-added programmes, thus enabling them to acquire an additional certificate along with their Degree certificates. Students can pursue these certificate programmes along with their regular degree programmes. Yoga and Communicative English are the value-added programs and Professional

Competency development, Information Literacy for Research and E-Resources and Online databases are the main add on programmes offered by the department. (https://rajagiri.edu/)

Other main activities conducted by the department are mentoring and remedial programmes. Mentoring is a strategy to provide students with emotional and instrumental support they need to achieve learning goals. Each group contains 8-10 students who are assigned to a faculty member at the commencement of the program. Mentors meet their students and guide them with their studies and extra-curricular activities. They also provide assistance relating to the selection of jobs and other career problems. Printed questionnaires are distributed among students to collect feedback. Then a detailed analysis is done with these questionnaires. If any student needs any academic or financial support, first it will be reported to the Head of the Department. HOD will direct them to the external expert. Through remedial coaching, the teachers will find out academically backward students and they will give them necessary support individually for the improvement in academics.

The motivation of students to participate and present papers in National and International level conferences and seminars is done by the department for improving the competency level of students and also for the faculty. Students have identified the importance of publication in their career building.

Activities offered by the LIS department in Rajagiri for enhancing the quality of the students:

1. Continuous assessments and evaluation
2. Revision of Curriculum
3. Coaching for Competency exams
4. Internships
5. Field projects/ Live projects
6. Earn while you learn to programme
7. Scholarships for eligible students
8. Rewards for academic performance
9. Add on/ Value-added programmes
10. Remedial Programmes
11. Mentoring
12. Industrial Visits
13. Social Sensitization Camps
14. Students Participation in National and International Conferences and Seminars
15. Organization of Seminars and Workshops
16. Research and Publication

To keep up with the current trends and challenges department is regularly providing interdisciplinary subject training to the LIS students within the campus fraternity, for example, after every semester ends, the department provides the mentoring session with HR faculties and IT Session with Computer Faculties and Research techniques with Research wing. Moreover, when the new batches arrive, the Department compulsorily send students to attend the rural sensitization camp to know the wider social environment through the rural setting. A tight schedule of camp activities takes them through the experience of planning, coordinating and controlling even as they learn to manage with resource constraints as well. The camp combines rigorous work schedules with evenings of entertainment and laughter.(Vijesh & Mohanan, n.d.) The Department has initiated to do the print and digital documentation work with the help of students who have done several relevant socially related topics like Environmental problems, waste management and health-related works. These various activities will equip them with a holistic and professional centred approach for their future career prospects. In recent years, Kerala has faced a lot of challenges due to flood and COVID 19. Students have well documented the reports about the flood and COVID 19 reliefs done by the college for future perusal and references.

Demand Ratio for the BLISc and MLISc Programmes at Rajagiri DLIS

Demand Ratio- MLISc

Year	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Students Intake	15	15	15	15	15	15
Applications Received	20	22	25	25	28	32

Table 1
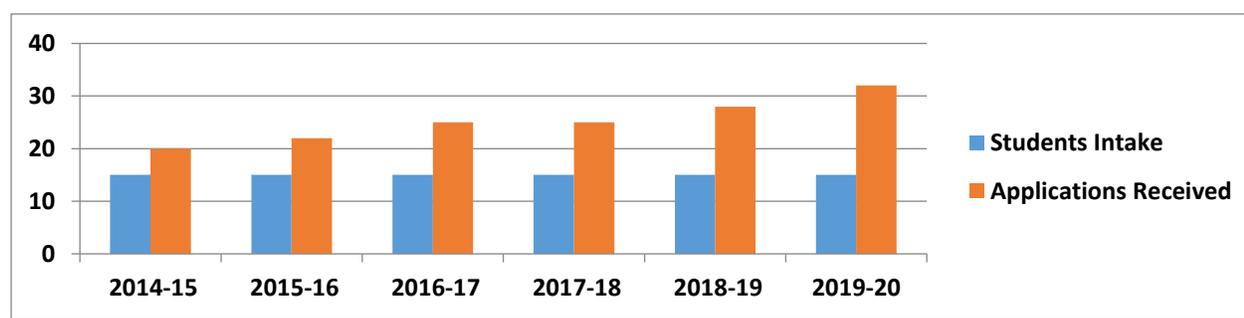
Figure 1

Demand Ratio- BLISc

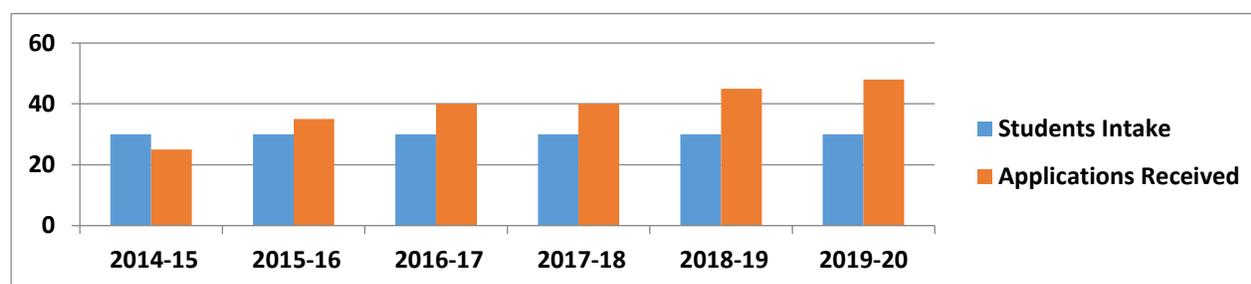| Year	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Students Intake	30	30	30	30	30	30
Applications Received	25	35	40	40	45	48

Table 2

Figure 2

Tables and figures show that the number of applications increased over the years. Current average demand ratio is 1:2. Department takes necessary initiatives to increases the demand ratio as 1: 10 through strategic planning.

Credentials of Placement Records from the Department

The school has an excellent placement record over the years. The school has a full-fledged Placement Cell, which coordinates career development -job oriented training to the students. The cell provides training on Communication Development, Technical Aptitude, General Aptitude, Personality Development, Self-confidence and Motivation by expert professionals in the respective area.

Department follows a strategic placement procedure. Students, who are interested in placement support from the school, will have to report to the placement cell with the latest resume. Those who are not interested also should report to the school by specifying the reason. The school will prepare a list of interested students for placement. At the end of every academic year, organizations/ institutions contact the school with the required job profile. From the list of students, the school sends eligible and matching resumes to the organizations/ institutions and inform the students to check their mail regularly for notification. In the next level, Institutions/ Organizations schedule an Interview at their offices with shortlisted students. After the interview process, they will announce the names of the selected students to the school or directly. In some cases school inform the students about the vacancies listed in newspapers, magazines and Social media and encourage the students to apply for the post directly. This is the general procedure followed by the department for placement. As mentioned earlier, the department provides coaching for PSC, UPSC and other competency exams. Students are placed in State and National level institutions.

It includes Government organizations, State and National level Universities, Aided Colleges, Private Universities, Private Colleges, Schools, Media and Research institutions etc. Some of the students are working abroad. Some of them are listed below. (https://rajagiri.edu/academics/dept-of-library-and-information-science)

Sl No	Types of Institutions	Name of the Institutions
1	National Level	Reserve Bank of India, Indian Statistical Institute
2	Govt Universities	Maritime University, Calicut, Kannur and Cochin Universities
3	Private Universities	Christ University, Bangalore, Jain University,Chinmaya University
4	Aided Colleges	St.Therasa,s College Ernakulum, SB College, Kottayam,VimalaCollege,Trissur,N.S.S College,Panthalam,M.E.S College,Aluva.
5	Media	Reporter TV, Flowers Channel, Surya TV,ZEE networks
6	Schools	Good Shepherd School, Rajagiri Group of Institutions, Bhavans Schools, Naipunya Ernakulum,
7	Hospitals	Amrutha Hosptal,ErnakulamLakeshore Hospital,Cochin,Lissie Hospital,Ernakulam
8	Other reputed Organizations	CDS Trivandrum, Sahithya Academy, Ernakulum Public Library, VSSC Trivandrum, INFLIBNET Centre, Police Academy.

Table 3

Placement Statistics

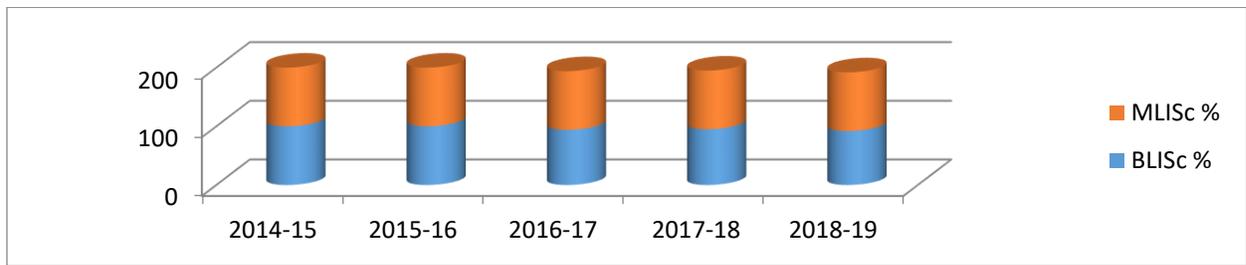| Academic Year	Percentage of Placements	
	BLISc %	MLISc %
2014-15	100	100
2015-16	100	100
2016-17	94	100
2017-18	95	100
2018-19	90	98

Table 4

Figure 3

Tables and figures shows that the placement done by the department for the last five years and its constant increasing over the years. It also shows the good demand of trained LIS students within the wake of the competitive environment. Through the placement training in Rajagiri, students can demonstrate subject-related and transferable skills that are relevant to library related jobs and employment opportunities.

Conclusion

The experiences and the challenges faced by the library and information professionals must be considered while framing the course contents of the LIS education. Only the working professionals know what is needed for the users and what may be the problems faced after having the degree. On acquiring the LIS degree, a person should be confident enough to handle any type of library independently. For that, the authority should make the regular revision of the course content with the latest developments in the field and adequate hands-on experience must be provided to the students. Past experience shows that all measures are taken to train the LIS students to equip with the present-day challenges and the placement history states the successful implications of the interdisciplinary approaches. Information retrieval has always been a core component of Library and Information Science Education, and this has been expanded to online information retrieval, web-based IR and database searching. Another core component is information organization, and in addition to traditional cataloguing and classification, students also study the principles of metadata, Dublin Core and other metadata schemas. Courses on information management were introduced many years ago, and this has been extended by adding knowledge management in curriculum. Computer literacy and information literacy in the computerized environment have been added.

Numerous courses on ICTs have also been added. It is evident that LIS schools have taken the challenges of the changing information environment very seriously, and have adapted their curricula, their names and their institutional alignments to reflect these changes. A vast variety of departments especially in universities can adopt the interdisciplinary subject training within their campuses for the betterment of the LIS students as well as professionals. Thus RCSS Competency based and interdisciplinary approach within the campus is a good model to adopt. LIS students have to cope up with soft skills, administration, strategic management and crisis management and finance management. LIS education is responding to each change happening to the LIS world by making appropriate changes in its teaching-learning strategies. To be competent enough to satisfy the challenges, products of those LIS schools must be market-oriented with high skills and competencies. By using the Interdisciplinary subject approaches to the campuses the DLIS will absorb these

multitasking skills. Present LIS graduates get employment opportunities in various sectors like educational, industrial, and research and developments which successively attracts people of top quality from different social and academic backgrounds. Periodic review and revision, redesigning of the curricula to stay track of the newest developments within the information world can help a lot during this regard. Sound knowledge of multi-disciplines and networking with the academicians can contribute more to this. The DLIS Centre at Rajagiri College of Social Sciences can certainly say that what they have planned and executed, played a big part within the growth of LIS students. The testimonial of DLIS students' placement itself says that DLIS centre is working towards the proper mixture of a blended approach to the LIS curriculum and the teaching methods. Therefore Rajagiri model for Competency based-Interdisciplinary subject approach within the campus is a good model for others to follow.

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