METHODS OF TEACHING LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE: AN EMPIRICAL APPROACH

Due to increasing impact of information technology on libraries and information centres, our traditional method of teaching and curricula, has become outdated. Most LIS departments have changed their curricula but their method of teaching remain unchanged. In this scenario right teaching methods is the need of the hour. The basic theme of the present paper is to discuss the methods for teaching library and information science. Also highlights the knowledge and skills required for future library and information science professionals.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the centuries the librarians have preserved books and records from the hazards of war, fire and flood. It is no idle boast to say that they have played a large part in maintaining the cultural heritage of their countries. Francis Bacon while sending a copy of the book ‘The Advancement of Learning’ to Sir Thomas Bodley wrote, “you have built an ark to save learning from deluge”. This emphasizes the role of librarians as well as the libraries and information centres. Although the traditional librarians acted primarily as keepers of records, the dramatic advances of information technology and their impact on various areas of library and information centres have changed the overall concept of librarian.

Each culture uses its own technology and each technological revolution brings forth its own culture. The interface between culture and technology is interesting and complex. After the typewriter came into large scale use, neatness in handwriting ceased to be desirable and necessary art of qualification. Presently word processor or computer can do the work quickly and elegantly and there is no point in making investments on typewriters. It can be concluded from above that every change demands new kind of culture and temperament and new kind of educational skills and qualifications. Invention of computers has totally changed the library culture and temperament of users of libraries. This change has demanded a new knowledge and skills in the persons who are entering the profession and who are already in this profession.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS REQUIRED

The knowledge and skills that are required for future library and information professionals are listed below.

- Proper knowledge of library and information science subject
- Knowledge of computer technology
- Ability to continuously acquire new information, different insights and perspectives and skills
- Ability to capture data from multiple sources and presenting it into usable format
- Knowledge of distributing recorded information in open format that can be retrieved and played from any desktop without any special applications
- Ability to understand target user needs and expectations
Knowledge of new systems and procedures that are necessary in fulfilling the customer needs

Knowledge of new information and communication technology

Communication skills for establishing effective relations with the customers

WHAT IS NEEDED?

Due to increasing impact of information technology on libraries and information centres, our traditional methods of teaching and curricula has become outdated. In this new information technology environments we can not operate with our traditional curriculum and teaching methods. We should adopt new curriculum and right methods of teaching library and information science. It is also true that due to increasing demand of change in curriculum, most of the LIS departments have changed their curriculum but they have not changed their methods of teaching. So the students are unable to meet the market requirements. For this reason it is very important for library and information science departments to adopt right method of teaching. As it is rightly said, the best of the curriculum and the most perfect syllabus remain dead unless quickened into life by the right method of teaching.

NEED OF A VARIETY OF METHODS

For the achievement of comprehensive objective of teaching library and information science, methods are needed which could expose the students to knowledge and experiences helpful in the development of understanding, critical thinking, practical skills and interests. To equip our students with required skills, we have to adopt a variety of methods.

The library and information science teacher must be conversant with the theory and practices of different methods of teaching the subjects mainly for two reasons.

Firstly, there is no royal road to successful learning. There are many roads, highways and byways; royal roads and narrow lanes; delightful path and rough ones which need to be tried for meeting particular needs and situations. The teacher should be able to use any permutation and combination of methods to make the subjects interesting, vital and living.

Secondly, each subject of library and information science demands different approach of teaching. For example, a teacher can not teach computers only through lecture method. It is necessary for the teacher to give students hands on experience on computers.

VARIOUS METHODS OF TEACHING LIS

The teaching entails the acquisition of new competencies. Although we have changed our curriculum, it is only by changing the method of teaching we can provide better avenues for our students. They will enter the LIS profession with confidence. The following methods are suggested for teaching of library and information science subjects in changing environment.

Lecture Method

It is the easiest method of teaching given by philosophy of idealism. The lecture method refers to the teaching procedure involved in the clarification or explanation to the students of some major idea. This method lays emphasis on the presentation of the content. We have already adopted this method since long for teaching library and information science.

Although it makes the subject interesting, it is also true that it is rarely possible for the teacher to stimulate and keep up the interest of students continuously. In new environment, lecture method should be used only for selected topics. The teacher can prepare a synopsis of the lecture and give it to the students two days before the lecture. So the students will be able to have some idea about the topic and they will understand the topic at the time of lecture. Lecture should often be followed by a written test to measure the success of the lecture. Accordingly teachers can plan them for better results.
On The Job Training Method

It is rightly believed that direct experiences are most effective in the process of learning. Most departments of library and information science only conduct tours of libraries that too usually after the end of teaching session. What happens in this case is that most of the students forget what they learnt in their classes. It is suggested here that university library should be developed as a laboratory of the library and information science departments. After the completion of the topic in the class, students should go to library for practical aspects of the topic taught by the teacher. This will enable students to understand topics properly and retain for a longer period. It is thus important that in addition to conducting the tour, teachers should send the students for practicals just after the completion of the topic.

Discussion Method

This method has been used in the teaching-learning process since times immemorial. It was widely used at the famous Nalanda University. Discussion has been described as a thoughtful consideration of the relationship involved in a topic or problem under study. It should be used, in teaching of library and information science. Teacher can assign a topic with some problem or an issue on which there is difference of opinion. These discussions may be in the form of debate, a classroom discussion or panel discussion. It will help the students to share their experiences, crystallise their thinking, identify the concept and explore future developments.

Assignment Method

This method is advocated for the Masters' level. The whole of the syllabus should be split into significant topics or units and each topic or unit in turn is subdivided into assignments. The students should submit these assignments in writing. After evaluating the assignment, teacher should point out the plus and minus points of the assignment, and can conduct a class seminar and discuss the topic in the class. It is advisable here that before giving the assignment topics to the students, teacher should give some background information about the topic and relevant literature. If we use this method it will be very fruitful in long term because now-a-days information is available in different documents and the library user has no time to use all the information. So it is the job of the library and information professionals to collect the information from different sources, organise it and provide it to the users who require this information. By this method, students will learn organisation of information gathered from various sources and present it into unified manner.

Project Method

Being an activity oriented method, it provides learning experience suited to individuals with varied requirements. Most of the LIS departments have already adopted this method. But in present modes, this method requires improvement. At the time of assigning the topics to the students, teachers should keep in mind the following factors.

- projects should involve mental activity like citation analysis, bibliometrics, etc.;
- activity should be purposeful;
- projects undertaken should provide varied types of experience to the students, i.e., manipulative, concrete, mental, etc.;
- projects should provide real situation experiences.

Teachers should encourage the students to maintain complete record of all activities connected with their project. It should be necessary that in the project report every thing is put down regarding the choice of the project, the discussion held, books and journals consulted, information sought or difficulties felt and experiences undertaken, short and long term gains obtained. Self appraisal is also to be entered and important and future guidelines and further references to be noted down. Well prepared projects may be awarded prize. The results of the projects should be communicated to the concerned community and can also be published in reputed journals. It has been seen that projects are not well maintained by the departments, although they contain valuable
data. It is necessary for departments to keep projects properly for future references.

**Question - Answer Method**

In this method teacher puts questions to the students and the answers given by the pupils are supplemented and elaborated by the teacher. This method can be used frequently in the classrooms. Because, by asking questions, the relevant experiences in the memory of the students come to the surface and the familiar and known associations help in learning and granting the unfamiliar and the unknown. For acquiring new knowledge, the students read just the previous known aspects. Thus the old and new gets integrated and the process of learning library and information science becomes simpler and easier.

**Tutorials**

LIS departments should also have slot for tutorials in their timetable. It will give a chance to the students to interact with the teachers and put her/his problems before the teachers.

**Class-notes Method**

In theory no one considers it as a suitable method. But for some topics of the LIS syllabus, it could be considered an important method. For example, sometimes students do not find any topic of the syllabus in the existing literature or topic is very theoretical. In this situation it is better to give a handout to the students after a small lecture.

**Symposium**

It is a series of presentation given by two to five persons of notable authority and competencies on different aspects of the same theme or closely related theme. Most of the symposia run between sixty to ninety minutes. LIS departments can organise symposiums on current issues. Once the presentations are over, interaction among the students is encouraged and accepted. This method will give a chance to the students to hear notable and competent authorities in the field and ask questions from them.

**Activity Programme for the Students**

LIS departments should not confine themselves to academic activities only. Library and Information Science Departments can also include following students activity programme in their time table.

**Expression from the Students**

LIS departments can organise expression programmes from time to time and ask the students to present any activity in that programme.

**Mock Interview**

Sometimes in the classroom, teachers can conduct a mock interview. It has been seen that sometimes good students can not perform very well before the selection committee. It is because students do not have any idea about the interview. Mock interviews will remove the shyness, etc. and make them bold. It is also necessary that in mock interviews, teachers should tell the students about market requirements and how to face selection committee. This will enhance the quality of mock interview.

**Group Activity**

Teachers can also form groups for some activities as this will help the students to learn how to work in groups.

Apart from the methods and activities discussed above, library and information science departments should also organise conferences, seminars, workshops and lectures from time to time. These are also very appropriate and suitable methods to teach library and information science informally. Involvement of the students is very essential in these activities. Because the students are involved in these activities, they will learn how to manage things effectively, how to interact with different types of persons and many others things. These things are vital and will help in overall development of the students.
CONCLUSION

There is no single method for teaching library and information science which could be recommended for all topics and all situations. There are many more methods which can be used. But in all the cases, the sole objective will remain to create interest in the students in the subject and maintain it for a longer time. In order to make the students feel that a subject is interesting can only happen if they will try to understand it properly.

To conclude it can be said that for the upliftment of the library and information science profession there is an urgent need for a review of the library and information science curriculum. It requires implementing a carefully planned and uniform curriculum which suits the present and future requirements. Proper infrastructure to the LIS department should also be provided by the authorities. Introducing of new and innovative methods for teaching of library and information science is also essential. The need for a growing dialogue between library and information science academics and library and information manager to provide well-trained and employable library and information professionals is very urgent.

REFERENCES

