

ACADEMIC STATUS OF LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON MAHARASHTRA

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Present academic status of librarians in India and specially, in Maharashtra is discussed in this communication. Recommendations regarding library and library professionals of various committees and commissions appointed by Central Government and University Grants Commission are reviewed and highlighted here. The implementation of these recommendations through acts and regulations are also mentioned. The academic status given to librarians by state Government in Maharashtra through University Acts is explained in brief. Disparities noticed in the UGC regulations 2010 and 2018 are identified and discussed in this communication for its considerations. Expectations from UGC and state government are given to enhance the status of librarians in academic sector. Expectations from library profession are also discussed to maintain the academic status given by UGC and state government.

Keywords: Academic Library Professionals, Academic status, Library professionals, Maharashtra Universities Act 1994, The Maharashtra Public Universities Act 2016, UGC Regulations 2010, UGC Regulations 2018.

INTRODUCTION

Under the umbrella of higher education sector, different educational activities are carried out in India. The aim of the Higher education is to provide knowledge and wisdom. Higher education in India is distributed in four levels viz. undergraduate college level, postgraduate college level, University level and canter of advanced studies etc. Higher education is imparted through formal as well as informal ways in different kinds of educational institutions. The University Grant Commission (UGC) is the apex body of higher education in India. It provides guidelines and standards to the universities and colleges in India. Moreover, by enforcing the regulations, UGC determines the minimum qualifications for the

appointment of teachers and other academic staff in higher education and also decides their promotion criteria. Through such initiatives, UGC attempts to maintain the standard of higher education.

In the higher education sector, role of libraries and information centres, (now called as Knowledge Resource Centres (KRC)) is very important in supporting the mission and vision of education system and treated as backbone to the educational system. Thus, library is one of the vital unit in academic system of higher education. Libraries took active part in teaching-learning process and also supports to research activities. The librarian's role is also equally important who manages and handles the information published globally in different forms and formats to serve the demands and purpose of academic community.

So far as the status of Librarian in Maharashtra is concerned, it is observed that, it is now at par with teaching professionals i.e. professors in teaching community. If, a cursory review is taken regarding the status of librarians and look back in ancient period, it is observed that the librarians of some renowned academic institutes were considered as a teacher and only selected academicians were allowed to become librarian. It means that librarians were receiving the status as teacher since long. But now professionals have lost this status all of a sudden. The brief development of status of librarian in Maharashtra is:

In Maharashtra, according to Maharashtra University Act 1994, the post of 'Librarian' was considered as a 'teacher' which was placed in the

act u/s 2(34) under the definition of 'Teacher'. This act was come into force from 21st July 1994, and from the same date the librarians working in higher education in Maharashtra became "teachers" in the vision of Government of Maharashtra. Before 1994, the University Act 1983 was in force where the post of librarian was not included in the definition/category of 'teacher'. But in spite of this in some universities in Maharashtra the post of 'Librarian' was considered under the teacher category.

The Legislative Assembly Bill no. XLVIII of 1992 regarding Maharashtra Universities Act was introduced in the assembly on 13th July 1992 and a joint committee of both the houses constituted under the Chairmanship of Mr. Prabhakar Dharkar, the then Minister of Higher and Technical Education, Maharashtra state. After thirty-one sittings/meetings committee had considered the suggestion received from individuals, associations as well as visiting other states, discussions with the then Vice Chancellors and concerned officers of the various universities, the committee had submitted its report on 6th July 1994. Initially in the Bill the post of librarian did not included in the definition of the 'teacher'. The committee had prolonged discussion whether the post of librarian should be categorized as a teacher or not and finally came to the conclusion that it should be included under the definition of the 'teacher' ("Report of the Joint Committee on L.A. Bill No. XLVIII of 1992, The Maharashtra Universities Bill, 1992," 1994). Since then the librarians' positions are treated as teachers. The same status of Librarian is continued in the Maharashtra Public University Act 2016 which came into force from 11th Jan. 2017.

LIBRARY PROFESSION CONSIDERED BY COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES: A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Different commissions and committees were appointed by Central Government as well as University Grants Commission, before and after independence to study the then status of higher education in India and also to recommend the suggestions to improve it. The prominent amongst them are:

- Saddler Commission (1917)
- Sargent Committee (1944)
- University Education Commission – Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (1948)
- University Grant Commission (1956)
- Library Committee (1957)
- Education Commission – Prof D.S. Kothari (1964)
- Sen Committee (1974)
- Education Commission – Prof R.C. Mehrotra (1983)
- Joy Committee (Kerala – 1993)
- Rastogi Committee (Pay Review Committee – 1994-1997)
- National Knowledge Commission (2005)

All these commissions and committees studied thoroughly the situations in the concerned periods and submitted their reports respectively to the concerned agencies. These commissions and committees considered each and every aspect of higher education including Library and librarians' issues. Committees considered importance of libraries and library personals in their reports. In view of Dr. C.D. Deshmukh, the first Chairman of the University Grants Commission, library is the heart of university,

administration is the head and teachers are the soul (Devi & Singh, 2006). Special committee on library has been constituted by the University Grants Commission in 1957 under the chairmanship of Dr. S.R. Ranganathan to study the condition of libraries and suggest the betterment regarding the development of libraries. S. Bashir-uddin, K.S. Hingwe, B.S. Kesavan, and S. Parthasarathy were the members and Dr.P.J. Philip was a Member Secretary of this committee. The committee considered each and every aspect of libraries and personnel. In its report it was focused on grants received by UGC to libraries, library funds, acquisition policy, reading habits, weeding out policy, documentation, departmental collection, library staff, library building, fitting and furniture. The valuable recommendations in this regard were also given in reports which were even today prove to be a guideline for library professionals.

The attempt has been made to discuss on the comments, suggestions and recommendations given by commissions and committees in reference to libraries, apart from this Ranganathan Committee, are discussed in this article.

COMMENTS ON LIBRARIES

Forthright comments have been given on the condition of libraries in Indian higher education by the various commission and committees. In 1948 the Government of India had constituted the University Education Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. The Government asked the Commission to make recommendations that would be appropriate for the present as well as for the future with a view to

developing higher education in India. The commission had submitted its report in 1949, and in this report highlighted the importance of libraries very well. The commission mentioned in its report that ‘the library is the heart of the University’s work, directly so, as regards its research work, and indirectly as regards its educational work which derives its life from research work. Scientific research needs a library as well as laboratories, while for humanistic research the library is both library and laboratory in one. The training in higher branches of learning and research as mainly a question of learning how to use the tools, and if the library tools are not there how can the students learn to use them’ (Sharma, 2015). This clearly indicated the importance of libraries in every branch of education. However, the commission had shown its displeasure by mentioning that in most colleges and universities the library facilities were inadequate. Moreover, in most of our universities the annual grants for libraries are very inadequate and sufficient attention has not yet been given to the reference service in the libraries of our universities, though these services are being provided by the libraries.

Under, the ‘Development of Libraries’, Kothari commission in their report shown reluctance in respect of the present position of expenditure on books and periodicals. Observing the then situation of libraries and also the views of academicians and administrators from higher education towards libraries, it is compelled for the commission to mention that ‘nothing could be more damaging to a growing department than to neglect its library or to give it a low priority’ (Gupta, 1992).

The Rastogi Committee has commented in its report under section 6.5.5 that most of the College librarians are found to be in the scale of a Lecturer or in still lower scale. This scale of pay also varies from institution to institution. The library system in colleges also needs to be upgraded (“Rastogi Committee Report Chapter VI Recommendations,” 1997).

Recommendations

‘No new university, college or department should be set up without taking into account its library needs in terms of staff, books, journals, space etc.’ (Gupta, 1992). This is a very important point recommended by the Kothari Commission in its report. This shows the significance and importance of libraries in higher education in the recommendations of different committees. On the same path, the review committee on education constituted by UGC in 1960 under the chairmanship of Prof. N.K. Sidhanta and Prof. K.G. Saiyidain indicated very clearly and transparently the importance of libraries in research. While recommending the committee highlighted that ‘the candidate should be allowed to supplicate for a research degree only in a department or place where adequate library facilities are available’ (“Review Committee on Education, 1960 – Report, New Delhi, University Grant Commission, 1966,” 1977).

Besides, the recommendations given by other commissions and committees are bifurcated in academic status, budgetary position, and library services in forthcoming lines.

Academic status

The Saddler Commission, appointed by Government of India, in its report recommended that ‘the University and colleges should have services of librarians, having the salary and status of a professor, and that he should be the ex-officio member of the academic council’ (Nair) and that to also in 1917. The committee on Governance of Universities and College was constituted under the chairmanship of Dr. P.B. Gajendragadkar in 1971. In the report of this committee it is mentioned that the Academic Council should be the principal academic body of the university, with power to coordinate and exercise general supervision over the academic policies of the university. Considering the academic position of the post of librarian in university it is also recommended by the committee that the post of librarian should be the ex-officio member of Academic Council (Gupta, 1992).

The University Education Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, recommended that the library should have adequate and well-qualified staff. At the top of it a person in the capacity of a university professor who has specialized in some aspects of library science, (having completed a full degree course) and who has capacities for organization and management of information should be recruited. The top personal must have qualifications corresponding to Doctorate in Library Science (Bhatt).

In 1983 the UGC appointed committee to consider the revision of pay scales, service

condition and career development of college and university teachers. The committee was constituted under the chairmanship of Prof. R.C. Mehrotra. Consequently, UGC directed the committee to consider the pay scale and service condition of librarians also. The National Eligibility Test (NET) was suggested as an essential qualification for librarians by the committee in its report. This qualification was at par with teachers. Further the committee had also suggested to give Duty Leave to librarians to attend summer schools, workshops, seminar etc. It seems that the committee had attempted to provide academic status to librarians (Devi & Singh, 2006).

A pay review committee was appointed by the UGC on 24th August 1994 under the Chairmanship of Rastogi. Specially, for college librarians the committee had recommended that the librarian should also be able to engage students in workshop-like situation with a view to train them regarding information retrieval and resourcing of material for their studies. Further, the committee recommended that performing these newer tasks, the position of librarian in the colleges should be at par with that of a lecturer in the college (“Restogi Committee Report Chapter VI Recommendations,” 1997). In 1961 the University Grants Commission constituted review committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. S.R. Ranganathan. The committee recommended certain improvements in the standards of teaching and research in the department of Library Science in the Universities. The committee in its report clearly mentioned that, ‘it would be useful for the librarians to maintain an academic interest in the

society by delivering few lectures in the department' (Varma & Sing). It clearly indicates the teaching status of Librarians.

Library Committee established under the Chairmanship of Dr. S.R. Ranganathan in 1957 gave due importance to the pay scale and training of the staff so that they could meet the challenges. It should be at par with the academic staff. The committee has recommended M.Lib. I. Sc. or M.Sc. second class and Diploma in Library Science or First-class B.Lib. I. Sc. as the minimum qualifications for the College librarians.

Budget position

In the report of the University Education Commission, it is mentioned that the annual grant for libraries are insufficient in universities and the required library facilities for its stake-holders are also not up to the mark. Therefore, the commission mentioned that the expenditure on libraries will have to be increased if teaching is to become effective and therefore recommended about Rs. 40 per student as the normal expenditure to be incurred on libraries (India, 1962).

Library services

The University Education Commission has recommended that in every university there should be a carefully planned open access system. Moreover, special attention should be given towards reference service in the library. Also Bibliographical documentation work has to be developed in order to develop the libraries as proper centres for research.

Kothari commission also provided special attention toward the timings of libraries as well

as the collection and space for libraries which support to raise the standard of it. It is mentioned in the report of the commission that 'more working hours and working days, easy accessibility to books, adequate provision in terms of staff, multiple copies of textbooks which may be loaned to needy students, better display of new reading material, organization of book-clubs, separate rooms for periodicals, reference books and research works, are some of the measures that would help raise the standard of library service'.

Implementation

Only establishing and constituting commissions and committees are not sufficient to raise and improve the quality of higher education. Considering the recommendations given by experts through these commissions and committees and implementing them through regulations and resolutions is equally more important. Unless and until these are not being brought out through regulations and resolutions on UGC and government level, the process of implementations is not being carried out effectively. In forthcoming paragraphs attempt has been made to study the implementation of the recommendations regarding academic status in respect of librarians.

Implementation by the University Grants Commission, New Delhi

The reports submitted by various committees and commissions are accepted by the Government of India. In large extent the University Grants Commission had given academic status to librarians and it is reflected in its regulations

published time to time for implementation. The UGC had brought out its regulations in 2000, 2010 and 2018 regarding minimum qualifications for the appointments of teachers and other academic staff. Through these regulations, UGC brought librarians at par with other teachers in respect of qualifications, pay scales and promotions (India, 30th June 2010) (India, 18th July 2018)

Disparities at the UGC level

The University Grants Commission in its regulation No. F.3-1/2009 dated 30th June 2010 has given the minimum qualifications for the appointment and other service conditions of College Librarian, University Assistant Librarian, University Deputy Librarian and University Librarian. In the same regulation UGC has also mentioned the Academic Performance Indicators (APIs) for the Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) promotions applicable to College Librarian and University Assistant Librarian and for the direct recruitment of the Deputy Librarian and Librarian at the University level (India, 30th June 2010).

It is cleared from the APIs designed for the Librarians that in view of UGC the librarians are not mere the custodian of the library. UGC expects that the librarians working in the higher education must play prominent role as Information Manager, Information Administrator, Good Teacher and Proactive Researcher. Even then following major disparities were noticed in the regulation.

- To promote through Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) from stage 1 to stage 2, Librarian has to complete one Orientation

and one Refresher Course of ¾ weeks duration. On the contrary, Assistant Professor requires one Orientation and one Refresher/Research Methodology Course of 2/3 weeks' duration. Similarly, to promote from stage 2 to stage 3 Librarian requires additionally two refresher courses, for a minimum period of 3 to 4 weeks' duration. However, for the same promotion Assistant Professor requires only one course/programme from among the categories of refresher courses, methodology workshops training etc. of 2/3 weeks' duration (India, 30th June 2010).

- In the regulation, opportunity is given to the person working on the post of 'Assistant Professor' to promote up to six stages through Career Advancement Scheme (CAS). However, College Librarians could enjoy only four stages.
- The eligible Librarian is not considered in ten percent number (10%) of post of Associate Professor in an Under Graduate College to become Professors. Similarly, the eligible University Librarian is also not being considered in ten percent of the posts of Professors in a university for the higher AGP of Rs.12000.
- With certain exceptions, the parity in case of pay scale is maintained at par with other teachers. However, the directly recruited Professor is entitled to get an opportunity to fix himself on Rs. 43000/- in the Pay Band of Rs. 37400-67000, with the applicable

AGP of Rs. 10000. This opportunity is not given to University Librarian.

- For direct recruitment of Professor, a minimum of ten years of teaching experience in university/college, and/or experience in research at the University/National level institutions/industries, including experience of guiding candidates for research at doctoral level is required. However, for the post of 'University Librarian' which is at same cadre requires 'at least thirteen years as a Deputy Librarian in a university library or eighteen years' experience as a College Librarian' (India, 30th June 2010).

However, with the collective efforts of various Library Associations the disparities in experience and promotion criteria are removed that reflects in the Regulation No. F.1-2/2017(EC/PS) 2018 of the UGC published in the Gazette of India on 18th July 2018. Indian Library Association and Maharashtra University and College Librarians Association had taken lead in this regard. Following major issues could be achieved to maintain the parity with other teachers.

Previously, as a Deputy Librarian in a university library at least thirteen years or as a College Librarian at least eighteen years' experience was required to become University Librarian. However, in this UGC regulation this experience is reduced up to ten years as in case of the direct recruitment for the post of Professor. Moreover, librarians are now enjoying promotions from level 10 to level 14 (Level 10, 11, 12, 13A and 14 are suggested in 7th pay)

through Career Advancement Scheme (CAS). The same promotions are also given to other teachers. Academic Performance Indicator (API) is also made applicable to Librarians as in case of other teachers. Of course, this API was also in 6th Pay Commission.

Even though, following are some major disparities still there in UGC Regulation 2018 (India, 18th July 2018).

- For the post of College Principal, the first eligibility criteria is given – 'Professor/ Associate Professor with total service/ experience of at least fifteen years of teaching/research in Universities, Colleges and other institutions of higher education'(India, 18th July 2018). Here it may confuse that whether the librarian is fit in this criteria to become College Principal or not.
- Workload of Librarian is not mentioned in the regulation. It was mentioned in the fourth amendment of the UGC Regulation 2010 as 40 hours per week for College Librarian, 38 hours and 36 hours per week in case of Deputy Librarian and University Librarian respectively.
- After the superannuation Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professormay be re-employed on contract basis. But this provision is not done in case of Librarian.

Implementation by the Government of Maharashtra

The Government of Maharashtra maintains the academic status of librarians working in higher

education through resolutions as well as university acts. So far as pay scales and eligibility qualification are concerned very first time Government of Maharashtra had accepted it as per UGC in 1980 vide GR no. USG 4280/157972/(275) XXXII-CELL dated 18th Sept. 1980 with retrospective effect from 1st Jan. 1973. The eligibility was MA/M.Com./M.Sc. and one-year diploma in Library Science or B.Lib. I. Sc. However, at par with teachers (Lecturer, Reader and Professor) it was being accepted vide GR no. USG 4280/157972/(275)/UNI-4 dated 18th April 1984 with effect from 1st April 1980.

At first time, the post of librarian has been considered as a teacher by Maharashtra Government in 1994 vide the Maharashtra Universities Act 1994 u/s 2(34) (Maharashtra, 21st July 1994). Since then the librarians in Maharashtra are enjoying the facilities of teachers except in few respect. In 'The Maharashtra Public Universities Act 2016' also the post is under teacher category as per section 2(61) (Maharashtra, 11th Jan. 2017). Moreover, nomenclature of University Library is being changed as Knowledge Resource Centre considering the changing concept of it in respect to its services, nature of collection and housekeeping activities. Also, the nomenclature of University Librarian is changed as Director. Being a teacher, college librarians can become a member of College Development Committee (CDC) constituted in each college as per the section 97(1) (Maharashtra, 11th Jan. 2017). This committee is responsible for overall development of respective college in terms of administration,

academic, infrastructural facility and co-curriculum activities.

FUTURE STATUS

Due to the policy of UGC and State Government of Maharashtra, the academic status of the librarians is remarkable. It is a universal truth that nothing in the world is perfect. In each case, some part is incomplete. By this justice the academic status of librarians working in higher education in Maharashtra are still not at par with teacher. In some aspect it is to be enhanced. The library associations as well as teacher's associations are continuously putting demand at the Government level for getting this status to librarians. The fulfilments of following points should be made immediately for bringing librarians at par with teacher.

- The nomenclature of the post of College Librarian/Assistant University Librarian, Deputy Librarian and University Librarian should be changed as Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor respectively.
- The experience of librarian should be considered as a teaching experience.
- Due to the fact that the librarian is competent but does not have the teaching experience, he / she is deprived from working on the key administrative positions in higher education. Therefore, his working experience and qualification should be considered for to work on higher positions.

One should keep in mind that only change of nomenclature in the post or considering the

experience for higher post is not sufficient to raise the academic status of librarian. Being a librarian, we should have to raise the quality of our libraries. It is the collective efforts of all professionals. For that the following demands should be put before the respective state governments.

- Higher Education should become library oriented. Self-study should be inculcated in students, research culture should be developed in them, the utility of library should be raised. In short, student should be information literate and therefore, the compulsory subject in first year of Under Graduate and Post Graduate level should be started at all educational level streams. The teaching responsibility of it should be given to librarian.
- Considering the changing scenario of library, the demand regarding constituting the committee for staffing pattern should put before respective state government.
- To become every college library competent in terms of e-resources, state government should develop a library network like INFLIBNET in their respective states.

ROLE PLAYED BY THE ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS FOR KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

The role of academic librarians and libraries are depending on the transformation of education system. Librarian has to play a pivotal role to support formal and education system by providing information support to the academicians, students, in teaching and learning as well as in

conducting research. The academic libraries are hubs of information and knowledge.

The librarians are well qualified and fulfil the conditions required as per the norms fixed by the higher education agencies like UGC. The librarians have also transformed their activities to suit the need of academicians from time to time to sustain in the profession. All the revolutionary changes are successfully adapted in the profession to serve the academic community to use the information resources at its maximum utility by providing different services. Use of ICT, use of e-publications, undertaking consortium activities to provide maximum access to information in limited financial resources, development of databases, providing library and information services using e-resources, social media, internet resources, open access literature, networking of libraries etc. changed the faces of academic libraries. These tasks are not easy to adapt, these are complicated activities, in spite of these librarians are managing them more effectively by undertaking continuous education and refresh themselves to face the changing paradigm shift. They are also taking equal parts in the administrative work and sharing the responsibilities at different levels in the organisation. They are definitely working at par of teaching faculty and imparting their expertise in facing NAAC, NBA, Quality reviews, management, teaching courses, orienting users both theoretical and practical. Hence, library professionals are needed to be placed on par with the teaching faculty and apply all the regulations to library professionals in terms of service conditions and benefits utilised by teaching

faculty. In no way they are less as compared to teaching unit.

CONCLUSION

From the initial stage various educationalists are giving weightage for library in education field and also experiencing it through various commissions, committees and acts. Therefore, step by step librarians are getting good academic status in higher education. National as well as State associations are playing major role in maintaining the status of librarians. However, unfortunately the weightage for library is not given to the mark in the present education policy. Anyway, the status is not demanding, it is commanding. By this justice, librarian should come forward to make their library a happening place.

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