Quo Vadis? LIS Postgraduate Education in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The paper intends to shed light on the predicament faced by many Filipino librarians: the lack of local institutions offering Library and Information Science (LIS) post graduate degrees. The study also aims to look at Filipino librarians who have either completed and are currently pursuing LIS and non-LIS postgraduate education, either locally or abroad. The paper aims to illustrate the state of Philippine LIS postgraduate education by considering the number of librarians who pursued and are still pursuing postgraduate degrees, and identifying the universities they selected, locally and overseas. The data was gathered from responses to an online questionnaire posted on websites of local libraries as well as professional networks, and supported by phone interviews. Responses were further validated through electronic correspondences. The study yielded constructive information on the state of Library and Information Science postgraduate education. Most respondents pursued or are pursuing Education related postgraduate degrees within the country. Of the number of respondents, only a few pursued or are pursuing postgraduate education in Library and information Science in other countries like the United States of America, Canada, Japan and United Kingdom.

Keywords: librarianship; postgraduate education; Philippines; library science; library education

INTRODUCTION

Currently, there are only 6,201 registered librarians who are authorized by law Republic Act 9246- Philippine Librarianship Act of 2003 (R.A. 9246) to practice librarianship in the Philippines. Latest data from the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) reveal that there are 44,846 elementary and 10,834 high schools, both private and public, serving more than 17 million Filipino students. There are also more than 2.7 Million Filipino students enrolled in more than 2,180 colleges and universities, not to mention the need for librarians to man special and public libraries all around the Philippines. Clearly, the Philippines is presently experiencing a shortage of librarians, particularly those with the required qualifications and competencies to manage and lead libraries as specified by various library standards and accrediting agencies in the Philippines.

Librarians, worldwide, pursue postgraduate education because of several reasons, i.e. for career advancement and promotion, salary increase, self-fulfilment, etc. For Filipino librarians, R.A. 9246 clearly states the need for professional development through formal and non-formal education. Filipino librarians abide by attending seminars, conferences, workshops, and by pursuing graduate and postgraduate education. Pursuing graduate education locally is not a problem since many Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are offering graduate LIS education. However, for LIS postgraduate education, this is not the case. First of all, LIS postgraduate education is not offered in any Philippine HEIs. Thus many Filipino librarians who are already done with their master's degree and who would like to engage in postgraduate studies are left with two options: 1.) take up their postgraduate studies in LIS outside of the Philippines; 2.) take up postgraduate studies/second master's degree in other fields, locally.

Many Filipino librarians have expressed the desire to pursue a postgraduate degree in LIS. Since many of them cannot afford to their leave homes, livelihood, and their loved ones to study abroad, many take up non-LIS postgraduate degree locally.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

LIS Education in the Philippines and the Asia-Pacific Region

Literature tracing the roots of library education in the Philippines is very scarce. Nevertheless, an in-depth historical account has been provided for by Damaso (1966) and by Santos (2003).

The following information on Philippine library education was derived from data provided by the aforementioned authors.

Library science as an academic discipline started in the Philippines in 1914, when the state-run, University of the Philippines, opened courses in librarianship in its College of Liberal Arts. However, university-level library education formally began only two years later, upon the introduction of a four-year curriculum. The goal of this program is to produce graduates that would, either fill professional library positions, or teach basic library science courses. Mary Polk (University of the Philippines librarian) and Lois Osborn (then professor, College of Education, University of the Philippines) worked together and lobbied for a law to be passed that allowed seven young men, at government expense, to take advanced library science studies in the United States. This transpired in years 1918-1923. Four out of seven became professional librarians and part-time faculty of the University's Department of Library Science.

Consequently, private universities started offering library science courses. In 1961, thanks to a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, administered by the American Library Association, the Institute of Library Science (ILS) in the University of the Philippines was set up, making this the first library school in the Philippines. Sarah Vann, being the first visiting professor and consultant under the aforementioned grant, worked with the faculty of ILS to put together the undergraduate and graduate degree programs in librarianship.

Library education in the Philippines, in terms of bachelor's and master's degrees, has already reached its maturity level. Today, there are now 145 colleges and universities offering undergraduate and graduate library education in the country (Dizon, 2008). Perhaps it is time for LIS education in the Philippines to move forward- thus the researchers, as well as many Filipino Librarians would like for Philippine HEIs to start offering postgraduate LIS education.

With a few years head start in the Philippines, LIS education soon propagated in the Asia Pacific region. According to Miwa (2006), library training began in China in the 1920s. There was a huge gap in the development as the succeeding developments began in 1951 in Thailand (Chulalongkorn University), followed by a librarian training program 1955 in Taiwan (National Taiwan Normal University), and two years after (1957) undergraduate and graduate courses were offered in Korea (Yonsei University). The most contemporary offering was in Singapore in 1982 through the Library Association of Singapore.

A number of universities in Asia Pacific have been offering postgraduate degrees in library and information science. However, there is currently no university offering this kind of degree in the Philippines.

Current LIS Education in the Philippines

Currently, Philippine HEIs are implementing the four (4) year Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) curriculum as mandated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). However, in the coming school year, Philippine HEIs will be implementing the new standardized 5 year BLIS curriculum. This new curriculum included more subjects that will equip new graduates with the skills and competencies necessary in today's technologically advanced libraries.

For the graduate level, the story is quite different in that the graduate LIS program is not yet standardized. Many HEIs are offering different graduate LIS programs, i.e. Master of Library and Information Science, Master of Arts in Library and Information Science, Master of Arts in Library Science, Master of Library and Information Management (Dizon, 2008). The CHED, fortunately, is currently finalizing the standardized LIS graduate curriculum.

Unfortunately, LIS postgraduate education is not yet offered in any Philippine HEIs. This creates a certain vacuum in the advancement of the LIS profession in the Philippines. The non-existence of this program compels Filipino librarians to pursue non-LIS postgraduate locally, especially those who don't have the means and opportunities to study LIS abroad.

Philippine Library Standards

The Philippine's Board for Librarians (BFL), under the auspices of the Professional Regulations Commission is responsible for creating policies and guidelines for the practice of librarianship in the Philippines as mandated by R.A. 9246. The BFL came up with a draft Standards for Philippine Libraries. The draft covered all types of libraries (School, Academic, Public, and

Special libraries). Based on the draft standard, Head Librarians or administrators of academic libraries must have at least a MLIS degree and a postgraduate degree or is actively pursuing a post graduate degree in any program (since there is no HEI offering postgraduate LIS education).

Different accrediting agencies for educational institutions in the Philippines also identified the requirements for librarians and library heads in schools applying for accreditation/reaccreditation. Some of the accrediting bodies in the Philippines include:

1. Philippine Association of Accrediting Agencies of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU)
2. Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities-Commission on Accreditation (PACU-COA)
3. Association of Christian Schools and Colleges (ACSC)
4. Accrediting Association of Chartered Colleges and Universities of the Philippines (AACCUP)

Of course, the specifications differ from one accrediting body to another. Almost all of the accrediting agencies have more stringent criteria for academic librarians in that they must have a master's degree in library and science and for library heads to have a postgraduate degree in education and other related fields, again, presumably, because there is no postgraduate LIS degree offered in the country as of the moment, many librarians pursue allied courses like educational administration/ management, etc. And since the Philippines has more than 2,180 colleges and universities, we should expect to have at least, 2,180 librarians with postgraduate degrees, however, this is not the case as can been seen in later part of this paper.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers extensively used existing Internet-based Filipino Librarians' networks in order to collect data for the study since there is no official record yet on Filipino librarians as regards educational attainment, institution where degree was obtained, etc. The two most popular sites are:

- PAARL
  (Philippine Association of Academic and Research Librarians) Yahoo Group: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PAARL/
- Filipino Librarian: http://filipinolibrarian.blogspot.com/

The researchers sought the following information from the respondents:

- Name
- Institutional Affiliation
- Postgraduate Degree
- School/University

The researchers posted the call for respondents in these websites twice, one in September and December 2010. All the responses where validated by the researchers through phone calls, email, and by checking various directories of Filipino librarians. Follow-ups were also made through phone and email. The purpose of the follow-up is to determine the reason/s for pursuing a non-LIS postgraduate degree locally.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

All the pertinent data gathered are presented in Appendix A. There were 39 respondents who participated in this study. All the responses were received via email. The researchers tabulated the responses as can be seen in Appendix A.

Almost all Filipino librarians who ventured into postgraduate education pursued allied or related doctorate degree locally (more specifically, in the area of Education, Educational Management and Administration, etc.). Thirteen (13) or 33% of the respondents pursued Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) while or 31% pursued Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Education. Only

three (3) respondents took up Ph.D. in LIS while two (2) respondents took up Ph.D. in Information Studies, all of whom studies outside of the Philippines. This could be attributed to the fact that most of the respondents are working in schools, universities, and other educational institutions. The majority of the respondents also obtained their postgraduate degree locally from the University of the Philippines.

Only five (5) respondents obtained their postgraduate education outside of the Philippines and only three out of five of the respondents pursued a postgraduate degree in Library and Information science (see Appendix A). The respondents indicated that they were able to pursue their postgraduate degree outside of the Philippines through scholarship grants.

CONCLUSION

This paper clearly and evidently presented the lack of or the non-existence of postgraduate LIS education in the Philippines. Many Filipino librarians, who in their interest in furthering their knowledge and expertise, pursue non-LIS (i.e. education) education locally or in the absence of any opportunity or the means, pursue postgraduate LIS education outside the Philippines. This interest or "gusto" on professional growth and development, through continuing formal education, coupled with the actual demand for postgraduate LIS education, are clear indicators of the Filipino Librarians' commitment to excellence in providing timely and relevant services and collection. Reflected by its development in the country, librarians and information professionals have made strides in the establishment of library and information science as a profession. However, its continued development is hindered by the lack of formal institutions that offer higher LIS education that will enable Filipino librarians to further understand, apply, and integrate basic concepts and principles of library and science to recent advancements in the field.

Given the scarcity of qualified and licensed librarians in the country, and the lack of available postgraduate LIS education locally, those who are qualified are therefore lured to pursue higher education abroad, thus running the risk of further losing them to practice librarianship in another country. From a long term perspective, it would be more beneficial to offer a postgraduate LIS education locally in order to tap the country's LIS professionals and therefore, further contribute to LIS development locally and beyond.

In case a Philippine HEI began offering postgraduate LIS education, the potential courses for the LIS postgraduate curriculum may include advanced LIS subjects and more importantly, topics not covered in the LIS graduate level. This may include advanced information science and knowledge management, metrics (qualitative and quantitative) in libraries, advanced research methodologies, archives and cultural heritage management, digitization and database management, etc. Potential faculty members to jump start the postgraduate LIS program in Philippine HEI may include Filipino postgraduate LIS degree holders who studied abroad. It is also ideal to have visiting professors from a LIS school abroad in order to infuse local knowledge in LIS with that of concepts and principles by scholars from outside of the Philippines. This infusion may also result in furthering camaraderie and fellowship of librarians from different countries and in advancing comparative librarianship studies.

Future studies in the realm of postgraduate education more specifically, the rationale and motivations for pursuing non LIS postgraduate degree in the Philippines may be conducted in order to have a more holistic approach on this topic.

Therefore, all stakeholders (the State, CHED, Professional Regulations Commission, Librarians'/Library Associations, and Higher Education Institutions HEIs) must join hands in establishing a postgraduate LIS program in the Philippines. It is the researchers' firm belief that the Philippines' premiere state university, the University of the Philippines, must be at the forefront of this endeavour, just to keep the ball rolling so to speak.

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APPENDIX A: Number of Respondents per Country and Institution

COUNTRY / SCHOOL	DEGREE OBTAINED	Respondents
CANADA		
University of Toronto	Ph.D. Book Studies and Print Culture	1
JAPAN		
Aichi Shukutoku University	Ph.D. Library Science	1
PHILIPPINES		
Bulacan State University	Ph.D. Educational Management	2
Bulacan State University	Ph.D. in Physical Education	1
Centro Escolar University	Ph.D. Curriculum and Supervision	1
Manuel L. Quezon University	Doctor of Education	1
Manuel S. Enverga University Foundation	Ed.D. Educational Management	1
National Teachers College	Ed.D. Major in Educational Leadership	1
Notre Dame University	Doctor of Educational Management	1
Philippine Normal University	Doctor of Education	1
Polytechnic University of the Philippines	Doctor of Educational Management	2
Rizal Technological University	Doctor of Public Administration	1
St. Louis University	Ph.D. Educational Management	1
St. Mary's University	Ph.D. Educational Management	1
University of Batangas	Ph.D. Educational Management	2
University of Immaculate Conception	Ph.D. in Management	2
University of Regina Carmeli	Ph.D. Educational Management	1
University of San Carlos	Doctor of Education	2
University of Santo Tomas	Doctor of Education	1
University of Santo Tomas	Ph.D. Educational Management	1
University of the Philippines	Doctor of Education	3
University of the Philippines	Ph.D. Anthropology	1
University of the Philippines	Ph.D. Educational Administration	2
University of the Philippines	Ph.D. in Communication	2
Urios College	Ph.D. Educational Management	1
UNITED KINGDOM		
University of Sheffield	Ph.D. Information Studies	2
USA		
University of Illinois	Ph.D. Library Science	1
University of Michigan	Doctoral Studies in Information	1
University of Pittsburgh	Ph.D. Library & Information Science	1
Total Number of Respondents		39

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University of Immaculate Conception	Ph.D. in Management	2
University of Regina Carmeli	Ph.D. Educational Management	1
University of San Carlos	Doctor of Education	2
University of Santo Tomas	Doctor of Education	1
University of Santo Tomas	Ph.D. Educational Management	1
University of the Philippines	Doctor of Education	3
University of the Philippines	Ph.D. Anthropology	1
University of the Philippines	Ph.D. Educational Administration	2
University of the Philippines	Ph.D. in Communication	2
Urios College	Ph.D. Educational Management	1
UNITED KINGDOM		
University of Sheffield	Ph.D. Information Studies	2
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