Education, competencies, skills in the field of Information and Library Science in selected European centres

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Abstract: This paper is an analysis of the changes that are taking place in the field of Information and Library Science in selected European university centres in context of creation the European Higher Education Area. The aim of research is an analysis of skills, competences and qualifications acquired by students during LIS studies in various European countries. Labour market needs and expectations of employers are also included.

Following aspects are mentioned: the scope and profile of LIS education, the structure of study programs, learning outcomes, mobility and its advantages for future professional life, education quality assurance, similarities and differences between curriculum and study programs in analysed centres, employer's expectation about the graduates in LIS, student's expectation about the LIS curriculums, possible connections of LIS studies with other areas/professions, standards of competences required for LIS professions in mentioned countries. The research for this work consists of three parts: analysis and critique of the literature/sources, discussion (polish and Spanish employers – representative of information, book & library institutions), focus group interview among polish LIS students of Jagiellonian University.

Keywords: LIS profession, LIS studies, skills, literacies, Europe

Background

The changes that are taking place in the field of Information and Library Science are caused by various factors. There are some economic, technological, mass communication and social changes (Garcia Marco & Agustin Lacruz, 2000). Creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) also played a role in shaping the LIS education (Capano & Piattoni, 2009; Pérez-Montoro & Tammaro, 2012). There are some characteristics as: teaching methodology, learning outcomes approach, continuous training, that influenced higher education because of Bologna process. Moreover according to changes in LIS profession and labour market, LIS studies must also evaluate.

In many publications it is admitted, that the education in XXI century should be transformed from theory contents into competences, skills and qualifications (Garcia Marco & Agustin Lacruz, 2000; González Geraldo, Ferrándiz Vindel & Bordallo Jaén, 2010; Halász & Michel, 2011; Salas Velasco, Sánchez Martínez & Rodríguez Ferrero, 2012; Santa, 2011; Varalakshmi, 2006). The reports and surveys among the employers also confirm that statement (Berggren, 2010; Górniak, 2013; Jachimczyk, 2013).

In Europe and also in other continents some efforts were made to introduce standards in LIS studies, learning outcomes, qualifications and skills that students acquire during university education. This process is supported by associations that take care of standardize LIS studies, prepare recommendations to curriculums, provide quality assurance standards, recognition of diplomas. There are: Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE), American Library Association (ALA), International Federation of Library Associations - Education and Training Section (IFLA), European Association for Library & Information Education and Research (EUCLID).

When it comes to Europe there are two documents devoted to LIS curriculums, which have key significance for this paper. The first one is titled *European Curriculum Reflections on Library and Information Science Education*. This e-book, edited by Leif Kajberg and Leif Lørring, is the result of virtual discussions which began in 2004, about the reformulation of the LIS studies. The second one is *EUROGUIDE LIS. Vol. 1* and *vol. 2* elaborated by European Council of Information Associations.

Purpose and methods

The aim of this research is an analysis of competences and qualifications acquired by students during undergraduate LIS studies. Curriculums of in five European LIS education centres were analysed in order to find skills developed, similarities and differences between curriculums, mobility possibilities, quality assurance systems. Among the analysed centres there are: Institute of Information and Library Science of the Jagiellonian University (Poland), Royal School of Library and Information Science at University of Copenhagen (Denmark), Department of Library and Information Sciences of Carlos III de Madrid University (Spain), Department of Information and Communication, Manchester Metropolitan University (United Kingdom), Swedish School of Library and Information Science (SSLIS) at the University of Borås (Sweden). The pattern for the analysis of study programmes is based on the set of competences contained in mentioned documents: *EUROGUIDE LIS. Vol. 1., European Curriculum Reflections on Library and Information Science Education* and Spanish *Libro blanco. Titulo de grado en Información y Documentación.* Moreover, students' and employees opinion about programmes of the studies were taken into account, in this research. The methodology of this work consists of: analysis and critique of the literature/sources (like the curriculums of each analysed education centre, lists of learning outcomes), discussion (polish and Spanish employers – representative of information, book & library institutions), focus group interview among LIS students in Institute of Information and Library Science of the Jagiellonian University (Poland), realised in 2013.

Competences, skills and qualifications in LIS education

When designing the studies' curriculums, some general questions must be considered, for example: what is the profile of the graduate? which competences should he/she acquire? what we want to learn?, how to learn and what teaching methods should be used to possess planned skills and qualifications. According to *European Curriculum Reflections on Library and Information Science Education,* competences that LIS students should acquire are divided in: domain specific competences (knowledge and knowledge applying, judgements); special competences (knowledge and knowledge applying) and transversal competences (communication, learning skills) (Kajberg & Lørring, 2005).

In *Libro blanco. Titulo de grado en Información y Documentación* the competences are divided in specific competences for the LIS studies (knowledge, profession and academic) and transversal competences (systematic, personal and instrumental). *EUROGUIDE LIS. Vol. 1. Competencies and aptitudes for European information professionals* contains the very clear and useful classification of LIS specialists' competences. It is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Competences of LIS specialists according to *EUROGUIDE LIS. Vol. 1.*

I INFORMATION	II TECHNOLOGY	III COMMUNICATION	IV MANAGEMENT	V OTHER SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE
Relations with users and clients; Understanding the LIS environment; Application of the law of information; Contents and knowledge management; Identification and validation of information sources; Analysis and representation of information; Information seeking; Management of collections; Enrichment of collections; Material handling of documents; Organisation of site and equipment; Conception of products and services	Computer based design of information systems; Computer based development of applications; Publishing and edition; Internet technology; Information and computer technology	Oral communication; Written communication; Audiovisual communication; Computerized communication; Using a foreign language; Interpersonal communication; Institutional communication	Global management of information; Marketing; Sales and diffusion; Budgetary management; Project management and planning; Diagnosis and evaluation; Human resources management; Management of education and training	Principal elements of other disciplines (economic, legal, linguistic, psychological, etc.);, that can help professionals of LIS to resolve problems or benefit from a culture (e.g. music, medicine, statistics, etc.)

Source: EUROGUIDE LIS. Vol. 1., http://www.certidoc.net/en/euref1-english.pdf

EUROGUIDE proposes four levels (Level 1: Awareness, Level 2: Knowledge of practice or techniques, Level 3: Effective use of the tools, Level 4: Effective use of methodology) for above mentioned competences. Unfortunately in this work it was impossible to verify the level of competences acquired. Such study requires deep research among students in selected centres.

Apart from professional competences, *Euroguide LIS* mentions some aptitudes that should be also developed in the curriculum. They are: autonomy, communications skills, availability, empathy, team spirit, sense for negotiation, teaching skills, an enquiring mind, analytical and critical ability, ability to synthesise, discretion, resourcefulness, perseverance, rigour, adaptability, foresight, decisiveness, initiative, sense of organization (European Council of Information Associations, 2004). Of course this is a list of useful competencies, that are

useful in other professions, too. LIS professional is not expected to possesses all of them, or at least not to the same degree.

Findings

Analysing the European LIS curriculums, it can be observed that the undergraduate library and information studies consist of 180 ECTS and in some cases 240 ECTS. In Germany or Denmark there are programmes that contain 210 ECTS and are divided into seven semesters.

The Bologna process introduced in Europe concept of learning outcomes, with aim to make the university studies more comparable and readable. After analysis of five European LIS curriculums, it was discovered that, only one centre provides the list of learning outcomes assigned to the realised studies, on its Website.

According to mobility, it seems that all centres offer the international exchange programmes for students, as ERASMUS or national exchange programmes (for example: MOST in Poland, SENECA in Spain).

When it comes to quality assurance, each of the analysed centres is covered by the national quality assurance system. There are Government funded agencies as most popular assurance systems. Some centres have internal systems (in faculties).

Comparing the study programmes, two of five analysed centres, organise the first year as qualifying year (or preparing year). Its purpose is to prepare students for further study in chosen degree in following years. Most of the competences and skills developed in the analysed LIS curriculums, concentrate around technology, information and communication. All study programmes contain some elements of other disciplines.

Spanish LIS programme contains many classic, historic and humanistic subjects (for example: history of document, palaeography and diplomatic, analysis and description of the ancient book), comparing with other analysed curriculums, while the Swedish one is focused on library institutions, collection and tools or library in society. In Manchester's University, the curriculum is turned to technology and communication matters. In general it can be said, that there is a little attention paid for management issues in all analysed curriculums. Most of them contain elements of global management of information, project management and HR. This fact is confirmed by employers. In discussion with them, realised by the author, employers admit that graduates of LIS studies have little knowledge and skills in the area of management, financial matters, budget planning, marketing and management of education and training. During the consultations made in preparation process of *Libro Blanco*, the employers highlight the need for a second language (preferably English), as an essential requirement in the LIS education. They admit that ability to work in a team and the capacity for analysis and synthesis are also important. These two skills should be acquired on high level. Moreover the employers indicated the need to put more emphasis on the ability to understand the corporate culture of the company or organization (Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación, 2004).

According to student's opinions obtained in the focus group interview the LIS curriculums should be better organised when it comes to undergraduates and graduates programmes. For LIS undergraduates who continue this discipline during graduate studies (in Poland this situation is very common), there are some subject that repeat in both cycles. Second demand is to increase the amount of internships and classes in collaboration with organisations and

companies like editorials, information centres, infobrokering companies, etc. This opinion is confirmed by study carried out in other polish university – Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. Asked about the practical preparation for the professional career, students evaluated it, as not sufficient (Ciszewska & Kowalska, 2011).

Interviewed students admit that it is no use planning a lot of technological subjects, while these aspects change continually. Instead of that, students propose classes that help to open new career paths – for example, bibliotherapy or sign language. Moreover the students consider the digitalization and digital libraries (digital librarianship) as a chance for their professional career. Regarding teaching methods, respondents said that so common university lectures, are poor of contact with the audience. Due to that they prefer other methods like projects, laboratories and group work. When it comes to international mobility, LIS students' opinion is that studying abroad gives new skills and is good experience – in the context of professional life. But on the other hand they complain about the low budget obtained for such internship, which in many cases, do not allow to realise the university exchange.

Conclusions

Traditionally LIS education institutions have covered three basic subfields of study:

1. the study of documents
2. knowledge organisation, e.g. a kind of micro-operation on documents
3. administration or management of documentary institutions: general topics, like cultural and information policy and legislation, planning (Kajberg & Lørring, 2005).

Nowadays, LIS studies also contain mentioned problems, but there can be seen interdisciplinarity and technological progress. Competences and abilities that student acquire during LIS studies differ depending on specialisation. LIS studies are no more dedicated only to librarians. It can be useful for archivists, documentalists, record managers, web editors, in some cases for publishers and museologists. From informational point of view LIS studies could be useful also for journalists. As Kajberg & Lørring (2005) admit, there is one thing, that join mentioned professions: a mediator role, so this competence should be the key one in the LIS curriculum. Similar statement represents the Spanish *Libro blanco*. As Wolske (2013) confirms the most urgent issues in LIS education are the following: preparing LIS students for rapidly changing job responsibilities; increasing student-centered education, internships, developing concepts surrounding information technology, adapting curricula to library's diverse users groups, helping students develop new models and skills.

Analysed programmes contain (in various proportion) elements of marketing, information technology, human-computer interaction, journalism, archives, communication. They are not equal. This is caused also by labour markets, that are different in each country and region, and the LIS programmes must be updated to them. In this context the analysed LIS curriculum are prepared for new profession emerging in LIS science.

In EHEA, the LIS studies have similar formal structure, but not the thematic structure. Of course there are some core points of curriculums that are common for all European LIS education centres (like the three mentioned at the beginning of this capture), but each centre can create its unique curriculum, according to labour market needs, research interests and possibilities.

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