EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As technology becomes more sophisticated and more affordable, the range of services that are provided also increases our life style, our business, our political and our social values and most importantly our educational system. LIS programmes face the dual challenges of providing quality education and preparing future professionals to work in blended environments and for this they must have the knowledge, skills and tools in handling digital information. In recent years the rising interest in e-learning has expanded and it has shifted its focus towards a new beginning with blended learning programmes which makes learning more accessible, engaging, relevant, flexible, reducing amount of time and exploiting ICT and training facilities. Blended learning increases the options for greater quality and quantity of human interaction in a learning environment. It offers learners the opportunity "to be both together and apart." A community of learners can interact at anytime and anywhere because of the benefits that computer-mediated educational tools provide.

The present study examined to answer questions bothering on the awareness and availability of blended learning in LIS education of selected Universities of North East India. The study will be restricted to the 6 (six) Universities North-Eastern Region of India having Library and Information Science Departments. The study provides valuable information on LIS Teachers, students and research scholar's knowledge, use, views and expectations regarding Blended Learning and its use in LIS education. The methodology that is followed for the study is survey method which comprises of administration of questionnaire, observation of the participants, visiting the websites, and interviews of some of the LIS students and teachers for knowing their opinion in respect of usage of blended learning in the department.

From the study, it is clear that use of Blended Learning tools by LIS Teachers and students in LIS departments in universities of North East India is sluggish and getting impetus slowly. It is most encouraging that majority of the respondents are willing to study LIS in Blended Learning course format. This means that they are interested in learning and getting knowledge on the subject through new means of learning process. In fact they appreciated it over traditional face-to-face method of teaching and learning method. During informal interview and observation of the students, it seemed that the students were more eager to know about this new concept of teaching and learning method. And once they got to know that Blended Learning uses technology in the learning process, it enhanced their content and it reflected on their preferences. Students believed that using Blended Learning in LIS education would motivate them more to acquire knowledge on LIS. So, therefore it's an excellent signal for the LIS education that students are ready to accept new things.

Change and development is a continuous process. Introducing Blended Learning would stimulate and enrich teaching, and move teaching methods closer to today's library science students which would keep students alert. Now the question arises how these needs of students will be addressed by the teachers. Even though Blended Learning is appealing and is hot cake but at the same time it should be embraced by the teachers into classes to reap the benefit. The teachers of LIS need to update and review the teaching and learning method, keeping in touch with the students view. LIS departments should concentrate on building framework for Blended Learning in order to implement them into teaching process. Though it is yet to be proved that Blended Learning has value and importance in LIS education, but still it is believed that incorporation of traditional face-to-face and technology into the teaching and learning process will move forward LIS education to stand in the near future of competitive world.

The present study through its findings and observations, emphasize the need to offer more training opportunities for LIS Teachers and students, to demonstrate, how Blended Learning and its tools can be applied in their works in academic LIS departments of North East India. LIS departments need to make sure teachers, support and effective classroom capacity for the use of Blended Learning tools. LIS departments have to inevitably emphasize in developing infrastructure facilities. Computers, higher bandwidth and adequate number of internet browsing terminals have to be extended to the students and researchers.

A framework for Blended Learning in LIS education is proposed in this study. This framework would link the teachers with the students and research scholars for an effective policy to achieve competitiveness in LIS teaching learning process. The competitiveness could be achieved if LIS learners' needs are aligned suitably with infrastructure requirements and adaptability attitude of parent body or administration and teachers. Perfectly planned Blended Learning in universities would gain better reputation in terms of quality education. From administrational perspective, this study provides narrative approaches for developing Blended Learning programme in the LIS schools.

The study provides a unique approach for LIS academicians to mix both traditional face to face and online learning for the fulfilment of ultimate goal of revamping LIS education in the ICT age. It seems that the use of Blended learning has a special role to play in the modernization of LIS education which can help to preserve and improve its identity and can educate the future librarians who can prove their benefit to the society by being in step with changes and advances in technology.