

Implementation of Public Library Legislation in North Eastern Region with Special Reference to Mizoram

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Abstract

The study deals with the role of Government and Library Authorities in the implementation of public library legislation in North Eastern region of India. The study covers public libraries of the Mizoram State. The sample size is around 150 public libraries of Mizoram. The research methodology used for this purpose is questionnaire method and personal interview of higher authorities. The review of literature tries to focus the need of modernization in public libraries and the support from government authorities. The paper highlights the prime issues of public libraries in the North Eastern Region of India.

Keywords: Library Authorities, Mizoram, North Eastern Region, Public Library Legislation

1. INTRODUCTION

The rural libraries help to improve the social-economic conditions of the rural communities is an important issue. To serve the people, it is necessary to their doorsteps, to provide them service at the levels where they live. It is the reality the most of the rural libraries in North East India spontaneously developed as a part of NGO, Societies, and Club etc. The financial support is like the backbone for the standing of any library and also help for the development indirectly help the rural India. The North East India consists of eight states. From the last several years, the North East India isolating from the other parts of India, because of the lack of proper transportation facilities, geographical location and such other factors are always barriers for the development. The emphasis in the case of North East India development is in the light of higher authorities. The rural libraries are located in the North East India serve as the key institution or gateway to look insight into the rural masses.

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

The information is highly essential to the users for day-to-day decision making and problem solving. Due to the drastic cut in the budgets, most of the public

libraries have not been able to add new books, journals and new services. Effective public library system needs library legislation, with a perennial source of finance [1]. Legislation gives the smooth financial support for the proper functioning of the libraries but the most important fact is its implementation in the particular state. Even in the states where library acts are in force, the provisions are suffering from lack of effective implementation. The states, which have passed the library acts recently, could not yet enacted. In India, out of 28 states and 7 union territories, only 15 states have library legislation so far. Out of 15 states, the Acts of Manipur, Haryana, Mizoram and Gujarat have not been implemented or implemented only partially [2].

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives are to study:

1. The action taken by the Library Authorities (State Library Authority and Local Library Authorities) to be set up for implementing the provision of the Act.
2. The process used by the Government for overseeing the implementation of the Act.
3. The action taken by the Government towards the implementation of the Act.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study would cover public libraries at state, district, sub-divisional, village level included church libraries. For this study, around 150 libraries representing at various level will be covered. Data would be collected through questionnaire, opinionnaires, and in-depth structured personal interview methods by visiting the public libraries.

5. PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM IN NORTH EAST INDIA

The North East India consists of eight states. From the last several years, the North East India isolating from the other parts of India, because of the lack of proper

transportation facilities, geographical location and such other factors are always barriers for the development. The emphasis in the case of north East India development is in the light of higher authorities. Public libraries are the exact ways to disseminate exact knowledge to the common people at right time. But the public library system in the north east India and in India has always been given less importance by the concerned Government [3]. In the North East region, Manipur and Mizoram have the library legislation are rest states are still struggling for the legislation. The most of the public libraries are run by the NGOs with the RRRLF grant, due to which rural people get the required information.

Table 1 Public Library System in North East India

| State | Central | District | Sub-Divisional | Block | Circle | Rural | Branch | NGO Library with RRRLF Grant | Total |
|-------------------|---------|----------|----------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|------------------------------|-------|
| Arunachal Pradesh | 1 | 12 | 13 | 18 | 38 | - | - | 84 | 166 |
| Assam | 1 | 22 | 14 | - | - | - | - | 174 | 211 |
| Manipur | 1 | 6 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 120 | 128 |
| Meghalaya | 1 | 7 | - | - | - | - | - | 15 | 23 |
| Mizoram | 1 | 5 | - | - | - | - | - | 140 | 416 |
| Nagaland | 1 | 7 | - | - | - | - | - | 244 | 252 |
| Sikkim | 1 | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | 159 | 163 |
| Tripura | 1 | 3 | 7 | 10 | - | 2 | - | 100 | 223 |
| Total | 8 | 65 | 34 | 28 | 38 | 2 | 1 | 1406 | 1582 |

6. PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN MIZORAM

Mizoram is in the south of Assam, surrounded by Myanmar (Burma) on the southeast and Bangladesh on the west. It has an area of 21,081 sq. kms with population of 888,573. Mizoram ranks second in India with a literacy rate of 88.49% [4]. However, the tragedy was that the people could not afford reading materials due to poverty and there was no Library service at present that covers the whole village. Hence, the people had no chance for acquiring, non-formal education. Formal education was very successful, but they could not use their talent for proceeding further education worth non-

formal education due to lack of reading materials. Public Library was known in Mizoram when first public library established at Aizwal, the capital, as sub-divisional library in the year 1969. After Mizoram attained higher administrative unit of union territory in 1972, a state library was established in 1974 which followed establishment of two district libraries at Lunglei and Saiha respectively. It was again followed by two sub-divisional libraries at Champhai and at Kolasib [5]. Mizoram public libraries were under the supervision and control of the Department of Art & Culture, Mizoram Government. It had a total number of 424 Government

recognized libraries as against the 779 number of villages (2001 census) and 531 village councils in Mizoram. Out of the 424 recognized libraries, 380 libraries were established and managed by Young Mizo Association (YMA), which was the largest NGO in Mizoram. The YMA was providing staff, building, and equipment to these village libraries. Mizoram people realized the importance of library legislation [6]. Mizoram Library Association was also established on 23rd October 1987 and it was headquartered at Aizawl. Therefore all the village/rural libraries were directly or indirectly associated with the Association [7].

7. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study will thus cover the state central library, district library in each district, sub-divisional library in each sub-division and village libraries and church libraries of the Mizoram.

8. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sangrang Brahma and C.I. Singh discusses about the empowering rural people through public libraries. In the North Eastern State only Mizoram and Manipur have the library act but not implemented till now. The public libraries doors are open for all so that it is important that authorities should cooperate for the development of rural peoples [8]. P. Mahajn discusses the public libraries moving towards the e-governance implementation by providing access to the government information online. The ninth plan emphasized on the networking of libraries. Including this a scheme for assisting and establishing libraries at panchayat level with initial coverage of the North East Region [9]. B Badan describes the present status of community libraries of North East India with emphasis on the role and services of community libraries, opinion and reliance of different bodies on community libraries, and how the different bodies could extend their services to the rural masses through the community libraries. Also give the suggestions to the government for the effective implementation of library legislation in North East Region. There was a need for library legislation to ensure effective financial support to all public libraries so that

they could serve the community free of charge [10]. S.K. Satpathy describes about the growth and development of libraries in the democratic society. The National Adult Education Programmes (NAEP) launched by the Central Government through Ministry of Education and Social Welfare which could have worked much effectively through the efficient public library services. The NAEP gave an opportunity to public Libraries to educate people and developing their strength for individual judgement and sense of moral and social responsibility [11]. R.K. Ngurtinkhuma states that public library in the information centre, from which people get their required information through its various services. Public libraries play a vital role in the development of community and fulfill the information need of the various users. She discusses about the support and contribution of Raja Ram Mohan [Sic] Roy Library Foundation, Non Government Organizations (NGOs) and adult education programmes for the development of public libraries [12]. C.P. Vashishth and Sunil Kumar discusses about the legislation is necessary for the legal framework of library system. In Mizoram, the Act has not been implemented due to financial constraints. The entire funding of Public library service as per the Act has to be met out of state Budget.” In the North East, rural libraries are being established and maintained by local clubs and voluntary organization [13]. V. Venkatapaiah reports on the national seminar on library legislation and its development. He discuss about the vital issues, in which “Networking of rural libraries to be linked up with the District Library System and State Central Libraries all over the country. Including this all states which have not enacted public library law should be persuaded to do so with a view to ensure that library services reach up to village level through out the country [14] ”. A. Buragohain highlights the new approach for library legislation. According to her, a new approach was required for drafting a library bill for North Eastern States; no single model was desirable for all Indian states due to diverse existing conditions. The town and city branch libraries were established due to the municipality Act which was amended as per 74th constitution

amendment. Network of urban and rural public library system in emphasised. The Act was to make provision for creation of District committee for co-ordination & co-operation among the public libraries district- wise, if possible with other libraries also for development of resources, services, resource-sharing and information retrieval [15]. R. Ramasamy and K. Panda traces the state government is responsible for the maintaining and establishing state central libraries. In the North Eastern region "due to the creation of Meghalaya state in 1972, by bifurcating Assam state, the existing state central library of Assam at shillong has been transferred to Meghalaya state. Hence, the district library of Guwahati was upgraded state central library. Manipur district library, established in 1958 has been elevated to the status of state central library when the Union Territory was promoted as a state. The creation of Arunachal Pradesh state by upgrading the Union Territory of North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) in 1987, the secretariat library of NEFA situated in Shillong was shifted to the new capital Itanagar and developed as state central library". A. Raghaviah and L.K. Rao reports on the Expansion of Public Library Field. The main object of the seminar was to prepare for mobilization of resources to make the library services available to all [rural people] in the village.

9. PRIME ISSUES FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

1. The telecommunications technology for people in rural users in order that the "highway" is truly functions. Presently, there is no highway in the north eastern India for the access of information. The highway is considered as a basic need for the end user in the rural libraries.
2. In the collection development process, the rural public libraries face unique challenges like limited collection, budgets, small staff and time constraints. Library financing is the basic concern issue for the management of the rural library. The basic responsibility of the library authorities/ management, voluntary organization, local community, the political representatives of that region is to ensure

that the rural library serves the information needs of the community. The authorities should play an important role in determination policy, encouraging partnerships with other libraries and community organizations, and ensuring sufficient funding for the library to meet community information needs and to perform day-to-day operations.

3. The lack of academically trained staff in library science is the most important factor limiting the present and future development of rural libraries and information services. The staff should be given sufficient opportunities to attend workshops; training programmers to enhance their knowledge. It is also important to train the librarians to use the internet, thus maintaining the library's role as a mediator of information between user and library.
4. In the age of electronic environment, the rural library should connect with the variety of networks, and the collection of electronic material will increase instead of print material like books, magazines and newspapers.
5. The women member has the continuing responsibility of "educating" children. Most of the women are house wife, so that it is crucial that library services be targeted to women according to their convenience like library opening hrs etc. It is must that serious efforts should be made to achieve some parity for the women.
6. The impact of technology, change the library services as the small libraries are able to maintain online Catalogue Access, Statewide databases, Internet connection etc. The small and rural libraries will not be able to cope with the daily application of technology that is being initiated at wrap speed.

10. CONCLUSION

Library has to change itself with the social changes and the changing needs of the society in terms of its structure, collections, staff and services etc. In the new era, library and society are interlinked and interdependent. Library and society are two sides of a coin and one cannot exist

without other. Today, the society becomes more technologically complex, and being change according to the need of the user is must for the existence of the library. In this concern rural libraries assume a greater responsibility in making computer based information services available to the public. It is important that the authorities and library professionals should take the responsibilities for the development of public libraries in rural areas of north east India. In India, more than half of the total population lives in rural part so it is necessary that Government should take care of their needs and requirement in there day to day life.

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