Role of Public Library in Empowering Lifelong Learning: AStudy on the State Public Library of Gandhinagar, Gujarat

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Abstract

The public library plays a crucial role in lifelong learning, as outlined in the National Education Policy. It provides access to educational opportunities, fosters personal growth, adaptability, and innovation, and encourages non-formal learning methods like online courses and vocational training. This study analyzes the State Central Public Library's services and literature review to understand their role in promoting education and lifelong learning.
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Keywords

Lifelong Learning; Public Library Service; State Central Library Gandhinagar.

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1. Introduction

The New Education Policy 2020 emphasizes the importance of continuing education and training programs to upskill and reskill individuals, especially in response to changing economic, technological, and social needs. This includes initiatives for adult education, vocational training, and lifelong learning centres. NEP advocates for a culture of continuous learning ensuring continuous access to educational opportunities. A holistic and flexible approach to education thatenables individuals to learn and acquire new skills at any stage of their lives, fostering continuous personal and professional development. It promotes flexible learning pathways that allow individuals to pursue education and acquire skills through various channels such as formal education, vocational training, online courses, and experiential learning. The NEP 2020 states that by 2035 all higher education institutions will be autonomous Institutions meaning thereby the autonomy will percolate down to decision-makers including Students. The learners are expected to acquire lifelong learning skills and develop multidisciplinary abilities. They are expected to develop 21st-century skills to become effective learners and citizens of the country (UGC, 2019a, AICTE, 2018). NEP envisions a society where learning is not limited by age or circumstance but is accessible, inclusive, and integral to individual growth and societal progress throughout life.

Public libraries play a crucial role in society by providing access to information, education, and cultural resources for people of all ages and backgrounds. It provides different services toinvolve the users in continuous learning such as:

- **Knowledge Access:** People can obtain knowledge on a variety of topics by visiting public libraries, which provide a large selection of books, journals, newspapers, and digital resources.
- **Education Support:** Textbooks, research materials, and study areas are just a few of the formal education resources that libraries offer. Additionally, they provide workshops and initiatives that encourage lifelong learning.
- **Support for Language Proficiency and**

Literacy: Libraries encourage literacy by providing materials for language acquisition as well as literacy programs for adults and children.

- **Preservation of Cultural Heritage:** To ensure that cultural materials like archives, rare books, and local history collections are collected, preserved, and made accessible to future generations, public libraries host these resources.
- **Life-long learning:** Beyond formal schooling, lifelong learning is the ongoing process of acquiring information and skills. In a world that is constantly changing, it's about embracing inquiry, adjusting to change, and remaining relevant. Formal education and informal education learning and community engagement can also help to support lifelong learning that will involve actively seeking out opportunities for personal and professional growth, whether through formal education, online courses, workshops, reading, or hands-on experiences. It fosters intellectual curiosity, enhances problem-solving abilities, and can lead to increased job satisfaction and career advancement. It's a mindset that values self-improvement and embraces the idea that learning never stops, regardless of age or stage in life.
- **Access to Books and Resources:** Public libraries offer a vast collection of books, magazines, newspapers, and digital resources that cover various subjects and interests. You can borrow these materials for free or for a small membership fee.
- **Online Databases and E-resources:** Many public libraries provide access to online databases, e-books, audiobooks, and educational platforms. These resources allow you to explore different topics, learn new skills, and access information from anywhere with an internet connection Community Engagement: Public libraries serve as community hubs where people can come together to learn, collaborate, and engage in cultural and educational activities. They often host events that foster community connections and lifelong learning opportunities.

2. Review of Previous Published Studies

The umbrella of public libraries in social development is very vast and covers almost all areas of social life. IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto Presented at the Transforming Education Summit in 2023, says the essence of libraries in transforming education. As Ghosh (2005) has clarified in his writing, public libraries ought to contribute more to the development of social and human capital. They ought to be able to provide individuals with up-to-date information so they can become more than just a storehouse of books for leisure. The study by Munshi et al. (2024c), explores the services and facilities provided by rural public libraries in West Bengal, India. The findings of this paper show the importance of libraries in providing life-long learning opportunities to their communities. The findings indicate, that due to a lack of collection or shortage of books, librarians are unable to provide information to the jobseekers. Maurya (2016) explains the importance of public libraries in the development of society and their significance in providing education, recreation, and social value. This paper also explains the key roles of libraries in society like promotion of democratic values, cultural exchange and engagement, promotion, and preservation of local culture, etc,. This public library also supports informal and continuing education by offering resources and engaging the users in discussions. Chatterjee et al. (2020b) in this paper explain the relevancy of public libraries. It emphasizes public libraries' role in driving community education and promotion of literacy. It showcases public libraries as a storehouse of knowledge. According to this paper, public libraries are fostering a culture of reading among diverse populations. Prasad (2016), discusses the development, and growth of public libraries and compares it with the current situation. Explaining the services and programs offered by the public library emphasizes the importance of public libraries in improving literacy, empowering citizens, and most importantly supporting education. Mandal (2019), discusses lifelong learning in India. It highlights the rise of LLL developed into a vital and symbiotic

component of adult and continuing education programs that were woven into the fabric of social transformation and nation-building.

The primary role of a public library is to support user Education (Kumar 2009; Chatterjee, Samanta, and Dey, 2020). User education in public libraries is an important aspect of Social Welfare (Chatterjee, Samanta, and Dey, 2020). According to L. R. Macolvin "Public libraries are those which provide free services to the people of a particular region, from the adequate collection of Usable books of their interests. These services are given without any discrimination of Religion, political and other." The Libraries continue to be places where people congregate to learn, engage, and dream. Five major categories are used by Edwards, Rausco, and Unger (2013) to categorize public library services:

a) Libraries as places to create communities;
b) Libraries as hubs for a varied population;
c) Libraries as arts centers;
d) Libraries as academic institutions; and
e) Libraries as advocates for young people.

The term "information era" refers to the current period in which information is regarded as the fifth and most important ingredient in production. The concept of life-long learning (LLL) has long been a valued objective in one of the world"s oldest civilizations, known for its culture and scholarship (Dutta, 1986; Shah (2009, 2010; Bhatia, 2009). After 1947, when India gained its independence, LLL evolved as an integral and symbiotic part of adult and continuing education programmes (Mandal, 2019).

As we know information is one of the most crucial factors of societal development & sharing information to the society this work is majorly done by the libraries. In the same way, we can say that public libraries also do the same for society. Public libraries help society to enhance by sharing information with society. As we know public libraries are open to all people in society so the library helps society in various aspects.

3. Statement of the Research Problem

This study explores literature and depicts an overview of "the role of the State Public Library of Gandhinagar in empowering lifelong learning". The objective of the study is

- To analyze the State Central Library of Gandhinagar's services for users;
- To identify the services of the State Central Library of Gandhinagar that support lifelong learning; and
- To suggest some services to implement in support of lifelong learning for public libraries.

4. Methodology

This study uses selected literature to understand public library services and lifelong learning. By taking the State Central Library of Gandhinagar as a sample, a study has been conducted to understand its services and how it is beneficial for lifelong learning. The result of this study is described with suggestions for future improvement.

5. Central Public Library of Gandhinagar, Gujarat

The central public library of Gandhinagar has a vast collection with an offer of variety of services to cater the information need of the patrons. The services offered by the library are as follows:

- **Children's Section:** Children can find books here that will entertain and educate them, as well as CDs that contain stories, poems, and other literary works. There is also an indoor gaming area in this part.
- **Textbook part:** This part provides access to educational and competitive exam-related reference books.
- **Senior Citizen Section:** There is a separate area where seniors can read while sitting down.
- **Multimedia Section:** This area includes various books and publications. Members can also check out CDs from this department to listen to at home or in the library.
- **Section for Visually Impaired:** A dedicated section is being developed for those who are

visually impaired. The needs of the visually impaired members would be met in this part.

- **Daily News Papers & Magazines:** A variety of daily newspapers and magazines are available in this section. Approximately 700–800 users use this section to stay up to current on news and information.
- **Women Reading Section:** This area welcomes women to come study in a peaceful setting from 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. with their reference materials.
- **Mobile Library:** For those who are unable to visit the library, there are two Mobile Library vans owned by the library that offer reading possibilities. One covers the entire district, while the other is limited to Gandhinagar city and the Taluka's neighboring villages. These traveling library vans make frequent trips to their locations.
- **Computerization:** Gandhinagar Library has incorporated computerization in the age of computers to preserve records of its books and member data. The SOUL Library Management Software is used by the library to give LAN users access to all of its resources. OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) provides readers with additional online access to the book's content.
- **Modernization and Developmental Programs:** To modernize and develop the State Central Library as a Knowledge Center, the Gujarati government has approved a budget of Rs. 3 crores. The library would have complete internet access as well as a number of additional features for the benefit of its patrons and readers under these development plans.
- **Copyright:** All publications published in the state of Gujarat (Press & Book Registration Act, 1968) and India (Press & Book Registration Act, 1867) require a copy to be delivered to the state library.

6. How these services support lifelong learning

Among all the services which are provided by the State Central Library of Gandhinagar some support lifelong learning. It serves as the hub for lifelong learning by providing access to a wide range of resources, including books, digital media, educational programs, and workshops. This offers opportunities for people of all ages to continue learning and growing throughout their lives, fostering a culture of curiosity and intellectual exploration within the community. It offers a variety of services tailored to different stages of life, from early childhood literacy programs like children's section to adult education classes. It provides access to information on a diverse range of topics, fostering critical thinking and promoting self-directed learning. Additionally, It often hosts events such as author talks, book clubs, and workshops on topics like technology, health, and financial literacy, further enriching the learning experience for patrons of all ages.

It can be said that the public library services support life-long learning through multiple ways such as (i) Access to Information; (ii) Technology and Internet Access; (iii) Educational Programs and Workshops; (iv) Homework Help and Tutoring; (v) Early Childhood Literacy Initiatives; (vi) Adult Education and Lifelong Learning Classes; (vii) Community Engagement and Discussion Forums; (viii) Access to specialized collection and resources; and (ix) support for life-long readers.

7. Recommendations and Conclusion

On the basis of the study, the recommendations can be made to strengthen the services of the library such as

(i) **Diverse Collections:** To better serve the needs and interests of the community, the library's collection is updated and diversified on a regular basis. Books, e-books, audiobooks, DVDs, and digital materials all fall under this category.

(ii) **Tech Services:** Provide access to computers, printers, scanners, and high-speed internet; additionally, offer technological workshops. Think about providing courses on digital literacy, coding, and database access.

(iii) **Civic Initiatives:** Plan a range of events and activities for individuals of all ages, including kid-friendly storytimes, reading groups, author

presentations, craft classes, movie screenings, and informative seminars.

(iv) **Language and Literacy Programs:** Offer tools and assistance to promote the development of literacy and language acquisition. Provide ESL instruction, tutoring, and early literacy development programs for young children.

(v) **Maker Spaces:** Establish maker spaces that are furnished with resources and tools to encourage creativity and experiential learning. Organize courses in robotics, woodworking, 3D printing, and other maker pursuits.

(vi) **Partnerships:** To increase services and reach more people, work with nearby businesses, universities, schools, and community organizations. Acquiring funds and resources from other institutions might be facilitated through partnerships.

(vii) **Easily accessible:** Make sure the library has facilities that are accommodating, accessible formats, and assistive technologies available for patrons with impairments. Provide customers who are unable to visit the library in person with services like home delivery.

(viii) **Community Engagement:** Actively include the community in order to get opinions, ideas, and recommendations for enhancing the services provided by the library. Promote community involvement by means of outreach initiatives, advisory boards, and volunteer opportunities.

(ix) **Digital Resources:** Make investments in online databases, streaming services, e-books, and audiobooks. To ensure that users can access and utilize these resources efficiently, offer training and assistance.

(x) **Frequent Cultural Events:** Showcase local artists, performers, and customs through frequently organizing cultural events, festivals, and exhibitions that honor the community's variety.

(xi) **Quiet Areas:** Make sure the library has areas free of distractions where patrons can read, study, and think. Set aside space for customers to work or study without interruptions.

(xii) **Environmental Sustainability:** Put into effect environmentally responsible measures include recycling initiatives, energy-efficient lighting, and sustainable building design. Encourage environmental literacy by means of educational projects and programs.

By implementing the above suggestions, public library can continue to serve as vibrant community hubs that promote literacy, lifelong learning, and cultural enrichment for people of all ages and backgrounds and to justify its existence.

It can be concluded that the State Public Library of Gandhinagar play crucial role Because they give people access to a multitude of materials, such as books, e-books, audiobooks, databases, and educational activities,public libraries are essential for fostering lifelong learning. They function as community centers where individuals of all ages can learn new skills, pursue new hobbies, and remain up to date on current events. Public libraries provide a wide variety of resources and services that encourage lifelong learning and personal growth. Public libraries are therefore extremely valuable resources for encouraging lifelong learning in society.

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