

Importance of Adult Literacylibraries for Promoting the Literacy Programme

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Abstract

The paper highlights the present situation of adult education programmes in Manipur. It argues that traditional public libraries have not succeeded to eradicate adult illiteracy. It therefore suggests for the establishment of special adult literacy libraries which can effectively help in fight against illiteracy. Because of poor economic state of Manipur the paper argues organizations and institutions in developed countries to provide adequate funds for the establishment of adult literacy libraries, which the paper considers the only way of helping the new literates retain their literacy.

Keywords: *illiteracy; public libraries; adult education; adult literacy libraries; Manipur*

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Introduction

Adult Education is a package of educational programmes for adults outside the formal educational system aiming at providing more information and better knowledge and skill for improving their life style and also their earning capacity. Thus, adult education simply means the education of those adults who could not get formal education in the prime of their lives or left school after attending for some time. It is a substitution of what they have missed. Adult education is a new phenomenon in social development and its beginning can be traced back to the closing year of the 18th century in Britain and to the first quarter of the 19th century in the USA. The basic aim of adult education is eradication of illiteracy and to enable the people to reading, writing and arithmetic and to become confident and self-reliant by understanding the situation in which they live and in solving their day-to-day problems. Its purpose is to educate adult for life and make him conscious so that he can effectively play his diverse roles as a citizen of the country. Adult education, therefore, is considered not only as the instrument of development and progress, but also of reconstruction and changes. It is not only the means to convert an illiterate into a literate, but also to help human being to lead a meaningful life style and contribute to the promotion and the well-being of a good society.

Adult education aims to serve all those who were forced or who preferred to leave school early; to reach isolated individuals as well as organized groups; women in their home and workers in the factories as well as people in their leisure time groupings; the village as well as the city. The primary aim of adult education is to help each individual man, woman, and youth make the best of life. Further literacy is a reasonably good indicator of development in a society. Spread and diffusion of literacy is generally associated with essential traits of today's civilization such as modernization, urbanization, communication and commerce. Education aims to impart knowledge and skills; inculcate values; impart vocational skills and make good citizens and libraries are the repositories of knowledge form an integral part of education. 'Education' and 'Library' are two inseparable concepts. As such, in the life long process of education library plays an important role. The democratic idea of equal opportunity of education and provision of books for all is the goal of a modern library by mass education which must precede the adult franchise.

According to S.R. Ranganathan, father of Library movement in India, "Library is a Social institution for present generation and prosperity". It should preserve and conserve knowledge for the present generation and the future to come and it should help the lifelong self-education to one and all. If one is an illiterate person, do you

think that he or she is enabling to get the benefits of education? Not at all. Literacy is only a means of education, not education itself. It is, no doubt, the most important means, and not having it is a serious handicap. But we have today many other effective means that modern technology has brought into existence. The audio-visual media, especially video tape, have made it possible for education to be brought to your door step. It is a special responsibility of the public library (P.L) to work for the education of the illiterate people in its community through such media. It should also organize learning clubs and other programmes of oral communication for education illiterate clientele.

The existence of public library is itself a monument against illiteracy. All efforts to eliminate illiteracy would be in vain unless reading materials are made available to those who have acquired the availability to enjoy reading (Hutchins, 1936). The public library is a place for informal self-education infused with the desire to serve for the intellectual, cultural and material improvement in the community. As a social agency, it implies the most appropriate agency to combat against illiteracy and disseminate knowledge. One of the main objectives of public library is to convert uneducated/illiterates and neo-literates into potential users of the library.

Literacy Programmes in Manipur

Manipur has its success and defeat history regarding adult education programme. During pre-independence period, the number of formal institutions like school, colleges were few and far between and the rates were very low during this period. Adult education in the state was not properly developed as majority of people were getting their informal education through customs, conventions, rituals etc. observed by the people from time to time. That means teaching learning was affected through oral transmission of knowledge from generation to generation, before it was transcribed in the manuscripts. Illiteracy is a global problem stagnating the development of the country and individual of the society. In Manipur, in order to achieve the target of the point no.16 of the 20 point programmes of Central Govt. many programmes were set up for the eradication of illiteracy. The programme was started by the Manipur State Social Welfare Advisory Board in the early 1950s. From 21st Feb. 1980 one separate Directorate of Adult Education was set up. The directorate had set up many Literacy Programmes in the state. The State Literacy Mission Authority, Manipur (SLMA) was constituted in 1998 as per the directive of the National Literacy Mission Authority, Govt. of India for the implementation of literacy programmes of the state. One District Literacy Society was constituted in each district with Deputy Commissioner concerned as the chairman of the society and one officials of Adult

Education Department, Government of Manipur as its member secretary. The main objective is to eradicate illiteracy, retention of literacy among the adult learners and skill development for neo-literates in the age group of 15-35 years and above.

The project proposals for TLC and PLP for each district were approved by the 39th project the 25th April, 2003 at Imphal for imparting functional literacy in the age group of 15-35 years. The Department has implemented TLC in all the nine districts of Manipur through the nine District Literacy Societies of the state. On completion of the TLC, the Department implemented PLP in all nine districts of the state during the session 2007-08. Post literacy is the stage of transition from guided learning to self-learning. In Manipur, the post literacy programme were implemented in the 8 Districts of the state, i.e. Bishnupur, Imphal East, Imphal West, Churachandpur, Ukhrul, Senapati, Chandel and Thoubal were completed the internal evaluation. The remaining one Tamenglong District could not fully implemented due to not released of central matching share of fund for PLP though the District has completed classes for MOP learners of primer-II out of the state matching share of fund. The continuing Education Programme (CEP) is intended to establish a responsive and alternative structure for lifelong learning. It will provide learning continuum to the efforts of TLC and PLP. However, CEP is not implemented in the directed to suit over to SAAKSHAR BHARAT MISSION-2012 instead of CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMME in four Districts of Manipur (Thoubal, Chandel, Senapati and Tamenglong district) where female literacy rate is below 50% in the first phase. The Department has launched the SAAKSHAR BHARAT MISSION (SBM)-2012 (Women Literacy) on the 15th January 2010 at Thoubal districts. The SBM is being implemented through well-equipped multiple functional Adult Education Centre (AEC) at panchayat level for delivering entire range of activities including literacy, basic education, vocational and continuing education. It is a place for community members to carry out various activities to improve their overall living condition. On the other hand model AEC is also an literacy learning Centre (LLC) which get financial support from the Public Private Partnership (PPP). It is also set up to provide institutional, managerial and resource support to literacy and lifelong education. It will act as centre for registration of learners for all teaching learning activities in its jurisdiction.

Public Libraries in eradicating illiteracy

As early as 1888, Melvin Dewey, the father of Library Science, rightly called public library as peoples of all University meaning thereby a place where people of all age groups can come and acquire knowledge or supplement their knowledge, either themselves or under the guidance of able libraries in an unbiased personal

way. Public libraries are social institutions offering services based upon various reading materials and information for various groups of people in the society. Among the different types of libraries evolved the society in the modern times, public libraries are the most popular because of the functions they performed. Padma Shree Dr. S.R. Ranganathan assigned the P.L. with new functions such as:

- to read out books for illiterates
- to give their substance by word of mouth by the personality of the person who gives the substance to present wall pictures and charts representing the new and the latest facts and ideas.
- To arrange discussion among the literates and illiterates.

Some of the major objectives of the public libraries are:

- To infuse awareness among people on the source of information and encourage them to make use of information which are available in the library.
- To take care of economic, educational social, cultural and information needs of the local people.
- To convert uneducated/neo-literates into potential users, and
- To provide information on all aspects such as agricultural, financial, public hygiene, family welfare, legal matters, etc.

To achieve all these, the public library system should cooperate and co-ordinate with other social organisation and institution in community and create a comprehensive collection of reading materials of reading and graphic materials relevant to the community. The UNESCO, in its Public Library Manifesto, for the first time spelled out the key missions which relate to information, literacy, education and culture and should be core of public library services:

- Creating and strengthening reading skills and habits in children from an early age.
- Supporting both individual and self conducted education as well as formal education.
- Promoting awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of arts, scientific achievements and innovations.
- Supporting oral traditions.
- Ensuring access for citizen to all sorts of community information.
- Facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills.

Since most of our illiterate people live in villages and remote areas, we need a special public library service for illiterates by use of audio-visual aids as well as books which will teach and encourage the people to read. Illiterates are also supposed to enjoy the benefits of reading with the effective implementation of ICT (Information

Communication Technologies) based information resources, services and other facilities offered by public library. It is unfortunate that the philosophy of public library service regarding the adult illiterates has not yet gained recognition, in practice, or acceptable in practice, in Manipur, though vast majority of her people still remain illiterate. The idea of public library serving as effective institution for the eradication of the tremendous population of adult illiterates in Manipur, has so far failed to gain any belief in the mind of her educational administrators, although they universally accept the importance of the role of libraries in the promotion of reading habit for the expansion of literacy and lifelong education. The traditional public library system in Manipur has not been able to satisfy the needs of providing adequate and suitable reading materials for the illiterates. Even when assessed as an urban utility of the public library system has not made any meaningful impact on the population. This is so because in the first place these public libraries do not stock suitable materials for the illiterates. Secondly no conscious efforts are made to relate the public library system to literacy campaigns. Above all, the government of Manipur has not implemented the Manipur Public Library Act, 1988 yet.

Alternatives to Public Libraries

Adult Education practitioners and policy makers should support their activities with suitable and adequate reading materials. That is if they do not want their students' to relapse in to illiteracy. Therefore, we can identify the following two alternatives.

Publishing Houses: The setting up of publishing houses to turn out cheap and plentiful suitable reading materials which can be distributed free of charge to new literates or sold to them at highly subsidized prices. In this regard, National Book Trust, New Delhi must take great role. Special printing houses should be established, using cheap paper, to produce Primers and rural community Newspapers, primarily in local languages for the new literates. Since, the publishing houses and the bookshops cannot furnish the adult learners with his reading materials, adult learners must turn to the library for salvation. This salvation does not however lie with the traditional public library but with the adult literacy library.

Adult Literacy Libraries: The establishment of adult literacy libraries to complement the existing moribund public libraries. Planners of adult library libraries must be very clear in their mind what they want to do. The aim and nature of such libraries must be carefully defined. If this is done adult literacy libraries will end up the way of existing public libraries- fund less, stale and irrelevant to the needs of their clientele.

Adult literacy libraries should be built up upon the concept that adult learners should have cheap and suitable reading materials easily, at their disposal. These

libraries should be equipped and managed in such way that they can sustain literacy in the society. They should also be used by the governments as a basis for achieving the policy of one man one book. They must also promote the reading habit for self-development and leisure, and ultimately for national development. Such libraries should therefore be community oriented. Every village should therefore be community oriented. Every village should be encouraged to have or be provided with one. We may decide to call it a Village Reading Room, or Rural Libraries or community Resource centre.

Giggly defines a Rural Community Resource Centre as:

“A place where members of a community can find information about subjects of interest to them; take part in learning activities; discuss and share knowledge, information and concerns with extension and other community workers, planners and administrators; find materials to help them retain their literacy and numeracy skill; meet to organise and work together on community projects; use equipment to produce their own information materials; and enjoy cultural and leisure activities”.

The followings are some suggestions which will allow the Adult Literacy Libraries (ALL) to play their proper role:

- i) The ALL should address rural development based on the understanding of the information needs of the community it servers.
- ii) ALL should be provided with electricity to allow the usage of audio –visual based information services.
- iii) ALL should have facilities to replay popular broadcasts for the community at large.
- iv) Above all the ALL should function as an information centre and a forum for exchange and debate of issue affecting the lives and individual, between the government personnel and community.

Conclusion

Funding of adult literacy libraries is central to their establishment and their ability to fulfil their objectives. Public libraries in Manipur have become stagnant partly because they are seriously starved of funds. So far adult education practitioners and policy makers in the state have completely neglected libraries and have left them out of their scheme of things. All their efforts and the huge amount of money being pumped into their literacy programmes have been and will continue to be little consequence so long as they fail to make suitable reading materials available to their illiterates through a well-conceived rural library system. Manipur government cannot bear the cost of establishing such libraries. It is here that international aid, both

government and non-governmental, is urgently required. The Manipur Public Library Act, 1988 should be implemented without any further delay to develop the public library system in the state. Only then we can move towards a reading and literate Manipur. This paper wishes to appeal to the donors and our authority that their aid should be extended to the establishment of rural, community or village adult literacy libraries in the state.

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