

LIBRARIES IN CONTINUING EDUCATION CENTRES: LIFE-LONG LEARNING FACILITIES FOR RURAL PEOPLE IN INDIA

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Abstract. The key aim of the establishment of Adult Education centers is to promote literacy and foster informal learning so that the adults are empowered to pursue any educational endeavor that they wish to undertake. The success of Adult Education Centre depends upon the kind of programmes and activities conducted by it. In order to improve the quality of life of the people, and to keep them abreast of knowledge, libraries are being established in Adult Education Centres. The purpose of the establishment of library will serve only if the learners utilize it properly. Otherwise the effort may not be meaningful. In view of this; a study was undertaken on provision and the utilization of library services in adult education centres. 120 beneficiaries from 12 centres of six Mandals of Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh State were selected as the sample and the findings and suggestions were presented in the paper.

Keywords: libraries, adult education centers, life-long learning, rural community

Life-long learning is the key to the 21st century. India has set before itself the goal of education for all, to provide equity, access and quality education to reach the hitherto unreached population. The conventional education system needs to be supplemented by informal and non-formal learning to cope with the ever changing learning needs of the society. Adult education is a form of non-formal education and different programmes like social education, FFLP¹⁾, NAEP²⁾ and so forth. This resulted in launching of National Literacy Mission (NLM)³⁾ in 1998. Under NLM, total literacy campaigns were implemented followed up with post-literacy programme and continuing education programme. Under continuing education programme, continuing education centres (CEC) were established to provide life-long learning opportunities to the rural people. Establishment of libraries and reading room facilities is one of the core functions of the CECs with an objective to meet the learning needs of the society. These libraries assists in finding, using and interpreting appropriate information that opens up opportunities for life-long learning, informed citizenship, critical thinking and ultimately empowerment in an increasing the complex world. Keeping the importance of libraries and their role in view, a study was conducted to identify the functioning of libraries in CECs in order to know their performance for which they are created. The National Literacy Mission has been modified as Sakshar Bharat Mission⁴⁾ and was launched on September 8th, 2009. Under this mission Adult Education Centres will be established in Gram Panchayats. Library with ICT devices will be provided to the rural people under CEP of Adult Education Centres. The findings of the present study will be helpful to strengthen and proper functioning of the libraries to serve the purpose in the Adult Education Centres of Sakshar Bharat Mission.

Objectives of the study

(a) To know the library facilities available in the Continuing education centres; (b) To identify the utility of the library facilities by the beneficiaries in the centres; (c) To suggest the measures for strengthening the libraries in CECs if necessary.

Locale and sample of the study

The study was conducted in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. The district has 66 mandals spread over in the three revenue divisions viz, Tirupati, Chittoor and Madanapalle. As the study aimed at finding out the provision and utilization of libraries in the continuing education centres, the information has to be collected from primary and secondary sources. The information on provision of libraries such as books available, working hours of the library, Daily, Weekly magazines available and maintenance of the registers and books has to be collected from the preraks. The information on the utilization of the library services by the beneficiaries has to be collected by the beneficiaries.

From each division two mandals from the three divisions of Chittoor district were selected randomly at the first stage (6 mandals). Two Continuing Education Centers from each mandal i.e. (6x2) constituting 12 centres were selected. The data regarding to the library facilities was collected from the preraks of the 12 CECs. In order to know the utility of the library services by the beneficiaries, 10 beneficiaries from each centre were selected i.e. (12x10) 120 beneficiaries. Thus the sample for the present study constitutes 12 preraks and 120 beneficiaries.

Tools used for the study

As the study is intended to identify the functioning libraries in the Continuing Education Centres, the information was collected from preraks

and beneficiaries. The secondary data pertaining to the centres in the district was collected from the Zilla Saksharata Samithi. In order to collect the primary data, the tools were developed. Both the schedules have two sections, section I was designed to identify the personal background of the sample. The section II was meant to identify the information relating to provision and utilization of the library services. A schedule with 21 items was prepared to collect the information from the preraks in order to obtain the information on libraries at the centre. A schedule with 19 items to the beneficiaries was prepared to identify the utilization of the library facilities at the centre. Percentages were calculated to know the facilities and utility of the library facilities in the centers and to know the difference in the utilization of the library services among the beneficiaries belonging to different groups of gender, age and educational status.

Data collection and analysis

The investigator has visited the Zilla Saksharatha Samithi and collected the information relating to continuing education centers in the district. The sample centres were randomly selected and the primary data was collected by administering the schedules developed by the investigator to the sample i.e., the schedule intended to identify the provision of library services was administered to the preraks and the schedule intended to identify the utility of the library services was administered to the learners.

Before administration of the schedule to the sample, a good rapport was established with them and explained them about the study and the way in which they have to respond to the items. While collecting the data, the cooperation of the mandal literacy organizers was solicited. The data thus collected from preraks and learners was pooled separately. Percentages were calculated to know the facilities and utility of the library facilities in the centers.

Provision of libraries in Continuing Education Centres

The libraries physical set up is of great significance as an information centre. The vital link in the information transfer chain is the change agent and the contact person. The prerak, i.e the librarian of CEC, should have equal communication with the change agent and the contact person so that he can transmit necessary information. He has to procure the different types of reading materials from the changing agent on one side, to maintain the library well and has to develop a close rapport with its different types of clientele. In order to know the infrastructure facilities of the libraries in the CEC and the ability of the preraks with regard to the library services the information was collected, analyzed and presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Books supplied to the CECs by ZSS

No	Year	Number of books
1.	1997-98	86
2.	2002-03	146
3.	2004-05	268
4.	2005-06	247
5.	2006-07	69
Total		816

During the period 1998 to 2007, 816 books were supplied to the Continuing Education Centres by Zilla Saksharata Samithi. They were on different aspects like health, population, environment, agriculture, stories and spirituality which will help the learners to enhance their knowledge and to improve their quality of life (Table 2).

Table 2. Provision of library facilities in CECs

No	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Number of books in the library		
	Below -500	--	--
	500 and above	12	100.0
2.	Availability of books		
	Health	12	100.0
	Occupational	09	100.0
	Stories	08	75.00
	Population	07	66.66
	Spiritual	07	58.33
3.	Working Hours		
	6 to 9 AM	04	33.33
	6 to 9 PM	12	100.0
4.	Issue of books		
	Yes	12	100.0
5.	Books preferred by the learners		
	Health	11	91.66
	Occupational	09	75.00
	Stories	06	50.00
	Spiritual	02	16.66
6.	Average attendance per day		
	Below- 10	09	75.00
	10 & above	03	25.00
7.	Subscription of N.P		
	Yes	12	100.0
8.	Subscription of Monthly	--	--
9.	Mobile library facility		
	No	12	100.0
10.	Promotion of Rea -habits		
	Motivation of the learners	--	--
11.	Opinion on the utility of the library		
	Good	06	50.00
	Average	05	41.66
	Poor	01	8.33
12.	Problems in running the library		
	Lack of furniture	--	--
	Lack of books	04	33.33
	Lack of time to run the library	11	91.66
	Lack of interest among the learners	12	100.00
13.	Suggestions to strengthen the library		
	Support from the Donors	08	66.66
	Support from the Government	10	83.33
	Support training	09	75.00
	Motivation to the learners	12	100.00

Cent percent of the preraks said that there are above 500 books in the library. To the question on the areas on which the books are available cent

percent of the preraks said that the books are available on health followed by occupational (75.00), stories (66.66), population (58.33) and spiritual (58.33). In cent percent of the centres the libraries are kept open from 6 PM to 9 PM and in 33.33 per cent of the centres from 6 AM to 9 AM. The preraks are issuing books to the learners to their homes. In terms of average attendance per day only 25.00 per cent of the preraks expressed that on an average 10 learners visit library every day and in majority of the centres (75.00) the attendance is below 10. In all the centres they are subscribing daily news paper. There is no mobile library facility in all the centres. For the promotion of reading habits among the learners, the preraks are not initiating any activities in the centres. This may be one reason for the less attendance of the learners to the libraries 58.33 per cent of the preraks expressed that the utility of the library by the learners is good, 41.66 per cent of the preraks said that the utility is average and 8.33 per cent of the preraks expressed their opinion as poor.

The problems expressed by the preraks in organizing the libraries were lack of interest among the learners (100.00). Lack of time to run the library is 91.66 and lack of books is 33.33. The suggestions to strengthen the libraries given by the preraks are motivation to the learners (100.00), support from the Government (83.33) sufficient training on the maintenance of library (83.33) and support from donors (66.66).

Utilization of libraries in Continuing Education Centres

The library is an important agency for the promotion of reading competencies among the learners. The library services of the continuing education centres can be judged based on the infrastructural facilities of the libraries and their utility of the learners. The information on the library facilities available in the centres was presented above. The data pertaining to utility of the library services was collected from the learners analyzed and presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Utility of the library services by the learners in Chittoor district

No	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Establishment of library in CEC	120	100
2.	No. of books available in the library		
	Below 100	-	-
	100- 500	50	41.66
	Above 500	70	58.33
3.	Areas on which the books available		
	Health	120	100
	Environment	46	38.33
	Occupational	66	25.00
	Spiritual	20	16.66
	Stories	10	8.33
4.	Books preferred by the learners		
	Health	86	71.66
	Environment	21	17.5
	Occupational	07	5.83
	Spiritual	22	18.33
	Stories	44	36.66
5.	Frequency of reading books		
	Every day	--	--
	Weekly once	22	18.33
	Monthly once	98	81.66
6.	Borrowing of books	61	50.83
7.	Frequency of Borrowing of Books		
	Every day	-	-
	Weekly once	28	23.33
	Monthly once	33	27.5
8.	News Papers subscribed by the centre		
	Eenadu	82	68.33
	Sakshi	50	41.66
	Vartha	10	0.83
9.	Reading of News Paper	101	84.16
10.	Working hours of Library		
	6 to 8 AM	90	75.00
	6 to 8 PM	110	91.66
11.	Mobile Library Facility	-	-
12.	Problems in the utilization of the library		
	Lack of Interest	87	72.5
	Lack of time	95	79.16
	Lack of Books	21	17.5

In all the centres libraries were established. 58.33 per cent of the learners said that there are above 500 books in the library, 41.66 per cent of the sample said that 100 to 500 books are available in the library. This shows that the learners are not aware that the actual number of books available in the library. The learners were asked to mention the areas in which the books are

available and cent per cent of the sample said that the books are available on health aspects, 25 per cent of the sample mentioned that the books are available on occupational 38.33 per cent on environment, 16.66 per cent mentioned that the books are on spiritual and 8.33 per cent of the sample said that stories books are also available.

Coming to the reading interests of the learners' majority of the learners 71.66 are interested to read the books on health, followed by stories (36.66), spiritual (18.33), environment 17.5 and occupational 5.83. Majority of the learners (81.66) were preferred to read the books monthly once, 18.33 per cent preferred weekly once and the percentage of reading the books every day was nil. Half of the sample learners i.e., 50.83 were borrowing the books from the library. From among the borrowers 27.5 per cent of the learners were borrowing Monthly once and the remaining (23.33) were borrowing the books weekly once. No learners were borrowing the books every day.

The responses from the learners on the news paper subscription in the centre shows that majority of the centres were subscribing Eenadu (68.33) followed by 41.66 and Vartha in only one centre of Madanapalli division. Coming to the news paper reading habit, 84.16 per cent of the sample learners were reading the news papers in the centre.

There was no mobile library facility in all the sample centres. 91.66 per cent of the learners expressed that the centres were kept opened from 6 PM to 9 PM and 75 per cent said that centres will be opened for the learners in the morning from 6 to 8. Lack of time (79.16), lack of interest (72.5) and lack of books (17.5) were the problems mentioned by the learners.

Major findings of the study

The findings are as follow: (i) 816 books on different aspects such as health, environment, population, occupational, stories spiritual and 1 wooden almarah, two wooden racks were supplied by the ZSS for all the CECs; (ii)

The preraks were maintaining the stock registers properly, but maintenance of the issue registers and arrangement of books were not good; (iii) The preraks have not been trained specifically on the maintenance of the library; (iv) The preraks were not able to tell the exact number of books in the library and the number of books on each area; (v) Majority of the centers were kept open only in the evening and the preraks were not organizing any activities to motivate the learners. The attendance of the learners to the library was not satisfactory; (vi) All the continuing education centres have been subscribing one daily news paper, not subscribing any weekly or monthly magazines and there was no mobile library facility; (vii) The reading interests of the learners were health (71.66) followed by stories (36.66), spiritual (18.33), environment (17.5) and occupational (5.83); (viii) The frequency of the reading books among the learners was monthly once (81.66), weekly once (18.33) and no body prefer to read the books every day; (ix) Only 50.83 per cent of the learners were borrowing the books. Among them 27.5 per cent were borrowing monthly once and 23.3 weekly once; (x) 84.16 per cent of the learners were reading the news paper regularly and among them majority were the male (83.87); (xi) Reading and borrowing of books was high among female, below 35 years age group and the learners having primary and secondary education. Utilization of library among neo-literates was low.

Recommendations

(A) Training should be given to the preraks on the aspects relating to the arrangement of books, maintenance of the registers, and procurement of departmental circulars, pamphlets, books display, identifying the learning needs and preferences of the community and communicating the same to the ZSS for supply of relevant material.

(B) The preraks should be motivated to organize the mobile library so that the learners will utilize the opportunity.

(C) Competitions like quiz, speed in reading and writing should be held and incentives should be given to the learners to attract them to the centers.

(D) In order to make them to read the books on occupational aspects, income generating programmes based on their interests and raw materials available in the villages should be organized and the books relevant to the programmes organized should be kept in the library.

(E) The success of the programme depends on the constant flow of information, continuous guidance and encouragement from higher to lower level personnel. This should be maintained.

(F) The problems in the maintenance of the libraries should be discussed in the meetings of the Continuing Education Committee and steps should be taken to strengthen the libraries.

NOTES

1. <http://www.foodforlife.org.uk/>
2. <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>
3. <http://www.nlm.nic.in/>
4. <http://saaksharbharaat.nic.in/saaksharbharaat/aboutPage.action>

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