

The Challenging Role of Public Libraries in the Perspective of NEP 2020

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a paradigm shift in India's education system, emphasizing inclusive, equitable and lifelong learning. Public libraries have been positioned as critical "learning and resource centres" in integrating formal and self-directed education while fostering literacy, skill development and digital empowerment. Lifelong learning, as envisioned in the NEP 2020, encompasses both formal and non-formal learning processes aimed at enhancing individual and societal well-being. This study pointed to the role of public libraries in implementing the lifelong learning framework of the NEP 2020, highlighting challenges such as resource constraints, skill gaps among staff, limited community collaboration and accessibility issues. It also explores opportunities for libraries to become dynamic hubs of adult education and lifelong learning through modernization, community-focused programming, and improved policy support. Recommendations include fostering partnerships with educational institutions and local organizations, equipping librarians with expertise in ICT and pedagogy, upgrading infrastructure, and developing inclusive, vernacular-rich collections. The study underscores the transformative potential of public libraries in shaping a knowledgeable and self-reliant society by aligning their services with the goals of NEP 2020 for lifelong learning and cultural preservation.

Keywords— NEP 2020, lifelong learning, public libraries, skill development, digital empowerment

I. INTRODUCTION

NEP 2020 makes an amazing change in India's education landscape, with an emphasis on inclusive learning and equitable access to knowledge. Libraries, especially public ones, are envisioned as "learning and resource hubs" that are integral to lifelong learning. Public libraries occupy a unique position in society, providing a bridge for organized and self-directed learning, thereby fostering knowledge dissemination and literacy. Lifelong learning—defined as continuous, self-motivated learning throughout life—aims to enhance individual capabilities and the well-being of society. Highlighting their role in nurturing literacy, skill development, and digital empowerment, NEP 2020

underscores public libraries as spaces to support this mission.

Objectives

This study aims to:

- Examine the concept of lifelong learning within the NEP 2020.
- Highlight the role of public libraries as spaces for lifelong learning.
- Identify the challenges and opportunities for public libraries in fulfilling this role.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative approach, reviewing relevant literature, journal articles, conference papers,

and sources from organizations such as IFLA and RRLF. It also incorporates findings from web-based research focusing on library policies, NEP 2020 proposals, and studies on lifelong learning.

The concept of lifelong learning in NEP 2020

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Lifelong learning encompasses both formal and informal learning processes throughout an individual's life. It enhances skills, knowledge and abilities and contributes to personal fulfillment and professional growth.

NEP 2020 outlines a structured program for adult education, emphasizing:

1. Fundamentals of Literacy and Numeracy
2. Critical life skills including financial and digital literacy
3. Employment skill development
4. Basic Education (Preparatory to Secondary Level)
5. Further education such as courses in arts, culture and sports

Public libraries are vital to achieving these goals, offering infrastructure, trained instructors, and accessible resources. However, challenges such as limited funding, outdated collections, and insufficient collaboration hinder their potential.

The public library is a place for lifelong learning

Libraries can be considered as a supplement to the classroom and the traditional textbook. According to the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, one of the twelve missions of public libraries is to 'ensure access to all forms of community information for citizens'. In this information age, making information easily and quickly available to all citizens will enhance the development of a society. It is a fact that proper utilization of information can improve the quality of life of an individual and thereby the society. Being a social institution closely related to the community, public libraries have the responsibility to develop people's lives through access to all forms of information and entertainment available from books and various other resources. Public libraries act as knowledge archives, social interaction centers, information retrieval centers etc. It is also a lifelong learning center that serves as a local gateway to knowledge and provides a foundation for adult education, lifelong learning, and cultural development. Public libraries in a society can act as nodes connecting local learning settings with global

learning resources, thus playing a fundamental role in the development of future systems of lifelong learning. Public libraries play an important role in supporting the learning process because lifelong learning is characterized by informal learning components, flexible learning opportunities, and a shift toward self-directed learning. Public libraries have staff, information resources, physical and virtual space that are easily accessible to all and provide lifelong learning opportunities, no matter who you are or where you are in life. Not compulsory, but inclined.

Realizing the importance of libraries in the education sector, NEP 2020 focuses on: development of attractive learning materials, ensuring availability of books and e-resources in school/public libraries, promoting reading habits across the country, and implementing ICT in schools/villages. Strengthening library collection for public libraries, higher education systems, setting up public library spaces for adult education, creating appropriate in-service training for library staff, etc.

Challenging role of public library in view of NEP 2020

In this information age, one of the main functions of a public library is to provide up-to-date information needed by all sections of society. Today, while some public libraries act as catalysts for information exchange in society, the work of many public libraries is progressing in a sluggish manner. Very few users come to the library and use library resources. Many libraries are in a situation where they have to write false reports for funding. Although institutions like RRLF allocate a lot of funds for the development of public libraries, it is often not utilized effectively. This requires a change for the implementation of NEP 2020. As stated by the NEP, information resources need to be improved and the knowledge of librarians needs to be improved and utilized. By making the public library a space for lifelong learning, NEP challenges public libraries to become an ideal infrastructure for providing information through trained and qualified instructors, with the participation of community people and improving the availability and accessibility of information resources. The NEP argues that all libraries should have a vernacular book collection to provide better adult education. But there is a problem such as space and money to collect rich information. In this context, libraries need to form a network connection with various public libraries and global networks that provide information to users. Along with this, the cooperation of public libraries and

communication with the local community, e.g. Various educational institutions, local trade, industry and health and environmental authorities create a strong information network and increase information exchange. We keep in mind that the value of libraries is not only based on their physical collection, but also on the skill level of their staff to provide services offline and online. So we can summarize the challenges posed by NEP as follows

- Modernization of libraries with adequate information and communication technology
- Provide up-to-date information needed by all sections of the society.
- To create information networks with local institutions
- To improve cooperation, collaboration and communication with the local community, e.g. Various educational institutions, local trade, industry, health and environment authorities etc.
- To provide guidance and training in information searching and quality rating of information sources.
- Upgrade the librarian's professional profile, for example skills in information retrieval, pedagogy and ICT
- To promote reading habit through mobile library, seminar, cultural events etc.

III. FINDINGS

In the perspective of NEP 2020, the public library can be considered as a center of lifelong learning. Public libraries in India face many challenges in implementing the narratives of adult education or lifelong learning.

Challenges facing public libraries

Public libraries face several barriers to becoming centers of lifelong learning:

- Resource constraints: limited collections, inadequate digital resources, and outdated infrastructure.
- Skills gaps: library staff often lack training in ICT, pedagogy, and user engagement.
- Community collaboration: weak relationships with local organizations and educational institutions.
- Accessibility issues: inadequate communication to marginalized communities and remote areas.

These challenges include implementing good collection development, availability and accessibility of information resources provided by public libraries, and

adequate cooperation and training of library staff. To overcome these challenges, the public library system should focus on the following:

1. Enhanced collaboration: Strengthen partnerships between libraries, educational institutions, and local organizations.
2. Training and capacity building: Equip librarians with expertise in ICT, pedagogy, and community engagement.
3. Upgrade infrastructure: Upgrade facilities to include digital resources and spaces for social interaction.
4. Community-centric programs: Programs designed according to local needs, fostering greater participation.
5. Policy support: Advocate for policies that integrate public libraries into the national education framework.

Suggestions

- Stimulate cooperation and interaction of public libraries with the local community and implement networking between public libraries and educational institutions and organizations.
- Use the framework designed by NEP 2020 for developing pedagogical methods and strategies suitable for adult education and for specific groups.
- Establish public library system near more crowded places like hospitals and railway stations
- Develop public libraries near specific places like village offices and agriculture offices to collect information considering the needs and accessibility of information.
- Strengthen the professional profile of librarians through continuing education on skills in information retrieval, pedagogy, didactics and ICT.
- Emphasize the role of public libraries in the preservation and public presentation of cultural heritages, e.g. oral tradition and vernacular.
- The application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in libraries works with lifelong learning.
- Develop adequate collection management of information resources such as books, newspapers, electronic media and audio-visual media with a balance between them.
- Create awareness about the relationship between the interior design and internal structure of public libraries and an environment conducive to

learning and education, and make necessary changes in libraries, workspaces, etc. to attract the user community.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study provides insight into the problems faced by public libraries, including lack of reading habits and lack of time, which seriously affect the functioning of public libraries. Although a lot of funds are being spent in various ways for the development of public libraries, the authorities should check whether they are being utilized properly. Similarly, the government authorities should take all necessary steps to strengthen the library. The use of the library will be effective only if it is for the benefit of the users. Setting up libraries at places like railway stations, hospitals, providing timely training to librarians, and appointing librarians who are capable of providing accurate information, should be taken care of while making the public library a center of lifelong learning. To achieve their goal of lifelong learning in this information age, public libraries should build strong collaboration and partnership with various educational institutions and local and global information systems. Skilled and qualified librarians play an indispensable role in effectively integrating the role of public libraries as a center of lifelong learning.

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