ROLE OF PUBLIC LIBRARY IN STRENGTHENING THE YOUNG INDIA

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Abstract:

The article deals with the current trend of Indian youth who have to prepare for competitive exams to secure any Government jobs and explains the problem faced in terms of availability in term of information resource and also suitable space. The situation of the youth aspiring to crack various competitive exams to secure government jobs is dealt in the four quadrants and in this context role of public libraries is highlighted in serving the young people of India.

Keywords: Public Library, India Youth, Competitive exams, Information sources.

Introduction:

Today India stands poised to reap the benefits of having the largest resource of young people in the world. With the beginning of 2020, India is set to become the world's youngest country. As per Indiastat.com [1]a comprehensive database of socio-economic statistical data, 50% of current population is below the age of 25 and 65% is below 35. This demographic potential offers India an edge over other countries with its growing economy. Hence India being a country of youth, with 65% of its population in the working age group, their aspirations should be the focus for the development of the country. The Center for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in partnership with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) conducted a sample survey-based study that sought to answer key questions about how India's

youth thought and lived. The respondents were aged 15-34 and the interviews were conducted across the country. The report released in April 2017[2] says that an overwhelming majority of India's youth i.e. 65% would prefer a government job, 19% were interested in setting up one's own business and only 7% preferred job in private sector.

This trend towards government job could be due to IT recessions. The IT sector savior of Indian youth for two decades is fast tracing into graveyard of employment. The slow rate of job market for Indians looks pretty scary. At a time when a huge number of young people come out of professional colleges and scout for jobs, the layoffs by leading companies and less intakes plus visa restrictions of US, Canada and Australia seem to tighten the chances of placement.

This has led thousands of students to join the bandwagon of aspirant for Government jobs in India. Jobs in Government sector has now become a preferred career choice for the youth of India. Apart from recession; the status, the job security, and 'Babugiri' of 'Sarkari Naukari' has attracted the youth. Presently majority of Government jobs are offered though open competitive exams based on recruitment system.

Though Government jobs are one of most desired career options by many aspirants, but it is also very tough to get through. The competitive exams range from IAS, IPS, IFS, KAS, bank officers to clerical level job in government sector which makes the range of aspirants very wide. The students aiming for higher positions through UPSC exams plan from the beginning and develop a strategy to meet all the requirements put down for the selections, be it written examination or the interview.

The students who cannot afford to prepare for IAS/IPS exams for two to three years both in terms of time and finance, aim at jobs in banking sector/ railways/Defense/Departmental position (Income tax, CBI and various

ministries), teachers for primary schools (TET) to Assistant Professors in Universities (NET), institutes (ISRO, DRDO) etc.

Due to heavy competition the youth have realized now the requirement of thorough preparation. Hence to help the aspiring youth to crack the exams many leading authors have written books to help them, and institutes have come up to facilitate them to form a strategy, tips to prepare for the exam and tricks to save time for Multiple choice Questions, verbal ability, logical also reasoning etc.

Apart from the candidate's zeal to study, capacity to work, ability to grasp the content, the most crucial requirements to crack any exam is access to necessary resources to study and a suitable place to study undisturbed. At this juncture public libraries have a role to play.

Role of Public Libraries:

The role of public libraries at this stage is important where most of the candidates preparing for the exams have either completed their graduation or post graduation. In other words most of the aspirants are not affiliated to any institution during their course of preparation; it is obvious that students who are focused on cracking the exams cannot achieve it along with another academic program. As they are not current students, they are not entitled to use the libraries of their colleges or Universities. Looking into this demand for suitable space many private institutions has taken initiation to set up 24x7 open reading halls where the candidates are heavily charged.

Preparation for competitive exams is a serious study which stretches from some months to one or two years depending upon the exam that they want to crack. Hence those students who cannot afford such private spaces look upon public libraries to pursue their studies.

Four Quadrants:

The aspirants for competitive exams can be broadly classified into four quadrants as follows.



I	II
Access to study material. Have Suitable place to study	Access to study material. Lack of suitable place to study
IV	**III**
Lack of study material. Lack of suitable place to study	Lack of access to study material. Have suitable place to study

1st Quadrant:

This quadrant comprises of students who are focused on the exams since their undergraduate level. They attend coaching classes conducted in metro cites, collect the reading material and continuously update themselves about current events through newspaper and other relevant sources. They are net savvy; possess laptops and latest mobile phones. The members of this quadrant are self sufficient and have a definite plan laid out to pass the exams and this group of aspirants do prepare and appear for the exams and try to crack the UPSC exams if not in the first attempt may be in successive attempts. This group does not depend upon public libraries.

2nd Quadrant:

This quadrant consists of students who stay in smaller towns, being aspirants to get through competitive exams enroll themselves for coaching institutes in cities where the courses run for few months and collect the source materials, some of the institutes offer boarding facilitates also, but that is only till the course is completed. It is this group of students who are in an utmost need of a peaceful place to study with their material and update themselves with current affairs. It is observed that many a times eight to

ten students pool together and rent some place in cities but it is not suitable to study for longer hours. They can use it only as a place to stay back at night.

Hence if public libraries provide suitable place to study without the disturbance of the general public it could be a boon to the members of this quadrant.

3rd Quadrant:

These are the group of people who stay in small town and villages but cannot afford buy the study materials. The most important fact of preparation for any competitive exam is being continuously updated about current affairs. The members of this quadrant suffer two fold; one is lack of print sources on current affairs in their town/village and another is very poor internet facilities/ lack of proper electric power supply etc. If the public libraries of such places provide at least some books and magazines based on the aspirants demands, it would be a great help to such people to borrow the material and study in groups either at their home or other convenient places. This will facilitate them to crack some of the exams like teachers in schools or clerical positions in some sectors. Access to resources will broaden their vision. Now especially many magazines are being published tailor made for competitive exams. Such magazines are not only published in English but also in regional languages. The public libraries can divert part of their budget for procuring such resources. For the members falling in this quadrant, space is not a constraint, hence if necessary information resources are provided, they can borrow/photocopy and prepare for the exams.

4th Quadrant:

This is the worst hit group where the aspirants are from economically very poor background who can neither afford to enroll themselves to the coaching classes nor can they afford to buy study materials and pursue self study.



The members of this quadrant usually stay in cities in small houses, many a times they have to work at least in part time jobs to support themselves or their families.

Such candidates usually do not aim for IAS/IPS/KAS etc. exams as such exams require a long period of study and exams demand complete devotion of time and energy of the candidate. The members of this quadrant aspire to crack some exam and seek a job and be the bread winner of the family.

Public libraries have to focus on this quadrant as they are entirely dependent upon them both for access to required study material and also for a suitable place to study for longer hours without disturbance.

Work for Target Groups:

The UNESCO public library Manifesto (UNESCO, 2004) declares the public library as the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and social group.

The present view about the public libraries by the general public is not encouraging. They continue to be store houses of printed books, providing ICT based services is at a very lower ebb. They may cater leisure reading but not the expectations of the present youth of the country.

The public libraries need to shed their present lethargic image and have to gear up to meet the current needs of the society and focus on the target groups. The library legislation has made the citizens pay cess towards the public libraries, hence with a moral responsibility the public libraries should emerge to serve the needs of the youth. The previous paragraphs reveal about the necessity of decent space and access to good material for competitive exams. If such a service is extended from the public libraries it will be the most sought after service.

To initiate such services the following may be adopted by the Public Library.

i) Earmark a part of the budget for procurement of book and journals pertaining to competitive exams.

ii) A separate space exclusively to such students may be created something like Competitive Exams Cell (CEC) where the students can study without the disturbance of the general public who visit the library.

iii) ICT facilitates may be extended to the CEC where the users may access the open access resources.

iv) At least few trained and IT savvy professional staff may be put in change of the CEC.

v) If the structure of the building permits or with few modifications, efforts may made to keep it open for 24x7. This will greatly help the people to use the library at their convenience.

vi) Furniture which support longer reading hours may be provided in CEC along with good lighting and ventilation.

vii) Basic facilities like clean drinking water, wash room facilities, cleanliness should be maintained to facilitate them to use the service for longer hours and a good ambiance should be maintained with available resources.

viii) The students may be allowed to bring their own reading materials into the CEC and study as per their plan for preparation.

ix) Once in a while Informative talks may be arranged by IAS/IPS/IFS/ KAS toppers or from the resource persons form the leading coaching centres.

x) Awareness programs about the enormous amount of literature available through 'Open Access' may be conducted which will open the doors of information and reduce the dependence upon print collections.

Financial Constraints:

To achieve some of the above the public library may face financial constraints. As per the recommendations of NKC public and private

partnerships should be encouraged in library development. To overcome the financial constraints the public libraries may

i) Charge some membership fee exclusively for access to the facilities of CEC
ii) Charge some minimum browsing fees for internet surfing and using computers.
iii) Approach local politicians to finance under local area development funds for some of the facilities to be provided to CEC.
iv) Approach philanthropists or social bodies like Rotary/Lions etc. to install drinking water purifier/tea vending machines etc.
v) Initiate to divert some of the funds from Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library foundation towards CEC.

Social Responsibility:

Karnataka being the third in the country to have library legislation way back in 1965 can take the lead to initiate such services at least with state central library and city central libraries. Library legislation not only provides necessary financial support but also a set up for proper management of libraries. Legislation aims to ensure proper assessment of users needs, evaluation of existing services and planning new services. This demands various spheres to work for the all-round development of Indian youth, so that they can realize their full potential and contribute productively to nation building process. If managed well, this service is bound to receive tremendous response from the public as information is regarded as a resource equal in value to capital and it must be used for the development of each sector of society.

Conclusion:

Youth are the strong forces of society. The public libraries have to live their mission and prepare our youth to research their rightful place in the modern world. The turbulent youth energy if channelized properly will not only reduce the unrest among the unemployed but also being appointed as young officers at various levels of the Government will definitely redefine

the Government machinery S. Indrakant RBI Chief Professor Council for social development in Hyderabad has aptly said "India is said to be enjoying population dividends. It is real? Are we utilizing the potentials of our youth optimally? In fact, today tapping the potentials of our youth is an important challenge facing the country."[3] The challenge is to galvanize this demographic advantage into well informed, dynamic office bearers in various sectors of the government. To overcome this challenge every possible effort the youth of the country in every work and corner can access the desired information.

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