

ABSTRACT

Public Library (PL) is recognized as a universal phenomenon. It exists in various societies, cultures and communities in a hierarchical way. The PL is a 'social institution', 'living force for popular education' which is understood today as a multipurpose informative, educative, cultural agency and also as an intellectual powerhouse. It serves all the people from the time they first look at a picture book until the senior citizen reads his last book and they are living and reading at a more advanced age today than when public libraries (PLs) were first established. PL should be active, positive and dynamic. It should tell people what to think and help to decide what to think about!

The purpose of PL is "to educate", "to inform" and "to entertain" public. The phrase PL is understood as a democratic institution for the people, by the people and of the people. PLs are the institutions giving life long self-education. A good PL system in developing society is a living force for popular education and helps in the success of democracy by mass education. PLs are not only promoting reading habits but also they act as: Information center; Community Development center; Centre for cultivating good character and conduct; Centre for promoting employment opportunities.

In Bangladesh mainly there are two types of PLs: viz. Government and Non-government PLs. The non-government PL movement has started during the British period with the establishment of four PLs in the year 1854. The non-government PLs were the forerunners of the public library service in this country. Exactly after 100 years the government PLs have established in 1953. The Department of PLs is established in 1983.

The purpose of the study is to critically review the historical growth and development of PLs. It also considers present status and general features of the public library system and services. Present study also encompasses in enactment of library legislation and the use of information technology in public libraries in Bangladesh. The status of public libraries has been evaluated in light of the standards for PLs prepared by IFLA. The present work concentrates on the development of government PLs in Bangladesh & highlights the problems faced by these libraries.

Objectives of the study:

The main aim of the study is to assess the present status of public libraries, with a view to identify some of the key areas and future prospects and plans for public library development in Bangladesh. The following are the objectives:

1. To study historical background, origins and development of PLs in Bangladesh;
2. To identify strengths and weaknesses of government PLs, in terms of physical infrastructure, manpower, funds, services and autonomy;
3. To study the growth and development of government PLs in Bangladesh with respect to readers, library collection, use of library and library management;
4. To suggest a model for “Library Legislation for Public Libraries in Bangladesh”;
5. To suggest solutions for the development of government PLs in Bangladesh.

Research Methodology:

Descriptive method is adopted to carry out the present research work. The research tools like interview, questionnaire, observations, personal visits etc are used to collect data. Researcher has designed two questionnaires for collecting data; one for the Librarian/Library in charge and the other for the library users.

Organization of the study:

This study is organized into seven chapters:

Chapter-1 is an overview of the entire research work, which includes the brief introduction, the necessity and the significance and objectives of the study. It traces the need and purpose of the present research work through a comprehensive literature survey. It also provides a short account of research methodology, scope, hypothesis and review of literature of the study.

Chapter-2 discusses historical, geographical, cultural aspects and educational system of Bangladesh.

Chapter-3 traces the origin & movement of PL. At the end of this chapter efforts are being made to overview of public library system in some developed countries and PL system in India.

Chapter-4 assesses the historical background of PLs in Bangladesh. In this connection what efforts have been made during the pre-independence, post independence and the post-liberation periods for the development of library services in general, the public library in particular are traced. The chapter also indicates, in detail, the present Status of public library system in Bangladesh. It illustrates the organization structure of public libraries in Bangladesh and at the end of this chapter explains the development and government plan of public libraries in Bangladesh.

Chapter-5 is entirely devoted to the library legislation existing in UK, USA and India. It also explains the current status of the library Legislation in Bangladesh. At present there is no library legislation in Bangladesh. Precisely for this reason, present chapter is undertaken which is also proposed model plan for library legislation in Bangladesh.

Chapter-6 is relating to the analysis of data.

Chapter-7 the concluding chapter deals with findings of the study. Recommendations are made with regard to the library development, legislation, Information technology and other aspects. In conclusion, researcher has made certain suggestions for the betterment of public libraries in Bangladesh.

Observations & Findings:

The following are some observations & findings of the study:

- 1). It is found that 98.24% libraries do not have adequate staff whereas 59.65% staff are non –professionals. There is a lack of training facilities, co-operation & poor status of library personnel.
- 2). CPL budget is more than division & district libraries & its budget is increasing every year. Branch libraries do not have separate funds. CPL & one district library have other source to earn revenue. It is observed that 50.87% libraries are not satisfied with the funds. It is also found that budget for divisions & districts libraries are fluctuating every year.
- 3). It is found that only 35.08% libraries have their own library buildings whereas 59.65% libraries have taken on rental basis.
- 4). Proper funding is not provided for purchasing books and other reading materials. It is revealed that 54.39% libraries are having collection of books

10,000-15,000 books. CPL has a collection of more than one lakh. Maximum libraries are subscribing 11-15 periodicals, mostly of them are in Bengali. It is also observed that 79.29% users are not satisfied about the library collection & 61.34% users are not satisfied about library journals.

5). It is found 82.46% libraries give offer reference & extension services. 15.79% have only issue books whereas users are demanding this facility. It is also revealed that 64.65% users are not satisfied with the extension activities. Mobile library service is not available in PLs.

6). It is observed that only 22.80% libraries possessing computers but these libraries use computer only for office work. Yet, library automation is not started in public libraries in Bangladesh. Libraries are not providing Internet facility. All librarians and users have expressed willingness to use IT for library activities.

7). The collections of the PLs are poorly organized. They are neither systematically neither classified nor catalogued. It is observed that 52.63% libraries did not maintain catalogue.

8). It is found that CPL acquired more books than the divisional & district libraries. There is no uniform growth of acquisition. It is observed that there is no uniform & standard policy for the libraries for acquisition of books. It is found that addition of books are fluctuating. As per IFLA standards not a single library adding volumes to a library.

9). There is no library legislation in Bangladesh.

Recommendations:

After careful assessment of the problems, appropriate suggestions have been put forward to improve the situation. There is a lack of co-operation among the public libraries and no unified organizational structure is existing. The lack of

organizational structure for libraries is a serious obstacle to their development, allocation of resources and monitoring the results. Therefore, there is an urgent need to establish public libraries up to Upazilla and village level and co-ordinated developments. Furthermore, the PL service, in Bangladesh, in general, is beset with innumerable problems such as lack of recognition, the absence of accurate public library planning and inadequate library services.

The followings are some recommendations to improve the present condition of PLs in Bangladesh:

1. To achieve an integrated library system throughout the country, a comprehensive legislation is essential. Hence efforts are made to propose model for public library legislation in Bangladesh.
2. Even though lending service is one of the important services in PLs, but few PLs are providing this service. So it should be provided by all PLs. Extension activities should be expanded.
3. Since the field of librarianship is so neglected and treated subsidiary, hence one of the suggestions has come forward to make separate Ministry called 'Ministry of Library Affairs', as it is in West Bengal of India. The Directorate should be headed by a professionally qualified Director.
4. According to IFLA standards of libraries depends on population, there should be one PL for every 3000 people, for 14 crore people of Bangladesh needs more than 46,666 public libraries. In order to keep pace with the growth of population and expansion of knowledge, almost every village will have to be provided with library facilities. One of the IFLA standard stipulates with the nearest library unit should be more than a mile away from the residential areas. So, Government should establish more PLs and should initiates for establishing public libraries up to village level.

5. Public libraries timings should be extended according to IFLA standards. To provide the PL service throughout the country, a network of libraries needs to be established.

6. All PLs should give emphasis for collection on national & international materials comprehensively. It should develop of collection in other languages. It should have sufficient number of standard periodical publications, including magazines, newspapers, non-print materials etc.

7. The government of Bangladesh should allocate sufficient funds for purchasing adequate number of computers & set up IT application for the PLs.

Many plans, schemes, committee reports have been prepared in Bangladesh after liberation period but not a single plan /proposal or committee report have taken seriously. One noticeable characteristic is that each plan has a little link of consistency with its predecessors. Libraries and Librarians in spite of possessing an important role in the socio-economic development of the country also failed to exert and impress their influence upon the people, society and government. To achieve an integrated library system throughout the country, a comprehensive legislation is essential. Hence an effort has been made in the current research programme to propose model for PL legislation in Bangladesh. Use of Information Technology is thought to be a dire need in PLs in Bangladesh.

It appears that government PLs do not possess the collections, library services, extension activities, timings, infrastructure facilities etc. as per IFLA standards. This shows that investigator's stated hypothesis is true.

It is hoped that this research work will be of immense value to planners, administrators, librarians and information specialists of Bangladesh. A few suggestions for further studies have been indicated at the end of the thesis. The

researcher is fully aware that the present research work is not perfect and complete; there may be loopholes or lacunae. Therefore, if the criticisms and suggestions come from all the corners of the globe, are highly appreciated.