



A REVIEW OF LIBRARY SERVICE CONDITION TO EDUCATE PRISON INMATES IN COIMBATORE

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a review of library service condition to educated prison inmates in Coimbatore. Through Questionnaire methods the data was collected from the Inmates, Library staff & also from the Welfare Officer. Based on the responses the collected data was analyzed. The study revealed that the information needs of the inmates are not well balanced by the library because of the inadequate library stock. It also revealed that the stock was maintained by the staff without having training in library field. It is noted that there is inadequate attention by the government & other sectors. The study recommends the prison libraries to provide more skills to improve the inmates knowledge & to help them how to live their life in outside world after imprisonment period.

KEYWORDS : Prison, Prison Library, Inmates, Resources, Education, Coimbatore, Government sectors, Services.

INTRODUCTION

Prison is the place where all the offenders are kept in same place. The empty mind is the devil's workshop. If the inmates are fully occupied then they never have time to think of their previous life or the time to discuss with others. During the day time most of the inmates are engaged with the work. In the night time they think of their family & the mistakes they have done which will make them asleep or become depressed. To avoid this most of them will spend their night by reading books. Information is major resource which makes to improve the knowledge. The prison library which is information provider plays vital role in providing treatment & care for the diseased mind. The services offered by the prison library help in the remedy of the inmates in many ways. This study is therefore explores the condition of the information services to the inmates using the Coimbatore Prison as a case study.

JUSITIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Incarcerated are the world abandon but normally they to have the same reading interests and information needs as individuals in outside world. As they are well thought-out as underprivileged group by the simple fact, that they do not have physical access to libraries in the outside society There is a great need for studies on prison libraries in Coimbatore because the findings will be the mirror of awareness render by the policy makers & public. A case study method to reveals the opinions of prison librarians & inmates about the provisions of prison library services have adopted for the research. With this background the present research has been designed.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- This study will help to identify the role of the prison library in reforming & rehabilitation for inmates.
- It also helps to identify the library professional needs for the library service to inmates.
- Also helps to find out the efforts required by the library associations & policy makers in the development & growth of the prison library.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is limited west part of Tamil Nadu. The selected prison is expected to be good samples, representative of other prisons in the Country. The selected area is the South India's Manchester. This prison has been in operation before the independence of India, during the freedom struggle had well-known freedom fighters like V.O. Chidambaram and Periyar E.V. Ramasamy. Thiru.V. O. Chidambaram was confined in this prison. From this view point, that

it may be good representative of the past & the present.

LITERATUR REVIEW

Reed, Jeffrey G. (1971) analyzed Library and Information Services and Facilities in Prisons. In this six part reports on Prison Libraries and Information Services, emphasis is placed upon services, collections of materials, and facilities for inmates, particularly of Maximum and Medium Security Penal Institutions. It includes: examination of past and present conditions using a survey of the literature, standards and objectives of prison libraries, brief examination of a particular institution--Maryland House of Correction for Men, Jessup, Maryland--and projections of possibilities for library development with a proposal for a model prison library which proposal includes the following: Objectives, Staff Requirements; Collection Guidelines, Services to be Offered, Facilities, and proposed Budgets.

LeDonne, Marjorie (1974) states that, On-site visits were made to all federal and some state prisons in 10 selected states to provide current information on which decisions could be based for prison library and information services. The focus was on the broad issues of library goals and objectives, relationship of the library to the total institution and the outside community, the role of the correctional librarian, and questions of administrative structure and responsibilities. Specific findings were made in the areas of: quality, suitability, and patterns of services; problems of access; legal reference materials; staffing; censorship; selection and control of materials; library programs; space utilization; funding; administrative support of librarians; and library position in the administrative structure. A major finding was that there was an acute need for improved library service to confined persons. While no one pattern of service could be right for all situations, some of the critical factors should be: recognition of inmates' right to read, stable funding to allow systematic planning, communication and cooperation between the institution and outside libraries, service to staff as well as inmates, clientele participation in developing library services; and administrative support. The appendix includes a summary of relevant court decisions.

Shirley, Glennor (2003) mentioned Effective library services are reflected in programs, services, and collections, where traditionally these were geared toward the European American population. As prisons become increasingly diverse, prison librarians are surveyed to determine how they cope with the demands for materials and services that address diversity issues. Responders to the survey felt that adherence to Library Standards for good services were often

impeded by security concerns outside their control, and limited budgets. They did not see racial differences between library provider and the population as a relevant issue.

Diana, Reese (2003) states that incarcerated fathers and mothers are connecting to their children through books. Parents are coached on how to read a book aloud to their children. They are given ample opportunity to practice, with feedback from the librarians and trained peer coaches. When the parent is finally ready, he or she reads the selected book aloud onto an audiotape or as a video recording. Tapes and books are sent to the child (ren).

Lehmann, V (2000) adds that a broad academic education in traditional librarianship that includes coursework in outreach services, literacy, multicultural resources, legal collections, and materials for the learning disabled, is probably the best foundation on which to build a career in prison librarianship.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Approval to undertake the study in the Tamil Nadu Prison was received from the Inspector General of Prisons, Chennai & ethical permission for the pilot study in Coimbatore Prison was received from the Superintendent of Coimbatore Central Prison. The research method followed in this study is the survey of prison library in Coimbatore. Library & inmates of Coimbatore prison are the population & the systematic sampling method is used as a sample size for this study. The data collections are carried out by the questionnaire (closed & open) method.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

For the inmates the questionnaire was translated into Local (Tamil) Language & the data are collected by distributing the questionnaire personally with a brief description of the objectives of the study. Out of 900 literate inmates the questionnaire was circulated to the inmates who use library resources. Approximately 200 of inmates use library regularly, a total of 133 (66.5%) responses received. Out of 133, nearly 80% responses were in local language.

During the study, there were 1160 inmates as convicts in Coimbatore prison, remaining of them were in remands. Only the convicts are permitted to utilize the library & they were taken for the pilot study. In Women Prison in Coimbatore & Borstal school in Pollachi all the inmates were remands. All of them can utilize the library in their respective place.

In Central Prison all the respondents (123) were convicts, whereas in Women Prison & Borstal School all the inmates are remand. From them we received 10 questionnaires who mainly borrow the library books. For the Women Prison & Borstal School they don't have library inside the annexure. For Women Prison, they get books from the Central Prison & for Borstal School they get books from the Public library.

NUMBER OF LITERATE & ILLITERATE INMATES

During our study, out of 1160 convicts, 900 (78%) of them literate & remaining 260 (22%) of them are illiterate. The illiterate inmate's information needs are different. The study was concentrated only to the literate who use the library.

AGEWISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

When considering the age wise respondents, it is clear that the highest number of inmates belong to the age group of 23 – 40 yrs ranging to 85 respondents out of 133. Then followed by the 41-59 yrs ranging to 38 respondents, while the 18-22 and 60 & above holders follow with 5 respondents in each category. It also shows that crime rate is higher among these age groups. It is understood from the data that the adult group are very active reader. It is really a point of concern that majority of the inmates are adult and in an impressionable age group.

EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Since all the library users are definitely literate, it is interesting to concentrate on their educational status. Out of 900 literates, 740 inmates have their educational status above 5th standard & only 16% are below the 5th standard.

From the respondents, majority of the library users are those who are less than 10th standard that is 50 out of 133 of the respondents, while the 10th passed holders follow with 43 out of 133. It is understood from the table that the reading habits plays a key role among the growing learner as it is found to be very much significant in terms of behavior & also for future.

When we consider the level of inmates who are presently doing higher studies, the percentage is very low. Out 900 literate inmates only 42 (6%) of them are doing higher studies through distance education. In that 29 (69%) respondents out of 42, who are doing higher studies, are utilizing the library. This shows that the library is in great help to their higher studies & also to update their knowledge. Out of the non respondents of 31% it is understood on observation that most of them are utilizing the library but they are not interested in responds to questionnaire.

LIBRARY DETAILS

The working hours of the library are in the morning 9.00-12.00 & in the afternoon 2.00 to 4.30. The library is opened in all working days except in Sunday & Government holidays. During our study, the library was handled by the library in-charge who is a design craft instructor on deputation basis he is taking care of library. When considering the educational qualification of the library in-charge he is ITI qualified.

Catalogue of books is available as per Accession number wise. The catalogues are in book form. The Office of Central Prison, Coimbatore, maintains the control copy of the books list. The details of book are entered in Accession register & maintained by the Library. The library is well maintained with the help of the inmate, he who takes care of issuing & returning of books, arrangements of books for the past four years. The issue & return of books are carried out only on Friday of every week.

Collection Details in library

In this library there are nearly 4418 books available. From the year 2003 the growth of collection is decreased. And after 2008 not a single book is included to the library. The collection contains 50 years old books, some of them are rare books & some of them are not in reading condition. In library the stronger collections are Tamil books (local language), 92.5 percentage collections are in Tamil language & 7.5 percentage collections in English language. In that the storybooks, medicinal books, history books, self-motivational books; religious books are stronger in collection. The most demand books or collection received utmost attention are for the storybooks.

In considering periodicals collection, the library receives one free magazine (Kudimakkal Murasu) & one own publication magazine by the Tamil Nadu Prison (Ulloli – Half yearly magazine). Any one local language paper (Thinamalar/ Thinakaran/Thinathanthi) is available.

LIBRARY VISIT

The library is opened on all the working days but daily visit to the library is less. That is out of 133 respondents 17 of them are using the library daily, 9 of them visiting monthly ones, 18 of them rarely use the library, 10 of the respondents are from Women Prison & Borstal School. The majority 79 (59%) of the respondents are visiting the library weekly. The reason was, in library the books are issued weekly ones & the most of the inmates were engaged with their routine work in the day time. And they find time only in night so they prefer to borrow books & to read during lockup period.

RESOURCES ASSISTS FOR FURTHER EDUCATION

In measuring the level of the resources to assist for further education, 47 out of 133 respondents says that the library provides the resources, majority of them 76 out of 133 respondents says that the library is not providing the resource for further education

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The under listed are the findings of this study. The questionnaire & observation method were the tools used in evaluate the condition in the prison library used as case study.

1. Majority of the inmates are qualified with above 5th standard.
2. Majority of books are in Tamil (local) language.
3. The majority of respondents were in adult group they belong to the age group of 23 – 40 yrs ranging to 85 respondents out of 133.
4. Most of the respondents are qualified 10th & below 10th standard.
5. The majority of the inmates who are doing higher studies are utilizing the library well.
6. Majority of them 76 out of 133 respondents says that the library is not providing the resource for further education.
7. Some the resources in library are more than 50 year old, this helps the inmates to know lot of information of the past.
8. From inmates point view the library helps to know what are happen outside.
9. From the observation, the inmate feels that the library is their education institution.
10. Books are not sufficient, need more books.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

From the above study it is clear that there is more demand of information needs among the inmates. But the prison library is not able to fulfill their information needs because of the unbalanced infrastructures. Previously the prison library offered the service of lending the books from public library, but now this service is not functioning due to insufficient of staff. Public library should create outreach programme service for the inmates. The study found that the Prison library in-charge is not having library qualification. It is therefore recommended the prison libraries should be managed by the library profession or the library in-charge should have librarianship training. It also found that the prison library staff is not active members in any library association. The library association bodies or organs should visit these types of libraries & explain to the inmates about the benefits of using the library for their self development and knowledge gaining. The policy makers should give hand in bringing the required service to the library. The Government has also find out the possibilities of bringing more resource with less budget. Like introduce the information sharing within prison libraries & with other Government & non-Government organization.

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