

RURAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAMME OF LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT:

Today, we are living in the age of information and communication technology. The term Information Literacy is the permutation of two concept i. e. information and literacy. Both the concepts are vast and vital and the self-explanatory. Access to information facilitates all round development of individuals. Information literacy is an “emerging global priority” as the society moves further into the digital environment. Information is an important milestone in individuals’ lives during their lifelong learning processes. A number of information literacy programmes are conducted by government of India. All these programmes encompass on developing technological as well as information skills. Desirable future can be attainable only with the active and co-operative participation of society and government. Therefore, only the information literate can take effective decisions, participate fully in democratic society and can remain competitive in the international community. Information literacy is an essential pre-requisite for participative citizenship, social inclusion and lifelong learning. In this paper, I define the term information literacy and also tries to describe the role of information literacy in education, agriculture...etc. This paper discusses the need and importance of Information Literacy Program. This paper also explore the Information Literacy Program at the National Level conducted by Government of India.

Keywords: information literacy, information, Role of Information literacy, National Programmes on Information Literacy.

INTRODUCTION:

India, like most other developing countries, is predominantly a rural country with more than eighty percent of the population living in rural areas. While they constitute a vital base of the national economy, ironically, and sadly, most of the poor in India live rural areas under conditions which may be best described as ‘backward’. People in the rural areas are handicapped in several ways. Illiterate people are susceptible to social, political, economic and other technological exploitations because illiteracy is the root cause of ignorance, which leads to poverty. Illiteracy and poverty are inter-linked and both are the prime factors, which have widened the economic gap between rural and urban

communities. There are numerous example and case studies available establishing the fact information literacy is the prerequisite to initiate developmental process in any country. Illiteracy is also one biggest barrier to make use of information resources. Since one-third of population of our country is illiterate, therefore, they may not be able to use information effectively due to illiteracy. Now with a view to improving the rural area the communication and multimedia technologies have broken up the barriers to use information resources by illiterates up to some extent. Access to information through modern information and communication technology has opened up a variety of new channels for exchange of information they are not restricted by time, location, language and culture. Information literacy is the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use of information. The beginning of the 21st century has been called the information Age because of the explosion of information output and information sources. Information literacy has been defined as “the ability to locate, evaluate and use information from a variety of sources, to recognize when information is needed and to know how to learn” (Doyle 1996).

OBJECTIVE:

1. To define the concept of Information Literacy.
2. To explore the Information Literacy Program at the National Level conducted by government of India.
3. To discuss the need and importance of Information Literacy Program.
4. To describe the role of information literacy in education, agriculture...etc.

INFORMATION LITERACY CONCEPT:

Paul Zurkowski was the first to use the notion “information literacy”. The American researcher states that persons with skills in information area are “educated people with the purpose of applying information resources in their work place” (Zurkowski 1974).

The conceptual foundation was made by the American Library Association (ALA): “in order to have information literacy, a person needs to be aware of the information necessity, to be able to locate it, access and use it efficiently. People acquainted with information literacy are those who learned how to learn” (ALA 1989).

What is Information?

Information is a set of data which is processed in a meaningful way according to the given requirement. Information is processed, structured, or presented in a given context to make it meaningful and useful.

What is Literacy?

The Chambers English Dictionary (2003) gives the basic meaning of term literacy is the “condition of being literate”. On the other hand, it defines literate as learned, able to read and write, having a competence in or with. It means that the literacy is the classic or traditional competencies of learning how to read, to write and to perform numeric operations.

DEFINITION:

The **American Library Association** defines information literacy “as a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information” (ALA 2018).

The Alexandria proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning of 2005 states:

Information Literacy lies at the core of lifelong learning. It empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion of all nations. (IFLA 2005)

CILIP (UK) Information Literacy Group updated (April 2018) the definition of Information Literacy:

Information literacy is the ability to think critically and make balanced judgements about any information we find and use. It empowers us as citizens to reach and express informed views and to engage fully with society. (CILIP Information Literacy Group 2018)

CAUL (2004) defines information literacy is an understanding and set of abilities enabling individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the capability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information.

Need of Information Literacy:

- To raise awareness of the importance of information literacy in the information society.
- To inform participants about the current global developments and activities in information literacy.
- To make it possible for learner of all usage to explain the power
- To develop information literacy skills in learners.

- To promote literacy activities of adults and children.
- To organize continuing education, career guidance or counseling, to improve standards of living of rural people.
- To promote the integrated computer education in the rural area.
- To provide guidance to the farmers in the field of agriculture in the rural areas.
- To become independent learners.
- To make the common people part of Information Technology revolution.
- To provide knowledge and motivate people to acquire Information Technology ability.
- To help librarians to develop, assess and improve their information literacy Programmes.
- To promote awareness of family welfare schemes and children welfare schemes among rural people.

Importance of information literacy:

Information literacy is important for today's learners, it promotes problem solving approaches and thinking skills-asking questions and seeking answers, finding information, forming opinions, evaluating sources and making decisions fostering successful learners, effective contributors, confident individuals and responsible citizens. Information literacy is very significant to any country especially the less developed countries. It enables the local people to be empowered with necessary information that is relevant to better their lives and develop the society. Through literacy they are able to combat those challenges that may be affecting them in the society. Becker (1964) argued that, "information literacy is important and necessary in that it acts like social instrument or tool for developing human resources and formation of human capital needed to bring about desired development". It is important to note that the relationship that exists between information literacy and development is not as simple as it seems to be but a bit complex. This is possible due to the fact that the impact of literacy on development is highly influenced by the amount of information the people know or how much knowledge they have acquired. In other words, information literacy is meaningful and relevant only if it is able to change or transform the living conditions of the people.

Role of Information Literacy in Economic Development:

Role of information literacy in economic development, literacy is always considered to be an important key for socio-economic growth. To promote economic independence and quality of existence people need to remain informed and up-to-date. Information literacy is vital in the sense that it empowers

people to productive and to participate actively in the income generating activities. Information literacy advances the living standards for people and enables informed decision-making which translates to socio-economic development. Economic prosperity of a country entirely depends on the economic resources it has and human resource is an important part of economic resource. Human resource includes the population, its growth rate, skills, standard of living and the working capacity of the labour force and all the above factors can be enhanced by increasing the literacy rate of a population. Thus, literacy rate plays a key role in economic growth of a country. Japan can be an example where an economy has developed by excelling in human resources despite the deficiency of natural resource. As the biggest asset India has is its human resource, effective utilization of the human resource becomes very crucial for the country's economic progress and thus literacy plays all the more an important role in determining India's growth.

Role of Information Literacy in Agricultural Development:

Role of Information literacy in agricultural development, information literacy can help the farmers to adopt new farming methods and successfully integrates with their existing system. So far, we have not been able to exploit the opportunities available in the untapped potential in agriculture sector. In this sector, productivity is very low, infrastructure of storage and distribution of food grain is fragile, marketing strategies are not so developed, quality of seeds and high yield variety of crops are not so good, irrigation techniques and balanced fertilizer are not proper. The cause for this is the agricultural illiteracy in our farmers. There is need to make farmers agricultures literates because they are not well aware of modern techniques of agriculture. For improvement of information literacy of farmers, the adult literacy program is required to help the farmers for acquiring basic skills and abilities to receive needed agricultural information through modern communication channels as well as there should be development of rural electrification is required in order to render modern agricultural information.

So, in agricultural development IL play a significant role-

- by organising awareness programme, through newspapers and television, of the various sources of information for farmers would also be helpful. In addition, the use of a public notice board in a public space, such as the village tea shop, would be a useful place to begin.
- to broadcast agricultural information on radio and television frequently, in local dialect, to enable the illiterate farmers understand and apply the innovations. Also,

radio and television broadcast on agricultural information should be aired when majority of the farmers would have returned to home.

- The public library or community information centers should get closer to the farmers and enlighten them on the information and services they provide. The library should provide not only printed materials but also a lot of non-print and audio-visual materials since the farmers obtain and understand information better through oral, visual and auditory means of communication.
- IL also provide technological information such as pumps, corn cutter, farming tools needed for agricultural production through organizing exhibitions and supplying printed sources.

Role of Information Literacy in Industrial Development:

Role of Information Literacy in industrial development, information has its existence since the existence of human being. Information literate industry that can locate, evaluate and effectively use information is the key to the success of many industries. With the exponential increase in information, its management and use have become an important issue in the industry. More than five decades have passed but the situation of majority of villages remained more or less unchanged. The conditions of remotely located are not much satisfactory. Village and cottage industries are considered to be one of the important sectors for providing employment opportunities to this segment of the society. There are many information sources in rural areas both formal and informal information channels but the rural community does not know how to utilize. Information literacy helps them to get right information in right time.

Recent reports from industry and the literature indicate that information literacy and the related competencies, critical thinking and lifelong learning, are very important for employers. There is a growing consensus on the need for an information literate workforce and sense of urgency about its implementation (American Management Association, 2010; Zhang, 2010; Achiev,2008; Perrault, 2007; Peter D. Hart Research, 2005; Goad 2002; Partnership for 21st Century Skills).

Role of Information Literacy in Society:

Information literacy plays an important role in the lives of people especially with regards to social development. It encompasses the sustained ability to acquire and use information as appropriate to any situation, both locally and globally. The principal aim of this concept is free flow of information and

ideas to the population without any prejudice and thriving culture and democracy in the society. It would lead to the creation of a stronger, more stable economy and a more cohesive society.

Information literacy is the liberal art concept of preparing people for a lifetime learning, updated for an Information Age. "The purpose of information literacy is not to produce a nominal information society, for instance, how to use a particular software or a source of information, but rather to produce citizens who are actively literate, who are able to use and identify techniques useful in one environment and apply them to other environments." As foreseen many decades back by Peter Drucker (1969) "The most important thing people will have to learn is how to learn. The most important thing, in other words is not specific skills, but a universal skill-that of using knowledge and its systematic acquisition as foundation for performance, skill and achievement." Information literacy is an essential pre-requisite for participative citizenship, social inclusion and lifelong learning. Only if, individuals gain the ability to participate in an informed and reflective manner the society will improve. **Role of**

Information Literacy in Education:

Role of Information Literacy in education Information literacy forms the basis of lifelong learning which is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. It enables learners to find the right information from authentic sources and extend their investigations, become more self-directed and assume greater control over their own learning. Education is more than conveying a recognized body of knowledge but enhancing the ability of each learner to generate, access, assess, adopt and apply knowledge and information to solve complex problems (Ajayi, 2000). The purpose of education is to pass on society's values and accumulate body of knowledge to enhance meaningful living. Information literacy is important for today's learners, it promotes problem solving approaches and thinking skills – asking questions and seeking answers, finding information, forming opinions, evaluating sources and making decisions fostering successful learners, effective contributors, confident individuals and responsible citizens. Information literacy is the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyse, and use information. In today's society with the amount of information available it is important for students, especially teacher education students, to develop these skills.

Role of Information Literacy in Cultural Development:

Role of Information Literacy in cultural development, information literacy especially cultural literacy is needed to have the ability to explore information contained in various cultural elements. Development of cultural literacy is needed as a basis for the introduction of culture and the process of cultural learning to the community. With the development of cultural literacy, future generations will be built

who have the soul and character in accordance with the nation's cultural values. This happens because future generations will understand the noble values of national culture. Literacy activities are a reflection of culture. In this case literacy activities can be used as a means of disseminating and cultural inheritance. The young generation must recognize and preserve their own regional culture in order to strengthen and preserve national culture. Preservation of national norms is an attempt to maintain cultural values. Therefore, the purpose of cultural preservation is to strengthen cultural values within the nation.

According to the Gboyega Banjo the role of libraries and information literacy programme for cultural development is that it;

- Promotes awareness of culture heritage, appreciation of arts, scientific achievement and innovations;
- Provides access to cultural expression of all performing arts;
- Foster intercultural dialogue and favoring cultural diversity.

NATIONAL PROGRAMMES ON INFORMATION LITERACY CONDUCTED BY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA):

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner, as mandated by 86th amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory Education to the Children of 6-14 years age group, a Fundamental Right. Launched in 2001, the goal of the SSA is to ensure that 'every child is in school and is learning well.'

District Primary Education Programme (DPEP):

DPEP was launched in 1994 to revitalise the primary education and to achieve the objective of universalisation of primary education. DPEP is based on the principle of "additionality" and structured to fill the existing gap in central and state schemes. DPEP adopts a holistic and area specific approach with district as the unit of planning.

National Literacy Mission (NLM):

NLM is a nationwide program started by Government of India in 1988 with the approval of the Cabinet as an independent and autonomous wing of the Ministry of HRD. It aims to educate 80 million adults in the age group of 15 - 35 over an eighty-year period. By "literacy", the NLM means not only learning

how to read, write and count but also helping people understand why they are deprived and helping them move towards change (NLM, 1998).

National Knowledge Commission (NKC):

In India the initiatives to make the country an information literate society have already been made in the year 2005, with the setting of a National Knowledge Commission (NKC) with a mandate to transform India of 21st century into a knowledge society (NKC, 2005).

Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA):

RMSA is a centrally sponsored scheme of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, for the development of secondary education in public schools throughout India. It was launched in March 2009. The implementation of the scheme was started from 2009-2010 to provide conditions for an efficient growth, development and equity for all.

TARA Akshar (+):

TARA Akshar (+) is an innovative literacy programme that is transforming the lives of rural women all over the country. Hoping to improve the low literacy rate amongst Indian women and provide them with opportunities for sustainable livelihoods, the unique laptop based functional literacy programme, teaches rural illiterate and semi-literate women to read and write in Hindi, and carry out basic numeric calculations.

TARA Akshar (+) is an initiative of the Development Alternatives (DA) Group, a not-for-profit organisation that has been working in the field of sustainable livelihoods for the past 25 years. TARAhaat Information and Marketing Services Ltd., the ICT arm of DA, developed the TARA Akshar+ software in 2004-2006. Today, rural women are educated in just 98 contact hours with the software.

Saakshar Bharat:

This Programme goes beyond '3' R's (i.e., Reading, Writing & Arithmetic); for it also seeks to create awareness of social disparities and a person's deprivation on the means for its amelioration and general well-being. This programme was formulated in 2009 with the objective of achieving 80% literacy level at national level, by focusing on adult women literacy seeking to reduce the gap between male and female literacy to not more than 10 percentage points.

E-Pathshala:

E-Pathshala is a portal jointly initiated by Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India and National Council of Educational Research and Training launched in November 2015. Epathshala it hosts educational resources for teachers, students, parents, researchers and educators, which is available on Web, Android, IOS and windows platforms. The resources are available in English, Hindi and Urdu languages.

Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan:

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India implements a scheme titled “Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)” under Digital India programme to user in digital literacy in rural India by covering 6 crore rural households (one person per household) by 31.03.2022. The Scheme aims to bridge the digital divide, specifically targeting the rural population including the marginalised sections of society like Scheduled Castes (SC)/Scheduled Tribes (ST), Below Poverty Line (BPL), Women, differently-abled persons and minorities.

National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM):

The Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (DISHA) or National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM) Scheme has been formulated to impart IT training to 52.5 lakh persons, including Anganwadi and ASHA workers and authorized ration dealers in all the States/UTs across the country so that the non-IT literate citizens are trained to become IT literate so as to enable them to actively and effectively participate in the democratic and development process and also enhance their livelihood.

Conclusion:

The Information Literacy Programmes encompasses information as information-literate person can manipulate information tools to gain access to information. This paper discusses the need and importance of Information Literacy Program in rural area. Till the beginning of the Twentieth century “literacy” meant the ability to recall and recite from familiar texts and affix one’s signature. In the present age, ability to read and write is not the only indicator/parameter for the measurement of literacy, but the term is present, is used frequently to describe something higher-the ability to understand new ideas and use these ideas appropriately when needed. The study shows the role of information literacy in education, agriculture...etc. The study also explore the Information Literacy Program at the National Level conducted by government of India. In order to achieve satisfactory results people are to be taught and trained to become efficient information literates and lifelong learners to participate fully as efficient citizens of 21st Century. They have to acquire information skills and technological expertise for their professional, personal and even for their entertainment activities.

According to the American Library Association “a country’s most valuable commodity is knowledge and information literate citizenry is the most valuable resources”.

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