Information Support by KILA Library for Capacity Building of Elected Members of Grama Panchayats: A Study

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Abstract

This study makes an attempt to see whether the library and information support rendered by Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) to the elected functionaries of Village Panchayats who come to KILA for enhancing their capacity by taking part in the training programmes, is efficacious and if not, to suggest measures for betterment. It is expected that the values they acquire and the attitudes they develop through training will capacitate them to offer their services and participation in Working Groups and Technical Advisory Committees even after the expiry of their term in the respective Panchayats, Municipalities and Municipal Corporations.

Keywords

Information support, Capacity building, Kerala Institute of Local Administration Library

Electronic access

The journal is available at www.jalis.in

INTRODUCTION

India lives in villages and that the state and central governments are trying to develop the villages by implementing various schemes through the Local Governments. Development of any country or region should begin at grass roots level and to achieve it, timely information is a pre-requisite. Training on a larger scale is being imparted to all functionaries of Local Self Government Institutions to build their capacity for formulating and implementing local development plans for economic development and social justice. Government has to play a conscious role in improving governance at the local level. If Government transfers a lot of responsibilities and funds to Local Governments, it is Government's responsibility to ensure that those responsibilities are carried out effectively and the funds are utilized properly [1].

One, who looks at the history of capacity building initiatives of Kerala State, can trace that an attempt to begin research and training centres under the state Government started in 1970s. These institutions were established either with the aim of imparting special training programmes in the areas concerned or for undertaking consultancy activities. The emergence of new techniques in all spheres of intellectual activity opened up venues for acquiring additional skills to abridge with the development in the relevant areas [2]. No doubt, these full- fledged training centres have developed with sophisticated library facilities to support training research and consultancy services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A small number of minor studies have been conducted focussing the KILA Library by various library professionals. KILA Library is a specialized library that helps to strengthen decentralised governance in the Kerala state. Paramjeet K Walia and Monika Gupta (2012), in their study provided a brief overview of the collection of Delhi Public Library System (DLPS). They focused the strength and weakness of their book collection in relation to the population of Delhi, the capital city of India [3]. Binitha, P.K (2008), has made a study on KILA digital collections in her project on "Creating and customizing the collection of Women Empowerment using Winisis and Genisis Web [4]. Sudha, K.R (2007) in her dissertation "Design and Development of a Digital Library on Gender Budgeting using Greenstone Digital Library Software" based upon the

digital collections of Kerala Institute of Local Administration [**5**]. Sharmila Ghosh (2003) critically studied the service and systems of Institute of Social Science Library, New Delhi. In her study she evaluated how ISS library and documentation centre performs a collaborative and interactive relation between research and information within the electronic environment [**6**].

Kazi, S.A. and Tadasad,P.G (2006), in their paper made an attempt to identify the information needs of the NGOs in Gulbarga district of Hyderabad-Karnataka region. They observed that the NGOs need information support from all the angles for implementing their rural development programmes successfully [**7**]. Majeed, K.C.A. (2002) evaluated the village library's role in social development. The paper illustrated how village libraries in Kerala state can be functioned more effective [**8**]. Francis, A.T. (1998) evaluated the existing information system in Kerala and highlighted essential structural reforms for providing integrated information services in the society [**9**]. In: *Towards the new Information Society of Tomorrow* ed by Malwad et al. Pp. 153-159, New Delhi, International Federation for Information and Documentation.

The Kerala Institute of Local Administration – Training and Research Institute

Kerala Institute of Local Administration, popularly known as KILA established in 1990at the central part of Kerala, Thrissur as a nodal capacity building institution with mandate of strengthening local governance through training, research and consultancy by the Government of Kerala under Ministry of Local Governance. Obviously KILA is the product of local Government institutions in Kerala. And thereby its prime obligation is to quench the training needs of local self-government institutions across the state. The institute has become a prominent one with its manifold capacity building activities meant for local governance and participatory planning for both urban and rural local government institutions viz. training, action-oriented research, publications, seminars and workshops, documentation and information services [**9**].

The other states in the country use to send their functionaries of Panchayati Raj institutions to KILA for exposure visit to see the working of participatory planning and local governance. Besides, the stakeholders of local governments from other nations especially the South Asia nations visit

the Institute to get a closer look at the participatory planning process being successfully implemented at the grassroots level in Kerala.

KILA Library

Being a documentation and resources centre of KILA, the Library is closely related to the Institute's research and development programmes and grassroots activities in the development sector. The resource base of the Library is envious in the sense that it covers all major areas and issues relating to the Institute's ongoing and programmes and activities and specially decentralised governance, urban studies, economic affairs, social studies, gender studies, human rights and related topics. Since the institute's focus is in the area of local self-government (*Panchayati Raj*) the Library & Information Centre of KILA has developed a specialized collection of resources in this area, including its subsystems-rural and urban local governance, decentralisation, federalism, women's empowerment and related issues. The centre keeps network with institutions like Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), New Delhi, Society for Participatory Research in Asia, to name a few, engaged in similar and allied areas of study. It also shoulders the role of a nodal agency for exchange and sharing of information in the topic of focus.

KILA Library, though not large, has a desirable collection of core documents on 'local government'. But the collection remains underutilized and the Library could not be put to its real use for it is looked up on as a facilitators/support service to the trainees (and not even for training process) attending KILA courses. The Library's role, service and experience would be unique in the state, in the sense it has been made an active partner in the dissemination of information to all those engaged in the creation of local government system in the state indirectly through an array of library services, publications, mass media, research topics, etc

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The present study makes an attempt to identify the information needs of Grama Panchayat functionaries and how far KILA and its Library played its role to satisfy their felt needs for the betterment of the society.

The study also tries to put measures to be taken to improve the effectiveness of existing information services of KILA Library.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POPULATION

KILA is a unique agency to impart training to the Local Government functionaries for building their capacity to effectively perform their duties. In order to cater to the needs of those who want to learn about decentralized governance. The Certificate Course in Local Governance started by KILA since 2003 July with the prime objective of developing understanding, skills and capacities required by elected representatives for effective involvement in local governance. Out of the 225 persons enrolled in five batches during the year from 2011 to 2012, 180 persons were selected as sample for the study using simple random method. The respondents belonged to various religions, educational backgrounds and age groups. The students constitute Presidents, Vice Presidents and Members of Grama Panchayats from all over the State of Kerala.

Method Adopted for the Study

The study has been taken up as a project, for which information was gathered from the Grama Panchayat members, Vice Presidents and Presidents enrolled in the certificate course. The type of design chosen for the study was descriptive or diagnostic and the method adopted was field survey and interviews. The data collected from respondents through questionnaire was tabulated using simple statistical tools. Tough questionnaires were distributed among 180 elected representatives who enrolled, only 160 responded. Ample discussions were also held with the Librarian and Library staff.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Out of the enrolled candidates, 68 per cent belonged to the age group of above 40 years and only 32 per cent were in the age group of below 40 years. This reveals that the candidates enrolled for the course were well experienced in social activities. With regard to education also majority (64 per cent) possessed graduate degree. Regarding position at the time of enrolment, 62 per cent were Members of Grama Panchayats. The sample distribution of questionnaires is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by their Personal Data

	Variable	Frequency	%
Age	Below 40 years	51	32
	40 years and above	109	68
	Total	**160**	**100**
Education	Degree	103	64
	Postgraduate	38	24
	Others	19	12
	Total	**160**	**100**
Position	President	24	15
	Vice President	36	23
	Member	100	62
	Total	**160**	**100**

It is revealed from the Table 2 that, out of the candidates, 27 per cent belonged to the area of specialization, i.e. social welfare and 14 per cent to women empowerment. 67 per cent of the candidates were in the habit of using library daily for reference and reading. The visitors register kept in the Library has proved this. This has revealed their keenness to build up their capacity through reading and learning.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Field of Specialization

Sl. No.	Area of Specialization	Frequency	%
1	Social Welfare	43	27
2	Agriculture & Irrigation	26	16
3	Women Empowerment	22	14
4	Child Development	12	8
5	Public Works	11	7
6	Poverty Alleviation	11	7
7	Decentralized Planning	9	5
8	SC/ST Development	8	5
9	Animal Husbandry and Fisheries	6	4
10	Watershed	6	4
11	Education	6	3
	Total	**160**	**100**

Table 4 & 5 depict that the prime objective of their visit to the library was to gather specific information with regard to the topics included in the course (55 per cent) have responded that they were getting the required information from the collections instead of approaching the Librarian. Only 29 per cent consulted Librarian for their needs. From this, it is evident that the users preferred to refer to the collection instead of depending upon the Library staff.

Table 4: Distribution According to Purpose of Visit to Library

Sl. No.	Category	Nos.	%
1	For specific information	88	55
2	To go through journals	22	14
3	To refer books/reports	20	13
4	To collect information for assignments	16	10
5	To collect information for preparing an article	14	8
	Total	**160**	**100**

per cent) and that too by referring the books concerned (83 per cent). Most of the members (71

Table 5: Distribution of Elected Representatives by Requirement

Sl. No.	Category	Nos.	%
1	Books	133	83
2	Study reports	17	11
3	KILA reading materials	10	6
5	Others(please specify)	0	0
	Total	**160**	**100**

There is no doubt that the Library is well endowed in terms of adequacy of collection, good physical facilities, reading environment and library space now available. Majority of the respondents have agreed that they had found the collection quite sufficient. 88 per cent unanimously agreed to the excellent physical facilities rendered by the KILA Library (Table 6 & 7).

Table 6: Distribution by Adequacy of Library Collection

Sl. No.	Details	Yes	%	No	%	Total	Total %
1	Adequacy of collection	138	86	22	14	160	100
2	Adequacy of journals	142	89	18	11	160	100
3	Adequacy of e journals	130	81	30	19	160	100
4	Non availability of documents	46	29	114	71	160	100

Table 7: Distribution by Physical Facilities of Library

Sl. No.	Facility	Satisfactory	%	Un Satisfactory	%	Total	Total %
1	Physical facility	141	88	19	12	160	100
2	Library space	132	83	28	17	160	100
3	Reading Environment	152	95	8	5	160	100

Table 8: Distribution of Participants by User Satisfaction

Sl. No.	Service	Bad	%	Satis-factory	%	Good	%	Excellent	%	Total	Total %
1	Lending Service	16	10	32	20	84	52	28	18	160	100
2	Internet Service	22	14	36	22	64	40	38	24	160	100
3	Reference Service	0	0	40	25	60	38	60	37	160	100
4	Newspaper Clipping Service	18	11	24	15	38	24	80	50	160	100

Majority of respondents (91 per cent) were not satisfied with the strength of staff available in the Library at service. Apart from Librarian, one Library Assistant, one Data Entry Operator and one Library Attendant were available in the Library. Considering the status of an Institution of excellence, this situation is not very healthy. The shortage of library staff has reflected in the poor lending service as well as information services of the Library as far as the respondents are concerned.

It is inferred that the library does not provide any Internet based services to the users. Though the Library has got Internet connection, the services were not open to its users. Cent per cent respondents have raised their demand to strengthen the Internet based services of the library. Regarding user satisfaction, the respondents had varied opinion. The general attitude of the respondents was that they were unsatisfactory with regard to lending and internet service of the Library. However, they were satisfied with the reference and newspaper clipping services (Table 8).

The Library also renders continuing service. While 27 per cent contact Librarian over telephone to clarify their doubts, 55 per cent make use of the services of help Desk attached to the Library (Table 9).

Table 9: Continuing Service of Library

Sl	Continuing Service	Number	%
1	Over Telephone to the Librarian	43	27
2	Through Writing Letters	14	9
3	By Visiting the Library	10	6
4	By Contacting the Help Desk	88	55
5	By Other Means	5	3
	Total	160	100

As per Table 10, 28 per cent have indicated that the Library was very helpful to them in understanding the various facets of budget preparation of the local bodies and the development plan formulation and its implementation.

Table 10: Distribution of Responses by Indicators capacity

Sl. No.	Indicators of capacity Building	Nos.	%
1	As facilitator for the coordinated activities of people	10	6
2	To serve people to get prompt services from the local body	20	12
3	For policy formulation of local body	32	20
4	To help people in solving their problems	18	11
5	Mediator's role in redressal of dispute	8	5
6	Budget preparation	44	28
7	Plan formulation and implementation	28	18
	Total	160	100

Taking into consideration the impact of KILA Library on the development of capabilities of the candidates, the knowledge gained through the Library has played a lead role in budget preparation, plan implementation and monitoring with respect to their local bodies.

Information Network with Local Self Government Institution Libraries

Network is comparatively a recent addition to the technology of library and information science. Networking provides a means by which a number of institutions can share equipments, programmes and database using communication lines. The information support system is a prerequisite for integrated rural as well as urban development. Towards this end, a proper information infrastructure has to be developed. There is urgent need for establishing a Network of libraries attached to Local Self Government Institutions with KILA Library as an apex body of local government institutions. KILA library should take steps in this direction and providing access to Online Public Access Catalogue through Website etc.

Conclusion

As the responsibilities of the elected representatives of local governments are multifarious, they should take lead role in various local development activities such as community based services, formal and non-formal education, information literacy and related services, library and information services, health and family welfare services, agriculture, post-harvest technology, water management, social welfare program, etc. The collection of KILA Library has a particular focus on Panchayati Raj, decentralized

planning, poverty alleviation, rural development, urban development, gender in governance etc. The Library has a specialised collection of over 15,000 titles including books, research reports and over 100 journals focussing on these thrust areas. Efforts were in progress to digitize the library and develop it as a full-fledged information centre on local governance, with all modern amenities. The Library is found very helpful and supportive to the elected representatives of Grama Panchayats who enrolled in the certificate courses conducted by the Institute in developing their capacity as people's representatives. Yet there are certain deficiencies in the services expected from the library. The lending service, library timing, inadequate e-resources, high speed Internet connectivity and web based services etc. are to be streamlined and strengthened to provide effective service to end users.

Suggestion for Further Research

KILA is on the threshold of being national institution of training, research and consultancy in the area of local governance and centralized planning. The Library also has equal status and is turned out to be the unique one in the country. Therefore, studies with wider perspective regarding the role of KILA Library are also suggested with state wide samples of elected representatives in Kerala.

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