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Original Research Article

Challenges and possibilities in the academic libraries of assam in promoting positive climate and culture in the educational institutes in the current scenario

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ABSTRACT

Educational institutes provide education to the learners with a vision to create a generation that can design and build a better society in near future. Libraries can be treated as the knowledge hub for educational institutes. The institutes spend lots of money in the libraries so that users can get their required information to carry the intellectual practices. Though the parent institutes spent so much money in the libraries, in this study, it is seen that about 30% of the users are not satisfied with the current service of their academic libraries and many users expect some more from the libraries; which affects the positive climate and culture of the parent institute. This study is based on a descriptive, mix-method research approach. In this paper, the challenges and possibilities carried by the academic libraries of Assam in promoting a positive climate and culture in the institutions are traced and discussed. Many major issues like absence in the library orientation program, Communication gap between the library staff and the users, lack of professional and permanent staff, etc. are identified during the study which affects the academic libraries of Assam. Some recommendations are also made in the paper to enhance the library services in the academic institution.

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1. Introduction

A library is a place where information resources are kept and managed in an organized way to fulfill the information needs of the user community. Based on their function libraries are categorized as the public library, academic library and special libraries. The libraries which are attached to the educational institute with two basic objectives – ‘to support the academic curriculum’ and ‘to assist the research work of the users of the institute i.e. the faculty and the students’ are known as the academic library. The academic libraries have the highest possibilities to contribute towards the practice of a healthy academic environment.

Educational institutes provide education to the learners with a vision to create a generation that can design and build a better society in near future. The ways, in which

the administrations and other staff work together, their set of values, assumption to obtain their vision and mission creates the culture in an educational institute (Shafer, 2018).¹ The teaching and learning attitude of the participants and its effect, relation among the teachers, students, guardians and administration, the environment of the institute constitute the climate of the educational institute. The concept of climate and culture of an educational institute is interrelated. The positive climate and culture help an academic institute to obtain its optimum goal of providing quality education (Kane et al., 2016).²

In this paper, the contribution of libraries as an important part of an educational institute in different aspects as well as its challenges and possibilities in promoting a positive climate and culture in the institutes is discussed.

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2. Literature Review

According to the National School Climate Center (n.d.), school climate has 12 dimensions i.e. Rules and Norms, Sense of Physical Security, Sense of Social-Emotional Security, Teaching and Learning which includes Support for Learning, Social and Civic Learning, Respect for Diversity, Social Support-Adults, Social Support-Students, School Connectedness/Engagement, Physical Surroundings, Leadership, professional Relationships. A positive climate in an academic institute brings about productive contributions to society.

A strong and significant relationship can be established between the culture and the performance of an academic institute (Stevenson,2006).³ Fundamental beliefs and assumptions, Shared values, Norms, Patterns and behaviors, etc. are some conclusive elements to establish the culture of an institute (Shafer, 2018). When an academic institute carries a positive culture, it creates the potential to grow in a positive direction.

Kothari Commission(1964)⁴ recommended to establish libraries in the academic institutes of various stages i.e. school, college and university. This commission stated in their report that as a norm, a university should spend each year about Rs. 25.00 for each student and Rs.300.00 per teacher or from 6.5% to 10% of the total budget depending on the stage of development of each university library.

The Mehrotra Committee which was formed in 1983 submitted their report to the UGC on September 3, 1986, recommended to make essential the qualifying of National Eligibility Test in Library and Information Science for the lecturers, assistant librarians, documentation officers and college librarians rather than M.Phil and Ph.D. The Committee also suggested that librarians should be given duty leave to attend summer schools, workshops, seminars, etc., to keep them abreast with the modern developments (Jagannathan, 2007).⁵

Gabbay & Shoham (2019)⁶ in their research found that the contribution of library services to the various aspects of teaching and research is perceived as higher by the librarians than by the faculty members. Most of the faculty members believe that the library fulfills their teaching needs whether some other faculty members expect some more.

Rasul & Singh (2010)⁷ in their article ‘The role of academic libraries in facilitating postgraduate students’ research’ opined that Postgraduate students are key producers of research in universities, and an important element in their research process is the access to information. The study revealed that 72.5% of the post-graduate students are satisfied by the current role of the libraries in their academic institutes.

Research papers show that libraries are playing an important role in enhancing research culture as well as the academic environment in the academic environment (Haglund, 2008;⁸ Simmonds, 2001; Rowley, 2004).^{1,9}

From the literature reviewed it is observed that academic libraries are contributing to maintain a good relationship between the teachers and students, providing support for learning, helping to carry the fundamental beliefs and assumptions etc. in its parent organizations. Thus academic libraries help in promoting a positive climate and culture in the educational institute. It is also observed from the reviewed literature that though in all the cases majority of the samples are satisfied with the role played by the library but it is not 100%.

There is a lack of research paper that focuses on the challenges and possibilities carried out by the academic libraries to contribute for the academic institutions to achieve their goals in the current scenario of Assam.

3. Objectives

When the library increases the capability to fulfill the information need of the members of the institute, library staff develops their professional behavior then there will be a growth in the goodwill among the members for the institute, the inter-personal relationship developed and boosts the academic practices of the institute which enhance the positive climate and culture. The objectives of the study are.

1. To identify the challenges faced by the libraries while providing information services.
2. To discuss the possibilities carried by the library to improve the information services.
3. Highlight some recommendations to improve the library service so that a positive climate and culture can be promoted by the library.

4. Materials and Methods

The study is based on descriptive, mix-method research approach. Reports on education from various committees and some other relevant materials are consulted. A survey was also conducted among the library users during the study. Data which are collected from the survey are analyzed diagrammatically as well as textually; recommendations on the library which was reflected in the reports and other materials are also analyzed and highlighted in the study. Informal interview with some library staff from different academic institutes and library users was also conducted for a better understanding of the present scenario of the matter under study.

5. Analysis and Interpretation

It is seen that the old committees/ commissions focuses on the following sectors of education regarding the library-

1. Library facility for the school, college and university.
2. Budget for the library.

3. Acquisition of documents/books for the library.
4. Building and infrastructure for the library.
5. Library staff.
6. Technological asset in libraries.

In 2019, the national education policy of India also advocated that-

1. Every school complex should have a library
2. To ensure foundational literacy and numeracy among all children, public and school libraries expanded to build a culture of reading and communication.

To evaluate the current scenario of the academic libraries, a survey was conducted among 130 samples from different academic institutes including schools, colleges, universities from different parts of Assam.¹⁰

The sample variety can be represented as-

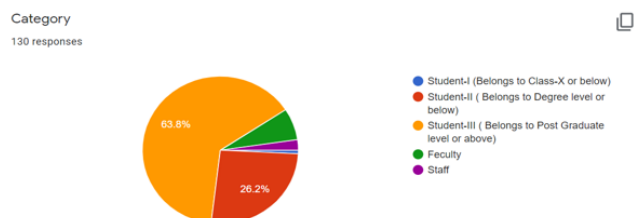


Fig. 1: Samples and their categories

97.7% of the sample belongs to an academic institute where there is a functional library. The rest of the sample has a library but is not functional. 97.7% of the samples visit the library whereas the rests are not. It is also seen from the survey that 10.9% of the sample feel hesitation to visit the library. 76.7% of the total respondent visits the library for consulting course material, 9.3% to consult research materials and 14% went there in some other perspective like newspaper reading, book reading etc. 69.5% have the digital facility in their libraries and 30.5% don't. Almost 90% of the respondents don't have the facility of 24*7 library service. 7%, 16.3% and 76.7% of them prefer digital documents only, the physical document and both types respectively. 47.7% of the total respondents are not satisfied with the collection of the libraries whereas 13.2% are not satisfied with the attitude of the library staff.

When it comes to the contribution of the libraries to promote positive climate and culture in its parent institute 7.7% of the respondent clearly said that it is not good whereas 55.4% remarked it as good and 36.9% responded as satisfactory but not up to the mark.¹¹

From the survey, the response of the respondents highlighted that for better service, the library should give more attention to- collection (67.2% of the respondents), technical assets (17.2% of the respondents), infrastructure (9.4% of the respondents) and attitude of the staff (6.2% of the response).

Contribution of the library to maintain or improve the academic climate and culture in the institute is-

130 responses

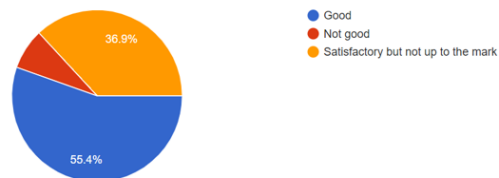


Fig. 2: Contribution of libraries to promote positive climate and culture in the parent institute

For better service, library should give more attention on-

128 responses

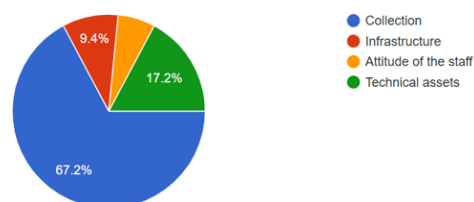


Fig. 3: Response for improvement of the library

Apart from the above opinion, the respondents also provide some other suggestions to improve the library service so that it can enhance the contribution of libraries to promote a positive climate and culture in the parent institute. Some of these are.

1. In some institutes, libraries don't have any permanent librarians and in some cases, the libraries are totally out of order. These libraries should be made functional.
2. Most of the respondents suggested to increase the library hours up to 24*7.
3. Libraries should play a role to generate reading habits and libraries must be developed in such a way that they could attract readers.

When we talked with the library professionals, they informed us that most of them are suffering from financial problems. Some other important aspects come to know after the interviews, these are.

1. Most of the users don't visit the library orientation programs. They are unaware of many important functions of the library like online subscriptions of the library, how to use the OPAC, how to visit and access the digital repository of the library etc.
2. The communication gap between the library and the users specially with the students. In many cases, the librarian sent information to the concerned authority

about the new arrival of the information resource but it is not passed to the students due to many reasons mostly negligence.

3. Lack of professional and permanent staff is a major headache for the librarians to run the library smoothly.

When we went to the faculty members, most of them have an issue that all the books recommended by them are not acquired by the library i.e. they are also not satisfied with collections.

Thus from the above analysis, it can be interpreted that-

1. 2.3% of the samples have libraries that are not functional due to various reasons and 2.3% of the respondents don't visit the library. That means, most of the potential users visit the library of an academic institute visit library if it is functional. So, every academic institute should have a healthy library which is recommended in the New education policy 2019, Kothari Commission 1964 and reputed committees.
2. 47.7% respondents don't satisfied with the collection of the libraries, 13.2% are not satisfied with the attitude of the library staff, almost 90% don't have 24*7 library service and 30.5% don't have a digital facility available in the library whereas 7% of the total respondent like to go through digital document only. These may be results to create hesitation to visit the library which is reported as 10.9% in the survey. Some other factors are also there which causes the hesitation to visit the library. Some of these are- they don't have the reading habit or the habit of visiting the library, they don't familiar with the library environment and library services offered by the library as they didn't visit the library orientation program etc.

This advocated the national education policy 2019 recommendation of building a culture of reading and communication in the schools.

3. Budget is a serious and sensitive matter regarding the library. Due to the financial problem libraries are unable to acquire all of their required sources to provide services to the users including the information resources i.e. collection development etc and other services. In the study, it is seen in the response of the library professionals as well as the users.
4. It is a clear fact that in this era of information exploration a library can't be self-sufficient, inter-library loans, library consortia, online subscriptions etc should be introduced in the library. Committee on National Network System for Universities /Libraries of 1988 Suggestion provides an indication towards it.
5. To run the library in an up-to-date mode the librarian or the library administrator should be eligible enough and there should be adequate library staff. Which is

indicated in the Mehrotra Committee report. Without proper library staff libraries couldn't run smoothly and create a positive vibe towards the institute which is seen in the survey responds that 13.2% are not satisfied with the attitude of the library staff and 6.2% of the respondents advised to improve the attitude of the staff. The problems regarding the proper professional staff are also reported by the librarians in the interview.

6. Findings

It is clear that, though libraries carry lots of potentials to promote a positive climate and culture in the educational institute, there are lots of challenges in front of the library administrator to achieve it. From this study, we are trying to highlight some challenges, possibilities possess by the library and provide some recommendations.

6.1. Challenges

1. *Budget:* The library budget is a challenging task for the librarian. The library has to manage all its collection, services and other facilities basically with the limited financial assistance provided by the parent institute depending on its type i.e. University, college, school etc.
2. *Collection development:* Collection development is another challenging task. It can be divided into two categories i.e. acquisition and mode of subscription. What are the resources that are going acquired by the library based on the recommendation of the faculty members and what will be its mode of subscription; whether it will be in physical form or digital or both have to be decided by the librarian.
3. *Creating reading habits:* In this era of social media, it is a very serious task for the library to attract potential users to the library and create a reading habit among them.
4. *Communication gap:* It is very important to remove the communication gap between the potential users and the library to provide them with up-to-date information about the resources and services available in the library.
5. Developing professional behavior in the library staff is a heavy task for the librarian.

6.2. Possibilities and recommendations

1. Academic libraries should be made functional with professional staff so that they can provide service at the optimum level.
2. The recommendation of New Education Policy 2019 to build a culture of reading and communication in the schools must be implemented.
3. Infrastructure development and introducing new technological equipment in the libraries may result in more effective services by the libraries.

4. Inter-Library Loan, Library Consortium, the online subscription can help to fulfill the information need of the users. Libraries should work on this.
5. To reduce the communication gap awareness program, online campaign about the libraries should be done.
6. There should be some active student members in the library committee.
7. A healthy fund with a skilled librarian carries the highest possibilities. Educational institutes should provide more importance while sanctioning the library budget and provide financial assistance accordingly.

7. Conclusion

From this study, we may conclude that, though there are lots of challenges, a smart budget with a skilled librarian, ICT tools with professional staff, a reading habit from the primary level with proper communication with the library and awareness about library culture carry lots of possibilities to overcome the challenges and promote positive culture and climate in the educational institute.

8. Source of Funding

None.


9. Conflict of Interest

None.

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