

A Comparison of the Conditions of Iran Public Libraries with the IFLA Standards

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Abstract:

This study aimed to compare the conditions of the public libraries in Iran with the standards of IFLA. Iran is a country in the southwest of Asia. With 1,648,669 square kilometres, it is the 18th country in the world and has a population of 77,189,669. There are more than 3000 public libraries in Iran. Under Iran's law, the Iran public libraries Foundation, which is a non-governmental entity, is responsible for the task of establishing, constructing, equipping, developing, managing, and monitoring the public libraries across the country. In this study, the five indicators of collections, stack space, the space of the reading hall and public library staff are compared with the IFLA standards to determine the difference between the current conditions and the standards. The methodology of the research is comparative. Data collection instrument is a checklist, based on which the number of public libraries in different indices will be extracted and compared with IFLA standards. This study presents a clear portrait of the conditions of public libraries in a country and can be a model for other developing countries to compare the conditions of public libraries with IFLA standards. Presenting this article and sharing its results, the authors also hope to benefit from the opinions of other expert participants in IFLA conference for the further improvement of public library activities.

Keywords: IFLA Standards, public libraries, Iran, Iran Public Libraries Foundation

Introduction

Public libraries are a global phenomenon. They are located in various kinds of societies including in different cultures and in various levels of developments.

Although public libraries can vary very much by the way they operate and by how they provide and deliver their services, they normally have common characteristics which can be defined as follows. A public library is an organization which has been established, supported and also funded by society. These activities are done through local, regional or national government or the other social organization forms. (IFLA guidelines for public libraries, 2010, 1).

Iran is located in South-West Asia with 1,648,669 square kilometres and is the 18th country with a population of 77,189,669. The first public library in Iran in modern time was opened in 1961 in Tehran Park-e Shahr. In 1965 a law was adopted that stipulated that 1.5 percent of the annual incomes of municipalities is allocated to the creation and development of public libraries. As a result of this law, public libraries in small and big cities in Iran were gradually developed (Mazinani, 2002).

However in 1973, due to unprecedented growth of incomes as a result of the sharp increase of global oil price, the government decided to forgo the contribution of municipalities to manage their public libraries. At the time, the government thought that its collections allowed it to centrally finance the public libraries of the country. Consequently, with approving of the 49th note of budget law in 1974, the contribution of 1.5 percent of the incomes of municipalities to public libraries was stopped (Khodaei, 2006).

However unfavourable and unfair status of public libraries in Iran caused that the parliament to establish the “Iran institute of public libraries (I IPL)”. This institute is a non- governmental and public institute. Its duty is to establish, construct, equip, develop, manage and supervise the affairs of public libraries all over Iran. There are 3169 public libraries in Iran according to the latest statistics of I IPL (20.03.2015). This statistic indicates that the number of public libraries of Iran is appropriate for the country with a growth in numbers in recent years.

Suitable standards and guidelines for libraries can be helpful for managers and librarians to evaluate the level of services provided by their library and then to make the appropriate improvements. Therefore, the present research aims to compare four indicators (namely collections, storage space, user space and staff) of I IPL with IFLA standards in order to measure the gap between the current condition and the standards. As a result, new actions can be proposed to develop public libraries in Iran based on international standards and guidelines.

Methodology:

The present study was conducted using a comparative method between the actual conditions and the indicators of the IFLA Public Libraries Service Guidelines (Koontz and Gubbin 2010). In the research, four indicators (namely collections, storage space, user space and staff) of I IPL with IFLA standards are compared. A checklist is used for data collection gathering. Therefore the statistics of public libraries of Iran are compared with IFLA guidelines indicators.

Findings

Indicator 1: Collections

Public libraries should have suitable and efficient collections. The following proposed standard is related to collection of books. The size of collection depends on the size of the populations. It is worth mentioning that with absolutely limited collections, these standards

can be considered as main goal and also average and long-term strategies should be contemplated in order to gain these standards in the future.

IFLA Guidelines: The collection of books of each library should be about 2-3 items per capita (IFLA guidelines, 2010, P.75). The results of the comparison of the Iranian public libraries and IFLA guidelines are in table 1.

Table 1: comparing with Iranian public libraries statues with IFLA guidelines

No	Province	Collections (Books)	Population	Collection Indicator (capita)
<u>1</u>	<u>IFLA standard</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
2	Yazd	1721409	1074428	1.60
3	Semnan	802870	631218	1.27
4	Chaharmahal	771570	895263	0.86
5	Ilam	473068	557599	0.85
6	Zanjan	831810	1015734	0.82
7	Kohkilouye	528408	658629	0.80
8	Khorasan Jonoubi	528511	662534	0.80
9	Qom	915363	1151672	0.79
10	Boushehr	732025	1032949	0.71
11	Markazi	934870	1413959	0.66
12	Khorasane \ Shomali	558830	867727	0.64
13	Qazvin	693974	1201565	0.58
14	Aedebil	717084	1248488	0.57
15	Azarbayej an Sharghi	2094690	3724620	0.56
16	Kordestan	837341	1493645	0.56
17	Isfahan	2550898	4879312	0.52
18	Kermanshah	980875	1945227	0.50
19	Khuzestan	2168946	4531720	0.48
20	Fars	2086043	4596658	0.45
21	Nation Indicator	34090132	75149669	0.45
22	Hamedan	748436	1758268	0.43
23	Mazandaran	1295948	3073943	0.42
24	Kerman	1238196	2938988	0.42
25	Azarbayej an Gharbi	1238974	3080576	0.40

26	Alborz	901475	2412513	0.37
27	Khorasan Razavi	2191493	5994402	0.37
28	Hormozgan	560340	1578183	0.36
29	Lorestan	604624	1754243	0.34
30	Gilan	850977	2480874	0.34
31	Golestan	597136	1777014	0.34
32	Sistan Balouchestan	536812	2534327	0.21
33	Tehran	2397136	12183392	0.20

As Table 1 shows in the collections indicator, all province are under standard level. In the table 1 data, 19 provinces (Yazd, Semnan, Chaharmahal, Ilam, Zanzan, Kohkilouye, Khorasane Jonoubi, Qom Boushehr, Markazi, Khorasane Shomali, Qazvin, Aedebil, Azarbajane Sharghi, Kordestan, Isfahan, Kermanshah, Khouzestan, Fars) are upper than national standard level (0.45) and 12 provinces (Hamedan, Mazandaran, Kerman, Azarbajane Gharbi, Alborz, Khorasane Razavi Hormozgan, Lorestan, Gilan, Golestan, Sistan Balouchestan, Tehran) are under national standard level.

Indicator 2: Storage space

Each library should have suitable space to store their collection of books. The size of the space depends on the size of the collection. The following proposed standard indicator can be considered as a general guide for storage space.

Guideline and standard: storage space can be determined through average 110 books for per square meter (10.8 square feet) (IFLA guidelines, 2010, P.131). There is comparing the Iranian public libraries statues with IFLA standards and guidelines in table 2.

Table2. Comparing with storage space indicator with IFLA standards and guidelines

No	Province	Storage Space (m2)	Collections (Books)	Storage Space Indicator (capita)
1	Kerman	15709	1238196	1.40
2	Kohkilouye	6189	528408	1.29
3	Khouzestan	22466	2168946	1.14
4	Golestan	5853	597136	1.08
5	Hemedan	7285	748436	1.07
6	IFLA Standard	1	110	1
7	Tehran	20261	2397136	0.93
8	Chaharmahal	6499	771570	0.93
9	Yazd	13861	1721409	0.89
10	Hormozgan	4482	560340	0.88
11	Azarbajean Sharghi	16738	2094690	0.88
12	Nation Indicator	255375	34090132	0.88
13	Gilan	6785	850977	0.88

14	Boushehr	5562	732025	0.84
15	Fars	15278	2086043	0.81
16	Markazi	6712	934870	0.79
17	Khorasan Jonoubi	3772	528511	0.79
18	Zanjan	5876	831810	0.78
19	Lorestan	4109	604624	0.75
20	Ardebil	4859	717084	0.75
21	Isfahan	17033	2550898	0.73
22	Mazandaran	8503	1295948	0.72
23	Azarbayejan gharbi	7816	1238974	0.69
24	Qom	5755	915363	0.69
25	Sistan Balouchestan	3268	536812	0.67
26	Kermanshah	5891	980875	0.66
27	Khorasan Shomali	3307	558830	0.65
28	Khorasan Razavi	12851	2191493	0.65
29	Kordestan	4579	837341	0.60
30	Alborz	4884	901475	0.60
31	Qazvin	3714	693974	0.59
32	Semnan	3851	802870	0.53
33	Ilam	1628	473068	0.38

As Table 2 shows in the Storage Space Indicator, five provinces (Kerman, Kohkilouye, Khouzestan, Golestan, Hemedan) are upper IFLA standard and 26 provinces are under IFLA Standard Indicator.

In table 2, ten provinces (Kerman, Kohkilouye, Khouzestan, Golestan, Hemedan, Tehran, Chahar Mahal, Yazd, Hormozgan, Azarbayejan sharghi) are upper than national standard level (0.88) and 21 provinces (Gilan, Boushehr, Fars, Markazi, Khorasan Jonoubi, Zanjan, Lorestan, Ardebil, Isfahan, Mazandaran, Azarbayejan gharbi, Qom, Sistan Balouchestan, Kermanshah, Khorasan Shomali, Khorasan Razavi, Kordestan, Alborz, Qazvin, Semnan, Ilam) are under national standard level.

Indicator 3: User space

One of the most important space in Iranian public libraries is the user space. Each library should provide a suitable space for their members. The following proposed standard can be considered as a general guide for user space allocation.

Guideline and standard: 2.8 square meter (30 meter feet) for user space for each member is an acceptable standard (IFLA guidelines, 2010, P. 132). Acceptable standard for user space in library is from 1000 people should be for 5 users (IFLA guidelines, 2010, P. 132). Comparison results between the Iranian public libraries and IFLA standards and guidelines are in table 3.

Table3. Comparing with user space indicator with IFLA guidelines

No	Province	User Space (m2)	Population	User Space Indicator (capita)
1	<u>IFLA Standard</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>1000</u>	<u>2.8</u>
2	Yazd	8969	1074428	1.67
3	Markazi	8959	1413959	1.27
4	Semnan	3169	631218	1.00
5	Chaharmahal	4164	895263	0.93
6	Kohkilouye	3012	658629	0.91
7	Ilam	2410	557599	0.86
8	Qazvin	4675	1201565	0.78
9	Khorasan Jonoubi	2529	662534	0.76
10	Boushehr	3698	1032949	0.72
11	Azarbajejan Sharghi	12081	3724620	0.65
12	Kermanshah	6182	1945227	0.64
13	Zanjan	3182	1015734	0.63
14	Ardebil	3798	1248488	0.61
15	Khorasan Shomali	2626	867727	0.61
16	Kerman	8607	2938988	0.59
17	Khuzestan	12265	4531720	0.54
18	Azarbajejan Gharbi	8141	3080576	0.53
19	Kordestan	3339	1493645	0.45
20	Isfahan	10658	4879312	0.44
21	Hemedan	3698	1758268	0.42
22	Fars	9395	4596658	0.41
23	Nation Indicator	172363	75149669	0.41
24	Alborz	4516	2412513	0.37
25	Golestan	3278	1777014	0.37
26	Gilan	4397	2480874	0.35
27	Mazandaran	5390	3073943	0.35
28	Qom	1995	1151672	0.35
29	Hormozgan	2396	1578183	0.30
30	Lorestan	2400	1754243	0.27
31	Khorasan Razani	7960	5994402	0.27
32	Tehran	12162	12183392	0.20
33	Sistan Balouchestan	2312	2534327	0.18

As Table 3, the study shows in the User space indicator that all provinces are under IFLA Standard Indicator.

In table 3, twenty-one provinces (Yazd, Markazi, Semnan, Chaharmahal, Kohkilouye, Ilam, Qazvin, Khorasan Jonoubi, Boushehr, Azarbajejan Sharghi, Kermanshah, Zanjan, Ardebil, Khorasan Shomali, Kerman, Khuzestan, Azarbajejan Gharbi, Kordestan, Isfahan, Hemedan,

Fars) are over the national standard level (0.41) and ten provinces (Alborz, Golestan, Gilan, Mazandaran, Qom, Hormozgan, Lorestan, Khorasan Razani, Tehran, Sistan Balouchestan) are under the national standard level.

Indicator 4: Staff

Staff is one of the main resources of the library. Numbers of staff should be sufficient to be able to respond to the needs of the society and to ensure that the library is managed effectively. The following proposed standard can be proposed as a general guide for staff.

Guideline and standard: a full-time staff for 2500 people (IFLA guidelines, 2001, P. 66). Comparison results between the Iranian public libraries and IFLA standards and guidelines are in table 4.

Table4. Comparing with Staff indicator with IFLA standards and guidelines

No	Province	Staff	Population	Staff Indicator (capita)
<u>1</u>	<u>IFLA Standard</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2500</u>	<u>1.00</u>
2	Yazd	192	1074428	0.45
3	Chaharmahal	139	895263	0.39
4	Kohkilouye	98	658629	0.37
5	Semnan	91	631218	0.36
6	Qom	149	1151672	0.32
7	Ilam	68	557599	0.30
8	Khorasan Jonoubi	79	662534	0.30
9	Zanjan	116	1015734	0.29
10	Kordestan	145	1493645	0.24
11	Ardebil	119	1248488	0.24
12	Markazi	126	1413959	0.22
13	Qazvin	105	1201565	0.22
14	Boushehr	87	1032949	0.21
15	Azarbayejan Sharghi	303	3724620	0.20
16	Kerman	239	2938988	0.20
17	Isfahan	394	4879312	0.20
18	Gilan	184	2480874	0.19
19	Kermanshah	143	1945227	0.18
20	Nation Indicator	5205	75149669	0.17
21	Alborz	166	2412513	0.17
22	Fars	306	4596658	0.17
23	Hemedan	117	1758268	0.17
24	Mazandaran	200	3073943	0.16
25	Hormozgan	102	1578183	0.16
26	Azarbayejan Gharbi	196	3080576	0.16

27	Khorasan Shomali	53	867727	0.15
28	Khouzestan	270	4531720	0.15
29	Golestan	96	1777014	0.14
30	Lorestan	94	1754243	0.13
31	Khorasan Razavi	314	5994402	0.13
32	Tehran	432	12183392	0.09
33	Sistan Balouchestan	82	2534327	0.08

As Table 4 shows in Staff indicator all provinces are under IFLA guidelines indicator.

In table 4, 18 provinces (Yazd, Chaharmahal, Kohkilouye, Semnan, Qom, Ilam, Khorasan, Jonoubi, Zanzan, Kordestan, Ardebil, Markazi, Qazvin, Boushehr, Azarbajejan Sharghi, Kerman Isfahan, Gilan, Kermanshah) are upper than national standard level (0.17) and 13 provinces (Alborz, Fars, Hemedan, Mazandaran, Hormozgan, Azarbajejan Gharbi, Khorasan Shomali, Khouzestan, Golestan, Lorestan, Khorasan Razavi, Tehran, Sistan Balouchestan) are under national standard level.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this research study, we reviewed the status of 4 indicators (Collections, Storage Space, Study space and Staff) and compared them with IFLA Standards to determine the gap in service provision in Iranian public libraries.

The findings are presented in chart 1.

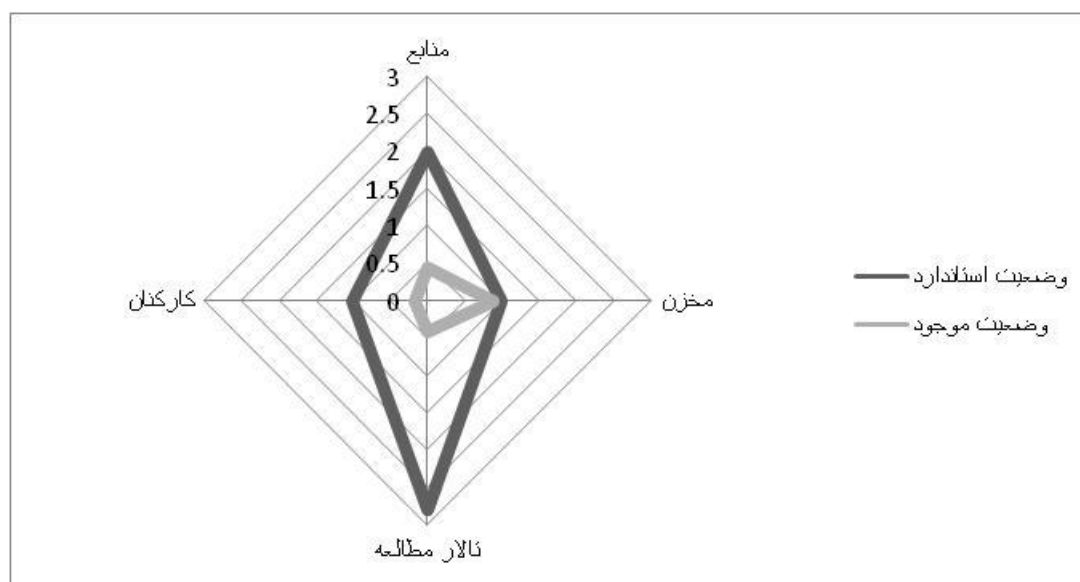


Chart1. The current situation with the desired situation in the four indicators

As the diagram1 shows:

- ✓ “Resource” indicator with national average (0.45) is in distance of 1.55 from standard status (2).

- ✓ “Storage space” indicator with national average (0.88) is in distance of 0.12 from standard status (1) and has the least distance with standard condition.
- ✓ “Study space” indicator with national average (0.41) is in distance of 2.39 from standard status (2.8) and has the most distance with standard condition.
- ✓ “Staff” indicator with national average (0.417) is in distance of 0.83 from standard status (1).

Conclusion:

The results of the research study indicate that there is some discrepancies between the level of services in Iranian public libraries and the recommendations of the IFLA Public Library Service Guidelines. The reason of this gap can be explained by the recent establishment of the IIPL (about 12 years). Even though the IIPL have been responsible for introducing measures to improve public library services during this short period of time, there are still areas where work will need to be undertaken to bring service quality to the levels proposed by the IFLA standards. Providing library collections for public libraries all over Iran, establishing libraries in deprived areas, employing expert staff as well as developing library standards are activities and measures that IIPL have been pursuing.

The authors of the paper are staff of the standard office of the IIPL and will count on IFLA support for the continuous development of Iranian libraries.

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