

**School Librarianship and Service of the School
Libraries: A Case Study at Kekirawa Educational Zone
in Anuradhapura District, Sri Lanka**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the current situation of school libraries and identify school librarian's role at Kekirawa educational zone of Anuradhapura District. There were 65 school libraries selected for the study. Questionnaires were distributed among them. Response rate was 100%. According to the analyzed data, 86% of school librarians are belong to Sri Lanka Teacher grade and 2% is belong to Sri Lanka principal service grade. Only 12 % are school librarians. 88% of teachers take care of the library duty while teaching another subject. 68% of libraries are closed when school librarians are involved or while they are on leave. Only 6% of libraries are kept open daily for the students and teachers. According to the analyzed data 12% school librarians are having the technical knowledge in library science. They did not have adequate time to allocate for the library service since their main responsibility lies with teaching. Most of the school librarians do not have sufficient knowledge on library resources and the library functions. This study revealed that permanent school librarians are to be recruited for the schools and trained school librarians are compulsory to be recruited for smooth functioning of school libraries.

Keywords: School Libraries, School Librarians, Anuradhapura District, Sri Lanka.

1. Introduction

Various school library development projects funded by national and international organizations, workshops, seminars and training programs conducted by a variety of organizations helped considerably in the development of school libraries and the library profession in the country. Several studies have focused on school librarians in past decades. Government of Sri Lanka was mainly targeting to improve school children's literacy skills. According to that the "Teacher Education and Teacher Deployment" (TETD) project commenced by the MOE (Ministry of Education) with the aid of World Bank in 1996 was the most comprehensive project ever undertaken to measure and to improve school librarians training and qualifications in Sri Lanka. This project was completed in 2005. The main objective of this project was to improve the quality, cost effectiveness and coverage of education in Sri Lanka (World Bank, 1996). Presently there is no evidence on identifying any trained school librarian under above project at Kekirawa educational zone.

2. Objectives

The purpose of this study is to identify the current situation of the school libraries and to identify the School librarian's role at Kekirawa Educational Zone of Anuradhapura District.

3. Methodology

A survey was carried out to collect data from school libraries at Kekirawa Educational Zone. A structured questionnaire was developed to collect information. The first section of the questionnaire consists of background information, such as school name, whether a library is available or not, gender, experience of the librarian etc. The second section of the questionnaire gathered information about school librarian's current position, qualifications, library collection, user profiles, library facilities and physical resources and the final section of the questionnaire focused on library services, school community and library functioning. 65 school libraries were selected for the study at Kekirawa Educational Zone in the North Central province under

ministry of Education. Sixty-five structured questionnaires were distributed among them in personally because all the school librarians of the Kekirawa educational zone gathered to a one-day workshop organized by Library services Board –North Central Province at zonal educational office Kekirawa.

4. Data Analysis

Response rate was 100%. Collected raw data were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, analyzed and interpreted using descriptive analysis. All schools are having own libraries. According to the demographic data of the study, 31% school librarians were male and rest 71% was female. The professional qualifications of school librarians were low, only 6% of the respondents had professional qualifications in the field of Library Science. 86% of school librarians' possessed Sri Lanka Teacher grade position and 2% possessed Sri Lanka principal service grade. Only 12% were school librarians. School Librarians had Library Science professional qualifications and recruited directly for the school libraries. Only 12% school librarians had the technical knowledge about library science. 95 % of the schools assigned only one teacher or a school librarian to the library without any supportive staff. When she or he was absent or on leave library has to be kept open.

Analyzed data indicated functioning of the libraries in that area; out of 65 libraries, 88% of teachers cover the library duties while teaching one other subject. 68% libraries were kept when school librarians were teaching. Only 6% libraries were kept daily for the students and teachers.

Physical resources in school libraries were analyzed and it shows that about 5% of the libraries were functioning almost well with basic requirements and a permanent qualified school librarian. 85% schools have a permanent separate library space with basic requirements. Others had a small room with minimum requirements. 51 % of libraries had 101-500 users because 69% schools of the Kekirawa Educational Zone were primary schools, they used “*room to read*” concept for their

libraries. 17% of libraries had more than 3000 books. 31% of libraries had a collection between 250-500. Generally, 40% of libraries had a collection of more than 1000 books. Analyzed data represents the usage of the libraries by students. 51% libraries had 101-500 users 85% libraries had 501-1000 users and 4% libraries had 2001-2500 users. These libraries had permanent school librarians. 62% of respondents said that time allocated for the library was unsatisfactory. Because 21% of schools did not have a time slot for the library timetables while primary schools had properly arranged the timetable for their library. All libraries updated their collections based on government allocations and donation from other parties. Primary schools developed their collection using the donation system within the school. Students donated books to the library on their birthdays etc. All “room to read” school libraries classified their books using a colour code classification system. School librarians who were involved in teaching rarely have time to allocate to improve the library services and activities as such school libraries did not develop. Respondents reviled that school authorities did not provide opportunity to explain the value of the library for their students. Because majority of responded supposed that decision-making process of their libraries was centralized to the principal of the school. Most of school librarians did not have sufficient knowledge on library resources and library functions. All of the respondents requested that training opportunities is a must to gain knowledge about cataloguing, classification and other main activities of library functioning.

5. Conclusions

This study concludes with the following findings; permanent school librarians should be recruited for the school libraries. Less qualified school librarians with no professional librarianship (Wickramanayake, 2016); manage the majority of school libraries in Sri Lanka. The present study furthermore shows that trained and qualified school librarians are compulsory to be recruited for the smooth functioning of school libraries at the Kekirawa Educational Zone.

6. Suggestions

Since school librarians do not have sufficient knowledge or training on library activities authorities should provide training opportunities for them. The education authorities of the country are to give utmost attention to introduce a standardized system for recruiting school librarians to increase literacy skills of the school children and the quality of school libraries. The Educational Ministry of North Central Province should identify their existing school libraries in the area and their human resources and physical resources and then should attempt to develop school libraries in the area the process which in turn will develop information literacy skills among students and the entire school community.

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