PROBLEMS OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN PRESENT DAY EDUCATION: SOME OBSERVATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

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Draws the attention of present scenario of libraries of Government of NCT of Delhi prevalent in secondary education system. Highlights the problems being faced by school librarians in day to day operations of libraries serving the needs of the students. Also indicates the lack of infrastructural facilities provided in the school libraries and suggests ways to find out solutions to problems being faced by the school libraries of government/aided schools in Delhi.

Libraries play an important role to inculcate independent life long learning of individuals in a society. They are the centre of all educational activities in formal educational system where the role of librarian becomes vital. So, it is necessary that every library should be well equipped in terms of resources and organised properly to provide effective library services in a school. Various committees and commissions, appointed for educational reforms and development, have stressed the role and importance of library and librarians in the educational process to inculcate learning habits and personality development of the students. Unfortunately, in India, school libraries lack not only proper children literature but also lack proper space, furniture, audio visual materials, etc. The significance and potential of a school library are yet to be realised fully. Interestingly, studies of school library systems have largely been absent in the curriculum of library schools of our country. Indifferent attitudes of school administration towards libraries has only aggravated the already unsatisfactory conditions of the school libraries.

Fifth All India Educational Survey reveals that only 8.28% of the secondary schools have a full time librarian where as in higher secondary schools this percentage is 38.48%. It indicates that most of the school libraries are run by untrained librarians. This survey also revealed that although education is often given priority still school libraries continued to be neglected. Indian Library Association organised a seminar for school library development in 1986 and 1996 respectively to improve the situation of school libraries in India. But the condition of school libraries remains the same. School libraries are thus still in a dilapidated condition. In the following sections problems specific to School libraries of Delhi have been discussed alongwith suggestions for improvement in the near future.

PROBLEMS OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Although the school libraries in Delhi are at an advantageous position in comparison to their counterparts in many other states where either there are no school libraries or schools have no librarians, yet the state of affairs is far from satisfactory. They are facing problems like all other kinds of libraries. Some specific problems are:

Lack of Additional Staff

In most of the Government schools of Delhi, the libraries are manned by only one person who performs all kinds of library work for proper use and maintenance of library resources. Therefore, they are unable to devote sufficient time to serve the needs and demands of the pupils. As such they are also not able to guide children on "how to use the library resources".

For proper maintenance and use of library resources, at least one more professionally qualified library personnel and one attendent should be provided in each school to assist the librarian.
in carrying out various types of jobs like stamping, pasting, date labelling, cataloguing, classification, lending of library books, etc.

Acquisition of Library Books

Collection development is one of the major activities of any type of library. In schools of Delhi, the financial resources to procure library books and other reference materials are very meagre. Interestingly, books are to be procured only out of the list of books approved by the Directorate of Education, Delhi Administration prepared by the Delhi Bureau of Text Books. This severely curtails the role of librarian in developing collection of instructional and reference materials in the school library. Due to this reason, most of the libraries do not even possess various library tools like classification schemes, cataloguing codes, etc. for classifying & cataloguing the documents systematically.

To rectify the present position, librarians should be permitted to purchase any type of documents related to the interest of the pupils to enrich the school curriculum. It should not be compulsory for him to procure only books out of the recommended list of books. All the purchases should be made through a book selection committee comprising of teachers, students, and other persons nominated by the Principal as the Chairperson of the committee and librarian as the secretary. Besides regular grants, some special types of funds must be provided to each school for acquisition of reference books and periodicals, because they are very costly to be procured out of annual grants given to the library.

Lack of Space and Furniture

At present, almost all the government school libraries are housed in a single room. Inadequate space and non-availability of furniture in the libraries hinders optimum use of library books and other materials available for the children. In such a situation, librarian is usually entrusted with other types of jobs, especially teaching of other subjects in the classroom. Thus, library services and the role of librarian suffers in school due to lack of space, furniture and other equipment.

In view of the above, authorities should look into the matter carefully for proper development of school library services and the librarian should not be entrusted with jobs other than that of the library. There should be provision of at least one separate room for the school library along with adequate furniture and equipment. ISI standard for school libraries should be followed in this regard for improving school library services in India.

Library Grants

The grants given to libraries is inadequate, which depends upon the number of students enrolled in their respective schools. Most of the time whatever grant is available, it is released only at the end of the financial year. Sometimes, it does not reach the schools in time. Contingency grants are also provided to some schools for library development from time to time.

For better utilization of library grants, it should be made available at the beginning of the financial year. The amount sanctioned for this purpose should be increased every year as the cost of books is increasing rapidly. To make it more fruitful, authorities should make specific provision for library budget in the following heads:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books (including reference, periodicals, etc)</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Furniture</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stationary items</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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As funds are limited, it is also suggested here that some fixed amount of money be annually charged as library fee from all students of class VI to XII for strengthening the library collection of the school.

Loss and Damage of Books

For a library to be used, whether academic, special or public library, loss and damage of books is natural. In case of school library, the chances of damage are more because children are innocent readers. Therefore, proper care and maintenance is required for school library and pupils need to be taught how to handle books. One of the most important factors observed for loss of books in the
libraries is that students do not return library books issued to them and leave the school without getting library clearance certificate from the librarian. Due to this, books are lost from the library forever and the librarian is asked to deposit the cost of the lost books.

It is suggested that authorities must issue clear guidelines to the heads of the schools and also take some decision in case of loss in this way. According to General Financial Rules - 116 (2) (ii), losses of three volumes consulted/issued in a year per one thousand should be allowed to be written off. A librarian should not be penalised for any loss and damage to the books. Moreover, library clearance certificate should be must for each pupil before leaving the school.

No Channel of Promotion

There are no promotional avenues for school librarians in the present system. They are appointed as librarians and retire as librarians. A teacher (T.G.T) became P.G.T, Vice Principal, Principal and gets other higher posts in the system during his service career through promotion or seniority whereas librarians are deprived the promotion in all respects. At times in some government/aided schools, librarian is trated as administrative staff and not at par with teachers.

For improving the condition of school libraries, it is suggested that librarians should be given time bound promotion to various higher scales just like that of other teachers. They should be given an opportunity to serve in responsible positions like teachers. This will help to improve the work efficiency and conditions of school libraries in over all perspective.

No Guidelines regarding Duties

As mentioned earlier, librarian has to perform various types of jobs besides librarianship, such as teaching, examination work, arrangement of time table, etc., as assigned by the principal from time to time which disrupts the library services. Due to this, the librarian in school does not get recognition and status and thereby library’s role is curtailed in developing and promoting life long reading habits among the children.

Amongst academia, the role of librarian is undisputed in the present day school curriculum. Therefore, no other work should be entrusted to school librarians in any circumstances. It is urged that the authorities may issue proper instructions to the heads of the schools for not involving the librarian in activities other than library work. Then only the librarians can concentrate and organise the library in a well to do manner. The head of the school should provide necessary support as and when required by the librarian.

Stock Verification

Stock verification of library documents is again not a common practice in schools. Whenever instructions are issued in this regard, the time limit is very short and therefore verification is done in a haphazard way. The problem is more during handing over of library charge.

Before doing stock verification, sufficient time and manpower must be provided to check each book physically, librarian should not be harrased for any missing books and the head of the school should be empowered to weed out lost books as mentioned earlier. Moreover, stock verification should be done annually.

This process helps to keep collection up to date and eliminate unused, outdated or damaged books to be written off from the library.

CONCLUSION

No doubt, school library is the heart of elementary education which pumps out the vital fluid of knowledge through silent provision of reading and use of books and other instructional materials. At the same time, it helps to promote life long learning after the school education also. So, it is necessary to solve the problems of school libraries in toto. Only then the purpose of school education can be achieved in a society. Government should take initiative for improving school library system, by providing sufficient staff, suitable space, proper resources and ensure its utilisation. As the costs of the books are increasing rapidly, funds should be increased from time to time and separate funds must be provided for reference books and other materials too.