STANDARDS FOR INDIAN SCHOOL LIBRARIES: A PROPOSAL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to know the existing situation of the Indian scenario of the school libraries. To identify the role of school libraries, inculcating better reading skills among the school children. To suggest important components to be included while preparing the standards for school libraries in the light of the IFLA and UNESCO manifesto.

Keywords: School Libraries; Library standards; Role of school libraries

1. INTRODUCTION

The education system in India is based on the British system of education (Mahajan, 2010). The Government of India lays stress on education for all. The directive principle contained in article 45 states that the state has to provide free and compulsory education for all until the age of 14 years. According to 2001 census, 65% Indians are literate and almost every child has an access to school with around 95% of our rural education having a primary school within one kilometre of their habitation. The school education in India is at three levels-Primary (classes 1 to 5), Middle (classes 6 to 8) and Higher/Secondary (classes 9 to 12).There are two categories of schools-government schools that are entirely funded by the government and theirs being the public (private) schools. There are about 888 thousands educational institutions in the country with an enrolment of about 179 millions. Elementary education system in India is the second largest in the world with 149.4 million children enrolled in the age-group of 6 to 14 years. All the states and Union Territories of India have adopted a uniform structure of school education, i.e., the 10+2 system of education. Education in India is primarily the responsibility of the state governments although the central government also plays an important role in higher education.

In India situation of schools, school libraries and school librarians is in a poor condition as compared to other advanced countries in the world. Most of the schools do not have libraries, and wherever libraries are available, the properly trained manpower is not available to manage those libraries. There are many reasons for this problem including budget, space, resources, manpower, lack of national policies, and standards. In the present paper an attempt has been made to propose a standard for Indian school libraries

2. ROLE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES

The school library is integral to this educational process. Encouraged at the right age, the children

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are sure to develop a love for books. "Catch 'em Young" is therefore the motto of the school libraries (Lowrie, 1972).

According to IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto, "the school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge-based society. The school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination enabling them to live as responsible citizens" (IFLA, 2005). It plays this role by selecting, acquiring and providing access to appropriate sources of information. The school library offers books and other resources ranging from print to electronic media for completion of various school projects and assignments, for acquisition of knowledge about a topic taught in class, for finding information about a hobby or current events and news, etc. The school librarian helps the students in finding the books/information on the topics of their interest. The librarians along with the teachers are also work together to achieve higher levels of literacy. While highlighting their role of the school library as the heart of school, Dr. Ranganathan stated that the school libraries should act as laboratories for students and the librarians should function as guides to help the students in learning and using the books for improvement of knowledge and scholarship.

3. SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

The school library is an essential partner in the local, regional and national library and information Network. The school librarian has to be professionally qualified because he is responsible for planning and managing the library. Supported by the teachers, he not only inculcates love for reading amongst the future citizens of the country but also helps in information literacy. The role of school librarian as a teacher is to analyze the information needs of his clients for which he seeks help from the teachers. He must have good interpersonal skills and should be able to take on the decisional roles. The school Librarian need to know what teachers like to work with and what information they need for teaching. Finally, the school librarian needs to know what is expected of the student and how and what are they being taught. In fact, the school librarians have to move away from the role of keeper of books to that of the information providers and support students in learning and using information regardless of its form and format. In an increasingly networked environment when the students at the school level are using IT skills for study, the school librarian must be competent in teaching different information handling skills both to teachers and the students. They help the teachers to use a broader range of teaching strategies and the students are helped in their project work, individual study, group research, reading and the teaching of ICT, etc. It has been observed that when the teachers and the school librarians work together, students achieve higher levels of literacy, reading, learning; problem solving and information and communication technology skills. It has also been noted that the students in schools with good school libraries learn more, get better grades, and score higher on standardized test scores than their peers in schools without the libraries. School library professionals in the developed countries are now engaged in some exciting activities so as to remain effective in the midst of fast-moving technological changes

(Crossley and Watson, 2004).

4. STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Standard is an approved by a recognized standards organization. A level of quality that people think can be acceptable namely British standards, American standards, Indian standards etc**.** The first library standard as a report for schools of different sizes in the United States was set in 1915 b the Committee on Library Organization and Equipment (CLOE) within the Department of Secondary Education of the National Education Association (NEA). This landmark report was adopted by the NEA in 1918 and later by the American Library Association (ALA) in 1920. The influence of the school library programs which were developed and published in the 1960s by the ALA and American Association of School Librarians (AASL) was seen in national standards, guidelines and policies in the United States and Western Europe. Generally, however, every country developed and documented its own standards, reflecting differences in the provision of school library services not only between countries, but also within a country. International Association of School Librarianship (IASL), the International Book Committee (IBC), the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and UNESCO have wanted to prepare international principles for common use. The principles of the School Library Manifesto were developed by IFLA in consultation with the IFLA Section on School Libraries and Resource Centres and IASL, and subsequently endorsed by UNESCO. The Manifesto (which was endorsed at the IASL Annual General Meeting in August 2002) was prepared in 1998, published in 1999 and adopted by IFLA Section on School Libraries and Resource Centres, UNESCO and IASL in 2000. It was designed to provide a guide for the evaluation of libraries which emphasizes general criteria, such as: the mission, funding, legislation and networks, goals, staff, operation and management, and implementation (InciO, 2009).

The school library is essential for literacy, education and information provision as well as for economic, social and cultural development of a nation. Hence, the school libraries must have adequate and sustained funding for trained staff, materials, technologies and facilities. As the responsibility of local, regional and national authorities, it must be supported by specific standards. Library standards are used to measure and evaluate the condition of the libraries as well as the degree of their development. They provide an outline for specific library activities and serve to define an ideal state of a library. The standards, which are developed professionally, indicate a direction for the libraries as to what tasks and objectives it should strive for. They provide school management with information on the management of libraries. Standards can have an international, national and regional scope. Internationally, standards are not only developed by the library organizations, such as International Association of School Libraries (IASL, 2004) and IFLA, but also by UNESCO or ISO. Keeping in view the vital role a school library plays in supporting the curriculum, such organizations have issued a School Library Manifesto whose 1998version became a known text and is used by the school librarians all around the world. The manifesto indicates the role of school library, its mission and the most important tasks as well as the

exceptional importance of a qualified school librarian. „School Librarians: Guidelines for Competency Requirements 'as published in the series- IFLA (2005) Profound Reports as number 41 in August 1995. The Library Association (CILIP) has also published a completely revised edition of the guidelines for „school libraries in secondary schools' in 2002. These standards usually describe the staff requirements, acquisitions of collections, audiovisual and computer equipment as well as budgetary calculations.

5. SITUATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Student Learning through Ohio School Libraries reveals that 99.4% of students in grades 3 to 12 believe school libraries and their services help them become better learners. The study shows that an effective school library, led by a credentialed library media specialist, plays a critical role in facilitating student learning for building knowledge .In Fall 2006, an LMS-nominated and self-selected sample of 293 library media specialists (LMS), 99 principals, and 422 teachers responded to surveys. The surveys explored qualitative issues impacting test scores concerning the perceptions of library media specialists, principals, and teachers (Singh, 1993). Issues addressed included: the value of libraries and library media specialists to principals; the value of library media specialists and teacher involvement, particularly when tied to a specific activity and activity frequency; assessments of teaching to information literacy standards; and perceptions of both principals and teachers about the role of the library media specialist. Predictably, schools performed best where both principals and teachers perceived of the library media specialist as a reading motivator, teacher, instructional resources manager, in-service provider, and school leader (Carroll, 1981).

6. OHIO RESEARCH STUDY RECOMMENDATION

Ohio research study centre made fallowing recommendations:

1. **ALL school libraries, including elementary schools, are staffed with** credentialed library media specialists who have educational certification and who engage in collaborative instructional initiatives to help students learn and achieve.
2. **ALL library media specialists have a clearly defined role as information learning** specialists.
3. **ALL school libraries provide a learning-cantered space supported by a** strong technology infrastructure.
4. **ALL stakeholders engage in action-oriented discussions to maximize** learning opportunities through school libraries

7. THE MODEL SCHOOL LIBRARY STANDARDS

Kindergarten through Grade Twelve In today's world, that term means having the skills to effectively access, evaluate, use, and integrate information into their lives. The new, rigorous school library standards are designed to help students prepare for success in the hypercompetitive

global economy that is powered by information and knowledge. These standards will help students to learn and work with twenty-first century skills and apply responsible research practices, be respectful to others when using digital devices, and continue to grow as lifelong learners. The standards also describe recommended baseline staffing, access, and resources for school library services needed by students to meet academic standards (Galler, 1996).

The school library standards maintain California's respect for local control of schools. They provide guidance to school districts for implementing strong school library programs. Such library programs improve student achievement, foster literacy, produce a technology-competent workforce, and nurture lifelong learning. We encourage local decision makers and educators to use these standards to design library policies and curricular and instructional strategies that best deliver content to their students. The school library standards reflect our commitment to excellence in school library services throughout the state.

8. COMPONENTS FOR DESIGNING SCHOOL LIBRARY STANDARD

Following are the main components to be included while designing the standards for the school libraries (IFLA (UNESCO)

- Environment: high, middle , low income
- Establishment: Request by public, Govt, private
- Aims: Provide learner center education
- Finance : Financed by Govt, private, society
- Staff: Librarians, teachers, school administrative staff, voluntary helpers
- Collection: Basic, teaching, recreation
- Types of media: print & nonpoint
- Services: information, cultural, recreation
- Co-operation: From city library, media centre, contact lib, public, local and municipal
- Documents : No specific, all types
- Types: Guidelines, regulations, recommendations
- Policy: Inf. Access, collection dev.
- Cataloguing: AACR2, OPAC, MARC, etc.
- Classification: DDC, UDC, LC, etc.
- Information retrieval.
- Archival, storage, arrangement.
- Furniture: Depending upon the standard.
- Implementation: Local and regional

- Information Networks: Be with network of lib.

9. EVALUATION OF STANDARDS

To evaluate the standard the fallowing criteria's be applied (IFLA, 2005):

Awareness:

Understanding of the aims, roles and responsibilities which the Manifesto indicates as important in **ALL school library programs provide instructional intervention, through** a credentialed library media specialist, which centres on the development of information literacy skills for inquiry learning.

10. DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE PROGRAM

This process involves both physical and intellectual perspectives. It shows when librarians became knowledgeable about the Manifesto.

Use: Presents a broad vision can be positive or negative. It is important to use and refer to the Manifesto in many different contexts. The earlier experiences was summarized with the librarians' view about how useful has the Manifesto been in helping them.

Expectation:

Results here give an indication of how librarians convert their ideas related to the Manifesto into practical action.

Future plans: Which looks at action plans, changing the way the service we delivered, and promoting diversity. Librarians 'future plans describe how to interpret the themes of the Manifesto and incorporate them into the functions of their individual library programs.

11. CONCLUSION

While trying to catch up with new developments, school libraries usually try to benefit from the different experiences in schools and librarianship. These experiences have affected library programs, education systems, specifically in traditional library systems. At this point, the Manifesto shows the concerted efforts of a group of library enthusiasts to promote activities in order to make libraries an effective service in the community. At a very high level, the Manifesto offers short and succinct guidance, but it is a major communications tool for school library development throughout the world. It is a practical working document with a variety of guidelines and standards that are useful in developing local and/or national services. It can be used to persuade decision makers of the importance of well-organized services. It provides advice on developing priorities, policies and laws for services. Using the Manifesto for a large number of school libraries emphasizes the absolute necessity for library managers, staff and authorities to promote its services to the users and to have a written promotional policy to support the planned promotion of its services. Finally, the information and ideas contained in the Manifesto are supported by IFLA and

UNESCO, the most important international organizations for school libraries worldwide. **This is high time for India, has to go for Standards for school Libraries in the light of the "Knowledge commission" of Dr. Sham Pitroda**

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