PROBLEMS FACED BY ADVANCE LEVEL STUDENTS WHILE USING SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Ms.K.D.R.L.J.Perera,
Dept. of Secondary and Tertiary Education, Faculty of Education,
The Open University of Sri Lanka

Key Words: *Advanced Level Students, Problems of School Libraries, School Libraries*

Introduction

Teacher-centeredness had been a dominant feature in the Sri Lankan Education system for a long time. After 1998 educational reforms,student centered methods have been incorporated to the teaching-learning process.In that, students are expected to explore new knowledge, acquire skills and inculcate positive attitudes by several ways. "School library in the 21st century can, and should be, hubs for increased student achievement and positive focused school reform" (Smith, 2002:1). "School libraries are distinct from public libraries because they serve as learner-oriented laboratories which support, extend, and individualize the school curriculum.A school library serves as the centreand coordinating agency for all material used in the school" (Morris, 2004:32).When consider about the Sri Lankan school libraries there were some tribulations. Jayathissa(1989) emphasized the need of having an efficient library service in Sri Lanka in order to achieve the current educational aims.The objectives of this study were four fold as: to identify the amount of books available according to subject streams (Maths, Bio- Science, Commerce, Arts), to study the way of organizing of school libraries, to study the students' nature of using school libraries and to examine the problems faced by students in using school libraries.

Methodology

The survey research design was used. The population was the advanced level students in Sri Lankan national schools. Random sampling method was used.The sample consisted of 96 advanced level students (24 students from each subject stream (Maths,Bio-Science,Commerce, Arts) from 3 national schools in Kaluthara Education Zone. Students'questionnaire was the main data collection instrument.An interview schedule was also used to collect in-depth information from selected teachers (8 from one school) and librarians in those three schools. Some documents in the libraries werealso used. The data analysis was done by using mixedmethods.

Summary and Conclusion

The data revealed that the average books for one student in Science and Maths stream varied. For Physics it was 1.3, for Chemistry 1.6 and for Biology 2.6. In the Commerce stream it was 0.2 for Economics, 0.2 for Business Studies and 0.4 for Accounting.In Arts stream, the average number of books for Sinhala was 5.1,2.5 for Buddhist Civilization, and 2.4 for Logic, 1.0 for Geography, 3.3 for History, 6.4 for Drama, 5.8 for Home Economics, 02 for Dancing and 2.0 for Music. Arts stream had enough booksthan the other two streams in all three libraries. Commerce stream had the lowest averages.Correlation between the student number andthe amount of bookswas 0.15.

In relation to the organization of school libraries, three areas (human resources, physical resources and other resources) have been evaluated.It was revealed that in 2 schools the persons who were in charge of the library were not librarians. In relation to organization of physical resources,there were enough physical resources in all three libraries. However,

those libraries did not have sufficient technological equipment such as computers, televisions and overhead projectors. Furthermore, no internet connection was available in all three libraries. But according to 1998 educational reforms, school library should be a resource centre. It was further revealed that there were not enough resources in all three libraries like compact disks, audio and video materials etc.

Two school libraries did not have enough space.Only one school had a separate upstairs building for the library. All three schools use Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme to classify materials but catalogue has not yet been computerized. In addition there is no proper method of shelving of books. Two periods have been allocated for library in advanced level students though most of (81%) students have mentioned that the allocatedtime was not sufficient. A school library has to maintain a number of documents such as accession register, members register,lending register and goods register etc.In relation to maintaining of those documents, there was no proper organization in two schools. Asa whole, financial procedures in all three libraries were not up to the expected standard.

Under the students' nature of using school libraries, a number of aspects have been considered. Considering the purpose of the use of libraries in using libraries, Science and Maths students had used library to read books and Commerce students had used them for reading newspapers. As a whole the majority (73%) have used library to read books. In all streams students have given priorityto read subject related books.However, 30% of Arts students have used library to read their own notes.Nearly 81.5% of students had responded that they used the reference section.It did not mean that there were sufficient reading materials in libraries. It was found that the majority of (82%) Science and Commerce studentshad been using the librarymore than the time allocated. It was only 62.5% for Artsstudents. All students have responded that the use of libraryhad impacted on their examinations. It could be concluded that, almost all students in all streams were interested in using the library.

As the problems faced by students in using school libraries, all students in all streams have mentioned about theinsufficiency of books available in libraries.As a whole,in all three schools 82.8% respondents have agreed that, there were not an adequate amount of educational newspapers.Regarding the contribution of librarieson completion of projects substantial percentage (73.4%) respondents revealed that the contribution was minimal. In relation to convenience to search the books, more than half of the sample (57.2%) had a negative opinion. A significant percentage (87%) in all three schools had mentioned that the freedom within the libraries was not adequate. In relation to the library environment, almost all (92%) students in two schools have responded that there was not sufficient space in libraries. Same were not satisfied with the ventilation in libraries.

This study finds that there were a number of problems faced by students when using libraries. Some of them were: inefficiency of library administration, new books were very rare, no internet facilities, conducting some classes in the library, no old newspapers collection, insufficient project reports, no new journals etc.It is recommended that the relevant authorities should take necessary measures to solve problems faced by the A/L students in using school libraries.

References

Morris, B.,(2004). Administering the school library media centre, CT: Libraries Unlimited, Westport.p.32.

Smith, K..(2002.) "Building Student Learning through School Libraries", Statement delivered at the White House Conference on School Libraries, available from: http://www.imls.gov/news/events/whitehouse_3.shtm.

Jayathissa, L.A., (1989).A study on SriLankan school libraries, Unpublished Post Graduate Diploma in Education dissertation, University of Colombo.