



Issues and challenges of managing school libraries in government aided/ sponsored schools in West Bengal with special reference to new set up school libraries

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Abstract :

Purpose : *The purpose of this study is to identify the challenging issues related to the management of school libraries including the new set up school libraries of government aided/ sponsored schools in West Bengal and also provide proposed solutions to overcome the identified challenges.*

Design/methodology : *All the challenging issues and proposed solutions are here enlisted by the author's working experience in a new set up school library of government sponsored school and with the discussions of some contemporary school librarians.*

Findings : *The paper concluded with the discussion that in West Bengal the main needs for smooth running of school libraries are creating good environment for library development and making positive attitudes from authority for right utilization of librarians.*

Value/Originality : *This paper will be helpful for those school authorities, where school library exist and also for those who are thinking to start a new school library. It is mainly written by the original working experience of author and discussions have made from the initial stage of growth of a new set up school library.*

Keywords : Library, School library, School library West Bengal, New set up school library, School library challenging issues, School library new set up, West Bengal school library, Govt. aided/ sponsored school library West Bengal

1. Introduction :

School library is "an organized collection placed in a school for the use of teachers or pupils, but usually for pupils. . . and be in the care of a professional librarian, teacher, or teacher-librarian" ("School Library," 2005, p. 618). Providing an active instructional program interrelated to curriculum content of host institution, school libraries help to increase resource-based capabilities, thinking-based capabilities, knowledge-based capabilities, reading and literacy capabilities, personal and interpersonal capabilities, learning management capabilities and etc., (IFLA, 2015). It is the first unit of academic library that plays vital role for supporting and enhancing educational goals as outlined in concerned school's mission and curriculum. It not only creates students' reading habit but also helpful to grow life-long learning skill. Librarian acts as a leader to improve these capabilities among students. Though it is necessary but library exists in a few government aided/sponsored schools in West Bengal (WB). Infrastructures and other facilities are too weak to manage the library well. Additionally, for a new set up school library it is always hard to motivate authority about the day to day works needed for good running of a school library as



well as duties of a school librarian. As per the present rules of Department of School Education (DSE), Government of West Bengal (GWB), only a higher secondary school can get a Librarian post or when a school upgrades from secondary to higher secondary stage Librarian post can be created with some other non-teaching posts, as rule permits.

2. Objectives and Methodology :

The main objectives of this article are identifying various challenging issues and obstacles for running of school libraries including new set up school libraries of government aided/sponsored schools in West Bengal and providing proposed solutions for smooth running of the same.

This paper is written mainly on the author's working experience in a new set up school library and also few concepts are incorporated by the discussion of some contemporary school librarians of govt. aided/sponsored schools.

3. Vidyasagar Granthagar, a new set up school library :

Vidyasagar Granthagar, a new set up school library was founded in Mohisda Ramnarayan High School (H.S.), Mohisda, Keshpur, Paschim Medinipur in January, 2015. Before its inauguration in a room of the school's new building it was run from staffs' room at initial stage of beginning. As recorded in the year 2016, the average number of library users was 35-40 on a full working day where as the total roll strength of the school was near about 1250 in the same year. There were only 1623 volume of books and archives of old question papers and book lists in the library. There were no other types or formats of documents including maps, magazines, journals, newspapers etc. or electronic books, audio books, compact discs (CDs) and digital versatile discs (DVDs) etc. Collected books may be categorized into following subject wise text books for different classes, books on grammar (including Bengali, English and Sanskrit languages), books on literature (mostly on Bengali literature of poetry, fiction, drama, essays etc.), books on general knowledge & general intelligence, reference books (including dictionary, child encyclopedia, year book etc.), religious books and others including biography, autography etc. Library was not automated. It had no computer. All the works were done by manually and issue register was used for book lending.

4. Challenging issues and problems :

Operating a new set up library at its initial stage is always challenging in the concerned environment, same as compliance of a new custom in society. When a librarian join to a new set up school library following issues may be found:

4.1. Haphazard accession register :

This is one of the major problems in any new set up library, especially for those which were started by non-professional persons at its initial stage of progress. It is common that value of accession register with essential fields or columns cannot be understood by non-professional persons. Various problems may occur regarding accessioning. Sometimes it is found that one book has two accession numbers and it may happen when responsibility of the library has shifted from one person to another and the second person has re-accessioned an already accessioned book for

stock verification or creating report about the total volume of the library at the beginning of a new session. Even it is seen that some circulated books have no accession number. Clearing the haphazard register and doing stock verification with books of above said conditions are very patient and time taking job. Taking permission from higher authority it may be fruitful to write a new register with adjusting existing records as recorded in old register.

4.2. Arranging library with necessary equipments :

Motivating school authority for purchasing necessary equipments including furniture, fruitful accession register, several stamps etc. and especially shifting library to a centrally placed healthy room is not easy. Proper arrangement of books with cleaning and dust removing is another initial work and some time it is hard to get help from official staffs.

4.3. Making positive attitude to library :

The entire students and teachers community of a school may have little awareness about the usefulness of library resources from which they can get their necessary information. Again beginning of a new library with at least a new room in a school brings new enthusiasm in students' mind. But due to small resources it is impossible to give at least one necessary book to all energetic students attracted to library. Librarians have to play positive roles here. To keep energy in students' mind mainly for the students of class five to eight he/she must take initiations to supply books that grow and keep students' interest to library, especially books on scientific fictions, comic, easy mathematics, story of travelling, biography and quotes of famous persons, easy general knowledge and vocabulary etc.

4.4. Keeping focus on library work :

Identify own self as a librarian to the entire school community is vital. It is not easy to add concept of library-librarian to the existing common concepts of students-teachers, classroom-blackboard, lesson work-exam etc., in people's mind. It may be tough for a new fresh employee to involve own self to the works enclosed in a room with only some books and waiting for users to come excluding the day to day customary works in school; sometimes it seems like working in a branch separated from root. In addition to it, duties of provisional classes and official works are enough to move librarian's working focus. In spite of all this obstacles librarians must have to take the challenges to grow and develop the library he/she has appointed for.

Besides the above mentioned issues related to a new set up school libraries there are some common problems to operate any school library especially in govt. aided/sponsored schools in West Bengal.

4.5. Lack of financial support :

Financial support is very crucial to run any library. Main source of income of a school library is collection of annual subscription as library fee from students and another source is collection of fine for book due. But the amount collected from these sources is very little for supporting library. Even many times school authority does not agree to expend the collected amount for library



purpose. There is no regular financial support for school libraries from DSE, GWB.

4.6. Lack of cooperative attitude and support from colleagues :

Mental support and cooperative attitude as well as respect to each other are much necessary in any working place. It is also important to mention here that inequality in salary structure allotted for a school librarian in relation to some other staffs though having equal level of academic qualifications can create obstacles to work freely.

4.7. Rapid changes in syllabi :

Supplying subject wise textbooks written by separate authors as differ from books mentioned in book list is one of the important facts that bring attentive students to library, especially the students from class nine to twelve. But syllabi of those classes trend to change rapidly which is not helpful to a librarian to manage new books easily for attentive students.

4.8. Binding pattern of textbooks :

Recently one issue is found that the binding nature of new books (mainly class wise text books) is so bad that they tear easily. Because the printed loose pages are only fasten with paste at spine, no inner stitch is there as found in old text books. It is hard to keep the demandable books usable even after one year of lending to several teenagers' hands. Publishers should think about it.

4.9. Burden of extra associative duties and lack of proper routine work :

To work in any institute it is common that some associative duties have to take besides main focus area, otherwise growth of total institution or getting co-operative attitudes from staffs cannot be gain. Many cases, Lack of proper routine work and unequal distribution of extra associative work on librarian create obstacle to library development.

5. Proposed solutions :

Some proposals are discussed here to solve the above mentioned issues and to keep alive of school libraries and its functions.

5.1. Consciousness of school authority :

Consciousness of school authority on library and its functions is much necessary, especially for a new set up school library. Generally school authority gives a room for library but it should be well located at the central position of school buildings. Sufficient light and air pass facilities must be available in the room. As academic libraries act like supporting hand to obtain goals of root institutions so authority should create proper working environment for its development. They should also conscious about the distribution of institution's extra associative work on librarian. It is pleasure to say here that as per the present rules of DSE, GWB librarian must be a member of school's academic council by chair. Librarian should be allowed to participate in related training programs regularly.

5.2. Financial support from DSE, GWB :

It is not right that government does not provide any financial support for school libraries. Though



it is not regular but phase wise support comes to some schools from several districts. The amount of allotted money varies from time to time. As per the information found from several notifications regarding grant sanction order as available at notification section of DSE's web page, it is clear that in the financial year 2014-15, the DSE has supported 553 schools, in which a sum total of Rs. 2,37,60,000 for 197 schools at first phase and the same total of amount for 341 schools at second phase and later in the same financial year a sum of Rs. 7,50,000 for 15 residential schools for street children. An amount of Rs. 50,000 per school was allotted in the financial year 2015-16 for 35 schools including re-allotment for Gidhagram Gigheswar Vidyaniketan (H.S.) of Burdwan District, as the school was unable to draw the money from the first phase allotment, dated on 20th October, 2014, no. 309-SE (P&B)/115-4/2010 (Government of West Bengal, Department of School Education, n.d.). It will be better if DSE allots some amount per year for all school libraries same as allotment comes to public libraries.

5.3. Re-thinking about designation and working scope of librarian :

The existing designation, duties and working scope of school librarians should be re-thinking to cope with the contemporary changing scenario. Government of India, National Knowledge Commission (2007, p. 16) recommends that "the existing designations may also be reviewed by the National Mission" on Libraries. Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan in its notification related to the employment of Librarian dated on 18th May, 2015, kept 'Librarian Post' under 'Miscellaneous Teaching Post' having Rs. 4600 Grade pay (Ahmad, 2015). One question often arises that whether school librarian should take teaching classes or not? It is right that student-teacher relation cannot be developed properly if a student is inattentive in the class of a particular teacher. Similarly the communication gap between students/ users and librarian can be reduced if librarian is well known to the students. Taking some classes, especially of class five to eight will create opportunities to reduce the communication gaps and helps students to come library. Becoming a class teacher is not supported, but taking some classes or provisional classes per week may give positive result and authority should think to denote class related works of librarian within the first half of school time so that total second half can be utilized for library work.

5.4. Appointment of qualified librarian :

It is necessary to appoint qualified librarian whose identification must be as a positive and energetic staff. In the context of govt. aided/sponsored schools in West Bengal, it is expected that except duty of library operating, some other works will be allotted for him, including provisional classes or involvement in Mid Day Mill Programme etc. In spite of involvement in all other duties, from librarian's part emphasis should always be stay on library developing and without proper academic and professional qualifications appointment of school librarian may results negative.

5.5. Library timing :

Library timing is another important issue in school. Students normally like to visit library after completion of a period. It is not necessary that students should come to library for book lending after first period. Especially at the first half of school time teachers may be irritated when a student enters in a classroom after his/her entry and argues library visiting as the cause of delay which



breaks the concentration of the whole class for a little. Library must stay open at tiffin time. Students from class five to ten are allowed to come from tiffin time and onward. Students of higher secondary should have provision to come from first half to utilize their gap period.

6. Conclusion :

The school exists to educate students up to teenage. The focus of the school librarian, therefore, is on formal instruction. In a study, Haycock (2006) highlighted that if school librarian and teachers collaboratively plan units of study by integrating information literacy strategies and skills in the curriculum then the impact on student achievement is lengthy.

In WB, the main needs for good running of school libraries are creating good environment for library development and making positive attitudes from authority for right utilization of librarians.

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