

Instructional role of librarians in higher education

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As Kevin Harris has opined education is centrally and necessarily concerned with the transmission of knowledge. It is the means by which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation. Conservation of knowledge acquired its transmission to the new generations and facilitating advancement of the frontiers of knowledge are the main objectives of higher education institutions.

A discussion of the traditional definitions of education will be useful to understand the various activities that are to be considered as instructing, teaching or educating.

In definitions of education we find four principal meanings for the word education. They are education as an institution, education as action, education as content, and education as a product.

Education as an institution extends the meaning of the word to the sum-total of all activities and structures whose purpose is to educate the students. According to second meaning, education is the action exercised by the adult generations on those who are not yet ready for social life. Its purpose is to induce in the student a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are demanded of him or her by society as a whole and the social environment for which he or she is particularly intended. Education consists of encouraging the fullest possible development of the attitudes of every person, both as an individual and as a member of society governed by solidarity.

Education is inseparable from social evolution and constitutes one of the forces, which determines it. The purpose of education and its methods must be constantly revised in accordance with increased knowledge of child, man and experience. These definitions are analogues at the normal level, since they combine the problem of purposes with that of the processes of action. A scientific analysis of the actions of teachers and librarians directed towards the students can reveal that they have similar or same purpose and in many aspects only combined action can serve it. So education as action includes the actions of the librarians also.

Education as content corresponds to what we call the curricula. But in higher education we have to go further than the notion of a curriculum, which very often refers almost exclusively to a body of knowledge to be acquired. Although it is true that scientific education is characterized by a sum total of knowledge in different fields, it also includes the creation and development of a certain number of structures and psychological processes which will change the student's outlook on the world and the way he apprehends uses and masters it.

Education as product stresses the result of education as action applied to education as content within the framework of education as an institution. The general education, of the eighteenth century, which was aimed at educating a gentleman – a man having some knowledge of everything - is no longer that of the twentieth century, which is aimed at educating a contemporary man who can quickly adapt himself to new situations and solve the increasingly numerous and different problems he will face. But without going for an analysis of all effects of education - short, medium and long term, we can state that the analysis resulting from the use of such and such a method or such and such a content falls within the framework of the analysis of education as product. Accordingly to take only two examples, the methods of learning to read; synthetic method as opposed to analytical method and so called modern or traditional methods not only lead to different

branches of knowledge but also to psychological structures which are themselves different.

This analysis of the principal meanings of the word education can show that education and teaching has lost the simplicity formerly attributed to it. It is now a combination of various specialized actions. In this context teaching is used to refer the ways of making something known to others, usually in the routine of an educational institution. But teaching does not serve its end if it is confined to the communication of bits of information in a mechanical way. It has degenerated in most of our institutions into routine instruction. The cause of the malady invariably can be traced to a lack of appreciation of the pure nature of learning. Many of the defects of the present system of higher education in the country such as emphasis on mass lectures, reliance on ready-made notes and guidebooks, memory testing examinations, etc. are the outcome of a mechanical view of teaching-learning process.

One of the essential conditions to be fulfilled in order to transform teaching from imparting bits of information to acquisition of knowledge, and learning from mere memorization to training of the mind and sharpening of the intellect is a consideration of the authentic role of all who performs the teaching function - the instructor as well as the information support providing personnel. The teacher has to be conceived as the person who stimulate in the students a genuine desire for scholarship by introducing, explaining and commenting on the subject matter; as well as the person who brings the student into living contact with knowledge generated in that subject field. Teaching thus conceived may be defined as a system of actions directed towards the students.

Teaching up to postgraduate level is mainly transmission of knowledge to students and preparing their mind to receive that fruitfully. Research facilities make possible critical inquiry and advancement of the frontiers of knowledge. Except in research usually in the higher education there is no innovation or creation of new knowledge.

To extend the boundaries of knowledge further the researcher must be provided an easy access to the recorded knowledge which man have accumulated through centuries of experience and research. More research activities give birth to new knowledge. Its application in turn, raises new issues for further research organizing. Organizing all this wealth of knowledge from the past and present for effective and profitable utilization by the faculty, researchers and students is the activity of library and information service professionals.

In view of the increasing scientific, humanistic and social science research Dr. Radhakrishnan Commission of UGC has emphasized that library is the heart of all university's work, directly so, as regards its research work, and indirectly as regards its educational work, which derives its life from research work. Scientific research needs a library as well as its laboratories, while for humanistic research the library is both library and laboratory in one.

So the transmission and progress of knowledge through teaching and research is not possible without the existence of adequately stocked libraries. Teachers must have necessary tools for the purposes of teaching and research in the shape of libraries and laboratories. Truman Commission of Higher Education has stated that librarians are equal to the instructional staff in their importance for higher quality of instruction and research. It brings home the point that the usefulness of the librarian begins where that of the teacher ends in satisfying the individual's inquisitiveness for learning and research.

There is a permanent relationship between development of research resources and the initiative of the researcher towards research projects. Without adequate research resources, which store the results of past and present research, the research workers are decidedly handicapped in planning new studies. It is the library that gathers research resources in response to the needs of current teaching and research.

The research worker is supposed to be familiar with the entire array of current and retrospective literature on the subject of his project. In acquainting himself with the current body of literature the researcher gets guidance and assistance mainly from the library and information service people. The expansion of research activities places a broader obligation on the library in increasing its resources in order to meet the increased new demands. So librarians are active partners with lecturers or guides in research. The effective partnership in the march of research lies in informing the researchers about the progress in general, and about advances that research has made in the field of their interest.

So effective teaching and research involves the actions of collection and conservation of knowledge, transmission of knowledge, increasing the capacity of the receiver to receive what is transmitted and assisting in the pursuit of truth and excellence by critical enquiry, which will advance the frontiers of knowledge. These actions are varied in form and content and they are related to the behavior of students whose actions are in turn related to those who transmit knowledge to them; be instructors or librarians. From the execution of these actions of instructor and librarian, instructor and student, and librarian and student learning occurs. In all these actions which are to be conceived as teaching, the instructor or lecturer and the librarian plays roles which are of equal importance contributing unique essential factors of teaching for which they are trained.

So teaching includes all actions of instructors, and librarians, necessary to transmit and explain information and knowledge assess and predict actual information requirement of students and modify further transmission of knowledge accordingly.

Neither class nor library can provide the best guidance for the student without cooperation from the other. Furnishing the students the guidance in information search and learning must be a mutual enterprise engaged in by instructors and librarians. Teacher and librarian can assist one another in

gaining a deeper understanding of the requirements of the students. On the foundation of this combined knowledge they can build the best means of providing for student's development.

In this context it can be established that teaching is the ways and activities for making something known to others usually in the routine of an educational institution. In this sense if we examine the ways in which teaching was defined we can understand that these definitions include the actions of the librarians also.

One school defines teaching as the arrangement and manipulation of a situation in which there are gaps or obstructions, which an individual will seek to overcome and from which he will learn in the course of doing so. This definition means that to teach is to engage and direct the pupil in problem solving. Once we accept this definition we commit ourselves to the proposition that all those who engage the pupil in problem solving, and direct them in problem solving are doing the action of teaching. Directing a student to solve a problem is done in class after explaining similar problems and giving hints for solving the specific problem. Actual problem solving can occur at a place where information sources required for supporting the student to solve the problem is available. In that place also during the process of problem solving student requires instruction and guidance. Such a place is library where information recorded in various sources and mediums are stored. The instruction and guidance required there for the student is on the information sources and techniques of information search. Only a person trained in library and information science can give this guidance and instruction.

Another school defines teaching as intimate contact between a more mature personality and a less mature one, which is designed to further the education of the latter. This means that teaching consists of contacts between two individuals, one more mature than the other. The contacts are to be intimate and designed to advance the education of the less mature person. Education

by this definition is the development of the individual through learning and learning in turn is defined as an adaptive process. Intimate contact supposedly requires the presence of one person in the company of the other. The guidance and direction given to the student at the library is more individualized, customized and intimate than that which occurs at the class. Each student's information requirement is assessed and analyzed and what he actually requires is given. He is made aware of the map of knowledge already created in the subject of his study. An analysis of Current Awareness Service, Selective Dissemination of Information etc. can reveal the importance of teaching actions effected at the library. The student is guided at the library through all the problems, which are his only. At each stage of his development through assimilating the provided guidance and information, his further requirement is again analyzed and attended. Even though the same thing may happen in a class between a teacher and a student the knowledge transmitted there is not customized to this extent i.e., according to the specific requirement of each student and so the contact is not as intimate as it happens in the library.

Another school defines teaching as imparting of knowledge to an individual by another in an institution of higher education. This school considers education as the cultivation of the mind, the mind being thought of as an accumulation of information - factual, theoretical and practical. Teaching according to this definition also does not mean that it is only lecturing. Relevant up to-date knowledge is collected organized and disseminated or imparted to students both by instructors as well as librarians. Teacher reforms the knowledge so transmitted according to the receptive capacity of the student. Updating the knowledge at the hand of the instructor requires library support. Student's further exploration of the subject is also supported and guided by the librarian who is actually in contact with student when he searches for information and knowledge of the subject.

John Dewey the famous educational scientist considers library as the central hub of any teaching learning process. It is the place for the students to bring

their individual and varied experiences, problems and questions and to discuss and pursue them so that new light may be thrown on them particularly new light from the experience of others, the accumulated wisdom of the world gathered, arranged and displayed in the library. This is the organic relation of theory and practice. This relation is essential for the

- ? stimulation of the nuclear element in each student.
- ? the student not simply doing things, but living the idea.
- ? the student getting from the start some intellectual conception entering into his practice and enriching it,
- ? for idea to find directly or indirectly some application in experience and has some effect on life.

Dewey considers librarian - student relation as equal to teacher-student relation and fixes the position of librarian equal among faculty members.

So we have to conclude saying that neither class nor library alone can provide the best guidance for the student without cooperation from the other. Furnishing the students the guidance in information search and learning must be a mutual enterprise engaged in by lecturers and librarians. They have the same objective; the growth and development of student no matter how they transmit knowledge through a lecture or through an SDI.

Librarian's work must complement, reinforce and extend the learning experiences that the lecturer gives to students. The lecturer must help the librarian understand his own particular role in instruction and development of the student. Conversely he must apply effort to inform himself about librarian's contributions and special problems associated with his work.

Mutual understanding and respect can eliminate many of the unnecessary friction between lecturers and librarians and can make it easier to develop an overall academic climate that will give maximum learning experiences to students, facility to update the knowledge of the teacher and maintain the quality of higher education.

References

1. Charles, Desforbes. An introduction to teaching. Oxford, Blackwell, 1995.
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3. India, Education, Ministry of - University Education Commission, 1948. Chairman: Radhakrishnan. Report. New Delhi, Govt of India, 1950.
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KERALA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Regd. No. 89/71

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

SEMINAR on INSTRUCTIONAL ROLE OF LIBRARIANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Monday 24th January 1994

Trivandrum Hotel Auditorium, Thiruvananthapuram

**Kerala Library Association
C/o. Kerala University Library
Thiruvananthapuram**

17-1-1994

Dear friend,

The Kerala Library Association is organizing a one day seminar on the "Instructional Role of Librarians in Higher Education" on 24th January 1994 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Trivandrum Hotel Auditorium, Thiruvananthapuram. Shri E. T. MOHAMMED BASHEER Hon. Minister for Education has kindly agreed to inaugurate the Seminar.

Memento awarded by the Indian Library Association to Prof. K. A. ISAAC will be formally presented to him by the Hon. Minister.

Shri. K. CHANDRASEKHARAN MLA, Former Minister for Education and Law, Kerala has kindly agreed to preside over the Valedictory function.

Shri. PRABAKAR RANE, Hon. Minister for Adult Education and Public Libraries, Govt. of Karnataka will deliver the valedictory address.

You are cordially invited to attend.

Sincerely

A. B. George
President

N. Sukumaran Nair
General Secretary

PROGRAMME

MORNING SESSION (11 a.m. to 1 p.m.)

- Welcome :
- Presidential Address : **Sri. A. B. George**
President, KLA.
- Inaugural Address and
Presentation of Memento : **Sri. E. T. Mohammed Basheer**
Hon. Minister for Education
- Speeches : **Sri. K. V. Surendranath Ex. MLA.**
Sri. P. Govinda Pillai
Prof. K. A. Isaac
- Vote of Thanks :
- Presentation of Papers : **Sri. K. P. Vijayakumar**
Sri. K. Raman Nair
- Chair Person : **Smt. K. K. Lalithabai**
- Discussions

Lunch Break

AFTER NOON SESSION

(2—4 p.m.)

- Presentation of Papers : **Prof. B. Hridayakumari**
Smt. K. K. Lalithabai
Sri. M. Ayub
- Chair Person : **Prof. K. A. Isaac**
- Discussions

VALEDICTORY SESSION

(4—5 p.m.)

- Welcome :
- Presidential Address : **Sri. K. Chandrasekharan MLA.**
Former Minister for Education
and Law, Kerala.
- Valedictory Address : **Sri. Prabakar Rane**
Hon. Minister for Adult
Education and Public Libraries,
Karnataka.
- Speeches : **Sri. K. C. Joseph MLA**
Sri. P. K. Rajan
- Vote of Thanks :

Registration of Participants will start at 9 a.m. at the Venue.
Working Lunch will be provided.