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pISSN 2321-5453  
eISSN 2347-5722

Available at: <http://itirj.naspublishers.com>

# INNOVATIVE THOUGHTS

## INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

Volume 4  
Issue 4 February 2017

Indexed / Listed In



## HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES: A STUDY

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### Abstract

*Ensuring quality library service is essential for the overall development of students and thereby achieving the goals of education. . But the present study, reveals that the situation of libraries in the Higher Secondary Schools is far from the expected standards and is disappointing. The main problems faced by the libraries, according to the students, are mainly limited lending hours, insufficient collection of books and other documents, closed access system, burden of class works, students' lack of interest in reading, lack of support from the librarian, number of books that can be borrowed at a time, etc.*

*Keywords: School libraries, Librarian, Library resources, Education.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Education, in the modern society, is considered as one of the most important needs of man. Education is essential to form a well informed, knowledgeable and responsible person who alone can give valuable contributions to the society. Therefore, ensuring high quality education and research can be considered as the most essential things for the overall development of a nation. One of the primary concerns of any government should be the efficiency of the educational system in the state. Quality of education should be ensured from the very early stages of school education. "The school library provides information, inculcates ideas and develops knowledge that is so essential to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge based society."<sup>i</sup> Developing in students' lifelong learning skills is one of the important objectives of schools libraries. They also help to develop in students the skill of creative thinking and imagination. All these will ultimately enable the students to be more creative and more productive and to live an ideal and responsible life. In other words, school libraries help in the overall formation of an individual.

The present study is an attempt to know the present status and use of libraries in ten Higher Secondary Schools situated in northern region of Kerala. It tries to examine whether there are libraries in these schools, and if there are libraries, how effectively they function and to what extent they satisfy the information needs of the students.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the problems faced by the school libraries.
2. To examine the basic facilities, collection and organization of documents and the services provided by the libraries.
3. To suggest suitable recommendations.

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Velmurugan, C., and G. Ramasamy<sup>ii</sup> conducted a survey in order to understand the utilization of information resources and services by students of Lalaji Memorial Omega International School in

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Chennai. They investigated the understanding of the students regarding the sources and services through internet. The survey was conducted among 250 students of Classes IX to XII using a structured questionnaire. The data was analyzed using Simple Percentile analysis to generate tables and to arrive at conclusion. Majority of the respondents are aware of the information sources on the internet. They are using the internet mainly for educational needs such as clearing their doubts on text books and lessons. Many of the students have enough knowledge regarding search engines, firewall protection etc.

Ramaiah, Chennupati K., and K. Nallaperumal Pillai<sup>iii</sup>, in the report of their descriptive research based on the existing literature on school libraries, speak of the important reasons for the poor condition of schools, school libraries and school librarians are budget, space, resources, manpower, lack of national policies, standards, etc. They observe that most of the schools in India do not have libraries, and wherever libraries are available, the properly trained manpower is not available to manage the libraries. There is the lack of proper training to school librarians in Indian library schools. This paper reviews the need for school library, UNESCO manifestations of school library, national and international scenarios, school library standards and guidelines, roles and responsibility of school librarians and impact of school libraries on students and teachers. The school library plays an important role on the overall development of the students to transform them into knowledgeable persons. Their reading skills, information seeking skills, and the knowledge about the library resources can be improved due to the school library and school librarian. The need of a professionally trained librarian in school library is emphasized in this paper.

**Sinko, Pirjo**<sup>iv</sup> studied the condition of the school libraries in Finland. It is said that the Finns are very famous for their reading interest and the Finnish library institution is one of the most superior in the world. But the school libraries, even though there are libraries for most of the schools, are outdated. There is no regular budget for school libraries and therefore they have to rely on a random amount of scarce funds. The author says that the words “School Library” could not be mentioned in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education. Now a new national Core Curriculum for basic Educations is being compiled in Finland and one area of competence is multi-literacy, which comprises traditional reading and writing skills, but also visual literacy, digital literacy, information literacy and media literacy.

Uzuegbu, Chimezie Patrick, and Olamide Tolulomo Ibiyemi<sup>v</sup> examined the status of Item Community High School library in an attempt to showcase the state of school libraries in Nigeria. The investigators studied the personnel, facility and material availability in the library. They also studied the extent of use of the library by teachers and students. The questionnaire and observation research methods were used to collect data for the study. It is observed that the library lacks materials and facilities and there is no librarian in the school for more than one year. As a result, the library has been shut down for more than one year and the teachers and students are denied access to and use of Item Community High School library.

Zhipeng, Wei, and others<sup>vi</sup> presented the report of a case study of school library programme in two rural counties in Western China. The report says that since 2002 the libraries of Tian-zhu and Tongwei High Schools have undertaken a series of outreach initiatives to improve local residents’ access to information and to address their cultural and educational needs. Over the past decade, both school libraries have played a leading role in improving the quality of life and enhancing information literacy of local residents. One of the main activities of Tianzhu High School library is the interview

by the students with the folk artists and scholars, the audiovisual recordings of which were made available on the website. Tongwei High School is known for providing health care information through both in-person workshops and online. They also have implemented a tutoring service aimed at teaching residents to use online resources.

**Kovalik, Cindy**<sup>vii</sup> conducted a study in order to better understand how high School students apply their information literacy skills when conducting research and how they carry out research projects. A group of 289 High school senior students were asked to complete an information literacy survey related to the research process. Besides, ten percent of them were randomly selected and asked to participate in an interview to provide in-depth information about their perspectives on finding and using information. The results show that the study participants are able to use library resources to locate and use information. They are familiar with a variety of resources, and they consider themselves successful library users. At the same time the study reflects the participants' need for help in deciding which resources are best to use and how to identify important information from those resources. But they rarely asks the assistance of the school librarian. They also wanted to learn more about how to use books for research. Based on the findings the investigator speaks of the role of school librarians.

Sujitha R., Laila T. Abraham, and Maghesh Rajan M.<sup>viii</sup> conducted a survey among hundred students in six higher secondary schools in Kottayam District, Kerala in order to know the reading habits of the students. The questionnaire method and face to face interview were used for data collection. The findings reveal that teens read less often and for shorter time. Those who read prefer comics and stories to serious books. The influence of electronic media, addiction to computer games, lack of time for leisure reading etc. are the main reasons for non reading. The teacher librarians do not give sufficient support to children for reading. The school libraries do not have interesting collection. The role of librarians, role of teachers and role of parents in improving reading habits of the students has been emphasized in the suggestions.

Umar, B.F.<sup>ix</sup> studied the functioning of the school libraries in Nigeria based on the literature published in this topic. The author examined the reports of many recent studies conducted in this field in Nigeria. Based on the findings of these studies the author discusses the concepts of the school library and its role in the development of education system in Nigeria. The paper highlights the services offered in school libraries to support teaching and learning in promoting academic excellence in students' performance. It also discusses the functions of school library management in enhancing maximum academic performance in school communities. Factors hindering adequate services and proper management of school libraries are identified among others as the non existence of libraries in most Nigerian schools, inadequate funds to properly manage some existing school libraries, irrelevant and obsolete library materials, ignorance of school management, teachers and students towards the role of school library in achieving effective performance, school librarians not being recognized as a stakeholder in promoting students' academic performance, and school librarians not being part of the school management and curriculum planning team. Establishing and adequate management of libraries at the grassroots level in both primary and secondary schools system is advocated to be mandatory on every public and private schools in Nigeria as a way foreword to promote students' academic excellence and customer service in Nigerian schools.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Survey method and observation method are used to find the objectives of the study. Questionnaire was distributed to librarians and students to know the present status and problems faced by the school libraries

### Questionnaire for the Librarians

Questionnaire for the librarians aimed to know the present status of the library which includes questions related to the collection, arrangement, circulation, facilities, working time, services, finance and financial sources, rules and policies, existence of library committee, availability of computer and internet facilities, problems faced, etc. The questionnaire also includes questions related to the qualification, experience, etc. of the librarian.

### Questionnaire for the Students

The questionnaire for the students includes questions related to the personal details of the students, their library using habit, assistance from the school librarian and satisfaction regarding the library services.

### Observation

Observation method was used for verifying the data collected through questionnaires. The investigator personally visited the schools and the libraries in order to ensure that the answers given in the questionnaire are true to facts.

## PROBLEMS FACED BY THE SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Respondents were asked to indicate the important problems faced by the school libraries according to the order of priority. The result is shown in Table 1. Since it is not easy to present all the stages in the order of priority in a single table, only the first five and the last two priorities have been included in the table.

Table 1. Problems Faced by the School Libraries

Sl. No.	Problem	Order of Priority						
		1	2	3	4	5	17	18
1	Lack of Interest in Reading	18 (2.61%)	37 (5.37%)	26 (3.77%)	39 (5.66%)	17 (2.47%)	0	0
2	Inadequate Collection of Books	147 (21.34%)	94 (13.64%)	116 (16.84%)	218 (31.64%)	112 (16.26%)	0	0
3	Poor Arrangement of Books	54 (7.84%)	12 (1.74%)	91 (13.21%)	119 (17.27%)	147 (21.34%)	0	0
4	Lack of Reference	0	0	64 (9.29%)	27 (3.92%)	101 (14.66%)	0	0

	Books							
5	Inappropriate Working Hours	0	0	0	0	2 (0.29%)	152 (22.06%)	194 (28.16%)
6	Limited Lending Hours	278 (40.35%)	174 (25.25%)	128 (18.58%)	109 (15.82%)	0	0	0
7	No Direct Access to Books and Other Documents	83 (12.05%)	98 (14.22%)	0	17 (2.47%)	0	0	0
8	Number of Books that can be Borrowed	6 (0.87%)	39 (5.66%)	29 (4.21%)	45 (6.53%)	182 (26.42%)	0	0
9	Service of the Librarian is not Available	0	0	0	0	12 (1.74%)	107 (15.53%)	0
10	Reading and Reference Room Space and Arrangement	0	38 (5.52%)	51 (7.40%)	24 (3.48%)	7 (1.02%)	0	0
11	Other facilities in the Reference Room	0	0	21 (3.05%)	13 (1.89%)	19 (2.76%)	0	0
12	No Separate for Boys and Girls	0	0	0	0	0	112 (16.26%)	82 (11.90%)
13	No Support Librarian	31 (4.50%)	0	0	0	14 (2.03%)	23 (3.34%)	15 (2.18%)
14	No Guidance	0	44 (6.39%)	0	11 (1.60%)	21 (3.05%)	59 (8.56%)	132 (19.16%)
15	Burden of	72 (10.45)	69 (10.01%)	124 (18%)	36 (5.22%)	42 (6.10%)	0	0
16	No Library	0	26 (3.77%)	3 (0.44%)	12 (1.74%)	13 (1.89%)	66 (9.58%)	0



17	Number and periodicals	0	58 (8.42%)	0	1 (0.15%)	0	104 (15.09%)	266 (38.61%)
18	No Facilities reprography,	0	0	36 (5.22%)	18 (2.61%)	0	66 (9.58%)	0

### First Problem

A big number of respondents (278, i.e., 40.35%) say that the first problem faced by the school library is the limited lending hours. For the second biggest group of 147 (21.34%) respondents, the most important problem is the inadequate collection of books in the library. The third group of 83 (12.05%) respondents shows the closed access system as the first problem. While for 72 (10.45%) respondents the burden of class works is the first problem, 54 (7.84%) respondents indicate the poor arrangement of books in the shelves as the most important problem. Small groups of respondents consisting of 31 (4.5%), 18 (2.61%) and 6 (0.87%) marked lack of support from the librarian, lack of interest in reading and number of books that can be borrowed as the first problem respectively.

### Second Problem

Limited lending hours (by 174, i.e., 25.25%), closed access system (by 98, i.e., 14.22%), inadequate collection of books (by 94, i.e., 13.64%), burden of class works (by 69, i.e., 10.01%), number and quality of periodicals available in the library (by 58, i.e., 8.42%), lack of guidance from teachers (by 44, i.e., 6.39%), number of books that can be borrowed (by 39, i.e., 5.66%), reading and reference room arrangement (by 38, i.e., 5.52%), lack of interest in reading (by 37, i.e., 5.37%), no library hour (by 26, i.e., 3.77%) and poor arrangement of books (by 12, i.e., 1.74% respondents) are indicated as the second problem faced by the school libraries.

### Third Problem

Limited lending hours, burden of class works, inadequate collection of books, poor arrangement of books, lack of reference books, reading and reference room arrangement, lack of facilities like internet and reprographic service, number of books that can be borrowed, lack of interest in reading, physical facilities in the reading and reference room and no library hour are shown as the third problem by 128 (18.58%), 124 (18%), 116 (16.84%), 91 (13.21%), 64 (9.29%), 51 (7.40%), 36 (5.22%), 29 (4.21%), 26 (3.77%), 21 (3.05%) and 3 (0.44%) respondents respectively.

### Fourth Problem

218 (31.64%) respondents marked inadequate collection of documents as the fourth problem. For 119 (17.27%) respondents the fourth problem is the poor arrangement of books. Limited lending hours is shown as the fourth problem by 109 (15.82%) respondents. The other aspects are shown as the fourth problem by groups of very small number of respondents.

### Fifth Problem

The number of books that can be borrowed, poor arrangement of books, inadequate collection of books and lack of reference books are shown as the fifth problem by 182 (26.42%), 147 (21.34%), 112 (16.26%), and 101 (14.66%) respondents respectively. A total of 147 (21.34%) respondents, who belong to different small groups according to their choice of the fifth problem, indicate burden of class works, no guidance from teachers, physical facilities in reading and reference room, no support from

the librarian, lack of interest in reading, unavailability of the service of the librarian, no library hour, reading and reference room space arrangement, and inappropriate working hours as the fifth problem.

### **Seventeenth Problem**

For 152 (22.06%) respondents the seventeenth problem is the inappropriate working hours. For a group of 112 (16.26%) respondents lack of separate reading room for boys and girls and teachers is the seventeenth problem. The third group consisting of 107 (15.53%) respondents shows the non availability of the services of the librarian as the seventeenth problem. Number and quality of periodicals (for 104, i.e., 15.09%), no facilities like internet and reprography (for 66, i.e., 9.58%), no library hour (for 66, i.e., 9.58%), no guidance from teachers (for 59, i.e., 8.56%), and no support from the librarian (for 23, i.e., 3.34% respondents) are also shown as seventeenth problem.

### **Eighteenth Problem**

Number and quality of periodicals, inappropriate working hours, no guidance from teachers, no separate reading and reference room for boys and girls and teachers, and no support from the librarian are marked as the eighteenth problem by 266 (38.61%), 194 (28.16%), 132 (19.16%), 82 (11.90%) and 15 (2.18%) respondents respectively.

## **BASIC FACILITIES**

### **General Elements**

1. There are no written rules or policies regarding the library in any of the schools.
2. There is no library committee in any of the schools. It adversely affects the selection of documents and the development of the libraries. In many of the cases only the librarian pays attention to the functioning of the library. Others remain indifferent to the library and its services.

### **Librarian**

3. There is no trained full time librarian in any of these schools. The responsibility of the library is given to any of the language teachers.
4. None of the teacher-in-charge of the library is given any type of training in the management of the library. Each of the library functions according to the style preferred by the teacher-in-charge of the library.
5. The service of the librarian is available only for a very limited period of time.
6. The librarians are not concerned about the satisfaction of the users. No user study has been conducted in any of the school libraries under concern.

### **Space**

7. There is separate room for library in all the schools. This room, in size, is equal to the size of an ordinary class room. All the library services such as lending, reading, reference, etc. are done in the same room. Hence the reading reference room is not conducive to do concentrated reading and reference.
8. There is no separate reading and reference room for students and teachers. Special seats have been arranged for teachers in some of the libraries.



9. Students do not get a comfortable atmosphere in the reading room if 30 – 40 users are accommodated in it. The desks and benches in the reading room are only 5 – 6 feet long. It will be just like a class room if such a number of users come in the room at a time. Shelves, desks, etc. are tightly arranged in the reading room. Users find it very difficult to move in the reading room, especially during intervals and during the time of lending. The reading and reference room is not sufficient compared to the number of users. Not even a single class, which is comprised of 50 – 60 students, can be accommodated at a time in the reading room.
10. There is no separate reading room facility for boys and girls. But different sections have been provided for boys and girls in all the schools.

### **Services**

11. Even though the library is open for about seven hours every day in all the schools, lending service is available only for about one hour. This is quite inadequate compared to the number of users.
12. Lending, reading room and reference service are the only services provided by the libraries. Both librarians and users are not even aware of other services such as Current Awareness Service, Inter Library Loan, extension activities, etc.

### **Library Collection, Arrangement and Circulation**

13. The available documents in all the libraries are recently published. But the collection of documents is insufficient compared to the number of users. Besides, the collection mostly contains books for pleasure reading such as novels, stories, etc. The number of subject books is very minimum in almost all the libraries.
14. The library collection includes only print documents such as general books, reference books, text books, maps, atlases etc. There are no digital or any other type of documents in any of the libraries.
15. The classification and arrangement of documents is quite unscientific in almost all the libraries. Those using self evolved classification styles find it difficult to identify the subjects of the documents and to arrange the documents according to the mutual relationship.
16. The cataloguing systems followed are unscientific and practically of no use in most of the libraries.
17. Register and individual card system is followed for circulation of documents. It is highly time consuming and difficult to manage. Library services are not computerized in any of the schools.
18. The number of books that can be borrowed at a time is one or two and it is very insufficient.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

The study reveals that there are many areas which need serious attention and immediate action from the authorities for ensuring effective library services in the Higher Secondary Schools under study. Some of the suggestions, which seem to be relevant, are given below:

1. The first and the most important step to be taken for the improvement of the library services in Higher Secondary Schools is the appointment of qualified full time librarian(s). Since special

skills and knowledge are necessary for many of the library operations, only a qualified full time librarian can organize the library and its services effectively. Appointment of librarians in the Higher Secondary Schools is one of the most essential things to be done by the government for the improvement of educational system. According to KER there should be Grade III and Grade IV librarians in all the Higher Secondary Schools. But no librarian has been appointed in any of the government or aided Higher Secondary Schools in Kerala. Government should immediately appoint at least one, preferably Grade III librarians, in all the Higher Secondary Schools. Many of the following suggestions presuppose the appointment of a qualified full time librarian.

2. All the library services, especially the circulation service, must be made available throughout the working hours of the library.
3. Presently all the schools use one of the rooms which is equal to the size and shape of an ordinary class room as the school library. But the school library needs specially designed room, which is bigger than the class rooms, in order to carry out different library services smoothly. It is necessary to have separate rooms or sections for circulation, reference, reading, etc. The reading room must have a size capable of accommodating at least the students of a single division.
4. The reading and reference room is arranged just like a class room. The furniture used also is not different from that of a class room. The reading and reference rooms and furniture must be specially designed and arranged in the reading and reference room providing enough space and comfort to each user.
5. Specially designed stands or shelves must be used for keeping newspapers and periodicals.
6. Besides the furniture, other facilities like light, fan, etc. also must be improved in the school libraries.
7. It is desirable to have separate rooms or seat arrangement for reading and reference for the staff and students. It is better to arrange separate rooms for boys and girls.
8. Different library services, such as Current Awareness Service, reprographic service, newspaper clipping service, internet service, etc. must be introduced to the library. This will certainly attract more number of students to the library.
9. The collection of documents, especially the subject related documents, must be increased according to the number and need of users.
10. Automation of the libraries is highly recommended for better service.

## **CONCLUSION**

The main problems faced by the libraries, according to the students, are mainly limited lending hours, insufficient collection of books and other documents, closed access system, burden of class works, students' lack of interest in reading, lack of support from the librarian, number of books that can be borrowed at a time, etc. Absence of trained full time librarian, work over load and lack of interest of the teacher-in-charge of the library, lack of training to the librarian, absence of standards in classification, cataloguing, etc., reading room space and arrangement, inadequate funding, lack of attention from the authorities, etc. are some other important problems which were found from the data collected from the librarians and from the personal observation of the investigators.

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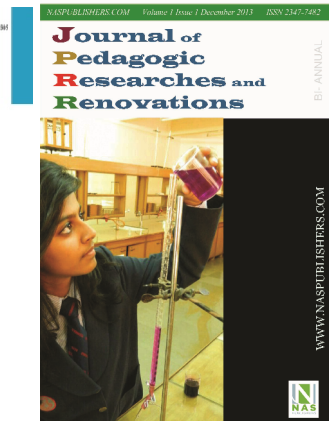
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