

The simple definition of a library is "a collection of books". It is a living record of man's progress from the stone age to the space age. Through libraries men communicate their vision and experience from generation to generation. A well equipped library is not only a store house of knowledge but also a repository of world's culture.

A school may call its library an instructional materials centre, instructional resource centre or resource and learning centre. It may be regarded as the academic heart of the school. There is no better laboratory than a library in a school. Every school must have a good library. Education without books and libraries are two inseparable invisible concepts. One cannot be separated in the other. None of them is an end in itself, rather both together are a means to an ultimate end.

In all developed countries of the world primary and secondary schools are regarded as the most important stage "where most of the skilled manpower of a nation is trained and where the quality of future university students is determined, where character building and qualities of leadership can best be developed". The principle that is now well accepted is that the school should provide a dynamic type of social experience in the practical art of citizenship.

So if we want to educate our children, improve their range and depth of understanding we should have to improve our school libraries and increase their efficiency. Practically libraries are non-existent in our primary schools and the condition of secondary schools is not at all happy for the purpose. School libraries should be treated as integral part of

School library

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school teaching and a base of higher educational research. American Association of School Librarians defined the purposes of school library in the following manner:

1. To participate effectively in the school programme as it strives to meet the needs of pupils, teachers, parents and other community members.

2. Provide boys and girls with library materials and services most appropriate and most meaningful in their growth and development as individuals.

3. Stimulate and guide pupils in all phases of their reading so that they may find increasing enjoyment and satisfaction and may grow in critical judgement and appreciation.

4. Provide an opportunity through library experiences for boys and girls to develop helpful interests, to make satisfactory personal adjustments, and to acquire desirable social attitudes.

5. Help children and young people to become skilful and discriminating users of libraries and of printed and audio-visual materials.

6. Introduce pupils to community libraries as early as possible and co-operate with those libraries in their efforts to encourage continuing education and cultural growth.

7. Work with teachers in the selection and use of all types of library materials which contribute to the teaching programme.

8. Participate with the teachers and administrators in programmes for continuing

professional and cultural growth of the school staff.

9. Co-operate with other libraries and community leaders in planning and developing overall library programme for the community or area.

UNSATISFACTORY

We should have similar concept of libraries at school level. But the present condition of secondary school libraries in Bangladesh is not satisfactory in the true sense of the term. Here school library is not treated as integral part of school teaching. Most of the schools do not have even full-time librarians, not to speak of full-time trained librarians. If there is a library it is run by a part-time teacher-librarian.

The library is generally opened during the vacant hours of the teacher-librarians. A very negligible number of schools have got trained librarians. There is no regular provision for library in the annual budget of the school. In-sufficient and irregular budget is, of course, the crux of all problems. There is no book selection policy. Due to lack of developing and proportionate selection policy the collection is most unplanned and haphazard. The collection does not reflect the needs and requirements of the school. Some of them do not even possess the basic reference materials.

Most of the schools do not have separate reading-cum-library room. Books are housed either in the chamber of the Headmaster or teachers' common rooms. Students do not have access to the library. Books are

usually locked in the almirahs. Most of the schools do not have the provision of library houses in their time table. Books are arranged without any relation to any scientific scheme. A good collection is of little use if they are not properly organised.

Students are thus further entrenched in their habits of reading nothing else than texts. The library condition of government schools, schools attached to organisation and schools located in urban areas is better but not as it should have been. Most of these schools have got librarians. Some of them are trained but they have got other problems regarding selection, organisation, space furniture, equipment etc.

If we want to improve the standard of our education we should have to create some atmosphere conducive to the cultivation of reading, leisure and meditation. If we fail to equip each school with a good library, we have no right to blame our teachers and students community. By providing one or two text books on each subject we cannot expect good educationists, planners, administrators.

Nowadays there is a tendency of passing the examinations by reading cheap note books instead of text books. This is unfortunate. We may try to save our children from this malaise by providing them with library facilities. It is only by luring students into the realms of newspapers, periodicals and books of all sorts that we can kindle

situation

in them a love for books and thus some love for knowledge. A school library is also a necessity for school teachers.

LIBRARIES INTO LABORATORIES

Now if we want to convert our school libraries into laboratories, some pre-conditions and requirements must be fulfilled. Efficient, effective and healthy school library services cannot be expected unless we nicely provide fund, space, equipment, furniture, materials and trained library personnel. A library is a functional unit and it cannot efficiently work in the absence of any of the above.

Most of the obstacles may be removed if we realise the real concept of library as a dynamic educational force that affects the intellectual life of teachers and students and the role of librarian as a teaching partner who is competent enough in the selection, organisation and proper utilisation of all the materials in his charge. Librarians and teachers are an indispensable educational team dedicated to preparing to days' boys and girls to meet the challenge of tomorrow.

According to 1982-83 figure, there are 8664 secondary and 43039 primary schools in our country. If we want to equip each school with a good library then a good number of librarians will be needed. There is no denying the fact that our libraries also suffer for want of trained librarian. The appointment of a trained librarian at least in

each secondary school is imperative.

Only the University of Dhaka offers post-graduate diploma and degree in library science but this is not at all sufficient for the purpose. The demand exceeds the supply. It will not be out of place to mention here that every year thousands of graduates are being produced by our universities who do not get job according to their qualifications. If all of our general university authorities offer library science courses as one of their disciplines, then some of the unemployed graduates will get the opportunity to undergo librarianship training and most of them may join our school library after training.

It will also solve some unemployment problem. The Library Association of Bangladesh has been offering its certificate course in Library Science in Dhaka and Rajshahi only. It should be requested to introduce its certificate course in each district headquarters.

The Directorate of Education should not give recognition to any school which does not meet the minimum required standard in respect of school library. District Inspector of Libraries should be appointed to supervise, instruct and guide for development of school library properly.

If we consider the idea of improving our school libraries according to our needs and requirements, fund, space, equipment, furniture, materials and trained library personnel must be provided. This will involve huge amount of money but money spent on education and instruction is no more treated as consumption; it is really regarded as investment.