

# Library Provision For Primary Schools

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**T**HE simple definition of a library is a collection of books. A school may call its library an instructional materials centre, instructional resource centre or resource or learning centre. Every school reasonably needs a library even if a good public library is nearby. To speak the truth, a public library is nonexistent in our rural areas.

Today's school library is more than a store house of books. It is a centre for materials including books, magazines, pictures, films, pamphlets, projectors etc. There is no better laboratory than a good library. To a student, a library is a place where he can pursue knowledge beyond his class room, beyond his textbooks and even beyond his teachers.

Primary school libraries provide boys and girls with some of their first experiences in using a library. Students go to a school library to hear stories, to browse and read, to borrow books for school works, to get their questions answered and for recreation. They also use the library to find materials for reports or to pursue their hobbies and other special interests.

A good primary school library should have a wide range of materials for use in the class room. Throughout the school day, students and teachers find situations where they need books and other library materials. If there is no library provision the entire academic programme will suffer.

In all developed and developing countries of the world primary school is 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 the qualities of leadership can best be developed." The principle that is now well accepted is that the primary school should provide a dynamic type of social adjustment and experience in the practical arts of citizenship. Hence "the libraries of primary schools should be equipped on an adequate a scale as possible, and the range of subjects should be as comprehensive in small schools as in large.

If we want to educate our children, improve their range and depth of understanding, we have to establish and organise an efficient and effective

library service in our primary schools. There is no denying the fact that a library is practically non-existent in our primary schools. If there is any, it is housed either in the room of the Headmaster or in the teachers' common room. Books are usually locked in the alimira. There is no provision of library hours in the timetable even. Students are thus further entrenched in their habits of reading nothing else than their well thumbed textbooks.

The concept of establishing libraries in primary schools is not an new idea. "A library is the heart of any educational institution and it should be well stocked and properly organised." These words lead us into the depth of the whole philosophy of education and to discover the truth in the present academic system. Subjects like social studies, science etc. definitely involve searching for information in the widest field of reading materials. But it is impossible for the teachers to cultivate the habit of reading or ask the students to read reference books which they cannot afford to buy for obvious reasons.

From the primary level we should encourage our boys and girls to become skillful and discriminating users of books and libraries. Children should become familiar with the methods of locating information. It will gradually open for them the doors of all knowledge. Nowadays there is an increasing tendency of passing the examinations by reading cheap notebooks instead of texts and reference books. This is simply unfortunate. We should save our children from this malaise by providing them with library facilities. It is only by luring students into the realms of books of all sorts, newspapers, periodicals and other materials that we can endkindle in them a love for books and thus some love and desire for knowledge.

All these enumerated above reasonably need an effective and efficient library service in our primary schools. We should provide our boys and girls with library materials services most appropriate and most meaningful to their growth and development as individuals. It will ultimately

help them to lead a successful life as useful members of the society.

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 our school with a good library, we have no right to blame our students and teachers community. By providing one or two text books on each subject we cannot expect good educationalists, scientists, administrators, planners, etc.

If we realise the real concept of libraries in primary schools and if we want to convert them into laboratories, some pre-conditions and requirements must be fulfilled. An effective and healthy library service cannot be expected unless we provide required fund, space, furniture, equipment, materials and trained personnel. A library is a functional unit. It is a service oriented agency. It cannot work profitably in the absence of any of the above.

A good collection is useless unless they are efficiently organised and fruitfully utilised. The efficiency of a library depends on the efficiency of the person who operates it. Librarianship is a specialised profession. Persons coming from outside the profession will not serve the purpose. Librarians are also teachers. They teach with books. Librarians and teachers are an indispensable educational team dedicated to preparing today's boys and girls to meet the challenges of tomorrow. They work closely with teachers to help students learn how to use books and libraries and to develop good reading and studying habits. They are equal partners in the challenging business of education. Hence they must be trained.

According to 1984-85 figures we have 44,488 primary schools. If we want to equip each school with a library, a good number of librarians will be needed. To speak the truth, due to the lack of training facilities our existing libraries (school, college, public and other) also suffer from want of trained librarians. Only the

University of Dhaka offers a post-graduate Diploma and Degree in Library Science. But it is not at all sufficient for our purpose. The demand simply exceeds the supply.

It will not be out of place to mention here that thousands of graduates are being produced by our universities every year who do not get jobs according to their qualifications. Secondly, thousands of students are refused admission in universities and colleges for want of seats and facilities, not to speak of medical and engineering education. If all university authorities (in general) offer library science courses, some of the graduate and under-graduate students will get the opportunity to undergo training in librarianship and after training most of them may join our libraries. There is a great variety of careers within the profession of librarianship.

It will ease the unemployment problem which is gradually pushing its head high above others. Everybody should be given an occupation. We should consider this not only for employing but also for utilizing the services of our educated youth and to save them from misery and waywardness and also from political and other exploitations.

To meet the present challenging shortage and to cater to future requirements all of our general university authorities should immediately offer library science courses as one of their disciplines. The Library Association of Bangladesh has been offering its Certificate course in Library Science in Dhaka, Rajshahi and Khulna only. It should also be requested to introduce its Certificate course in each district headquarter.

If we consider the library as a dynamic educational force that affects the intellectual life of teachers and students and the role of trained librarians as a teaching partner who is competent enough in the selection, organisation and proper utilization of all the materials in his charge, the ideas enumerated above reasonably demand their implementation.

The organisation of library service in primary schools will no doubt involve a huge amount of money and man-power. But the cost of library service should, of course, be regarded as capital investment.