

## Training Needs of School Librarians in India

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### ABSTRACT

In India the situation of schools, school libraries, and school librarians is in a poor condition as compared to the advanced countries in the world. Most of the schools do not have libraries, and wherever libraries are available, the properly trained manpower is not available to manage those libraries. There are many reasons for this problem including budget, space, resources, manpower, lack of national policies, and standards. One of the problems is lack of proper training to school librarians in Indian library school. The paper reviews the need for school library, UNESCO manifestation of school library, national and international scenarios, school library standards & 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 the school librarian. So, the need for professionally trained manpower to man these libraries is also discussed.

**Keywords:** School libraries, school librarians, training needs, Indian school libraries, impact of school libraries on education

### 1. INTRODUCTION

"...the library media center should become a magnet for teacher and student alike."

-- Alliance for Excellence

The 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce requires skills in problem-solving, communication, and technology to be creative and innovative, and habits to connect experiences and information from a variety of sources and constantly develop their own knowledge<sup>1,2</sup>. The same skills, and habits are vital in a democracy that are required by citizens to understand the complex problems of change, make reasoned arguments, and understand different viewpoints. The partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills is a collaboration of business and educational organisation, declared a propound gap between what students learn in school and the knowledge and skills they need for the 21<sup>st</sup> century communities<sup>3</sup>. The world of 'school libraries' has changed substantially due to technological advancements in various fields including printing technology, IT, networks, digital storage, etc. Automation, collaborative working, print-to-digital shift, changing educational needs, and multimedia products led

to many changes in today's school librarianship. School librarians recognise the importance of being instructionally savvy, educational partners who can collaborate with teachers in co-plan, co-teach, and co-evaluate student's work. According to UNESCO, the following aims of the school library<sup>4</sup> are to:

- (i) Acquire books and other materials in line with the demands of the curriculum and the needs of students to organise these materials for effective use;
- (ii) Guide pupils in their choice of books and other materials of learning desired both for personal and curricular purposes;
- (iii) Develop in pupils skill and resourcefulness in their use of books, and libraries to encourage the habit of personal investigation;
- (iv) Help pupils, establish a wide range of significant interests;
- (v) Provide aesthetic experience and develop appreciation of the arts;
- (vi) Encourage lifelong education throughout the use of library resources;

- (vii) Encourage social attitudes, and provide experience in social and democratic living; and
- (viii) Work cooperatively and constructively with teaching and administrative staff of the school.

However, due to technological developments in libraries, lots of changes took place in their collections, services, and functions. Accordingly, the manpower to manage them also got to change, therefore this study is most essential for effectively running today and tomorrows' school libraries. In this context, many countries, like, US, UK, Canada, Australia, etc., framed school library guidelines intended to help in establishing, maintaining, and developing primary, secondary, and high school libraries. The guidelines addresses the library needs of school students; embedding the school library in the teaching, and learning culture of the whole school. The guidelines also recognise that the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) as an integral part to every aspect of school library.

## 2. NEED FOR SCHOOL LIBRARY

During the 6<sup>th</sup> Indian Education Survey<sup>5</sup> it was found that 96 % of children in the age group 6 to 14 in rural India were enrolled in schools. 73 % of these children were enrolled in government schools, and the remaining (21.8 %) were enrolled in private schools. It is surprising that around 40 % of all rural children in 5<sup>th</sup> standard in India were at least three grades (classes) behind based on their level of learning. During 2007-2009, for children in government schools in 5<sup>th</sup> standard, the ability to do division problems has actually declined from 41 % to 36 %. The average attendance rate in rural India is around 75 % however, it is 90 % or more for states like Kerala, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa, Tamil Nadu, and Nagaland. In government schools, 17.1 % students take private tuitions, and this percentage rose to 30.8 % by the time they reached to 8<sup>th</sup> standard.

In today's IT era, school library takes a key place in the school education. School librarian deals with all subject areas, but more closely related to teaching and learning, media resources use and management, IT and net skills, reading, information seeking skills, information literacy skills, etc. The school librarian should be well versed with the following:

### 2.1 Incorporation of IT in School Library

IT has become an integral part in today's school education so it has to be accommodated in the school library. Information processing tools, communication tools, information searching tools, net-surfing, etc., may be taught to all the students to do their day-

to-day work and project works in a much better way. School librarian need to prepare students for the information and technology-rich work-place of the future. An active, dynamic information and technology team is an integral part of the school. As educators, it is our responsibility to equip our students with the required IT skills so that they will comfortably work in e-networked or virtual learning environments. Incorporation of IT component in school libraries is essential for the students to utilise the entire resources of the library.

Helping teachers should make the best use of the opportunities provided by new technologies to their students. E-mail, cell phones, and blogging are some of the ways students nowadays communicate to each other, so the school librarian should help them in effectively use of these technologies. Today knowing how to identify, locate, access, and utilise information is the key to our achievement.

### 2.2 Getting Acquainted with E-media

Due to the advancement of technology so many developments took place in information acquisition, organisation, and dissemination. Hence, the school librarians are also expected to master in handling of the electronic media because the majority of their resources are either media- or IT-based, so familiarity/expertise in these areas is one of the prerequisites to properly run the school library.

### 2.3 Familiarity with Other Subject Areas

The fundamental aspect of school librarianship is information literacy: the ability to access, evaluate, and use information from a variety of sources and in a variety of formats. Library & Information Science deals with many subjects including management, information technology, education, archival science, preservation & conservation, ethics, copyright, computer science, documentation & records management, printing & publishing, sociology, psychology, and many more.

## 3. SCHOOL LIBRARIES

### 3.1 International Scenario

The school library equips the students with life-long learning skills and develops imagination among them to live as responsible citizens. The mission of the school library is to offer instructional services, books and instructional resources that enable the students to become critical thinkers and effective users of information in all formats or media. The school libraries link to the wider library and information network in accordance with the principles of the UNESCO's Public Library Manifesto<sup>7</sup>. It has been demonstrated that when librarians and teachers work together, students will achieve higher level of literacy, reading, learning, problem-solving skills and ICT skills. School library is an integral part of

present education system and supports educational goals. It develops and sustains the habit of reading and learning in children and organises activities that encourage cultural and social awareness. It works with students, teachers, administrators and parents to achieve the mission of the school.

Similar to Public Library Manifesto, the UNESCO also brought out School Library Manifesto in 1998. The purpose of this Manifesto is to define and advance the role of school libraries and resource centres in enabling students to acquire the learning tools and learning content that will allow them to survive; to develop their full capacities; to continue to learn throughout their lives; and to make informed decisions<sup>7</sup>.

School libraries offer material relevant to the needs of students and teachers, including traditional materials such as books, magazines and newspapers, and material available in electronic form through modern technologies. The materials should complement and enrich the school curricula's textbooks, teaching materials and methodologies. When teachers and librarians work together, students improve their reading, learning, problem solving, and develop computer and information literacy.

### 3.2 Titles Used

The following are the basic titles that are used in different countries but their function is the same:

#### 3.2.1 Library Resources

Include all media, such as books, periodicals, newspapers, videos, audiotapes, three-dimensional models, posters, charts, slides and CD-ROMs. Several equipment including and computer hardware and software that enable teachers and learners to access digital information.

#### 3.2.2 School Library

This term is used in its generic form to incorporate all types and models of collection development and delivery that provides materials relevant to a resource-based teaching and learning, approach to learners and teachers in schools.

#### 3.2.3 Teacher-librarian

A generic term for the various names used in schools for teachers who manage the resource collection, for example, librarians, media teachers, resource centre teachers, and information specialists.

#### 3.2.4 School Librarian

The terms 'school library' and 'school librarian' are used in this text to encompass a range of terms employed by different countries to designate the policies, programmes, services, and staff of the library within a school. Such terms as 'information center', 'documentation center', 'resource center', 'media center', and 'learning center' are included in the term

'school library', while the terms 'teacher-librarian', 'school library media specialist', 'teacher documentalst', 'information technologist', and 'information specialist' are meant by the term 'school librarian'.

#### 3.2.5 School Library Media Specialists

The school librarian in the USA is called 'School Library Media Specialists (SLMS)', and their library is called 'School Library Media Center (SLMC)'. The school librarians are called with different titles in different parts of Europe, however their roles and responsibilities are almost similar. In this case, the librarian is expected to be an information specialist, curriculum consultant, teacher librarian, and having elaborate knowledge about the handling of electronic information sources. Both in Australia and New Zealand school librarians are called 'teacher librarian', who is holding recognised qualifications both in teaching and librarianship, and also holding an Associate membership of the Australian Library and Information Association. Within the broad fields of education and librarianship, teacher librarians are uniquely qualified.

The school library is a vital teaching and learning environment in the school community. The school library and its staff are integral part empowering the students to become independent lifelong learners. Student learning outcomes are enhanced through the teacher librarian's acquisition and organisation of information resources, the dissemination and circulation of learning materials and collaboratively planned programs to integrate information and digital literacy<sup>8</sup>.

The international research shows that the quality of student's learning outcome greatly enhanced by effective school libraries<sup>9</sup>. All learners of European countries are entitled to quality SLMCs and services. In order to achieve this in each country, the European Union adopted and implemented the principles of the IFLA/UNESCO school library manifesto. The schools with well stocked, well-equipped school libraries, managed by qualified and motivated professional teacher-librarians working with support staff will create high-quality learning experiences. Standardised scores of the students tend to be 10-20 % higher than in schools without this investment on school libraries<sup>10</sup>. The school library is one of the few factors whose contribution to academic achievement has been documented empirically, and its contribution cannot be explained.

The technological developments in the information and knowledge dissemination compel the changes in the roles and responsibilities of the school librarians. School library professionals in the developed countries are now engaged in some exciting activities so as to remain effective in the midst of fast-moving technological changes. They are providing smart researching methodologies and information literacy

skills to their students. They are using Web 2.0 technologies including blogs to give updates on resources as well as to interact with users and host collaborative discussions, connecting their readers on social networking sites such as MySpace or Orkut. The RSS tools are used to subscribe new information services by the staff and students involved in creating online library-related resources, podcasts and videocasts for the audio tours of the library. As a result, school libraries are now called 'Learning Resource Centers' and the school librarians as the 'Learning Resource Centre Managers'. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT)<sup>11</sup> identified the roles and responsibilities of the school librarian as school library media specialist, as teacher, as instructional partner, as information specialist, and as programme administrator.

Around the world, instructors are reinventing themselves as 21<sup>st</sup> century digital teachers in this new technology-based classroom environment. Nowadays mobile digital devices are more and convenient because digital curricular materials are more comprehensive in scope and content, and the classroom is now connected with the world. As a result, classrooms are becoming more interactive and students are increasingly engaged. Teachers and instructors can use the opportunity to present these new technologies and take their profession to the next level of performance and sophistication. Now it is the time for education leaders to make the investment in professional development to help the workforce seize the future. According to Carl Harvey<sup>12</sup> a teacher expects a School Library Media Specialist as a: teacher, collaborator, resource locator, technology literate, staff developer, innovator, manager, and is flexible. Also he/she loves literature and loves to learn, and also lends helping hand. But most of the time, the Library Media Specialist does not work alone. To run the school library programme successfully everyone – the library media specialist, teachers, administration, and the library media staff would work together for the benefit of the students.

### 3.3 National Scenario

Due to lack of professional training programmes (both degree and diploma level), most of the libraries are looked after by the regular teachers as an additional duty so they cannot do any professional work. Because of that their regular teaching also hampers so there is an urgent need in India to start professional training programme to train the school librarians that suits to the requirements of the current needs of schools. To study the existing situation and needs of all types of schools no research work was done in India except the

School Libraries Committee of the Indian Library Association surveyed all school libraries in Delhi during 1998 but the report is not available for this review. Besides that, the following seminars were conducted in India but most of them did not publish their proceedings:

- (a) Role of school libraries in quality education, organised by NCERT, New Delhi during 10-11 February, 2009.
- (b) School libraries and reading, an international conference, organised by Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur, Rajasthan held during 3-5 October 2008, and
- (c) Manpower in school libraries in India: Present position and prospective requirements. National seminar on school libraries and education system, organised by KLA, Trivandrum, 19-20 November 1998.

Out of the 28 states of the Union of India, only 17 states have passed the legislation for the Public Library Act. In India, school libraries are facing lot of problems ranging from inadequate space for keeping books, reading space for students, lack of professionally trained staff to manage them properly<sup>13</sup>. Non-availability of regular funds for acquiring reading materials is a major problem faced by most of the school libraries in government and semi-government sectors. These schools have only limited amalgamated funds such as parent-teacher association fund which is used to purchase a small number of approved textbooks. The ad-hoc system existing among school libraries is running throughout the country due to absence of specific guidelines and standards for their sustained growth. Rural schools are lagging much behind to urban schools, in terms of professionally trained library staff and other resources. Therefore, India in need of school librarians training programme to produce professional school librarians, and at the same time proper guidelines and mechanisms have to be developed to standardise the school libraries both at state and central governments level.

After setting up of UGC's INFLIBNET, the college and university libraries have developed to a greater extent but the school libraries are totally neglected in India. According to the 7<sup>th</sup> All India Education Survey, 77.24 % secondary schools and 89.59 % higher secondary schools are having library facility whereas in 6<sup>th</sup> Survey out of total 65,564 secondary schools, the percentages for secondary and higher secondary schools having library facility was 80.65 % and 90.21 % respectively. However, there are no trained librarians working in most of Indian schools, although the central government has made libraries as centres to raise the literacy rate in the country<sup>14</sup>. Their resources in terms of staff and funds are scarce, as these have received the least priority. The school

libraries neither have good collection nor sufficient space because of the financial constraints. As a result, the school libraries are unable to inculcate the reading habits among the children and help in achieving information literacy. In 1998, the School Library Committee of the Indian Library Association surveyed all school libraries in Delhi and found that most of the government primary schools had no library at all and the libraries in secondary schools are substandard. The committee stressed for the need for school library and it may be made as the hub of the school. For them it is one of the best marketing tools to attract large number of students to their school. After privatisation of education in the country, the majority the public (private) schools were able to set-up some what better library facilities including staff, collections and services as compared to the government schools.

The national seminar on the 'Role of School Libraries in quality education' 10-11 February 2009, New Delhi, NCERT has submitted a report with the 15 recommendations, out of which following points related to the training needs of school librarians are:

- (i) The post of a professionally trained librarian may be including in the skeleton staff of the secondary schools not with standing the strength of students.
- (ii) The school library budget should be of at least 5 % of the school's budget.
- (iii) National census of school libraries in India is strongly recommended.
- (iv) LIS courses to add school librarianship modules in universities and vocational stream.
- (v) Standards for libraries and services should be developed by the apex bodies in the form of handbooks/manuals.

Though India is one of the top producers of technically trained manpower in the world, the school education system is not at all comparable to other developed countries. Many countries like USA, UK, Canada, Australia, etc. already formulated school libraries guidelines long back at national level and providing quality services to their school community but in India neither standards nor guidelines are established for setting-up of school libraries and also for appointment of school librarians.

### 3.4 Roles of School Libraries in India

In India, the library was considered as an important part of school since it is a store house of knowledge and the activities were confined to issue and return of books only. Nowadays the school library is expected to serve the students and the teaching community in a most professional manner, thus the roles are multifaceted and manifolds. The services render by some of the school libraries in

India including:

- (a) Reference service;
- (b) Information dissemination; and
- (c) Book issue and return, etc.

Dr S.R. Ranganathan stated that the school libraries should act as laboratories for students and the librarians should function as guides to help them in learning and using the books for improvement of knowledge and scholarship. The school libraries are managed by trained librarians in case of public/private and a few government schools, and providing services like issuing of books and story telling hours. Whereas, the situation in rural areas is quite opposite, the book almira's are mostly locked and the libraries are in bad shape. Besides to these services, once in a while school libraries also arrange book exhibitions to the readers for selecting the books.

The role of school library is to act as a gateway to knowledge and play an important role in inculcating the love for reading among the students. The school library is an integral part of the educational process. Encouraging at the right age, the children are sure to develop love towards books. The school library should provide information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge based society. The school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens. The mission of the school library is to nurture the educational process<sup>15</sup>. According to UNESCO the following are essential to the development of information literacy, teaching, learning and culture, and are core school library services: supporting and enhancing educational goals as outlined in the school's mission and curriculum; developing and sustaining the lifelong habit and enjoyment of reading and learning in children; offering opportunities for experiences in creating and using information for knowledge, understanding, imagination and enjoyment; supporting all students in learning and practicing skills for developing and using information, regardless of form, format or medium, and including sensitivity to the oral tradition; providing a school information center that gives access to local, national and global resources and opportunities that expose learners to diverse ideas, experiences and opinions; organising activities that encourage cultural and social awareness and sensitivity; having staff trained in information services and education who is recognised members of the school community, work with students, teachers, administrators and parents to achieve the mission of the school; proclaiming the concept that intellectual freedom and unrestricted access to information are essential to effective and responsible citizenship and participation in a democracy.

Therefore, the school library should fulfill all these functions by developing relevant policies and programmes based on guidelines provided and standards established by professional bodies; selecting and acquiring resources; providing physical and intellectual access to appropriate sources of information; providing instructional facilities; and employing trained staff.

#### 4. SCHOOL LIBRARY STANDARDS & GUIDELINES

The school library is essential for literacy, education and information provision as well as for economic, social and cultural development of a nation. Hence, the school libraries must have adequate and sustained funding for trained staff, materials, technologies and facilities. It is the responsibility of local, regional and national authorities that school libraries meeting the standards established by national or international agencies. Library standards are used to measure and evaluate the condition of the libraries as well as the degree of their development. Standards can have an international, national and regional scope. Internationally, standards are not only developed by the library organisations, such as International Association of School Libraries (IASL), IFLA, UNESCO, and ISO. However, the School Library Manifesto<sup>15</sup>, 1998 version issued by UNESCO became the standard for all the school librarians in the world. In India so far national standards and guidelines for libraries, library services and staffing are not formulated so the condition of school libraries is not in good shape. This is directly showing impact on the quality of teaching and learning and total education being provided to the school children.

#### 5. IMPACT OF SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER ON STUDENTS

SLMC being a knowledge centre will surely have impact on the students. The school library plays a very 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 will be improved due to the SLMC and the SLMS. Research studies continue to show that an active school library programme run by a trained teacher librarian or resource teacher makes a significant difference on the student's learning outcome. Numerous international studies have demonstrated a link between student achievement and the presence of professionally staffed and accessible school libraries and some of them are discussed in the following sections. Studies have also shown that reading enjoyment is a significant factor in improving student performance not only in literacy, but in science and mathematics as well.

#### 5.1 Influence on Tests Scores

Many studies found that students score an average of 10-20 % higher on reading and achievement tests when their school has a strong library media program<sup>16-18</sup>. This effect remains the same, regardless of other school conditions such as student-teacher ratio, overall per-pupil spending, student demographics and community socio-economic conditions. In addition to the above results, qualitative research shows that the relationship is causal: however, effective library media programs directly contribute to higher student achievement<sup>19,20</sup>.

It was found that successful library media program is made up of numerous important elements, and researchers have identified a number of specific factors that correlate with higher student achievement. These individual factors can be categorised into the following four main categories:

- (i) Research has shown that student achievement is higher 'when Library media centers are having more staff and opened for long working hours'<sup>21-24</sup>. A professionally trained librarian can optimise each of the other impact factors such as quality of information resources, level of patron usage, and level of instructional collaboration, and maximising their program's impacts on student achievement. Longer opening hours result in greater optimisation of these impacts<sup>18</sup>.
- (ii) When 'Library media centers have larger collections of better quality information resources, periodicals, etc.'<sup>23-24</sup> also, achievement is higher in schools where the library media center provides access to online information<sup>23-25</sup>.
- (iii) When 'Library media centers and resources are used more frequently by students and staff'<sup>18, 21-22, 25</sup> the level of usage is partially a function of the accessibility of the facility and its resources, and this level of accessibility is also associated with higher student achievement<sup>18</sup>. Test scores are also higher in schools where the library operates on a flexible schedule instead of a fixed rotation<sup>26-27</sup>.
- (iv) When 'Library media specialists spend more time collaborating with classroom teachers to teach information literacy curriculum standards', more often students receive information literacy instruction which leads to higher test scores<sup>21</sup>. Student achievement is higher when information literacy instruction is integrated with the subject-area curriculum<sup>22-25</sup>. Student achievement is also higher when librarian collaborates with classroom teachers to teach information literacy<sup>21-22, 25-27</sup>.

#### 5.2 Influence on Character Built-up

School library media programmes are aimed to give the students a balanced and rational thinking,

to realise their responsibility in the society and to have a good character built-up. Interpersonal and self-directional skills have four main skills, of which the fourth one is social responsibility: acting as responsible citizens with the interests of the larger community in mind; demonstrating ethical behavior in personal, workplace, and community contacts<sup>28</sup>. SLMS teaches the students about ethics, social issue, copyright issues, collaborate work, equal respect to others work, etc., that leads to good character.

### 5.3 Impact on Social Environment

The society in which children live has lot of impact on them. It is quite natural that the influence of the social environment on the children may be positive or negative. The children are taught to live in the society. This means that they are educated to live in the community and adjust with the society. Social skills are part of the curriculum of the school education. The responsibility of teaching social skills to children lies on School Library Media Specialist. They promote social skills whenever they introduce activities that encourages teens to make friends and work together<sup>29</sup>.

## 6. IMPACT OF SCHOOL LIBRARY ON TEACHERS AND TEACHING

Teachers are the pillars of the school education. They have good knowledge in their subject area and processing excellent teaching skills to conduct class teaching. The Library is a great treasure for them. In fact their knowledge of library resources and the skills of utilising the electronic media tools enhance their efficiency in teaching and understanding the student's requirements. The library resources add new knowledge to teachers and make them feel refreshed in their subject field. Thus, the impact of school library on teachers and teaching is in many folds.

### 6.1 Teachers Perceptions about School Library Media Specialists

It is proved beyond doubt that a school needs library and librarian. Earlier research in this direction has shown that the impact of library on the students' achievements such as reading, comprehension and so on. It is also essential to see the impact of school library on teachers and teaching which ultimately effect on the results of the school. In a study it was found that due to good relationship and cooperation between school librarian and teachers, one can create conducive educational environment and strengthen the bond and mutual respect between these groups. The teacher participants describe the roles of the SLMS to be more important that what is actually being practiced in their school settings<sup>30</sup>. It was found that the interaction between the school administration, teachers as collaborative planning

partners, collection development activities, and the SLMS will have positive impact on students' achievement<sup>31</sup>.

### 6.2 Combined Effort of Teachers and SLMS

Though they do different type of works, all the school staff work towards achieving the goal or the motto of the school. Classroom teachers work on the syllabus, reading specialists transforming each student as an expert in reading, and the SLMS trains them as effective users of library collections and other resources. Ultimately all these factors will help the students to achieve best results. The practice in several developed countries shows that SLMS collaborate with classroom teachers in designing, delivering and assessing authentic learning activities, providing students with opportunities to practice and refine life-long skills of research.

With a deep knowledge of wide variety of authentic reading materials available in the SLMC and beyond, the SLMS has a key role in supporting print and online reading comprehension strategy instruction in collaboration with classroom teachers and reading specialists. SLMS co-design, co-implement, and co-evaluate interdisciplinary lessons and units of instruction that result in increased student learning<sup>10</sup>. SLMS has teaching role to act as co-teacher of information literacy to students and in-service trainer of teachers.

### 6.3 Improvement of Teachers' IT Skills

Teachers are supposed to know the information resources that are available in the library and also use of electronic materials to greater extent so that they will deliver quality teaching to students. This knowledge can be well acquired by the regular visit to the library and in collaboration with the librarian. School librarians should teach students and teachers how to search for, evaluate, and use the information efficiently and effectively. The SLMS is an expert and well versed with the operations of the electronic equipments so it teaches the students and teachers about the operations of the electronic instruments which they are supposed to use during the teaching and learning. In a study it was found that the participants had varied perceptions, beliefs and expectations on the subject. However, all the participants agreed that SLMS should teach computer skills to both students and teachers and assist students and teachers in locating resources<sup>32</sup>.

## 7. TRAINING NEEDS OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

Training is given to personnel for getting required knowledge about the work and the working condition. SLMS is trained professional like a teacher to handle the school children and also teaches about the maintenance of the school library. The SLMS

is trained in such a way that he/she may be able to handle the electronic media equipments, the students in the classroom or in the library, and also the library activities.

### **7.1 Qualifications of School Library Media Specialists in Developed Countries**

The school librarian should have the qualities of both the librarian and the teacher. He must be able to think in terms of the needs and interests of the school students. The school librarian should have a wide knowledge of books, ability to organise library materials for the efficient service, and considerable experience in reference work. Even though an individual may desire to have an MLIS degree, a school library media specialist programme may be more suitable based on their strengths, weaknesses and overall career goals<sup>33</sup>.

A School Library Media Specialists bachelor's degree programmes can be completed in four years in several universities in USA, UK, Canada, Australia and their list is available at <http://www.sldirectory.com/libsf/resf/jobs.html>. However, master's program in this field takes two years after completion of undergraduate programme in many western and European universities. The job description describes the roles and responsibilities of a particular position. It may vary from general to specific depending on the particular school.

### **7.2 Skills of School Library Media Specialists**

The efficient use of School Library Media Center depends on the skills of the SLMS. The SLMS is supposed to be a 'teacher librarian' who is capable of teaching reading practice, story telling, handling the electronic media equipments to students and teaching them about their functions and operations. The functions and skills of school librarians, being an efficient communicator, keeping abreast with the current new technologies, and being able to make sure their students have open access to information. They must also be ready to change, learn and grow so that their programmes and activities respond to the best resources for teachers to teach and students to learn.

SLMS have crucial roles to play in student's learning as curriculum developer, instructional design consultants, information specialists, ICT skills teachers, staff developers, collaborators<sup>28</sup>. School librarians are still recognised as specialists in the two main roles of the school library is the provision and organisation of information for the purpose of increasing the knowledge of each student and the integration of information handling skills into the curriculum. They also need to possess sufficient management skills to operate the school library smoothly and successfully for the fulfillment of these roles.

### **7.3 Library Training in India**

All most all the Indian school librarians are not specialised in school librarianship because such training is not available in the country and also there is no prerequisite for their jobs selection. It is the general opinion of the educationists all over the world that the job of the school librarian is entirely different from that of a college or university librarian. The research on this subject also proves the same. The school librarian is supposed to deal with the elementary school students to the teenage students. The activities such as reading practice, comprehension, story telling needs special skills and psychological understanding of the students. Hence, the school librarian of India may have some specialised training in order to cater to the needs of the school students.

Only small percentage (9.38 %) of librarians in secondary and higher secondary schools are having professionally trained librarians. The professional qualifications of these librarians vary from certificate course or a Diploma or a Bachelors degree in Library and Information Science. Because of that the school libraries in India are facing a lot of problems ranging from inadequate space for keeping books, reading space, unsuitable school building and untrained staff. Most of the schools do not provide required basic services to their users because of the appointment of non-qualified staff in their libraries.

### **7.4 Teaching Skills as Part of Training**

The role of school librarian includes teacher librarian which stresses the librarian to be a teacher in the classroom hence, first of all the school librarian has to be a trained teacher also. Teaching skills are based on with sociological and psychological principles. Getting acquainted with the teaching skills will make the job easier for the school librarian while dealing the students in the class or in the library. As teacher, they also hold classes a few times a week or month on proper library use, research techniques, on use of DVDs and A-V equipments and on the operations of projectors<sup>33</sup>.

### **7.5 Child Psychology-based Training**

The presence of SLMC and SLMS in the school is a psychological booster to the school. With the help of the school library and librarian, the teachers can make their teaching more effective. The librarian can also help a teacher to develop professionally. The collaboration between a teacher and the school librarian makes a difference in student's learning and progress. Sometimes a teacher needs a friend; one of the advantages of working with the SLMS is companionship.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

The information explosion has changed the knowledge and skills required for productive living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Students must become efficient and effective users of information. UNESCO's Manifesto<sup>15</sup> affirms that 'the school library is integral part of the educational process', therefore the school library services should foster and enhance the school's mission and curriculum, and should, consequently, provide the school community with a stimulating environment for all learners. The several goals outlined in the IFLA-UNESCO Manifesto are so far met partly only, due to lack of collections, space, equipment and staff. Skills of working collaboratively with teachers, administrators, and parents, should be taught to school librarians. Staff development programs to school librarians are rarely provided in India. The university departments offering courses in librarianship and information management should introduce new programmes or courses in school libraries, so that newly trained professionals would be able to meet the needs of all levels of schools. At the same time, professional associations and academic departments should also run short term courses including school librarians training in Library automation, e-resources, ICT tools, school library standards, and quality services.

Research findings demonstrated that if the library staff are professionally trained and qualified, they make a difference in the school library services. This situation in this field varies very much from country to country and sometimes within the same country. School libraries can contribute to the improvement of student's achievement by providing instructional materials aligned to the curriculum; by collaborating with teachers, administrators and parents and by extending their hours of operation beyond the school day. The school librarians spends more time in collaborating with classroom teachers to teach information literacy curriculum standards. Collaborative planning also plays a key role in how the media center impact on the student's achievements. The media specialists and teachers must work together in order to best use of the media centres by the students.

Helping teachers should make the best use of the opportunities provided by new technologies to their students. Knowing how to identify, locate, access and utilise information is the key to achievement. Out of four roles of school librarians, working effectively with teachers, administrators and other staff to provide them with specific opportunities to develop sophisticated skills in information literacy including the use of IT<sup>6</sup>. Effective teacher librarians are educators to both teachers and students. They share in the teaching and learning activities of their

students and fellow teachers. They manage their library to support staff and volunteers to guide and evolve the library media program. They participate in all the meetings with administration to align the library with the instructional goals of school.

Education for school librarianship is not offered anywhere in India except a few, which offers as certificate or diploma level courses which are not so popular in the country. Many countries including USA, UK, Australia, Canada, etc offering as special programme or specialisation in a general LIS programme. More often, in-service training and post-graduate courses offered to a teacher wanting to enter in the field of school librarianship, the possibility to become educated and trained in the school librarianship and to acquire some relevant competencies (i.e. in school library organisation and management, or curriculum related activities). It is high time that Indian LIS schools should open their eyes and make their contribution to education by providing quality manpower who are able to deliver quality school education in the country sooner than later.

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