

School Library Reform Program and ongoing professional development: Experiences from the field

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Abstract

During last two decades, worldwide, libraries have been changing and adapting themselves to the ongoing information needs of the users. The major driver for this change is information and communication revolution. School libraries are not an exception. The global change in the field of LIS has impacted school libraries as well and a major paradigm shift is brought in expanding it from a school library to a library media resource centre. School librarians or Teacher Librarians are now seen as key academic leaders and information gateways who connect teachers, students and curriculum using the information resources. DEEANNE KIMMEL¹ in her article hub for learning have elaborated on the need and importance of the roles school librarians must play to facilitate the learning processes in and out of school. She has identified the key roles as connections which librarians should try to establish with the learning community. Within the context, the connections which a librarian or a library media specialist could make include **Connect to education initiatives** at museums, theaters, public libraries, and other community cultural institutions. **Connect to a range of media resources** and instruct teachers and students in how to use them. **Connect to media literacy skills** that enable students to become effective users and producers of information. **Connect to other educators, students, and educational initiatives** around the world. **Connect to new ideas for teaching and learning** in innovative, interactive ways.

This paper highlights details of efforts being carried out for reforming school libraries of one of the largest educational NGO of Pakistan for its schools in Karachi. It also highlights how ongoing professional development of school librarians was institutionalized and reforms were being brought into the school as well as in the perceptions of librarians and key stakeholders in

¹ Kimmel, Deeanne "The Hub of Learning." Access Learning (www.ciconline.org) October 2003: Page 4,5

the school. Empowering the school librarian through these reforms was one of the key agenda and the driving force.

Keith Curry² in “5 roles for empowering school librarians” has shared the following roles which an academic institution must visualize and implement to bring library and librarian at the heart of learning institution. These roles include “*Librarian as a School Leader, Librarian as a program administrator, Librarian as an information navigator, Librarian as Technology Facilitator, Librarian as a collaborative teacher and learner.*”

Based on this understanding and making librarians accountable for learning, various programs and strategies were developed and implemented. The reform efforts included creating a collaborative vision and translating it to achieve the academic goals, creating systems for optimized use of library resources, marketing of library services, automating libraries, building capacities of librarians through summer learning sessions and monthly reflective meetings. The paper also shed light on how these efforts were perceived, implemented and the impact on school community and the librarians themselves. At the end the paper also stresses upon the need of creating a school library association of Pakistan under PLA, which could serve as an avenue for ongoing professional development.

Keywords: School Library Reform, Capacity Building, Paradigm Shift, Library Media Resource Centre, School Library Media Resource Centre, lifelong learning

School Libraries as Learning Laboratories: A Literature review

Historically, the establishment of school library began in late eighteenth century in the United States, when few states in the New York began to understand the importance of school library and started allocating funds for them. The collection development in the libraries began to increase after the invention of printing press by Guttenberg and young children got access to various print materials during that time. The inclusion of school libraries continued at a slow pace and gained a momentum in the 20th and 21st century. From 1900 to 1957 various reform

² Lance, Keith Curry. "5 roles for empowering school librarians." Library Research Service, Colorado State Library & University of Denver www.lrs.org/impact.asp

movements in education in the US were introduced and voices were raised to reform educational programs of school with a focus on transferring skills which help students see the connection of education with life and society. The focus of these moments was to shift the perception of education, teaching and learning from telling to doing. A very little attention was paid to include school libraries and librarians into these movements. The progressive movement placed teachers as mentors for students; however, librarians were considered and perceived as clerical staff not professionals. Similarly educational publications during that time did not focus much on school libraries and their role for promoting learning. (Latrobe, 1998) highlights that “although many articles in professional education journals paid lip service to the library's being ‘the heart of the school’ and ‘the center of school life,’ a citation review of Education Index (EI) reveals relatively little interest among educators in writing about school libraries during the Progressive Era”. During these times, Librarians took the lead in publishing their articles in the educational journals, but their numbers were few. Leaders including Mary E. Hall, Lucile F. Fargo, and Hannah Logasa published frequently on the subject of how libraries could serve modern education. Hall in (Latrobe, 1998) imagined her library as a laboratory, as well as "the very center of the school". She also realized that an effective librarian should be updated about the modern teaching methodologies and make illustrative materials more readily available. She focused on the importance of librarians reaching out to the educational community if overall conditions of the school need to be improved. Hall in her paper the Development of the Modern High School Library (1915) “coined the term modern library to mean a space where the selection of books is made skillfully to stimulate students’ interest in reading. She also stressed that the rules and regulations should not be very strict but minimal, so that they could encourage the pupils to use library and its resources. She also recommended an idea of including a library classroom (which was suggested by one of her colleagues teaching English), an office and a reading room. She took the ideas of progressive education which inspired and motivated librarians to make their libraries more attractive and exciting places for students to learn together. Her companion Logasa advocated that the librarians must understand the psychology of students in order to work more effectively with the students. Dorris Doyle in (Latrobe, 1998), another promoter of progressive libraries in the book *The New High School in the Making*” started her first chapter with the following questions "The library a place where books are kept or a place where books are enjoyed? The librarian a keeper of books or a guide to more effective

reading and a promoter of greater enjoyment through reading?" she proposed the following view of the librarian "the real librarian's responsibility is not to be a keeper of books, to check out books, to take in books, and to return them to the shelves. The real contribution of the librarian is in his work with boys and girls. . . . The librarian who is really meeting his responsibility will spend more time in the classroom and laboratories in contact with students than in the library itself".

These entire efforts set the tone for the librarians and library organizations to put their efforts in visualizing, promoting and managing libraries as learning hubs and center of learning. Post world war efforts further crystallized these ideologies and perceptions and gave birth to the school library divisions of American and other international library associations. Furthermore, standards were established for school libraries not only in terms of collection development, but for librarian's competencies, collection mapping, information literacy, library programs and services, their marketing and assessing and evaluating library services. Collaboration amongst librarians, academic staff and students has become one of the key driving principles for achieving success.

Role of School Libraries and Librarians in the 21st Century

The information and knowledge explosion in the 21st century, especially through internet and digital technologies have pressed school libraries and librarians to see their role beyond resource providers. One of the key roles and functions of school library is to ignite "*love for learning*" and "*love for reading*" amongst young children and teenagers. The school libraries are also termed as "*Learner oriented laboratories*". The school libraries become central to the holistic development and help students become lifelong learners. The focus has now become on how libraries and librarians could play their effective role in supporting students and faculty members to become *lifelong learners*. According to European Commission³ lifelong learning is defined as "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective."

The libraries and librarians must make effort to serve the goal of lifelong learning (School Libraries Work, 2008) refers to the following roles of school librarians to support the agenda of lifelong learning:

³ http://www.esae.org/articles/2007_08_005.pdf

- **⁴To take a lead role in teaching and learning information literacy across the curriculum and to collaborate with teaching colleagues to embed information literacy across the curriculum**

Information is available everywhere and could be accessed from anywhere. One of the key demands for success in 21st century is to be an information literate knowledge worker.

School libraries can help individual students and faculty members to realize this goal and demand.

- **Focused teaching for pupils and conducting In-house sessions for staff**

School libraries and librarians carry out focused teaching assignments for pupils which may include organizing small workshops on “how to read”, “story telling sessions”, “book talks” and information literacy sessions for students and faculty members.

- **Provide an environment suitable for group and independent research**

Students of level 6 and above are provided with projects and assignments. School libraries provide a conducive environment for achieving this goal.

- **Provide a wide range of resources**

As stated above, the school libraries are literacy centres as well. They provide wide range of resources not only for information access but for leisure reading through provision of fiction and classics.

- **Stimulate independent learning**

Above all student libraries shoulder the responsibility of stimulating independent learning with the entire education community.

In order to achieve that, the librarians should be facilitated to understand their roles as well as build their capacities to put their roles in action. Above all they should be empowered enough to become key academic partners into the school’s learning community. For achieving and enabling the above mentioned connections, the schools must empower librarians to become a key academic leader. Keith Curry has shared her views about key areas for empowerment.

Librarian as a School Leader

⁴ School Libraries Making a Difference. School Libraries - Making a Difference. http://www.schoollibrariesadvocacy.org.uk/toolkit/making_a_difference.pdf (accessed October 20, 2012).

The school librarian should be encouraged and supported to view himself or herself as a school leader. As a leader, he / she should:

- Coordinate and meet with the Principal regularly
- Attend faculty and academic meetings
- Serve on key committees specially those who are responsible for developing academic programmes, budgets and learning initiatives.
- Meet with other library staff and stay connected with them.

Librarian as a programme administrator

The school librarian should be provided opportunities and exposed to enhance his or her own knowledge, skills and understanding about how to develop plans and budgets, mobilize resources, generate reports and evaluate the impact of programs on student learning. The librarian should also be encouraged and provided support especially in terms of human resources to work with students and teachers on flexible schedule.

Librarian as an information navigator

The librarian must carry out effective and efficient efforts to select print, non-print and electronic resources that support the school curriculum and learning standards. He or she should be information literate and support school community to become information literate. This includes recognizing an information need and to locate, evaluate, and apply information in critical thinking to solve a problem. Librarian could play an important role in helping students and teachers in understanding the effects of plagiarism and ways to reduce it.

Librarian as Technology Facilitator

The librarian should be seen as a person who selects licensed databases and resources, identifies authoritative free websites. He should be seen as an individual who bridges gaps between students and teachers, online information, and curriculum and instruction.

Librarian as a collaborative teacher and learner

Librarian should also continuously polish his or her own knowledge and skills related to becoming an effective learning facilitator and collaborator. This role would entail librarian as a teacher of students who collaborates with classroom teachers in design and delivery of instruction, a teacher of other teachers who supports them in becoming self-reliant users of information resources and technology, a colleague who attends local, national and international

conferences and seminars. In our scenario, the librarian should also collaborate with instructional technologists or computer teachers, and work together to develop and achieve the goals of information and media literacy.

Capacity Building or Ongoing Professional Development of School Librarians: a key imperative

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) or Continuing Professional Education (CPE) is a regular feature for teachers and faculty members in the world of schools and academia. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)⁵ in their position statement has stated that “Teachers and other educators should be expected to learn and grow throughout their careers. Teachers in all schools should be provided the time and other resources necessary to reflect on their experiences, investigate new approaches, learn new skills and content, and plan with their colleagues. In most schools, this would require redefining financial priorities as well as rethinking organization of the school day and year.” (Medel-Añonuevo, Ohsako, & Mauch, 2001) has highlighted two specific purposes of CPE i.e.

- every individual must be in a position to keep learning throughout his (her) life. The idea of lifelong learning is the keystone of the learning society,
- the new educational ethos makes the individual the creator of his own cultural progress, self-learning, especially assisted self-learning, has irreplaceable value in any educational system.

The Library and Information sector worldwide has undergone a massive change and continuously trying to grapple with this change. It is essential that professional development opportunities should be created on an ongoing basis to sail through this ongoing changing scenario. It is essential that the professional development should be in line with the organization’s values and mission. The organization along with the librarian should have a clear picture of where they are heading and what should be done to achieve the goal. According to Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science “Continuing professional development (CPD) is an activity strongly promoted by library and information associations. . . . It involves a systematic approach to staff development and continuing education, usually consisting of a program of learning opportunities made available over a period of time. The intention is to

⁵ http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1053&context=lib_fac_pubs

ensure that information workers continue to acquire and adapt their skills and knowledge to a swiftly changing professional environment. (Continuing professional development, 1997)

(Feather, 1997) states “the principal objective of library education remains to produce new entrants to the profession who have a broad-based understanding of professional issues and the context in which they are applied, as well as appropriate practical skills. The latter will always need to be constantly updated through continuing professional development; the former should, however, inform and underpin an entire career.

(Lamprey & Corleay, 2011) Inform “there is, however, a growing body of research-based evidence that is changing the perceptions of mentoring as being an ‘underground’ form of continuing professional development which, while it was to be encouraged, was too amorphous and of too uncertain value to be incorporated into the services that professional associations provide to members. In particular, the growing evidence suggests that while informal mentoring is valuable and will undoubtedly continue, there may be even greater benefit to mentoring relationships that are conducted within properly managed and supported programs. (ALA 2011)”

Librarians being an integral part of any academic institution should also be provided with ongoing professional development and learning activities.

Due to global change in the role of the school library media specialist and the necessity of having new skill set, Evans and Tipton in (Shannon, 2001) recommend “in-service programs and workshops that focus on those skills not covered in traditional preparation programs. These skills include interpersonal skills, grantsmanship, leadership, and change and communication strategies.”

In the book *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*, American Association of School Librarians (AASL) has put together guidelines and twenty seven principles necessary to develop an exemplary library media program along with competencies required by the school library media specialist.

Schon, Helmstadter, and Robinson in (Shannon, 2001) found a strong agreement between school library media specialists and principals about the competencies school library media specialists. The six key areas included professional matters, library materials, management, human behavior,

planning and evaluation, and learning.

Joyce Kasman Valenza has highlighted Manifesto for 21st Century Teacher Librarians⁶⁶ covering eleven key areas including ongoing professional development and networking as one of the important areas to work upon.

Internationally, there are various school library associations who provide ongoing professional development opportunities for librarians including American Association of School Libraries (AASL), School Library Association (UK), International Association of School Librarians (iasl-online), Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) etc. The graduate schools of library and information science also provide opportunities for ongoing professional development. The modes of professional development are both online and face to face including participation in seminars, day long workshops, participating through webinars etc.

Pakistan Library Association (PLA) along with various professional groups including Pakistan Library Automation Group (PAKLAG), Pakistan Library Cooperation Group are providing capacity building opportunities of generic nature related to the library and information science professional. However, there is a need to create focused programs and learning opportunities specifically for the school librarians in Pakistan. Establishment of Pakistan School Libraries Association (PASL) under the umbrella of Pakistan Library Association (PLA) could be initiated to serve this need.

Development and status of School libraries and librarians in Pakistan

The core purpose and objective of the school library is to ignite young minds with the love for reading and becoming life-long learners. School libraries also serve educational, social and recreational needs of the school community. (Sehar, 2011) informs “according to the there are more than 8000 private schools in Pakistan”.

According to ministry of education statistics⁷ there are 149,163 primary schools, 24,877 middle schools and 13790 secondary and higher secondary schools in Pakistan. There is no significant amount of research available on number of libraries available in these institutions.

⁶⁶ <http://www.teacherlibrarian.com/2011/05/01/manifesto-for-21st-century-teacher-librarians/>

⁷ Facts and Figures. Ministry of Education, Pakistan. <http://www.moe.gov.pk/esrbook/Annex-IX%20%28a%29.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2012).

(Ramzan, na) informs that “The number of libraries is currently not known According to a survey conducted in 1990s out of 171,000 schools, only 481 schools have libraries containing 980,800 volumes. Only 30 librarians are placed in the school libraries. About 80% schools are without any library facility in the country.”

As far as the legislative directions are concerned, (Ramzan, na) further informs that “Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) Act of 1975, says that an institution seeking affiliation with the board, must have:

- Accommodation for library in the school building
- The school shall have a well-stocked library. In case of new schools a sum of Rs. 25,000 must be spent on the library in the first year and a provision to the extent of Rs. 5,000 must be made in every year’s budget.
- Adequate number of newspapers and periodicals must be provided in the reading room
- The school shall have a Library Assistant who must have obtained a certificate / diploma in library science”

Some of the problems and concerns related to School Libraries in Pakistan especially in the public sectors are elaborated (Haider, 2002) “The current school library scenario could not be termed satisfactory by any stretch of the imagination. Despite all beautiful phrases used for the school library in government documents and the rhetoric of our educational planners and educators on the eve of library seminars and conferences, the school library is yet to be re-organized as a component of school curriculum. This is best illustrated by the fact that a vast majority of the existing secondary schools, not to speak of primary and elementary schools, do not possess any sort of book collection.

About the use of library in schools, (Ramzan, na) (Fatima, 2011) further informs that “Library periods are also observed in some schools and students are allowed to read and borrow books. However, the timings of the libraries are the same as of the school, so very little time is available for the students or teachers to avail the library facility.”

Having worked with school librarians, some of my observations about the state of libraries and librarians vis-a-vis schools especially in the private sector schools are mentioned below:

- The overall perception about the profession of school librarianship in Pakistan is not encouraging. As a career it has still not become the profession of choice. Although the

demand for librarians has gradually increased, but still it is not pursued as a serious and exciting career.

- The ongoing professional development opportunities for librarians are available in scarcity. In fact, the majority of institutions especially schools do not believe in investing in the capacity enhancement of librarians.
- The librarians and the entire profession of librarianship needs to re-claim its respect. The need for acknowledging their critical role, providing space, resources and opportunity still remains a dream.
- Considering and engaging librarian as an active partner in developing learning programmes collaboratively is still a distant dream.
- Majority of Librarians even if they have received a specialization in School or Academic libraries, are not pro-active and updated enough to understand and respond to the learning needs of schools. For e.g. Information Literacy is considered to be one of the important skills which should be possessed by librarians as well, but unfortunately, not all of them have a clue about it.
- The young graduates of library science are not very much aware of the collection which should be recommended for school libraries according to the needs and relevance of the curricula being taught in schools as well as the needs of children.

(Fatima, 2011) suggests the following recommendations for improving the condition of school libraries:

- Library awareness may be created by Radio and TV talks, editorials and advertisements of library materials by all communication media.
- Pakistan Association of School Librarians must be formed affiliated to Pakistan Library Association to strengthen the cause of school librarianship and librarians.
- Inclusion of an additional course of school librarianship for in service training of school teachers in B.Ed and M.Ed curriculum.
- In private sector of education PLA can constitute a resolution that “Permission of opening new schools should not be given until a library and laboratory is not established in school”.

- Annotated standard bibliographies of children literature for different grades/classes should be published regularly.
- Mobile libraries at provincial levels and town levels should be established and supported to spread the cause of reading.

Initiating the Journey of Library Reform at the Aga Khan Schools in Karachi

Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan – an overview

The Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan is a part of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), which promotes education, health, housing, economic enterprise and cultural awareness in a number of countries. AKESP is an imperative association working under the umbrella of AKDN in the area of educational development at various levels. It not only provides education but also addresses the issues related to the development of Educational Institutions through teacher training and development, accountability mechanisms, appropriate technology and library integration plans, community mobilization and self-sufficiency mechanisms.

The Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan provides schooling from Pre-Primary to Higher Secondary Education. Priority is given to female access and education in the formal school systems, which is very limited in the developing nations.

AKES, P operates 187 schools and 5 hostels spread across various region of Pakistan. These institutions provide education to about 37000 students, a majority of which is in rural areas. In Northern Areas and Chitral, AKES, P, currently operates 178 schools providing education to about 27000 students. In Southern region, AKES, P operates nine schools catering to a student population of about 10000 students. Male and female ratio in AKES, P schools are 37:63 which speaks for the efforts of AKES, P to promote the education of girls and the development of women.

Aga Khan Schools in Karachi – Brief Introduction

The Aga Khan Schools in Karachi, house approximately 10000 students and 400 faculty members. The schools are located at District Central and South of Karachi. Out of four campuses, three schools are providing educational services from grade K – 10 and one school is providing High School / Intermediate Education. Aga Khan Schools worldwide have partnership with Phillips Academy at Andover Boston and Salem School in Germany. Through International Academic Partnership (IAP) initiative faculty was exposed to latest and up-to-date teaching

methods and curricula by running short faculty exchange programs and summer learning workshops.

Out of four campuses in Karachi, three campuses have a central library with a collection of 10,000 books or more. One campus has two libraries i.e. a library for grade ECD-V and a separate library from grade VI-X. Each library had one librarian, one assistant librarian and one library attendant. Almost all the librarians were professionals having completed the Masters in Library and Information Science from University of Karachi. Most of the librarians got their specialization in medical librarianship. The library assistants were para-professionals.

In 2002, AKES,P invested huge amounts on refurbishment of libraries and computer labs situated in Karachi, with a view that a conducive, more user friendly environment with better services and facilities should be provided to the students and faculty members to promote research and inquiry based learning. The refurbishment of library included establishment and installation of computers for research, carpeting and better lightening facilities, provision of fast internet connection, designing and installing shelves according to the developmental needs of students, providing a separate computer with printer to the library staff.

Institutionalizing Professional Development Programme

The refurbishment process brought with itself a need of a program for optimum and effective utilization of Learning Resource Centres. Hence, a Learning Technology Program was conceptualized and chalked out with objectives, goals and strategies to achieve the goals. A dedicated three member team was housed at a central education office to derive programs for promoting library as an active learning space. The key philosophy was to support the school based teams through ongoing interaction and professional development opportunities, which may result in building their confidence, skills and knowledge to run the library programs independently in future. Rather than doing sporadic workshops and trainings for capacity building, this is considered to be one of the most effective and meaningful ways of professional development where a team of mentors is placed with the implementation team to guide and support them and take them through processes of empowerment.

The following initiatives were taken by the professional development team and the library staff for library reform program.

Critical Needs & Situational Analysis

Initially, a critical review was carried out in the form of baseline data collection from various stakeholders about the existing usage of resources (libraries and computer labs) and perceptions of stakeholders about librarians and computer instructors. A self-evaluation grid for assessing knowledge and skills related to academic libraries was prepared has the following key areas:

- Program Planning, Implementation and Monitoring
- Training design and facilitation skills
- Understanding of Curriculum and teaching learning process
- Advocacy, Awareness and Networking
- Collaborative planning
- Library related ongoing activities which include organizing book reviews, storytelling sessions, author talks, book fairs etc.
- Presentation and Communication Skills

The baseline provided the following insights.

Absence of Collective Vision amongst school community

There existed no collective vision amongst school community regarding the libraries and their future. This also resulted in absence of a proper plan of where we want to go? The existing knowledgebase of majority of stakeholders in schools was also very limited vis-à-vis library, its effectiveness for student learning and the recent global changes occurring in the profession of librarianship.

Library and IT spaces seen and used as isolated spaces

There appeared lack of frameworks to integrate both these learning resources with main stream academic programs. Librarians were not being made a part of any academic planning initiatives, nor librarians were concerned with what's happening in the classrooms. The visibility of librarians amongst teaching faculty was merely of a book keeper who is there to provide book lending services. Library was majority of times used for fixtures / arrangement periods in case any subject teacher was absent due to any reason. The librarians were considered as gatekeepers

and security guards for protecting books from thefts. If a librarian is absent due to any reason, the library could not be opened and kept locked. Librarians were also not invited into general staff meetings, neither in budgeting and yearly planning activities. There was no proper accountability system in place for librarians. Even librarians of the four campuses were not interacting with each other, and did not know about the other libraries in the system.

Absence of programs for ongoing professional development of librarians

In schools, usually June and July are the months for professional development of teachers. But librarians were never made a part of it, in fact, they were not asked whether they have any professional development needs. There was no system of assessing existing skills, knowledge and areas for improvement.

Libraries and IT spaces considered a prestige issue not a learning resource

Majority of the private schools in Karachi, present library and IT resources as something prestigious and schools today market themselves incomplete, if these resources are not present. Every time there is a visit from a government, private representative or parent, library is the first place where the Principal or Head Teacher to show them the state of the art facilities. Less emphasis is placed on what actually library delivers in terms of academic programmes and promotion of student learning.

Absence of proper programs for attracting students towards library

There was a library period each week through which students accessed the library. Majority of times, the tasks were de-linked with mainstream classroom learning activities and students were left on their own or on librarian's discretion, when it came to selection of books. Some regular and avid student readers however were found very active in submitting requests related to new releases or books they want to read. In majority of cases, students did not have sense of ownership of the library as their own personal and collaborative learning space. A lot of students saw library space as a relaxation venue, where they could sit in air conditioned environment to get rid of stress.

Absence of documented policies and procedures

There existed no documented policies and procedures of library including collection development, weeding out etc. The major reason shared was the frequent dropout of the library staff.

Moving towards action: initiating in-house ongoing professional development as a tool for converting libraries as active learning spaces

Creating a Collaborative Vision for promoting learning through library

The next step after baseline data collection was to share the findings with the major stakeholders in schools i.e. Principals and Head Teachers. A week long professional development workshop for librarians along with the school principals was organized for the first time, which was highly acknowledged and appreciated. The workshop focused on *exploring the reasons for existing perceptions about role of librarians where* Librarians were engaged in critically thinking about the reasons regarding existing perceptions amongst stakeholders about their role as librarians. Then a session was conducted on *Understanding what is learning and how important is it for the librarians to have a vision to promote learning. An emphasis was placed on* how libraries could become facilities to enhance student learning. After having the discussion, a detailed presentation was made on the *emerging trends of school / academic librarianship around the world was shared and how libraries and librarians are repositioning themselves to meet the needs of 21st century was carried out. Creating a vision was the next task which was carried out collaboratively.* It was discussed that due to information explosion, it is very difficult to draw a line between access to information through libraries or using digital technologies. Globally, the divided between libraries and computer labs have almost diminished. In future, a time will come when in majority of schools, both the resources will be put and seen under the same umbrella i.e. *Library Media Resource Centre*. Keeping this in view, the following vision was created in collaboration with major stakeholders

Using library and technology resources to promote independent learning, critical thinking, creative abilities and consciousness among students to make them the caring citizens of this global community

In order to bring the shift, it is essential to review the TORs and job description and align it with the overall goals and vision of the library. The existing TORs were reviewed collaboratively, modified and finalized by the management.

Developing a yearlong action plan

During the workshop, librarians were facilitated to come up with a yearlong action plan along with key targets and deliverables. Preparing an action plan was again an experience which was carried out for the first time. The action plan was based on the needs and situational analysis and following key areas were selected for implementation.

1. Reviewing the off the shelf library software vis-à-vis needs of the library
2. Installation and configuration of software along with data entry
3. Participation in academic & staff meetings for sharing library resources which could be aligned with the curriculum
4. Presentation library usage statistics, challenges and monthly activities with the principals
5. Developing and finalizing Collection development and weeding out policy
6. Library orientation program for students and faculty members
7. Developing library learning activities to be organized during fixtures
8. Organizing International Library Days and events

Formulating collection development policies

Out of eight librarians, no one had an opportunity earlier to work on the collection development policy for K-10 schools. By doing internet based research librarians reviewed various collection development policies and then came up with a draft policy which was shared with the school stakeholders for review and finalization.

Making librarians accountable for learning

Based on the literature search through internet, the roles and responsibilities of school librarians were identified and then put together in the form of a grid. The existing appraisal form was reviewed and revised based on the identified roles and responsibilities.

Re-appropriating the roles of Librarians

Librarians in many of the academic institutions are categorized as administrative staff. In order to facilitate learning and becoming a part of academic programs within the institution, it was imperative that librarian's role should be re-appropriated. It took almost 1 year to convince the senior management and HR teams to accept that librarians in school should be put under academic staff.

Creating a space for interaction and sharing

The schools made it mandatory for librarians to participate in faculty meetings and were provided ten minutes to share the updates of the library. On a monthly basis, librarians were invited to meet with the principal to share the updates of the action plan and library usage statistics. This brought librarians into lime light and their level of confidence and ownership of the library programs increased through participating in these forums. The librarians were also invited to participate in the meeting with the core team based at the central place once a month to discuss the challenges and the facilitation required for implementation plans. The core team used to facilitate and engage librarians in finding out the solutions, testing them and coming back with their reflections and feedback.

Automating libraries using off the shelf library software

Student Information System (SIS) was purchased through Hunter Systems and was getting implemented within AKES Karachi schools. Along with this software, Librarian's edge a web based software was also provided which was not being used at all. During the discussions and meetings, core team identified a need to automate the library and librarians were provided with a software evaluation grid to analyze this software and share its suitability vis-à-vis needs of schools. The librarians carried out a thorough analysis and informed that the software meets 70-80 percent requirements therefore they recommended it for the implementation. Library volunteers were hired in summer vacations for data entry and stock verification and the system became operational in August 2004.

Initiating collection mapping

According to eduscapes⁸ website "Collection mapping is the process of examining the quantity and quality of your collection and identifying its strengths and weaknesses. A number of authors have written about the process. The outcome of the process can serve as a guide during the collection development process. A collection map is a visual supplement to the automated catalog system that graphically displays the breadth and depth of the collection. In other words, a collection map provides a quick picture of the collection"

Each librarian had a particular subject interest and based on this interest they were provided guidelines and support to come up with collection mapping for a particular grade. The librarians identified resources available to meet the curriculum of a particular grade and then provided an orientation to the respective teachers.

⁸ <http://eduscapes.com/sms/program/mapping.html>

Providing exposure through workshops and seminars conducted by librarians of international and national

To broaden their understanding about Information Literacy, collection mapping, collection analysis and other critical library services, Director Libraries from Phillips Academy was invited to conduct summer workshops for the librarians, heads and the principals. This was the first time in the history of AKES,P that an international level training was organized for the librarians. The workshop not only helped them gain knowledge and skills about the role of librarian as an academic leader, but strengthened their conviction about the possibility of executing and implementing the programs, because they were listening and going through the experiences of a librarian who was engaged in facilitating students through these innovative ideas.

Organizing and participating in outreach seminars

An outreach seminar was organized for the librarians and school teachers which was conducted by the Director Library Phillips Academy about 21st Century Librarians and their roles. The seminar also had a panel discussion where representatives from Pakistan Library Automation Group (PAKLAG) and the faculty members from University of Karachi including Dr. Syed Jalaluddin Haider (late) were invited to share their views about role of librarian for academic success. Similarly, upon request from Defense Central Library, a seminar was conducted where one of the librarians from AKES was provided an opportunity to present his learning experiences which he went through during library reform program.

Library Reform Program and Ongoing Professional Development: Reflecting on the journey as a Librarian

As the co-author of this paper and one of the active members during the implementation, I would like to share the impact of this program and its initiatives on my own personality, knowledge and skills.

Broadening horizons about library and learning

The entire effort which was being carried out from engaging the librarians in coming up with a vision, getting acquainted with global changes and how school librarians are responding to them, getting in touch with international librarians helped me broaden my vision about school libraries. I was unaware of the role a librarian as a media specialist could play in enhancing students' learning. As a matter of the fact, the entire experience helped me enhance my own understanding

about learning and how a library can contribute to the process. Similarly the week long workshop held in collaboration with Phillips Academy was awesome. It helped me learn the way I could help my students in gaining an understanding about information literacy, how they can formulate better search strategies. The sessions also helped me exchange ideas and possibilities of making library as a centre of learning, and in fact, looking at it as a social learning space.

Librarians as pro-active learners

The experience was insightful and enriching because it helped me realize and understand my role as pro-active learner. It pushed me to research, think, reflect and act and follow this cycle on an ongoing basis. The learning technology team whenever met with us, asked right questions which helped us look things beyond the surface. The spark within me was ignited and I started to contribute in a very pro-active way. The biggest realization I had internalized was in order to facilitate students become lifelong learner,

Implementing ideas with confidence and conviction

Initially, we used to believe this would not work as there were many challenges and concerns as we were only two librarians serving almost 2000 students. Our school timetable will not provide us the opportunity to implement our ideas. It seemed that these practices are ideal and could be implemented only in an ideal environment. But, I must say when we started implementing; reviewing the successes and challenges, suggested solutions in collaboration with learning technology team, our confidence and conviction was raised, that yes it could be done. In fact we were not expecting that our roles would be re-appropriated as academic staff, but through our efforts and continuous interaction with principals and staff, it became possible. We started having a conviction on this process and belief that yes we can have an impact on students' learning.

Knowledge and Skill building

The exercise of collection mapping was an amazing experience. None of us were exposed to this important core skill. Although I was not a subject expert, but having work on social science area helped me identify the number and quality of resources / collection available within the library and helped me serve users better. Similarly reviewing the librarians' edge automation software and assessing its appropriateness for our library was a treat. I realized that I am consultant who is asked to review a product and then share my recommendations. Our constant interactions with

the learning technology team helped each of us in thinking about how we can improve our library services and make them more users friendly.

Revisiting our own Perceptions

Honestly, we used to serve the users by sitting behind our desks. Our attitude was not very welcoming and encouraging especially for students. We never thought that they are our customers which require better services, which could only be provided with positive and welcoming attitudes. I realized that going to the user is now an imperative for a successful library, rather than waiting for them to come to us. We went into classrooms for introducing new arrivals, started using library soft boards more pro-actively and creatively, with a sense of serving users better and felt pride in it. We had a strong realization about it when we conducted library orientation sessions for students and new comers in the school.

Building effective and positive relationships

I started to believe in collaboration and sharing as one of the key for success. The process of interaction with teachers, sitting with them in curriculum planning meetings, sharing our ideas including resource lists with them, helping them learn new skills, was not only an amazing experience but helped build effective and positive relationships. I must say, we started getting more respect and the perception about us that we are gatekeepers or clerks, sitting in an air-conditioned environment doing nothing were changed. Our efforts started getting acknowledged at all levels, especially within the student community.

Enhancement of communication and presentation skills

The entire process enhanced our communication and presentations skills. We were sharing our action plans, data about use of library resource by faculty and students, successes and challenges to the school principals and heads in a comfortable manner. We also learnt how to analyze data, make sense out of it and putting it in the form of graphs and charts. Off course, it built our skills for using power point.

I believe it all worked because it was coming from us. The learning technology team were acting as facilitators who were asking right questions and helped us rethink about our roles and responsibilities guided by a vision. We were continuously learning and improving and having this feeling within ourselves. This could be called sustainable learning and development as it will remain with us throughout our lives. This collaborative model of ongoing professional development or in fact self-empowerment was one of the unforgettable experience for all of us.

Conclusion

The learning journey was not exciting only for the librarians, but for the learning technology team as well. The guidelines adapted through 5 roles for empowering librarians served as an essential tool for creating programs, building capacity of the librarians with tools and essential skills and then building their conviction was one of the key outcomes of the entire learning process. Our strongest recommendation would be to formulate Pakistan Association of School Librarians (PASL) under the umbrella of Pakistan Library Association to motivate school librarians by organizing need based seminars, workshops, field visits and encouraging school librarians to formulate a strong network for supporting each other through collaboration and sharing of experiences and resources.

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