Quality Libraries Produce Quality Learners

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to get insight about perceptions of school teachers about the importance of libraries. Sample was consisted of 480 school teachers (male= 240 and female=240) from 60 public sector boys and girls high schools of Lahore District. A questionnaire consisting of 18 items was developed and pilot tested on 90 school teachers. The reliability coefficient value was α=0.8981. Finally, the data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and t-test to compare the means at p<0.05 level of significance. The results indicated that both male and female teachers are equally in favor of using libraries by students for their better academic achievement.

Key words: Quality library, school library, academic achievement, teachers and school library, quality learner.

Introduction

Education is a process of learning, aimed at equipping people with knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to enable them to live a complete successful life (Rizvi, 1997). It is a way through which individuals extend capabilities, attitudes, and positive values in society where they live. It is the upshot of knowledge and experiences. In the educational networks primary to higher education library enjoys a status of backbone for ensuring quality product. It is not a holy place for veneration of books, but is a 'maternity room' of ideas and a workshop for creativity (Parry, 2000). It is a hub and ware house of such sources of knowledge and experiences. Quality education at all levels depends upon collection of educational resources. As well as the quality of higher education is concerned, it remains just a dream without libraries equipped with latest resources and standard of services. Standards of edification and research, literacy, intellectual, moral and cultural advancement, economic, scientific and industrial development and elevation of a society largely depend upon the extent of library services (Islam, 1968; 1990). Libraries are the heart of awareness. Their role is to disseminate knowledge about the happenings and phenomenon in the world. These ware houses of books provide readers the knowledge of past and present. It is the choice of the readers what they will take from the preserved knowledge. Libraries play a deep-seated role in society. They are the aerial and stewards of heritage. Knowledge is organized in the form of books, which connects the realities of the past with the present, and presents it for the future

application (Reding, 2005). The quality of materials and services has a long lasting effect on the students learning habits and attitudes. Library has a positive effect on students study habits which results in high academic achievements. These study habits become the ladder for higher education and success in future (Jagannath & Preveen, 2007).

Hole (2004) is of the view that "Libraries are as crucial to our survival as schools, hospitals, farms, or any other institution you can name; because they ensure that we need not learn the same lessons over and over again, from scratch"(p:1). Quality libraries offer opportunities to learn from the experiences of others. School libraries exist in most schools, and as enrollment rates increase, they are well placed to provide access to information literacy for a new generation of citizens. Schools are the main institutions for learning for children and a central role of the library is to support schools to achieve learning goals (Christchurch City Libraries, 2003). The school library is the nucleus of a school. U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Sciences (2005) stated that in school library resources and materials are organized systematically ensuring universal access. School libraries also serve as a viaduct between school and real life (Sipley, 2003). According to International Federation of Library Association (2006), school library

provides an infrastructure for knowledge based society. It develops life long skills in students, which shape up the society on being learned and conscientious citizens. The subsistence of library and its services affect the overall behavior of its members. It influences like other media sources as newspapers or television or the visits to museums or cultural events. Generally speaking, such outcomes could be knowledge, information literacy, social insertion, and well being of students and users (Poll, 2005).

Healthy academic values and quality activities are exhibited in quality libraries (Kuh & Gonyea, 2003). They have a special role to play in the development and practice of reading and improvement of literacy which is a serious problem and hindrance towards societal development (Lyman, 1977; Elley, 1992; Weibel, 1992; Evans, 2004). Literacy not only trains the people to learn but also to learn how to learn. Research carried out by Krashen (1998) as quoted by Williams, Coles & Wavell (2002), indicated that "free voluntary reading has a positive impact on reading comprehension, vocabulary, spelling ability, grammar usage and writing style, and that children who read more typically have higher literacy development" (p:12). Celano and Neuman (2001) quoted Lora (1990) that libraries endow with entrance to world of information about

civilization, the public, financial system, and the past (p:8). Students who have sources of information can think well than those who have not such sources. They can think critically and independently.

Those who are critical thinkers can feel as better learners about themselves (Hancock, 1993). The relationship between student's achievement and the use of library is a question to be answered. Ory and Braskamp (1988) found a positive correlation between these two variables. Students who are frequent users of libraries show better performance on standardized tests as compared to non users (Lance, Rodney & Pennell, 2005). Students of school with quality libraries perform significantly better in basic research skills, reading comprehension, expressing their ideas, in knowledge and use of reference material (Haycock, 1995a; 1995b). Baughman (2000) and Smith (2001) also reported a strong correlation of library usage with achievement of student. According to Lonsdale (2003), usually the high scorers are from the schools with quality libraries. "School library can help how to shape the learning environment, provide a variety of learning experiences, support systematic skills development and research, provide access to a wider world of information, encourage and support learning, facilitate equal access to the curriculum, enhance self-esteem and independent

learning and offer careers guidance" (p:22). Study conducted by Beile (2002) for students of graduation level also reveled that students having better exposure and experience of library services and usage perform better on tests and cognitive outcomes. Quality libraries equipped with digital and non digital resources enable the students to get involved in learning opportunities at international level. A sense of competition and awareness is developed in the students.

Libraries at college and university level however exist in some forms but school library has been neglected in almost all the schools in Pakistan. The majority of schools possess no library. Where some semblance of a school library exists, it is often no more than a few shelves of outdated and worn out material. According to Haider (2002), Pakistani school authorities have a very meager attention towards the establishment of school libraries. Those who are having libraries are in pitiable conditions; suffering from a lot of financial and managerial problems. This is a much neglected area in school organization. Healthy and quality libraries contribute a lot for the community development. The primary aim of teaching learning process should be to offer easy access to the reading learning materials and instruction, and also to provide motivation to the learners

for independent learning and thinking. Smith (2006) also conducted a study of teachers' perception and found that school libraries help students acquire unique skills that they do not learn in the classroom. School libraries help students in becoming information seekers, information reviewers and synthesizers, thereby honing all students' research and analysis skills and preparing them for continuous learning in the 21st century. Keeping in view this issue of effect of school library on students learning, it was decided to conduct a study in Pakistani educational culture, to get insight that what the school teachers perceive about the use of school library because they are having the pivotal role in the education system and are guarantors for the preparation of young ones for higher education. This area is a neglected one in Pakistan. This investigation was an attempt to get teachers' perceptions.

Method and Procedure

In order to gain perceptions of school teachers about the effect of use of quality library on the students' academic achievement, survey was conducted.

Population

The study was delimited to male and female teachers of public sector high schools from only one district. In this way the population of this study comprised of all the teachers of public sector boys and girls schools of district Lahore.

Sample

Sample of the study was 480 male and female teachers selected randomly from randomly selected 60 public sector boys and girls high schools. Male teachers (240) were selected from 30 boys' high schools and 240 female teachers were selected from 30 girls high schools.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

Data were collected from the sample teachers. The instrument based on the five point Likert style was used for data collection. This questionnaire consisted of 18 statements. It was pilot tested upon a sample of 90 teachers selected from nine different boys and girls high schools and also got validated. The value of reliability coefficient was $\alpha= 0.8981$. The items of this questionnaire were related to the effects of use of library on students' academic achievement, learning skills, use and creation of new ideas, critical orientation, study habits, reading ability, language development, problem solving skills and better communication in classroom.

Results

The fallouts of the study are as follows:

Table 1: Effect of library on students' academic achievement

Sr.	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Quality library creates study interest in students.	4.50	.72
2	Quality library has a positive impact on students' learning.	4.49	.64
3	Quality library develops good study habits in students.	4.47	.69
4	Quality library helps students in gathering information they need.	4.42	.70
5	Quality library has an impact on students' reading ability.	4.37	.76
6	Quality library helps students to search information relevant to their topic.	4.33	.71
7	Quality library is a mean of providing motivation in reading to students.	4.30	.80
8	Quality library helps students in contributing more in class discussion.	4.25	.77
9	Quality library helps students to create new ideas and information.	4.18	.82
10	Quality library ensures the effective use of ideas and information.	4.16	.84
11	Quality library plays role in language development.	4.14	.89
12	Quality library helps students in getting better grades in tests.	4.10	.89
13	Quality library promotes critical thinking among students.	4.05	.90
14	Quality library promotes learning to use new technologies in communicating information.	4.03	.89
15	Quality library has the tools to inspire literacy in learners.	4.02	.95
16	Quality library helps students for solving problems in a better way.	3.96	.98
17	Quality library helps students in doing their schoolwork better.	3.95	.93
18	Quality library promotes communicative skills in classrooms.	3.91	.92

(Note: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, 5= strongly disagree)

Table 1 indicates that most of the school teachers perceive that school library has an impact in creating study interests among students (Mean= 4.50; Std Dev= 0.72) followed by the areas students' learning (Mean= 4.49; Std Dev= 0.64), in developing study habits (Mean= 4.47; Std Dev= 0.69) and in gathering needed information (Mean= 4.42; Std Dev= 0.70). Whereas promoting communicative skills in classroom (Mean= 3.91; Std Dev= 0.92) is least affected area followed by the areas 'better school work' (Mean= 3.95; Std Dev= 0.93) and problem solving (Mean= 3.96; Std Dev= 0.98). Mean score calculated for all areas is ranged from 3.91 to 4.50. Rest of the areas like 'reading ability' (Mean= 4.37; Std Dev= 0.76), 'class discussion' (Mean= 4.25; Std Dev= 0.77), getting better grades' (Mean= 4.10; Std Dev= 0.89) and use of technologies in communicating information (Mean= 4.03; Std Dev= 0.89) fall between this range. So, it is concluded that quality library should be an integral part of educational institutions in particular and society in general because it has

a positive impact on different areas of students' achievement as perceived by school teachers. School teachers perceive that a quality library can help them for producing better learners. Whenever they will be better learners ultimately they will be good achievers and as a result they will approach to higher education.

Table 2: Perceptions of male and female teachers about effects of library use on students' achievement

Gender	N	Mean	t-value
Male	240	75.86	.491*
Female	240	75.44	

Not significant at $p < 0.05$ level of significance; df =478

Table 2 indicates that t-value (0.491) is not significant at $p<0.05$ level of significance. There is also very minute difference between mean value of male teachers (75.86) and mean value of female teachers (75.49). It is therefore concluded that both male and female teachers have no difference in their perception about effect of library on students' academic achievement.

Conclusion

Quality learners are need of the hour for each and every society all over the world. Today's young generation is real stakeholder for future. They are the future leaders in different spheres of life. These young boys and girls have to play diverse roles nationally as well as internationally. Quality libraries help school in producing good learners for colleges and colleges in turn produce quality learners for universities. Ultimately universities contribute professionals to the society. These professionals are the key to change in socioeconomic status and wellbeing of the society. The objective of this research was to explore the school teachers' perceptions about the importance of use of library in connection with the academic and learning elevation of students. Data analysis showed that teachers are in favor of the use of library for better students. This study also showed male and female teachers have similar perceptions regarding use of library. They perceived that quality library is an important factor for students' learning. So quality library services should be provided to our young ones at all the levels. Government should take serious initiatives for establishing quality libraries in schools equipped with trained library staff, computer facilities and enriched with fresh and updated material. School authorities should also get help from the society and the donor agencies for the establishment of quality school libraries. Students should also be involved for the collection of books. These libraries should not only be in educational institutions but should be in villages, towns and cities governed by the local governments. It is also need of the hour to establish toy libraries for the pre

school learners. Educationists and experts of the field of library science should come forward, work shoulder to shoulder by sharing their expertise for combating this challenge. In Pakistani culture it is also needed to launch a campaign for the promotion and advocacy of use of libraries for developing study and reading culture in the young ones at all the levels. The role of print and electronic media in this campaign will also be very helpful.

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