Evaluation of School Libraries According to IFLA Standards (Case Study: Elementary Schools of Shiraz)

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ABSTRACT

In this paper besides reviewing the condition of school libraries in Shiraz in elementary schools, they are compared in accordance with IFLA standards. Statistical sample in this research is 175 elementary schools in Shiraz selected randomly among 510 elementary schools in Shiraz. Of this, 76 boys' schools and 75 girls' school and 24 mixed schools were selected. Data collection instruments was a 45-question questionnaire that according to the nature of this research, for data analysis descriptive statistics including frequency, frequency percent and mean. The return percent of the questionnaire is 91.42%. The studied libraries are not in accordance with IFLA standards for school libraries in space, equipments, human resources, budget, set of books and etc criterions. The positive point in behavior of the authorities in these libraries is their hope to reflect the results of these researches and change in the condition of school libraries that is optimistic for improving the current condition.

KEYWORDS: School libraries, IFLA standards, Shiraz, Iran.

INTRODUCTION

The most important duty of education ministry is preparing the students for self study and moving them toward a learning system that is self-motivated. In education system based on self-study, the student participates in half of the educational activities. In student-oriented systems, the teacher is playing the role of a director and it is not as the teacher should always teach, and this makes the students to search in information resources and libraries to learn the text book on their own. This kind of learning is creative learning and besides focused education, the student is more inclined to used information resources and self-study instead of teacher teaching. Growing research and creativity in students is not in contrast with the role of teacher in the classroom and it doesn't downplay the role of a teacher, but the teacher is introduced as a director and a person who knows all the information resources related to the text books.

In modern educational systems, instead that the teacher just talk, research moral of the students is improved and to achieve this goal, information centers and libraries compatible with their information requirements are considered in schools. This is possible when teach thought is exceeding the information resources and is transferred to the student and the student is obliged to take the same route to keep up with the teacher. This kind of communication image between teacher and the student and vice versa regards school library as a mediator. As it can be said: The connection between teacher and student is possible via library" (Neshat & Hori, 2006.p. 8).

School libraries make the information and views available that are necessary for successful activities in modern society that is increasingly based on information and knowledge. These libraries equip the students with permanent learning skills and by improving imagination, empower than as responsible citizens to live. The activity of school libraries (2008) knows the most important mission of school libraries changing their place to learning environments by which provide equal opportunities for progress of all the students without considering their social-economic level or educational level of the society.

If official education remains in its limited framework and don't use new educational resources and technologies- as one of these instruments are equipped libraries compatible with the students requirements- they changed into a repetitive environment in which research and thought motivations are lost. Indeed, growing talent of young students in each society is the duty of educational system after the family. So, it is necessary that educational system in each society provides opportunity in accordance with the future goals and requirements in which children and adolescents can find a good answer for their information requirements. Thus, school libraries can be the best educational instrument that helps the students step by step in understanding the educational programs. The libraries are important both for students and teachers. The teacher should study and research to update his knowledge and abilities to answer the students' questions. Due to this fact in the importance of school libraries we should say that "all the roads end to the library" (Majidi, 2003.p.21).

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Statement of the problem

The need to know and evaluate school libraries in Iran is due to this fact that unfortunately school libraries in Iran are not recognized as one of the necessities for the development of the society. This has many reasons and one of the important reasons is the life theory in Iran educational system and emphasis on teacher-oriented and education-oriented system instead of being student-oriented and research –oriented.

A successful educational system should try to provide the opportunity for answering the students' questions besides official and new educations. The effective information resources beside educational role can improve research motivation in students. As one of the important goals of education is creating activity and growing students talents and moving them toward self-motivated learning, it is necessary to provide the necessary opportunities. One of the most important tools to achieve this goal is school libraries. The role of school libraries in forming the scientific personality of the students and preparing them to enter the society indicates their position in educational system of each society.

Research purpose

To study the current condition of school libraries in elementary level of Shiraz city and its compatibility with IFLA standards, it is attempted to study the condition of these libraries from view, space, equipments, resources, human resources, budget and educational programs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is of descriptive and survey method. In this research it is attempted to besides describing the school libraries of elementary schools in Shiraz , evaluate them by IFLA standards from the point of space, resources, human resources, budget to provide the resources, educational equipments and information technology and educational programs of using library and report the strong points and weaknesses of the studied libraries. Statistical population of this research is all the elementary schools of Shiraz in academic year 2010-2011. These schools according to the statistics of education department of Fars province are more than 510 schools during research being active in four regions of Shiraz, of which 219 schools are for girls, 222 schools for boys and 69 mixed schools.

By Kukran formula $n = \dfrac{N.Z^2.p.q}{(N-1)d^2 + z^2.p.q}$, the number of 510 elementary schools in Shiraz, 175 schools is randomly selected as statistical sample. Of which, there were 76 boys schools, 75 girls school and 24 mixed school.

Data collection instrument in this research is a questionnaire with 45 questions. The said questionnaire is extracted from librarian MA thesis of Jamshidi (2007). For doing research with the collaboration of Education organization of Fars province, 175 questionnaires are sent to elementary schools of Shiraz.

Of the total sent questionnaires, 160 questionnaires are filled out by the studied libraries and returning percent of the questionnaires are 91.42 %. 15 schools by some reasons such as not having library, the absence of the related expert and etc didn't fill out the questionnaire.

This research was done in March 2011 in elementary schools of Shiraz. Considering the nature of this research, for data analysis, descriptive statistics including frequency, frequency percent and mean were used.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Abas Hormozi (2003) in a research titled " study the problems of school libraries of guidance school and high school of Khuzestan province and comparing the current condition according to global standards" besides reviewing the general condition of school libraries of high school and guidance schools of Khusestan from the point of space, budget, facilities and equipments, human resources, set of books and services found the following results: Only 5 percent of the required libraries are managed by a specialized librarian. 82.2 % of the studied libraries are managed by people who are not educated in this regard and they don't know anything about librarian job and library. 92% of the studied libraries lack the required budget. 95.2 % had a separate library.

Generally, school libraries of the province didn't give good service and they had some serious problems such as the lack of specialized resources, budget, space and the low per capita for purchasing books.

- Samadinia et al (2006), the findings of this research show that: 75% of Tehran schools have library and for each student, there is 6.5 books other than text books. But the library is not big enough to keep these books and for each

student there is only 22 cm^2 space. The libraries don't have audio-visual equipments. Indeed, the current condition of Tehran libraries is not satisfactory and this is one of the problems of Education system.

- Jamshidi (2007) besides reviewing the condition of school libraries of high schools in Kermanshah province from the point of space, budget, facilities and equipments, human resources, quantity of the set of books and services , the obtained information compared with " IFLA standards for school libraries". The results show that 80.97 % of schools have library. 32.83% of the libraries are managed by librarians and only 9.34 % of these people are educated in librarian major. 91.27 % of the libraries don't have an exclusive budget. The libraries are very small and most of them didn't consider a space for the study of the students. The libraries set of books are quantitatively weak. 32.53 % of the libraries educate how to use the library and only 5.72 % of these libraries are connected to internet. Equipments of the libraries are very bad. School libraries of high schools in Kermanshah province are not compatible with IFLA standards in all aspects and generally it can be said that these libraries are facing big challenges and they cannot meet the demands of the students.
- Majidi, Mosa (2008) in his research titled "The study of school libraries based on a brief research in official statistics of Education ministry" states that in academic year 2006-2007, 15 million students and 1 million teachers and staffs are presented. There are 145241 institutions in all the country and there was library in 22118 institutions. Thus, there is no library in 123123 institutions. 75.6% of the institutions in cities and 92.7 % of the institutions in villages don't have any library. The librarians were 5035 people and urban libraries had 4650 librarians while rural libraries had 385 librarians. Of the total 46.5 million books in the libraries, $\frac{4}{5}$ of it are in urban libraries and $\frac{1}{5}$ in rural libraries. Heterogeneous resources and subjective manner of the selection of the resources are the main reasons of the weaknesses of school libraries.
- Moraveji et al (2010) with the aim of reviewing the condition of pre-university libraries of Arak city found the followings: Pre-university centers libraries of Arak city were consistent with the standards of schools libraries from the point of policy and mission 67.66 %, budget 66.68%, space and equipments 88.33%, set of books 50%, human resources 91.11%, services and activities 59.99%, library service and improving learning 70%.
- Slyfield (2001) in reviewing the condition of school libraries of New Zealand, states that only half of school libraries regard their library as standard and satisfactory. High school libraries were better in comparison with elementary schools. Satisfaction is more prominent in urban libraries in comparison with rural libraries and only 1/5 of the studied libraries in this research regarded the necessary elements for achieving information literacy satisfactory. Slifield recommends that school libraries improve their condition from gaining information literacy.
- Saitis & Saiti (2004) in an article titled "School libraries in Greece: Comparative study of elementary schools in urban and rural areas "studied school libraries in elementary level. The results show that the said libraries encountered some problems including the lack of enough space, not having freedom in determining financial requirements of the library, shortage of electronic and print resources, the lack of a specialized librarian, the lack of collaboration between the libraries and limited working hour in libraries.

Research findings

Population information

According to the obtained information of table 1, of the total 175 studied schools, 160 schools (91.42%) have library. Of this, the minimum amount of schools with libraries are mixed schools (The number of educated students in elementary schools of Shiraz city were 3662 people and of which, 1962 people were member of the library of their school. The results of chart (1) showed that the girls' membership is more than that of boys. 68.9% of the girls were the member of their school library, while this amount was 31.09 % in boys.

Table 1: Frequency of elementary schools with library in Shiraz city

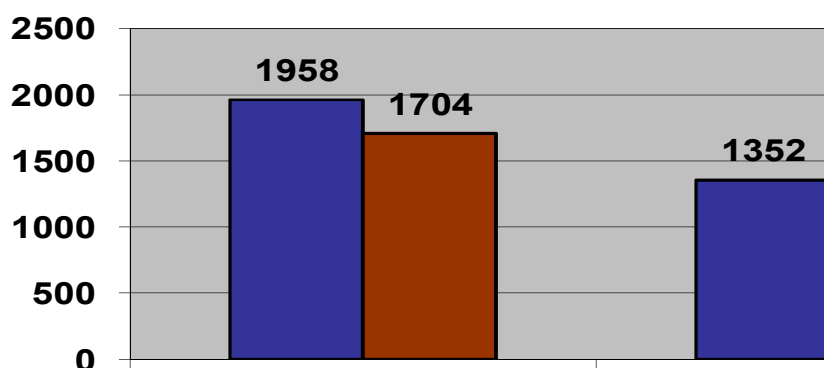| Number / Gender	Total elementary schools		Studied schools		The schools with library	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
Boys	222	43.5	76	43.5	76	47.5
Girls	219	43	75	43	75	47.8
Mixed	69	13.5	24	13.5	9	5.7
Total	510	100	175	100	160	100

Chart (1): Frequency of the number of students and members of elementary schools libraries of Shiraz city

Mission and policy

Of total 160 studied libraries, 138 libraries (86.2%) have standard policy and 22 libraries (13.8%) don't have standard policy. Averagely, the existing policy of elementary schools libraries in Shiraz in 77.9 % is consistent with school libraries standards.

Human resources

According to the data of chart (2), only in 6 cases (3.75%) of the libraries have librarian and in the remaining (96.25%) they don't have any librarian and the library is managed by a person other than a persona with librarian degree. Among them educational teachers with 61.25 % have the highest share?
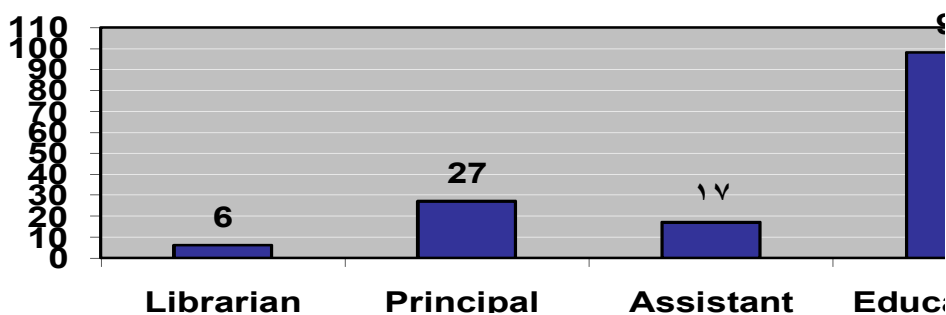

Chart (2): Frequency distribution of libraries authorities in elementary schools of Shiraz
Library budget

Of the studied libraries, 116 libraries (72.5%) had permanent budget. 153 libraries (95.62%) don't receive money from the institutions out of the school. The budget of these libraries as averagely 67.662 % is consistent with standards of school libraries.

Library space

Library space of elementary schools in Shiraz is lower than the standard amount. All the studied libraries had a space less than 250 m. According to IFLA guidelines the required space for school libraries is 2.3 m for each student. On the other hand, according to the data in table (2), the number of the members of studied libraries is 1962 people that according to the standard 2.3 m for each member, space of about 4512 m is enough. This space is other than the space required for the future development or new members in future. Also, 11 libraries are having separate location and 149 libraries (89.37%) don't have a separate space. Of total 160 studied libraries, 13 libraries (8.12%) have reading hall. In 152 libraries (95%) having access to library is equal for all parts of school. Only 7 libraries (4.37%) have the required equipments for disabled people.

Of the responses received from library space, the result was that averagely, elementary school libraries in Shiraz are consistent as 49.2% with the standards of school libraries and they are not in a good condition.

Table 2: Frequency and percent of elementary school libraries in Shiraz city

No. of question	Questions items	Given questions			
		YEs		No	
		F	p	F	P
11	Separate location of the library	149	89.37	11	6.87
12	Reading hall	13	8.12	147	91.87
13	Having access to the library from all parts of the school	152	95	8	5
14	The required facilities for disabled students to use library	7	4.37	153	95.62

Library equipments

The average amount for the existing equipment of elementary schools libraries of Shiraz is 7.95 that is much lower than school libraries standards. Elementary schools libraries in Shiraz in not of the said items in library equipment (Book shelf, journals shelf, map table, library ladder, desk, chair, desk and chair for staffs, paper, registration office, recorder, projector, portable screen, Bulletin Board, computer and copy machine) are not even near the standard level.

Set of books

For each student member of the library there are 2.19 libraries. According to the recent IFLA standard for a library set of books, for each 100 people, there are 1200 books. Also, the annual increase of the materials in the library, 3 books are stated for each person. According to these standards, the studied elementary school libraries in Shiraz should have a set of 43944 books but this statistics is stated as 8025 volumes. The existing books in these libraries are 18.26% that is much lower than standard amount. Other obtained information about the books indicates that 33.23 % of the resources (less than 5 years) are up-to-date. Of this amount, 46.10 % are self-study books, 53.75% of the resources are in accordance with students' requirements, and they are consistent with IFLA standards. Of total 160 studied libraries, all part of the library use different classification systems to organize their resources. Among these amounts, 77 libraries (48.12 %) organized the resources according to the required subjects of librarians. 66 libraries (41.25 %) arranged the resources according to the registration number, 16 libraries (10 %) alphabetically and only 1 library (0.62 %) arranged them according to Dewey Decimal Classification.

Having access to internet and digital library

Elementary schools libraries in Shiraz don't have any IT facilities. None of these libraries have access to internet, database and digital library.

Improving library services and learning

The extracurricular activities in school libraries are holding reading books contests, book fair and different periodical classes. 66.78 % of elementary libraries in Shiraz hold book reading contests. Also, 30% of libraries hold book fairs in different occasions. But holding educational courses as periodical is held only in 5.62% of the libraries. According to the obtained data, averagely 34.16 % of the studied libraries are giving additional services to improve learning in accordance with IFLA standards that is lower than the expected amount and is not consistent with IFLA standards for school libraries.

Working hour of libraries

The maximum working hour of the libraries in elementary schools in Shiraz city (63.12%) are between 4 to 6 hours. This case is possible in the schools with morning and afternoon shifts. Because to avoid the repetitious information in libraries, of each studied school only one shift is studied.

Educational programs methods in using library

One of the existing challenges in using library resources, the ability of the users is assessed in having access to the required resources. The resources in the library cannot alone meet the demands of users' information requirements and this is the access to the resources that is including the main part of library activities. Instructing users in this library is mostly based on education at service. 99.37 % of the libraries stated that they have case education in their program and help students to find the required resources in library.

The manner of managing library

82.5 % of elementary school libraries in Shiraz are arranged in close shelf and 17.5 % are arranged in open shelf. The lack of adequate staffs in library and unfamiliarity of the student to the arrangement of the resources are the reasons stated for running library as close shelf. Running the library as open shelf can help the students in finding other resources and meeting the demands of study requirements. Unfortunately, due to the said items, most of the libraries avoid to use open shelf method.

Information need assessment

Averagely, Information need assessment is done by libraries only in 3.8% of the items that is much lower than standard amount. Regarding the library resources conformity with educational goals in elementary level only 10.62 % are based on IFLA standards that is not consistent with these standards.

Table 3: Coordination between library resources and educational goals of elementary schools in Shiraz

No. of question	Questions items	Given questions			
		Yes		No	
		F	p	F	P
41	Information need assessment of the students	1	0.63	159	99.37
42	Collaboration between teachers and librarians to improve educational goals	2	1.25	158	98.75
43	Sending the students to library to do their assignments	17	10.62	143	89.38
44	Conforming educational goals of elementary schools by using library	17	10.62	143	89.38

Conclusion

Viability of educational system in each society is depending upon using school libraries as the role of educational and research tool. In spite of modern educational progress and more emphasis in the development of school libraries, these libraries are quantitatively and qualitatively weak. In this research elementary school libraries in Shiraz are studied and conformity or non-conformity of the existing condition in these libraries is defined with IFLA standards. Considering the research questions the following results are obtained:

- Regarding the number of schools in library, 91.42 % of the schools have library. This is consistent with IFLA standards about school libraries.
- Regarding the number of library members, 31.09 % of the boy students and 68.9% of the girl students are member of their school library. According to this information, boys' membership is not consistent with IFLA standards and this shows that library was not successful in satisfying the students.
- Of the received responses about libraries policy, 86.2% of the libraries have standard policy. This library has planning for other activities and this policy is done under the supervision of principle of the school.
- Regarding the human resources of libraries, only 3.75% of the libraries had librarian. 96.25 % of the libraries were managed by other people and the highest amount in this part is educational teachers (61.25%).
- According to the data obtained about library budget, averagely 67.66% are consistent with school libraries standards. Of the total 160 libraries, 72.5% had permanent budget and they didn't receive any money from the institutions out of school.
- Space of elementary school libraries in Shiraz city is much lower than standard amount and only 11 libraries have separate space. Of the total number of these libraries 58% of them have less than 50 m space and this is in contrast with IFLA standards having 2.3 sq.m spaces for each student. Averagely, the space of elementary school libraries in Shiraz city is 49.2% in contrast with IFLA standards.
- The existing equipments in the studied libraries are not consistent with IFLA standards in any items. The obtained average for library equipments is 7.9 % that is ignorable.
- Considering the number of students in these schools (3662 people) and IFLA standard (2.19 books for each person), the set of these books should be 43944 books and this amount is almost 5 times of the current condition in these libraries.
- The mean of the existing resources in these libraries is 18.26 % that is much lower than IFLA standards. Of these numbers only 33.23 % are up-to –date and organization of these resources in most of the cases is done according to the registration number of resources.
- Having access to internet and databases is possible in 5.7 % of the libraries and that is limited to the desk of librarian. Digital library is not defined for these schools.
- In library service section, the highest amount (66.78%) is for holding book fairs. And of this view 34.16% are consistent with IFLA standards that are much lower than expected amount.
- The maximum working hour is 4 to 6 hours per day that is obtained of morning and evening shifts in schools.
- Educational programs of using library in all the libraries (99.37%) are done as case study and at the time students refer to the library.
- 82.5 % of the libraries are managed as close shelf and it was not the main factor for using this method in managing these libraries and adequate staffs are used in libraries.
- Averagely, 10.62 % of the activities related to information need assessment in these libraries are according to IFLA standards. Heterogeneous and subjective nature of arranging these resources is the main problem that is observed in most of the studied libraries.

- Generally, in the studied items, the standard condition of school libraries is not seen. Unfortunately, not using specialized librarians is not having separate and permanent budget and above all, the negligence of authorities created a condition for school libraries that doesn't create a good perspective for students. The studied libraries in this research are such a useless book stores that shows the authorities are releasing their burden. The only positive aspect in face to face interviews with the people who are working as library authorities, is the hope for research influence that inform the results to the authorizes. But if it was possible that a person is awakened of a heavy sleep, the condition of our school libraries was something more than the current condition.

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