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Comparative Evaluation of Status of Infrastructural Facilities in Secondary School Libraries of Varanasi, India

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Library is an integral part of school education system. Its role is not only limited to issue-return processes but also in inculcating the reading culture among students. The main aim of this paper is to examine the existing status of infrastructural facilities in selected school libraries in Varanasi, India. A comparative analysis of schools affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education (central board) and Uttar Pradesh Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad (state board) is also done in the paper on the basis of quantitative and qualitative data obtained during the study. Survey method is used to for the study, hence questionnaire method is applied to collect the data. Proportionate stratified sampling is applied on the population under study. Questionnaires are distributed to school librarians selected for the study. The data obtained is analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences and Microsoft Excel. Schools affiliated to CBSE are providing more library facilities and services than schools affiliated to UPMSP. The number of schools providing basic infrastructural facilities is more in CBSE affiliated schools than in UPMSP affiliated schools. Financial condition and lack of awareness towards library development is the main hurdle in uplifting the standard of library facilities in secondary schools of Varanasi. Findings of this study will help in diminishing the gap of service expectation and status of library infrastructural facilities in school libraries.

Keywords: *Infrastructural Facilities, School Libraries, Status of Libraries in India, Library Facility.*

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0 INTRODUCTION - SCHOOL EDUCATION AND SCHOOL LIBRARY

Education is one of the basic necessities of today's growing world. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)¹, every child and citizen should be provided access to standard quality education. Education imparts development of the individual on many levels including physical, mental, spiritual and intellectual. The basic module of school education is to train the students about learning. To achieve this, knowledge from different sources are provided ranging from science, art, sports and co-curricular activities.

Library, an integral part of school, provides aforementioned resources to the readers with different interests in different subjects. Library directly affects the growth of the students in terms of their learning, knowledge and skills; this is the reason why the library is considered as the highest priority in the growth of any school. Library, in terms of its structure, is 'trinity of users, documents and staff' a very famous quote by Dr. S. R. Ranganathan. Staff acts as catalysts between users and documents. The objective of the library is to cater the information needed by its users, mainly students and teachers. For this, the collection of the library should be enriched and with updated information which should be selected judiciously by recommendation of students and teachers.

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)² advocates that the library policy is essential to extract maximum benefit from the library. Hence library policy making becomes the important work in library functioning. Proper execution of library policy is required by the librarian and concerned authorities. IFLA defines a school library as a physical and digital learning space where services and facilities are provided to support students to discover their knowledge and skills. Library guidelines issued by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)³ also advocates that book selection should be properly managed by the Library advisory committee. This committee should consist of a principal, one representative from different subject teachers, six students and librarian. American Library Association (ALA)⁴ describes school libraries as a platform for making students effective and efficient in information searching and retrieval. Further ALA explains the role of the school library beyond its curricular role. In fact, it can also aid in solving students' basic questions that come in their mind due to curiosity and personal interest. The basic purpose of any school library is to provide a learning environment for both students and teachers. School library functions in resonance with the prime objective of the school. A rich collection of school library helps in

inculcating the reading habits of students at the beginning of their school education. ALA also emphasizes that high quality reading materials promotes students to become lifelong learners and readers. According to IFLA School Library Guidelines, it is important to evaluate the school library services and facilities as it will help concerned authorities to ensure that these services are fulfilling the information needs of the school community and help in repackaging and redesigning services to serve users.

Generally, school libraries in India are basically formally organized spaces that act as a storehouse of books maintained in lacunae of policies, standards and qualified professionals (ISLA, 2017)⁵. According to a concise report of 8th All India School Education Survey (AISES)⁶, 79,396 (67.71%) secondary schools and 48,859 (77.97%) higher secondary schools does not have library facility whereas total number of schools as per this report stands 13 lakhs (AISES, 2016). As an average, more than 25 % of secondary and higher secondary schools in India do not have library facilities. Even this percentage grows further when we talk of primary schools in India. Therefore measuring the gap of library and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities becomes paramount for the benefit of students. In this study, we attempted to measure this gap and bring out the ground reality of libraries of Varanasi schools.

1 LITERATURE REVIEW

A lot of researches have been done on school libraries. Few of the studies focused on evaluation of school library facilities and services. There are also some studies which correlate school library facilities and its impact on academic performance of the students. But evaluating infrastructure of school library facilities is rare in published domain. This study is focused exclusively on infrastructural facilities of school libraries. Furthermore, a comparative analysis is done on different affiliation boards to examine their state-of-the-art report on infrastructural facilities of school library. Review of literature on school libraries reveals that researcher tried to explore existing status of library facilities. However, work limited to infrastructural facilities of library is scanty. Selvakumar⁷ evaluated existing status of library facilities of secondary and higher secondary schools in Karur district in Tamil Nadu. He made seven objectives related to school libraries. One of his objectives is to find out the physical infrastructure facilities of schools where he selected parameters like availability of racks, chairs and reading tables. By using cross tabulation and measure of central tendency, he explained the existing status of library infrastructure facilities. In a similar kind of study by Jain (2001)⁸ on school

libraries in Delhi, physical infrastructure facilities have been evaluated. He devised three separate questionnaires for teachers, students and librarians. Both these studies focused on many factors of library management like collection, services, infrastructure etc. Overall findings of these studies explain the poor infrastructure facilities in school libraries. They came to conclusion that the facilities are below standards as set up by CBSE school library guidelines. CBSE school library guidelines opine that school library building should have space to accommodate at least 50 students at a time. BIS however opines for at least 40 to 120 students at a time to be present comfortably in the library. Apart from this the space should also accommodate 10000 to 15000 volumes. An additional 10 % should be left for desks, counters and reference service.

2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this research is to evaluate the existing status of infrastructural facilities of school libraries in Varanasi. The study is limited to only higher secondary schools affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and Uttar Pradesh Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad (UPMSP). The study also incorporates the cause of gap in library facilities of CBSE and UPMSP affiliated schools. At the end, the remedies to minimise this gap is also discussed based on the current study and literature published in this field.

3 METHODOLOGY

As it is a survey-based research, therefore questionnaire is used as a tool for data collection. Due to the heterogeneous nature of the schools, stratified sampling is done in which stratifying variables are kind of affiliation and highest class offered by the school. The reason for choosing stratified sampling is the heterogeneity in the population of schools in terms of library infrastructural facilities. For applying stratified sampling, variables used to form strata are kinds of affiliation and highest class offered by the school. In the first case, there are many schools affiliated with different affiliation boards such as CBSE, UPSMP, Madarsa and Sanskrit School Boards. So, first layer is formed by using affiliation and schools from two affiliation boards i.e. CBSE and UPSMP. The second strata of the population were formed by the highest class being offered by the schools. There are many schools who are at elementary, primary, secondary and senior secondary levels. The samples were collected only from those schools where highest class being offered is intermediate (class 12) i.e.

senior secondary schools. Hence, the population of schools selected for this work includes all the schools affiliated to CBSE and UPMSP where class 12 (intermediate) is the highest class taught in the school. Total 40 schools are selected for this study, 20 schools from each affiliation board.

4 SELECTION OF PARAMETERS

The parameters chosen for the study is based on multiple research works. For instance, the parameters selected are based on the thesis submitted by Selvakumar P (2014) on the topic “The status of high school and higher secondary school libraries in Karur district: a study”. Another source for selection of parameters is thesis submitted by Sudershan Kumar Jain (2001) on the topic “Library and information services in senior secondary schools: problems and prospects”. These two studies helped this work in selection of parameters as well as framing the questionnaire of evaluating the infrastructural facilities. Apart from this, parameter selection for the study is also based on school library guidelines issued by Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and American Association of School Libraries (AASL).

5 QUESTIONNAIRE

Data collected from the librarian or library incharge of the concerned schools. All the necessary information about the library infrastructure are collected from the library. Infrastructure includes the basic amenities required for smooth running of a library such as library building, electricity, lighting, ventilation, furniture, book shelf, magazine stands, internet facility etc. Data is collected in both online and offline mode.

6 DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of data was done using MS-Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences. For the qualitative part of data, percentage method was used to show the results and for quantitative data, mean and other associated methods were used.

Basic Information	Number of Schools	Percentage (%)
<i>Type of Schools</i>		
CBSE	20	50.00
UPMSP	20	50.00
<i>Funding Agency</i>		
Government	14	35.00
Private	18	45.00
Aided	8	20.00
<i>School Category</i>		
Girls	4	10.00
Boys	6	15.00
Co-ed	30	75.00
<i>Location of School</i>		
Urban	26	65.00
Rural	14	35.00

Table 1. Preliminary Information about the population under study

The preliminary information about the population under study tells that the majority of the schools selected as sample belong to urban region and three-fourth school are co-ed in nature, it means both girls and boys are studying together in school premises. Very few schools belong to the category of only girl students or only boy students studying in the school premises. Most of the schools are either privately funded or funded by the government, few belong to aided schools.

7 FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Infrastructural facilities of a library include library building, reading room, air conditioner (AC) facility, closed-circuit television (CCTV) facility, electric-

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backup facility, internet facility, smart classroom, different-sized chairs, different libraries for junior and senior students. Following data has been collected from the school library and is presented by using tables.

	CBSE		UPMSP		Total (%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Questions asked from Librarians						
Existence of school library	20	0	20		40 (100)	0 (0)
Separate reading room facility	7	13	0	20	7 (17.50)	33 (82.50)
AC facility	3	17	0	20	3 (7.50)	37 (92.50)
CCTV facility	12	8	0	20	12 (30.00)	28 (70.00)
Electricity-backup facility	18	2	12	8	30 (75.00)	10 (25.00)
Access to Internet	15	5	2	18	17 (42.50)	23 (57.50)
Smart classroom facility	3	17	0	20	3 (7.50)	37 (92.50)
Different sized chairs for different age-group students	6	14	0	20	6 (15.00)	34 (85.00)
Combined or separate libraries for junior and senior sections	5	15	0	20	5 (12.50)	35 (87.50)

Table 2. Answers based on Qualitative Data

This data about basic infrastructural facilities indicates that all the 40 schools (100%) selected in sample possess library. In these 40 schools, 7 schools (17.50%) have separate reading room facility whereas 33 schools (82.50%) does not provide this facility. Only 3 schools (7.50%) have AC facility in their library and rest 37 (92.50%) schools does not provide this facility. Regarding CCTV facility, 12 schools (30.00%) have this facility and rest 28 (70.00%) schools does not have this facility. Electricity backup is necessary for non-stop service in the library. 30 schools (75.00%) have electricity backup facility in their schools while 10 (25.00%) schools does not have. Internet is one of the important necessities these days. 17 schools (42.50%) provide internet facility and rest 23 (57.50%) does not provide. Smart classroom facility is provided by only 3 schools (7.50%) while majority of the schools i.e. 37 (92.50%) does not provide this facility. Different sized chairs in a library facilitates comfortable reading for both junior and senior students. This facility is provided by 6 schools (15.00%) and rest 34 schools (85.00%) does not provide this facility. At some places, it is found that two libraries buildings are present in one school, one for the junior batches and other for senior batches. This facility of two different library building is possessed by 5 schools (12.50%)

affiliated facilities as depicted from table 2.

Library Size

Size of library (in sq. ft.)					Total
		1-500	501-1000	1001-1500	
Type of Affiliation	CBSE	5 (12.5%)	9 (22.5%)	6 (15%)	20 (50%)
	UPMSP	11 (27.5%)	6 (15%)	3 (7.5%)	20 (50%)
Total		16 (40%)	15 (37.5%)	9 (15%)	40 (100%)

Table 3. Library Size

The library size is an important factor in the category of infrastructural facilities. 40% (16) of the schools have area less than 500 square feet, while another 40 % (15) possess area between 501 to 1000 square feet and rest 15 % (9) schools have area 1001 to 1500 square feet. As per library guidelines issue by CBSE, there is provision of 10 square feet per pupil in the library plus 10 % extra space for other group activities in the library.

	Book Racks	Reading Tables	Sitting Chairs
CBSE (20)	2440	160	900
Average	122	8	45
UPMSP (20)	1520	70	360
Average	76	3.50	18

Table 4. Book Backs, Reading Tables and Sitting Chairs

On an average, CBSE affiliated schools in Varanasi have 122 book racks, 8 reading tables and 45 sitting chairs in their library. Schools affiliated with

On an average, CBSE affiliated schools in Varanasi have 122 book racks, 8 reading tables and 45 sitting chairs in their library. Schools affiliated with UPMSP have 76 books racks, 3.5 reading tables and 18 sitting chairs in their library. This data indicates that CBSE affiliated schools provides better reading facilities in their libraries than UPMSP affiliated schools in Varanasi.

Availability of Xerox Machine, Printer and Scanner

S	Xerox	Printer	Scanner
CBSE (20)	17	18	12
Average	0.85	0.90	0.60
UPMSP (20)	12	14	8
Average	0.60	0.70	0.40

Table 5. Xerox Machine, Printer and Scanner

Library generally possesses other infrastructural facilities such as copier machine (Xerox), printer and scanner. These facilities provide add-ons in the service menu of the library. In Varanasi, CBSE affiliated schools have 0.85 Xerox machine, 0.90 printer and 0.60 scanner on an average whereas UPMSP affiliated schools have 0.60, 0.70 and 0.40 on an average for Xerox machine, printer and scanner respectively.

8 GAP IN INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES

The data analysis and findings section confer that there is a gap of infrastructural facilities in all parameters mentioned above. Following table gives a clear cut depiction of this gap.

S. N.	Infrastructural Facilities	No. of Schools		Gap
		CBSE	UPMSP	
1	Separate reading room facility	7	0	7
2	AC facility	3	0	3
3	CCTV facility	12	0	12
4	Electricity-backup facility	18	12	6
5	Access to Internet	15	2	13
6	Smart classroom facility	3	0	3
7	Different sized chairs for different age-group students	6	0	6
8	Combined or separate libraries for junior and senior sections	5	0	5
		Size (in sq.ft.)		
9	Library Size	867	637	230 sq.ft.
		Mean (Average)		
10	Book racks	122	76	46
11	Reading Tables	8	3.50	4.50
12	Sitting Chairs	45	18	27
13	Xerox	0.85	0.60	0.25
14	Printer	0.90	0.70	0.20
15	Scanner	0.60	0.40	0.20

Table 6 Gap in infrastructural facilities

Table 6 gives an idea about the comparative analysis about the gap in infrastructural facilities in schools affiliated to CBSE and UPMSP boards. It can be seen that there is large gap in the facilities between CBSE and UPMSP affiliated schools. CBSE affiliated schools are providing better infrastructural facilities than UPMSP affiliated schools. Access to internet, CCTV facility and separate reading room facility are the top three facilities where gap in schools are highest. Library size is important parameter to measure infrastructural facilities because if the space is ample, then there is lot of scope to accommodate books and also providing more services. Difference between mean of library size of CBSE and UPMSP affiliated boards (in sq. ft.) is 230 ft. which is a good margin. CBSE affiliated schools also excels with UPMSP affiliated schools in facilities like book racks, reading tables and sitting chairs by a margin of 46, 4.5 and 27 respectively. There is slight margin in terms of availability of Xerox (0.25), printer (0.20) and scanner (0.20).

9 CAUSE OF GAP IN INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES

It is well established from above section of data analysis, findings and discussion that CBSE affiliated schools are providing better and more infrastructural facilities than UPMSP affiliated schools. The cause for this gap of facilities may include lack of sufficient funding (financial dependency) for library infrastructure, lack of implementation of school library guidelines, no provision of special budget allocation for library infrastructure and lack of skill and awareness of school librarian. It has been seen that library authority is also responsible for poor infrastructure. The school management gives importance to library collection more than library infrastructure. It is one of the important reasons found in this study for poor infrastructural facilities.

10 MEASURE TO IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES

To improve the infrastructural facilities and to minimise the gap in facilities in CBSE and UPMSP affiliated, following measures can be taken based on previous studies and guidelines:-

- **Funding:** Financial dependency of libraries lies on their host institutions. Sometimes it is boon if the institution is taking care of the library but many times it is a curse specially in the present study where the host institution does not want to spend money on the libraries. In fact, the ground reality is that library is existing in schools only because they are required for getting affiliation from the boards like CBSE and UPMSP. By improving the annual budget on infrastructure, this problem can be solved.
- **Implementation of Guidelines:** There are several guidelines published on school libraries in India as well as in abroad. Most prominent guidelines are CBSE Guidelines, AASL guidelines and IFLA school library guidelines. If these guidelines are implemented as it is, then 90% problem of infrastructure facilities will be resolved.
- **Special Allocation in Budget:** In the annual budget of school and the library, special allocation on library infrastructure should be allocated. The infrastructure is so important because the ambience of the library attracts the users. Budgets from other departments can be relocated towards library infrastructure. So we recommend special allocation should be there for library infrastructure.
- **Utilising Space as Learning Commons:** Nowadays, libraries are focusing on learning commons. Using library space (infrastructure) as platform for learning commons where users can come and they can learn their academic as well curricular activities in collaborative or individual learning zone.

- **Skill Proficiency in Library Staff:** Sometimes, it is seen that library infrastructure is sufficient but it has not been used in its maximum capacity. Hence, it also depends on skill proficiency of the library staff that how well he/she is using library infrastructural facilities for providing better services for library users.

11 CONCLUSION

The statistical data collected from the schools were analyzed and found that CBSE affiliated schools have better infrastructural facilities than UPMSP affiliated schools. UPMSP affiliated schools are providing only the basic infrastructural facilities only while CBSE affiliated schools are providing basic as well some additional facilities and enhancing their library services. Both types of schools are providing the facilities but the number of schools providing such facilities is greater in CBSE affiliated schools than UPMSP affiliated schools. The reason for this gap might be the resources present in the library (man, money, material). Man means library staff which should be motivated and skilled in their profession, money means the budget of the library which should be according to the guidelines and material means physical facilities and resources. Many CBSE affiliated schools are financially empowered and hence investing on library infrastructural facilities whereas many UPMSP affiliated schools are financially weak and dependent on government and various other funding sources. Even it was found during the visit to schools that there was no librarian post in UPMSP schools. The school library is run by most educated or senior employee of group D (lower positions). This paper presented an overview of the status of infrastructural facilities of Varanasi schools. Infrastructural facilities of CBSE affiliated schools were far better than UPMSP schools. CBSE school libraries provided more number of infrastructural facilities, more number of racks, seating chair tables in the library than UPMSP school libraries. Another reason for this gap is the ignorant attitude of the school authority towards library. In one the surveyed schools, it was found that library size was reduced to half and the other half was given for the music class, thus the overall size of library is reduced. Eventually, some services are hampered and it also affected the library collection as some racks were removed. The attitude of the library authority plays crucial role in improving the condition of library services.

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