Responsibilities of teacher librarians in inclusive digital teaching and learning environment

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1. Introduction

The evolution of school libraries in the 21st century has been fueled by cultural, pedagogical, and technological advancements, making them more dynamic. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to consider, using a combined method, changes of teacher librarians' roles in schools during the transition to an inclusive digital society, where every student has a mobile phone as a digital device. The impact of digital resources and services has not only changed the roles and responsibilities of the school librarian but also the name. Thus, in some counties, a school librarian is called a media specialist, a school library media specialist, an information specialist or a school library teacher, but in this study, the researcher uses the title of the teacher librarian as recommended by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL, 2012). The researcher analyses the literature to determine the expectations of teacher librarians in the country and also interviewed teacher librarians in Sri Lanka to investigate the implementation and support of digitally inclusive environments in schools. Also, changes related to the digital environment in the role of teacher-librarian. The researcher found that there was little consistency in the implementation and support of digital inclusion in schools, but teacher librarians felt that their role had changed and their job satisfaction had decreased. The role of teacher librarian participation in the preparation of training and their ability to continue as a teacher in this position were also other two factors that had pronounced effects on job satisfaction. Therefore, the researcher interviewed selected teacher librarians to enhance and enrich the understanding of the changing roles of librarians in a digitally inclusive environment to understand how to bridge the gaps.

2. Key Characteristics of the Teacher Librarian

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) has documented in standards and guidelines the main roles, duties, responsibilities and qualifications of teacher librarians around the world. Therefore, the Association (AASL, 2010) outlined the qualifications, requiring that school librarians have as part of their credentials a master's degree in Library Science, a teaching degree, or a teaching certificate. In addition, some key roles have been identified that teacher librarians should play. So, such roles are: as a leader, an instructional partner, an information specialist, a teacher, and a program administrator. As a leader working in the school library, the librarian was chosen as the main role. It appears that the leadership role of librarians is increasing from the library membership register to the certification body. Therefore, teacher librarians must be active, involved, and informed. Because it always seeks to improve school libraries by interacting with stakeholders, including students, teachers, administrators, school boards, and the community at large. In addition, the responsibility is to create and maintain a warm, dynamic, inclusive and collaborative library environment, both online and physically, with a focus on cutting-edge education. As learning partners, school librarians help make connections between information and research needs, curriculum content, stated learning outcomes, and information resources available to students. One of the greatest contributions of teacher librarians is as a learning partner who works with teachers to help students discover and create new knowledge. Teacher librarians must also be engaged and involved in lesson planning, working with teachers to foster student reading habits for lifelong learning, and planning professional development activities for staff. The teacher librarian, as an information specialist, insights the expertise in the selection, acquisition, evaluation, and organization of information resources and technologies in all formats, as well as empowers students to become critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information. As (Darlington, 2019) points the teacher librarian serves as a ready resource to students to provide research assistance.

However, the most comprehensive task of the teacher librarian is mentioned as a program administrator. The association has identified that the teacher librarian is responsible for developing and sharing the policies of the library program and guiding and directing all school library programming. Hence, the job description itself has highlighted that to accomplish this role; the teacher librarian has to participate in strategic or long-term planning for library improvement and match library strategic planning to school goals.

3. Key responsibilities of the teacher librarian

3.1. The Teacher Librarian as a protagonist

According to recent research, school libraries have resources that support both learning and teaching (SLI, 2014). Consequently, the primary responsibility of a librarian is to manage library collections. The library collections should support the reading needs of students and the requirements of the school curriculum. In the face of the digital world's rapid growth, librarians must establish a social media presence and keep up with emerging technologies such as web technologies, tools, applications, and devices. Also, librarians should (Craver, 1994; Mallawaarachchi, 2018) be literary and educational consultants for library users (students and teachers), to help them find publications and information that suits their needs.

3.2. The Teacher Librarian as a digital anchor

The teacher librarian must encompass all literacy abilities in the K12 setting due to high expectations. As (AASL, 2010) skills and knowledge of Information Literacy, Digital Literacy, Computer Literacy, Language Literacy, Visual Literacy, Media Literacy, Finance Literacy, Numeric Literacy, and Technological Literacy have to increase. The teacher librarian's proficiency and skills become crucial when we consider students can be overwhelmed by the sheer volume and often dubious quality of the information instantly accessible using digital devices. For example, how the proliferation of data, information, and knowledge influences the electronic information society and electronic knowledge society

(Domo, 2019) urges that more data available in the e-society than anyone expects. Hence, to cope with that expansion of data skills in literacies becomes essential for the teacher librarian to perform the job role and to help patrons find reliable printed, non-printed, and digital services and resources.

3.3. The Teacher Librarian as a Knowledge Instructor

The significant contribution towards students' learning achievements the direct information literacy instructions and knowledge instructions have to be identified how important by school libraries and the teacher-librarian. Because, the teacher librarian helps (Lance, Schwarz, and Rodney, 2014) students to find, access, evaluate, use, and create knowledge on a daily and assignment basis than teachers which is a positive impact on teaching and learning in the K12 domain.

4. Discussion

4.1. Job satisfaction of the teacher librarian

The teacher librarian's role traditionally is identified (Wine, 2016) as a keeper of books. However, the teacher librarian shows a positive attitude toward their job roles in the digital inclusive environment due to working with teens. However, most of them commented that skills and knowledge barriers in digital library environments sometimes create the least job satisfaction because the valuation of the profession is not well recognized. Furthermore, some teacher librarians documented that there was not enough time to perform the librarian's role and responsibilities because assigned work of the clerk's job, the teacher's job, and the computer technician's job.

4.2. Supports of the teacher librarian for school curriculum

The teacher librarian is a key player in students' learning achievements in schools. Hence, to measure ways in which the teacher librarian's contribution towards learning achievements (Lance, Schwarz, and Rodney, 2014) can consider the number of teacher librarians and library assistants are allocated; the

total budget of the library and how much per student; number information literacy teaching hours per week of the teacher librarian as individually and collaboratively; the size of the library collection and its capacity on circulation of library resources; number of computers both in the library and the school available for students to use; and average number of students and teachers for the library per week.

4.3. Engage with society of information economy

The information age is generating an unprecedented amount of digital services and resources for the younger generation, which is also pushing forward with increased advancement. This trend of change shows how good for teacher librarians in many perspectives. For example, most school libraries reported that lack of funding limits the amount of services and resources available for current information needs. In addition, the school library's concept of being a warehouse has changed to electronic archives. Therefore, teacher librarians and ICT and multimedia staff should work together to manage the library with a user-friendly automated library management system. As a result, the proliferation of electronic resources and services, including digital devices, has placed new burdens on school librarians (O'Connell, 2002). Hence, librarians also act as technicians, password managers, professional development leaders, network administrators, and technical assistants for school libraries and students (Todd, 2001). This is because the job description of teacher librarians has changed to "maintain a collection of resources relevant to the curriculum and students" and "provide resources outside the school" (AASL, 2010). It also "connects schools and the global learning community." Also, one of the primary responsibilities of a librarian is to "provide 24/7 access to library services."

4.4. Acquaint with International guidelines and standards

The development of school libraries can be facilitated by the American Library Association, which is one of the most significant guidelines. This provided some guidance to school libraries on how to respond and change goals to help students from a broader perspective. Therefore, the AASL National

School Library Standards encourage teacher librarians to engage with the global community as part of an integrated learning community (ALA, 2018). It is therefore recommended that schools and libraries develop a vision to connect students with learning resources around the world to support and design long-term learning programs, including digital literacy (November 2013), as an integral part of the curriculum, not as a "subject".

4.5. Introduce "learning Commons" to school libraries

Digital inclusive learning and teaching environment the "Learning Commons" is a welcoming platform among schools around the world. The model is one of the tools that enhance open access to information. Hence, (Holland, 2015) mentions that it is connecting learners and constructing knowledge therefore it creates a physical space for learning and teaching in cyberspace. As a result, some recommended best practices seem unusual. Hence, teacher librarians can facilitate collaborative teaching and learning works and project-based learning through the learning commons

4.6. Implementing of Information Literacy Instructions

It is highly recommended that implementing information literacy instructions not only for students but also for teachers is important. School library patrons may then see the value in library resources including electronic resources, reading of books, and their teacher librarians. In addition, the question is whether school administrators know the value of the roles and responsibilities performed by the teacher librarian and whether their contribution to students' learning achievements is still evaluated or not. Therefore, information literacy instructions may be one solution to increase patrons' visits to the school library.

3. Conclusion

The research focused on the role and weight of teacher librarians in addressing the digital world and proposed changes to narrow the gap between school libraries and teacher libraries. In a digitally inclusive society, most

students have a smartphone with 24x7 Wi-Fi or Internet access. This positive environment allows faculty libraries to improve students' digital skills and increase access to library resources and services.

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