

## Status of School Library Development in Nepal

Ms. Sharada Siwakoti

Chairperson

The Nepalese Association of School Librarians (NASL)

c/o Kshitiz Secondary English Boarding School (KSEBS)

Hadigaon- 5, Kathmandu

Nepal

Tele. 00977-1-4437457

E-mail: naslkshitiz@yahoo.com

### 1. Introduction

The school education system of Nepal consists of Pre-Primary, Primary (Grades 1-5), Lower Secondary (Grades 6-8), Secondary (Grades 9-10), and Higher Secondary Education (10+2). There are basically three types of schools on the basis of management: (i) Public schools, (ii) Community-based schools and (iii) Private schools. Actually, higher secondary schools are totally managed by the private sector alone. The total number of schools in different grades and sectors are as follows.

Table 1 - total number of schools in different grades and sectors

<i>Type</i>	<i>Pre-Primary</i>	<i>Primary (1-5)</i>	<i>Lower Secondary (6-8)</i>	<i>Secondary (9-10)</i>	<i>Grand total (1-10)</i>	<i>Higher secondary</i>
<i>Public Sector</i>	439	16209	2713	3159	26435	911
<i>Community Sector</i>	111	1447	355	232		
<i>Private Sector</i>	955	1223	308	789		
<i>Total</i>	1505	18879	3376	4180		

The approximate ratio of pupils and teachers in a classroom differs in public, community and private schools of urban and rural communities. Schools in the urban areas have more fluctuation in the ratio, ranging from 20 to 45 in private schools and 80 to 100 pupils in public schools. The aggregate ratio of teachers and pupils in a classroom are presented in the following table.

<i>Pre-Primary</i>	<i>Primary</i>	<i>Lower Secondary</i>	<i>Secondary</i>	<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>Higher Secondary</i>
25	35.7	40.4	21.4	34.4	19

There is no provision of central library in schools as per the government policies. NASL administered questionnaires to two hundred different schools in Kathmandu

valley out of a total of 3464 schools to find out the overall situation of libraries in the year 2002. About 163 schools responded, of which, 98 schools were found to be running libraries, but not as per the standards of library management. The important findings of the research are as follows.

1.1.1. Location of library:

Schools		Location of library
No.	Percent age	
59	(60%)	Part of a room
27	(27.5%)	Small room
12	(12.5%)	Well-established libraries.

1.3.2. Library Seating Facility: Out of 163 responded school libraries only 84 schools (51.5%) have seating facility, Whereas 79 schools (48.5%) have no seats.

1.2. *Proportion of schools that have a person assigned to manage the library :*

Though there is a shortage of qualified personnel, almost all schools have a person assigned to manage the library, mostly a teacher cum librarian.

1.3. *Training for the individuals who work in the school libraries*

Only 18 schools (11%) were found to have trained librarians and the rest of the librarians were untrained. 32 schools (19.6%) had a library committee while other schools had no such committee.

1.4. *Average number of books in the library*

Most libraries have collected textbooks, magazines, and reference books (147 schools i.e. 90% were found to be in this condition). 16 schools (10%) had facilities such as audio-tapes, video cassettes and CD-ROM. The highest collection of books was 3,046 numbers, whereas the minimum was 67. Private schools are better equipped than other schools.

1.5. *Language or medium of instruction in the schools*

90% of the government and community schools use Nepali language while 90% of private schools use English language as the medium of instruction. However, regional languages like Maithali and Newari are also used for students' convenience.

1.6. *Activities frequently undertaken in schools*

The students generally use the libraries in a class-wise, close-access system. 18 schools (11%) had catalogued the books and issued library cards. 33 schools (20%) were listing in the register while issuing the books. Some activities like book display and information projects were undertaken to develop the students' reading habits. Few schools had creative activities such as story writing, project work, drawing and painting, educational toys and other non-book materials. In this regard, NASL's pilot project on the establishment of model school library in Kathmandu valley has been an important milestone.

1.7. *Some special events and activities*

Various schools, influenced by NASL's activities, conducted an interaction program about *the role of libraries* among parents and community people. NASL's member schools also organized elocution programs on the *importance of school libraries* in their respective schools.

#### *Centralized services*

There are some schools that have trained staffs who perform centralized services such as registration, classification, cataloguing, reference services, lending etc as the centralized services of a school library

#### *Support services*

The government provides in service teachers training in every year. There is no library budget in the govt. schools but nominal fees are charged in private schools to be used for library development, which differ from school to school, ranging between Rs. 25 to Rs. 200 being charged annually. There have been no support services from the district, regional or national offices till date. The govt. is just awakening to this problem in the 10<sup>th</sup> national plan. The government declared Rs.1000 would be issued to each and every school to develop book corner only in grade one.

#### *Common methods of student assessment*

In school education system the evaluation methods are consist and we still follow teacher-centered and test-based evaluation. The 8<sup>th</sup> Grade students' final exams are conducted by DEO in basis. SLC exams are conducted on a nation-wide basis, for which the Controller of Examinations, HMG is responsible. The Higher Secondary Board conducts the +2 level examinations annually. The schools are themselves empowered to conduct mid-term, periodic and the final exams according to rules of Ministry of Education in other level.

## **2. Administration and coordination system of school libraries**

The Ministry of Education is the policy formulating body for the education system in Nepal. Under its guidance, the Department of Education is the major stakeholder of school education. There are five regional education offices in five different regions and 75 district educational offices all over the country. In all the 75 districts, there are many resource centers depending on the number of schools. In each resource center, resource persons are appointed and their main responsibility is to observe the schools and conduct teachers' training. Under the Ministry of Education, there are two major libraries: Keshar Library and Nepal National Library, which are however working as public libraries and are not concerned about school libraries as yet. Realising the importance of school library, the govt. of Nepal emphasized the topic in 8, 9 and 10<sup>th</sup> Five year plan. But until now, there is no clear-cut policy about it. The Tenth plan, as it is just running, has emphasized "to encourage establishing and managing libraries in each and every educational institution". The govt. hasn't yet introduced complete rules and regulations about school libraries.

Emerging from theoretical existence and uselessness and library services the concept of using libraries is now gradually coming into practice. The government of Nepal seems to have understood by now the importance of functioning of libraries, which is apparent in the policy being formulated under the 10<sup>th</sup> national plan.

### 3. Special Projects

As mentioned earlier the govt. of Nepal in connection with the library program only in its infant stage, because it has just included policy formulation in its 10<sup>th</sup> plan. The NASL, since its establishment has conducted many activities such as Seminars on *the importance of school libraries*, on *the situation of community based school libraries in Nepal* and on *the development of children's literatures*, and NASL also conducted teachers' training based on pedagogic exercise.

The most important task done by NASL is the establishment of model school library as a pilot project in Kathmandu valley in 2003. This project was funded by Education Sector Advisory Team/ DANIDA and monitored by HMG, Nepal. The duration of the project was of one year, and was divided into two parts. The first part was training on the topic *Library Administration and Management*, lasting for 35 days and a pedagogical training for 4 days. The second part of the project was the establishment of model library. After the completion of training, the trainees were went back to their respective schools and NASL supplied books and furniture to them, trained the teachers to be librarians, who are successfully running the libraries from the knowledge they gained through the training. Members of the Department of Education (DOE) monitored this project. Thus, NASL achieved great success in this project and received letter of appreciation from the DOE, HMG of Nepal.

#### 3.2. Ongoing activities

While the govt. of Nepal hasn't initiated any activities regarding school libraries till date, NASL has the following ongoing activities:-

- 3.2.1. Library service for local community children
- 3.2.2. Distribution of boxes of books to the member schools on loan.
- 3.2.3. Library awareness program.
- 3.2.4. Idea sharing program among the members about school libraries.
- 3.2.5. Short term library and pedagogic training.
- 3.2.6. Competitions on the different extra-curricular activities within the member schools.

#### 3.3. Future plans

The future plans of the organization are as follows:-

- 3.3.1. Research activities in related field.
- 3.3.2. Enlargement of the pilot project.
- 3.3.3. Conduct training on school library management and administration as well as pedagogic training.
- 3.3.4. Developing school library as an information center.
- 3.3.5. To facilitate idea exchange program among students and teachers.
- 3.3.6. Publication of books on children's literature.
- 3.3.7. Networking to the like-minded organizations and run partnership Programs in the government as well as other NGOs and INGOs.
- 3.3.8. Developing a Pedagogic center in the district.
- 3.3.9. Seminar on the special issues and problems in the related topics.

Thus, NASL has stepped forward and is determined to fulfill the requirements in this sector even as the government is just awakening to this crisis.

#### 4. Problems and issues of school libraries

Following are the problems and issues related to school libraries in Nepal:-

- 4.1. *Lack of management*: There is no government agency to control, monitor and evaluate the school library activities.
- 4.2. *Lack of awareness programs*: There is a general lack of awareness about the importance of school libraries among the parents, students, teachers as well as the concerned authorities.
- 4.3. *Budgetary constraints*: The limited budget issued to the schools by the government is insufficient. Even a minimum regular budget is not allocated for each school to cover library expenses and remuneration of the teacher cum librarian. Due to budgetary constraints, there is a lack of infrastructure, insufficiency of qualified staff in many schools and an inability to recruit a professional librarian.
- 4.4. *Inadequate space*: While most schools are lacking infrastructure, their inability to provide enough space for a library is quite understandable. Even the existing libraries need to be developed under a proper library arrangement system.
- 4.5. *Inadequate library materials*: While many schools do not have libraries, those which have libraries their collection are outdated or not of children's level or interest. Poor collection of children's literature and reference books are a major problem.
- 4.6. *Lack of trained and skilled manpower*: The few libraries that exist are in a poor condition due to lack of proper management, which is a result of the absence of proper pedagogic and library administration training.
- 4.7. *Lack of appropriate govt. policy*: There is an absence of appropriate policy in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of library programs in schools in the country. While minimum provision for libraries is a grave necessity, it is found to be in contrary in Nepal.
- 4.8. *Lack of information literacy*: In Nepal, we are still unaware of the great changes that are taking place in the field of information technology. If it is included in the school curriculum through libraries, it is possible that the Nepalese students can be informed and educated about this. People are still unaware of the major issue which is involved in the use of libraries and literacy of information in this era of Information Exchange and Technological Advancement.

#### Conclusion

TU Central library and information center has already established information literacy as a taught subject in their degree level. Similarly, if we include this subject from the school level, it will be more useful. So schools must give attention to develop rich resource center with electronic devices in order to enhance the potentialities. Even the students who are not affordable to continue after SLC can do their job effectively and efficiently in any field and those who can continue, can compete in the international level as it helps in retrieving the relevant development information to solve the problem at hand.

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