

Exploiting 'library-periods' in schools to implement information literacy programmes

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Abstract

In the abundance of information at present era, the concept of information literacy became inevitable, thus, is needed to be taught at all levels of education. Its importance had been recognized and pondered upon in Sri Lanka as late as 2004, when National Institute of Library and Information Science (NILIS) organized an international workshop on information literacy, with the participation of foreign resource persons and delegates. In consequence to that, an information literacy model called Empowering8 (E8) was devised and implemented. This model was accepted by the Ministry of Education in 2005, and executed at school level. Since then, the Ministry of Education and NILIS are jointly conducting the workshops in every district for school teachers, teacher librarians, principals, and administrators of education. Nevertheless, IL has not been practised extensively in many schools across the island. There are considerable number of obstacles for schools for not practising the IL at schools, which are: i) the importance of IL in the school education has yet not been realized by many educational administrators, school teachers and principals; ii) there is no room for IL in school curricula; iii) teachers are not aware of the concept of IL; iv) little or no library facilities at many school; v) no IL curriculum has been developed for school education; and vi) resource-based learning (RBL) is nearly absent due to the dominance of teacher- centred and/or examination-oriented learning at schools. Despite, almost all the school time-schedules consist of a library period, which is an opportunity. It has been observed that one to three periods per week have been allocated for using the school library, where a teacher has been assigned as in-charge for library period. Although the library periods are expected to improve the reading habit of school students, in reality it

does not serve the intended purpose as library periods are 'free' or replaced by teaching other subjects. Therefore, taking as an opportunity, library periods should be exploited to introduce standalone IL programme to school students. In this regard, university librarians have potentiality to extend their expertise as outreach services to introduce and train teachers and students in information literacy. As an example, Eastern University, Sri Lanka has started conducting workshops and seminars to teachers who are in-charge of library periods and school Principals to implement IL at any possible level. These series of seminars and workshops encompass as to how teachers and students could be trained in IL related knowledge, skills, attitudes and interpersonal skills, based on Empowering8 Model. During the discussion slots, resource persons, probably university librarians and participants analyse the challenges and bring about proposals and recommendations.

Keywords: *Library Period, Information Literacy, Empowering8, Teacher Librarians, School Libraries, University Librarians*