

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The library user education programmes and school libraries are important in inculcating information searching skills among students. The schools and school libraries should teach students how to obtain accurate information, as well as know which and what information is important. User education programmes in school have evolved from being primarily aimed at showing pupils how to use the library, to infusing information skills in all aspects of the school's curriculum. Information skills education is no longer seen as merely the province of the librarian, but as part of the total education process in the school, involving both teachers and resources. There has been growing realization that the skills involved in user education are information skills, which are important to pupils in schools as well as those who go on to higher education or to deal with their information needs in their adult lives.

1.2. User Education

Knapp (1964) noted that the aim of the library programme is "to stimulate and guide students in developing sophisticated understanding of the library and increasing competence in its use. To achieve this end, it provides students with experiences, which are functionally related to their coursework and planning such experiences will involve library instructional co-ordination on an unprecedented scale". Knapp further explained that through such a programme, "the student could achieve library competence if his

experiences with the library were both extensive and functionally related to his course content". Knapp also described it as "an experiment in co-ordination between teaching and library staff changing student use of library resources, implying competence in the use of books and other library resources".

The traditional approach to user education has focused on locational skills, which involved searching for materials or information. Traditionally, it is a bibliographic instruction or library orientation. The current approach hopes to integrate and link locational skills to the skills required to use the information once it has been found. Both types of skills should not be taught or learned in isolation from each other. In this case, resources, teaching methods and information skills are significant for the user education programme.

In supporting user education, Viswanath (1962) stated that the instruction involves the "training of pupils to find books they need quickly and easily. This includes both formal training in reference work and the incidental training in the use of books, which arises naturally out of children's enquiries. Training of pupils to understand, select, record and present information obtained from books" The user education and educational activities are interrelated with the school curriculum. Therefore, user education should be related to the teaching- learning process.

Krik (1971) proposed that "to be effective, instruction in the use of the library needs to be an integral and fundamental part of the course work". This means that the user must gain

knowledge about information skills and other relevant skills from the teaching learning process in schools.

Williamson (1971) presented the same view and described user education as “library instruction with formal courses and independent studies”. The information skills must be given to users through formal education and independent study is a necessary component of the programme.

Marland (1981) noted that “Individuals today have an increasing need to be able to find things out. Never before has so much information been available to so many, and never before have our lives depended so much on our ability to handle information successfully. We need to be able to search out what we require, to assess critically the ideas and facts offered to us, and to make use of our findings, learning to learn which begins at school, continues in our adult lives- in our work, in our leisure activities, and in any further education”. The information sources available today are increasing, especially, those available through the electronic media. An individual who does not have the necessary training and education in information skills, will not be able to select accurate and correct information efficiently.

1.3. Importance of User Education in School Libraries

Students must acquire information skills and use the skill in their daily lives. Student should get the knowledge through their studies or through formal education. The user

education programme would help students search for accurate information needed, and ultimately promote an information literate society.

Kulthan (1993) noted that “users do not clearly understand the task of forming a focused perspective from the information encountered in the early stages of the search process. Users need guidance and counseling in the task most appropriate for moving on to the next stage. A role for information professionals in the search process is indicated beyond that of locating sources. A new kind of intervention that meets the process needs of information users is indicated”.

The user education programme in a school library helps the student in various ways. The students could improve their ability in using the library effectively. It is an essential part of education for life process. The user education process can prepare the students for continuing self-education for their future.

The user education programme could also help the students in their studies as well. The student will know how to find information from the various information sources and use new information for future tasks. This is specially so in the electronic environments. The Internet provides us with huge amount of information and the students need to be able to select relevant information to solve their problems. Effectively, good user education programme would give students such skills.

In the guidelines for school libraries, Kinnell (1992) proposed that schools “plan the delivery of the learning skills curriculum within a whole school learning skills policy as part of a sequential programme, practiced, reinforced and extended in all areas of the curriculum. Learning skills development involved the chartered librarian... working in collaboration with teaching colleagues to provide cross-curricular opportunities in all aspects and stages of the learning process”. The stress is on integrating user education within the schools curriculum.

In order to survive in the information age one must develop a comprehensive and well thought out strategy for dealing with information overload. To succeed in the information age, one must have access to information and learn how to convert raw data into knowledge, to communicate it effectively to others, and to use it to meet one’s personal objectives. Knowledge influences a person to develop his career. The school and school library can help individuals develop such skills through its user education programme.

The aims of the user education programme as defined by Lubans (1974) are:

- a) To contribute to the realization of the aims of the organization, with regard to teaching and learning, by the acquisition of printed and non-print material necessary to cover present day and future information need;
- b) To register and store the materials acquired in such a way that it not only permits, but also actively stimulates the use of this materials;
- c) To adapt these information resources and services to the changing needs of the schools and society; and

- d) To contribute to the integration of both national and international information resources within the education system.

In summary, in order to develop an effective user education programme, the school library has to have good mission and vision.

1.4. School Libraries

The school library is an important contributor to educational excellence. It is a resource centre where students go to obtain reading materials housed centrally for their convenience, for study as well as for recreational reading. It is an integral component of the school educational programme, has a role in contributing to the school curriculum and is the dynamic force that promotes the intellectual growth of the individual.

The School Library Media Manual (1964) described a good school library, as “well organized and stocked with a reasonable range of carefully selected books and other reading materials and can make a distinctive contribution to education. It can then serve as the nucleus for teaching and an active service centre for the purpose of providing teachers and pupils with a variety of well organized printed and audio-visual materials to supplement the text books used in school”.

Willson (1965) indicated that students demonstrated superior grades on the Iowa test of basic skills in elementary schools, which has a centralized library and a professional librarian. Yarling (1968) found that the addition of a well-equipped and managed centralized library had a significant impact on the performance of elementary school students in library related skills, particularly outlining and note taking.

The school library has special functions that distinguish it from other library and educational experiences. It is a place for quiet learning and enjoyment, where students and teachers can become expert in using materials. Although the school library should work hand in hand with the classroom and complement the public library, it should not have the appearance or environment of the classroom nor should it be the a carbon copy of the public library. It is not a substitute for either one. The school library can facilitate students' learning processes.

Today, information technology is rapidly changing the entire world. Students must learn how to use information technologies and how to combine it with their curricular activities. The school library could help in this aspect. The curriculum of the school is changing rapidly. When the curriculum changes, it influences the teaching-learning process. The teaching methods, materials for teaching and learning as well as environment of the classrooms must be changed accordingly. The school library has a role as an agent of change. The school library could work together with the school authorities to develop an effective user education programme.

1.5. Aims of the School Libraries

The Report of the Secondary Education Commission, (India, 1953), Government of India described the aims of the school library as:

- a) The training of character to enable students to participate creatively as citizens in the emerging democratic social order;

- b) The improvement of their practical and vocational efficiency so that they may play their part in building up the economic prosperity of their country; and
- c) The development of their literary, artistic and cultural interests, which is necessary for self-expression and for the full development of the human personality.

Therefore, the school library must support these objectives and plan for the development of student's library skills.

The Children's Defense Fund (2000) outlined their objectives of school libraries as;

- a) To promote literature and reading among school children from the schools and improve students reading skills.
- b) To provide information that supports the curriculum. The school libraries must provide related resources for the education activities. The student can complete their curricular activities supported by the school libraries;
- c) To teach pupils how to find, process, and use information. The school libraries must implement instructional sessions for students; and
- d) To provide information students will need as they grow into adulthood.

1.6. The Role of Teacher Librarians in User Education

The Teacher librarian plays an important role in the implementation of user education programme in schools. New technologies bring many opportunities and challenges to school libraries. For that, schools administrators, teachers, and teacher librarians should think about how to create an environment that can give organizational knowledge to

students across the curriculum. At the same time, schools should teach their students how to find out extra information for the expansion of knowledge. For that, user education methods and programmes are very important.

The Australian School Library Association (1993) remarked that the “resource and information services provided by school libraries are essential to the achievement of student learning outcomes. Through resource based programmes students develop the skills necessary for gaining intellectual access to information, acquire knowledge and understanding and use resources for personal growth and fulfillment... the knowledge, understanding and necessary skills for learning are introduced developmentally and incrementally. In developing these abilities, teachers and teacher librarians work cooperatively to combine knowledge of the curriculum, knowledge of individual students’ needs and competencies and knowledge of information sources, resources as well as technologies. The teacher librarians must be able to work with teachers to instill information literacy skills and promote life long learning in student.”

Kreiser and Horton (1992) pointed to the changing roles of the school librarians from caretakers of the book collections to information providers, consultants, curriculum activists, instructional designers, instructional leaders, production specialist and most important teachers. The use of resource based learning materials such as the Internet and CD-ROMS have increased the learning achievement of the student. Mendrinos (1994) stressed on the teacher’s role in resource-based learning environments. Resource based learning is adaptable to the individuals, groups, or cooperative learning situation.

Resources-based learning integrates both cognitive and physical tools of information literacy within the curriculum. Teacher librarians are the agent who integrates resource-based learning techniques and the development of the information skills of students. When students select and evaluate information, teacher librarians could help them in the following ways:

- a. Contribute to the development of strong critical sense and creative thinking in every student;
- b. Develop an understanding of how knowledge is created, evaluated, refined and changed within subject areas;
- c. Promote both intuitive, imaginative thought and the ability to evaluate ideas, processes, experiences and objects in meaningful contexts; and
- d. Enable students to think for themselves, to recognize the limits of individual reflection and the need to contribute to and build upon mutual understanding.

Baule (1999) pointed out that the teacher librarian is someone who is proficient with the wide range of information technologies available today, and are able to work with teachers to instill information literacy skills in their students. Teacher librarians help to guide the students, are involved with all grades and in all subjects as well as curriculum development. They become coordinators of activities, events and curriculum because they can make connections between grades and subject areas and are working with teachers. This teaching process is largely involved with user education.

1.7. Methods of User Education

The school library and the school librarian have an important role in promoting user education programme both indirectly and directly. The principal and academic staff should identify the characteristics of the user education method to be adopted. Today, world wide, there are so many methods of user education practiced in schools, universities and other educational institutions. Mostly all programmes provide for good interaction among the teaching staff, principal and library staff to create better user education programmes in schools. User education methods and learning teaching process is always integrated with the students' activities. Hills (1974) described four main factors that affect learning in a practical situation. It includes motivation, activity, understanding and feedback. These factors can be considered in relation to the programme of library education. Hill discussed three types of instructional methods which is given in Table

1.1.

Table 1.1: User Education Methods Proposed by Hills

Type of Instructions	Methods of the Teaching
Individual instructions	Individual help Self-instructional material (tours, sings) etc Programmed instruction Practical exercises Book, printed guide etc (micro media)
Group and individual instructions	Audio tape Audio tape/illustration Tape/slide Video tape Film
Group instruction	Guided tour Seminar/tutorial/demonstration Lecture

The methods of user education adopted by most schools mainly focus on individual and group work. Basically, the school curriculum is inter-related with the user education programmes. The various individual and group teaching methods used were discussed in *The Report of the Secondary Education Commission in India* (1953). The report described group teaching and individual methods as desirable, as it helped to expand the range of students' interests. The report urged all schools to provide in the time table at least one free period every day in which students may pursue their favourite hobbies and creative activities individually or in groups, preferably under the guidance of teachers. It

stressed that the success of this proposal would largely depend on the requisite accommodation and equipment being available for the purpose.

Sayer (1981) reported that individual instructions could give rise to the following situations

- a. A situation when students requested for particular items and the librarian checked to see if he/she knew how to use it; thus earlier instruction was reinforced and expanded;
- b. When student appeared to need it, this could be quite easily observed, or, students would indicate such need to the librarian;
- c. To a number of individual students who came to the library, library instruction on an affixed time on a weekly basis is provided. Such instruction was always arranged with the teachers concerned. The librarian should provide these students with individual or group instructions.

The school librarian has to fit in their user education programmes with the existing school framework and curriculum after consulting with teaching colleagues. It is equivalent to, allocating an extra teaching period to one subject as classes were conducted in the library followed by resource based learning programmes.

International Federation of Library Association (1996) described various methods of user education, which include:

- Book talks;
- Story telling;

- Discussion groups and clubs;
- Information programme on special topics;
- Celebrity visits;
- Performances;
- Cooperative programming with community institutions and groups;
- Productions of drama, publications, television, radio, and magazines; and
- Workshops.

Shapiro and Hughes (1996) described seven dimensions of information literacy. These are; tool literacy, resource literacy, social structural literacy, research literacy, publishing literacy, emerging technology literacy, and critical literacy. The model for information skills prepared by Marland (1981) noted the following learning questions.

- What do I need to do?
- Where could I go?
- How do I get to the information?
- Which resources shall I use?
- How shall I use the resources?
- What should I make a record of?
- Have I got the information I need?
- How shall I present it?
- What have I achieved?

This model of information skills can be used for user education programme in schools.

1.8. Statement of the Problem

The school library has the responsibility for inculcating information skills among students through its user education programme. Student would be trained to locate and use information through the user education programme. There is no formal user education policy that schools and school libraries in Sri Lanka are required to follow currently.

The resources needed by Sri Lankan school libraries to develop the user education programme are still unidentified. To develop an effective programme the cooperation of teachers and parents are necessary. In Sri Lanka, the students cannot identify their information needs. The school should firstly identify the problems of implementing users education programmes within the school. This would be followed by proper organization, planning, direction, evaluation and cooperation among the principals, teachers, teacher librarians, parents and students. Currently, there are no proper plans between the school authorities and the education authority on user education. As such, user education programmes can be introduced immediately in schools through the teaching-learning process in Sri Lanka.

1.9. Importance of the Study

The user education programme in school libraries involves the professional staff in the education sector, the parents, principals, teachers, school librarians, students, educationists and policy makers. This study will help those involved in such programmes to comprehend the basic need for user education. Information sources are rapidly developing worldwide and yet many people do not know how to search for information,

and collect relevant information from various information sources. It is essential therefore, that information skills are incorporated within user education programmes. This study help to identify innovative user education programmes needed for an educational institutions in order to upgrade student's information skills. Developing countries and underdeveloped countries are still not actively involved in designing the best user education programme for students. This study is important for the future of school libraries, which need to create effective user education programmes. The results from this study might be helpful for policy makers in the education sector.

In the Sri Lankan school system, there is no formal user education policy being formulated. However, the educational authority of Sri Lanka is trying to introduce the user education programme in schools via the curriculum. This study will help to identify possible programme, which can be applied within the Sri Lankan context.

1.10. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

- a. To study the current state of user education programme in schools in Sri Lanka
- b. To identify the current problems faced when implementing user education in schools in Sri Lanka.
- c. To identify the students' needs of user education programme in schools in Sri Lanka.
- d. To make recommendations for a relevant user education programme for schools in Sri Lanka.

1.11. Research Questions

The following research questions are used to develop this study.

- a) What are the current types of user education programmes used in Sri Lanka?
- b) What are the user education methods used in schools?
- c) What are the competencies that principals, teachers, teacher librarians feel they should implement in user education programmes?
- d) What are the current problems faced in implementing user education programmes in schools in Sri Lanka?
- e) What are the levels of information literacy skills among students in schools in Sri Lanka?
- f) What are the types of improvements teacher librarian would like to see in user education programmes?

1.12. Limitations

This study is based on user education programmes used in schools in Sri Lanka. As such the research findings only applies to schools in Sri Lanka. The second limitation is that the research sample population is limited to fifty schools in Sri Lanka. The findings of the research only apply to these schools in Sri Lanka.

1.13. Definitions of the Terms

a) Information skills

Information skills refer to the skills needed to make efficient and effective use of information. It is worth looking at some characteristics of the way information skills are currently approached. Information skills are: frequently regarded, and taught, in a fragmented way as reading, comprehension, note making, library and study skills, frequently taught as standalone programmes.

b) User education

User education in libraries is the instructions that focus on the ability to find information is essential for successfully. The staff of the schools will show students how to plan search strategy, how to use library resources, reference sources and collections to find information. Schools must be designed to teach students the skills of finding information in the libraries.

c) Library programmes

The school library programme promotes the development of skills and attitudes that prepare students to be life-long learners in an information-rich society. To prepare students, the library programme provides an open setting that encourages enthusiasm and success in learning. Students are provided with access to resources that stimulate intellectual growth and the development of critical thinking skills. To promote library skills among students various programmes are organized. The programmes that aim to promote students' information skills can be defined as library programmes

1.14. Summary

This chapter serves as an introduction to the study. It provides an overview of the user education programmes provided by school libraries. The importance of the user education programme in school libraries, the responsibilities of school librarians and teachers for the development of user education programme are discussed. The chapter also presents the problems and importance of the study, the objective of the study, the research questions and limitations of the study.