CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a summary of the study is first presented and the findings are then discussed based on the research questions listed in chapter 1.The chapter concludes with recommendation and suggestions for future studies. The study is undertaken to examine the user education programmes in school libraries, in Sri Lanka. The analyses of the study are based on responses from 40 principals, 40 teacher, 40 teacher librarians and 80 students from selected schools in Colombo, Gampaha and Kalutara districts in the Western province in Sri Lanka. The questionnaire is the instrument used to collect data.

5.2 Summary of the Findings and Discussion

5.2.1 What are the current types of user education programmes used in Sri Lanka?

The results indicate that the majority of the respondents feel that only basic user education programmes are provided in the schools in Sri Lanka. The reading guidance programmes and curriculum integrated user education programmes are generally the programmes provided to the students. However, the use of the catalogue, locating library resources, use of library resources, project based user education programmes, and the use of mass media in information skills programmes are minimally provided. Yapa (1998) outlined the information skills programmes that should be introduced to the school curriculum. This study indicates that, the least used programmes are providing computer

and new technology based user education programmes. This type of programmes is considered very important by 90% of the respondents.

5.2.2 What are the user education methods used in schools?

The results indicate that the Sri Lankan respondents use traditional methods when conducting user education programmes. The traditional methods are group instruction, individual instruction using self-instructional material and programmed instructions, individual instruction using practical exercises, group instruction using guided tours and team teaching, demonstrations as well as lectures. International Federation of Library Association (1996) and Marland (1981) described the various methods of user education models of information skills. The ideal user education programme should include resource, social, research, publishing, and critical analysis literacy.

5.2.3 What are the competencies that principals, teachers, teacher librarians feel they should implement in user education programmes?

About 50% of principals, teachers and teacher librarians' who are respondents in this study are either graduates or have master's degree but none have any kind of library qualifications. It is expected that the qualified library personal could develop user education programmes effectively in schools. Yapa (1988) highlighted that training on information skills and planning user education programmes should be provided to all trainee teachers. Therefore, professionally qualified personnel should be appointed as

teacher librarians so that user information skills programmes can be successfully implemented.

Deusen (1993) also pointed out that teacher librarian or other persons involved in providing user education programmes should have the appropriate competencies to conduct such programmes in order to give the necessary information skills to the students. The current study indicates that all respondents are aware of the basic competencies required in user education programmes. These competencies include the ability to assist students in the traditional and electronic methods of identifying and assessing information in the school library as well as the ability to instruct students in locating information. The principals, teacher librarians, and teachers should be able to integrate teaching with information skills students, able to design appropriate information skills programmes, instruct students in locating information and able to identify problems arising from information skills programmes. The Association for Teacher-Librarianship in Canada (1998) listed these professional competencies, thought necessary for the teacher librarian, but was given low priority by the respondents. These include:

d) Providing opportunities to introduce, use and produce new technology to students;

e) Incorporating information skills within classroom curriculum; and

f) Using appropriate teaching methods when giving information skills to students.

5.2.4 What are the current problems faced in implementing user education programmes in schools in Sri Lanka?

The results indicate that the most problematic situations in Sri Lankan schools are inadequate school library equipment, insufficient library materials, inadequate time to conduct the information skills programmes, no planning for the user education programmes, and insufficient financial assistance to support the user information skills programmes. Information power (1998) indicated similar barriers to the implementation of the school information skills programmes such as, lack of time, poor planning, lack of adequate funding, lack of interest and support from classroom teachers and lack of clerical staff to assist in the implementation of such programmes.

5.2.5 What are the levels of information literacy skills among students in schools in Sri Lanka?

The results indicate that the students strongly agree that their library resources are relevant to their educational needs and their subject teachers and teacher librarian do encourage them to use the library. However, most feel that the library facilities, materials, and arrangement of the library are not adequate to improve their information skills. The library facilities, materials, and arrangements are interrelating with the implementation problems. This situation is also indicated by Adeoti (1997) who pointed out that the lack of resources might influence library user education programmes. This may be the reason why user education programmes are poorly implemented by most schools in Sri Lanka.

According to the results, the students in Sri Lanka are keen to obtain their information skills from group discussions, workshops, formal information skills and practical programmes (production drama, publication, television and radio programmes and create magazine), book talks, story telling, and guides from resources persons, as well as school teacher librarian and teachers. The respondents indicate that they are trained in the use of least multimedia tools, drama production, publication, television, radio and magazines.

Information is widely available worldwide and changing everyday. Many people use electronic media to retrieve the information in the modern world. Therefore, the use of such electronic media should be introduced in the schools to expose students to the vast amount of information available. The results indicate that the use of computers is very low in the schools in Sri Lanka. The main problems of using electronic media are inadequate computer availability and, no Internet, and CD-ROM facilities. The school libraries do not provide students with skills on how to search the Internet and CD-ROMs. As such, Sri Lankan students are not technologically literate. Saskatchewan education indicators (1992) indicate that giving technological literacy to students can improve their appreciation of the value and limitation of technology. Heaviside's (1994) study indicate that school library often does not include adequate computer training in their programme generally, the information skills programmes in Sri Lanka are organized by individual schools and the scope of the programmes differ from school to school. The quality of the programmes is dependant on the principals, teachers, and teacher librarian. About 90% of the respondents of the current study agree that information skills programmes, which are standardized, should be promoted at all schools.

5.2.6 What are the types of improvements teacher librarian would like to see in user education programmes?

More than 90% of respondents feel that technology literacy programmes should be incorporated in user education programmes for both students and teachers. As such, school libraries should be equipped with the new technologies for effective implementation of user education programmes. School management would also like to see more information skills integrated with the library and teaching information programmes. They suggest that sufficient materials should be given to the school library to support an effective user education programme.

5.3 Recommendations and Conclusions

Based on the results obtained, the following recommendations are proposed for implementing user education programmes in Sri Lanka. The proposal could be useful for policy makers and educational administrators. When planning for user education programmes in Sri Lanka, the policy makers and educational administrators should consider the following factors.

i.   The level of competencies of the principals, the teachers, and the teacher librarians on user education programmes should be identified.

ii. The current user education programmes and methods should be considered when planning new educational programmes.

iii. The implementation problems and the environment of the schools must be studied to ascertain their conduciveness for the implementation of user education programmes.

iv.   The programmes selected should be comparable to those provided by other countries.

The educational authority in Sri Lanka should launch an island wide survey to identify the needs of user education programmes. The following are some recommendation for the future of user education programmes in Sri Lanka.

The principals, the teachers and teacher librarians should be trained and given awareness programmes and knowledge on user education programmes. This can be incorporated into the MLIS or information science certificated course, which principals, the teachers, and teacher librarians in the schools should be allowed and encouraged to attend. An immediate solution is to recruit qualified teacher librarians and place them in school libraries. User education programmes should also be included in the new curriculum for teacher training colleges, national college of education and national institute of education.

It is recommended that technology based information skills should be included in the school curriculum. Information skills should be included in the formal school curriculum and taught to students in collaboration between the subject teachers and the teacher librarians. The principals as managers of the schools should supervise the organization of user education programmes at the school level and provide collaboration among schools at provincial, zonal, divisional levels.

To improve the information literacy programmes for schools in Sri Lanka the education authority of Sri Lanka should also give more attention to develop the field research base,

mass media base and computer and new technology base user education programmes. In order to achieve these adequate computer facilities should be provided to the schools.

The study indicates that the principals, the teachers, and the teacher librarians still use the traditional teaching methods in user education programmes and most of the methods are used on irregular basis. The education authority of Sri Lanka should give more attention to the development of teaching skills on user education programmes through short-term training programmes. In such programmes, the school curriculum and the user education programmes should be integrated with technology based teaching methods. This would help encourage teachers to apply appropriate innovative methods when providing user education programmes.

The majority of the respondents indicate that the main barriers in implementing user education programmes are insufficient library materials, inadequate library facilities, inadequate equipments, insufficient funds and inadequate time for effective provision of user education programmes. The student respondents also indicate that the facilities and library arrangement are not sufficient for their academic activities. Therefore, the library resources, library funds and enough time should be allocated to enable the provision of better user education programmes in schools. Authority should be given to the principals to collect necessary funds with the assistance of the School Development Association, Alumni association and non-governmental organizations. Various donors can be solicited for funds with the approval of the Ministry of Education. The principal as a manager of the school should plan the timetable and give enough time for teachers to integrate user

education programmes in their teaching in order to develop students' information literacy skills.

The Ministry of Education could develop a plan to establish cluster level computer resource centers or library resource centers. These centers should be opened to all students, teachers, teacher librarians, and other staff of the educational system. The resource centers could be used to conduct short-term information technology courses to those involved in user education in schools and open on weekdays and weekend.

The success of user education programmes in schools involves various personnel such as the principals, teachers, teacher librarians, educational administrators, parents and the central government. These groups of people should understand the significance of the user education programmes in schools. The foundation for the development of a country is education. User education programmes provide students with the skills to locate retrieve and gather information. Students should be taught to use technology to obtain information. As such, appropriate facilities and resources should be given to the schools to enable an effective user education programmes. The persons involved in conducting user education programmes should understand their responsibility and accountability to users and the school community. Each teacher should try to incorporate information skills within their subject instructions.

In conclusion, further studies could be conducted on a nation wide basis and a qualitative method could be applied to obtain in-depth information. The planning and structure of the

user education programmes could be discussed with the teachers, the principals, the teacher librarians and the students. The user education programmes should also integrate technology knowledge into the curriculum.