

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine the education and training needs of the teacher librarians in Sri Lanka. The study examined four research questions:

1. What are the duties of teacher librarians in Sri Lanka?
2. What types of training programmes are currently provided for the teacher librarians in Sri Lanka?
3. Are there any drawbacks in training programmes of the teacher librarians?
4. If so, what are the suggestions to enhance the training programmes for teacher librarians in Sri Lanka?

The objectives of the study were discussed in chapter 1. The research methodology was established to achieve these objectives. The data collected was used to examine and fulfill the research objectives.

This chapter presents the overall design of the research and it identifies the research population. It also describes the profile of the sample, instruments employed and how the questionnaire was designed. Data collection procedure and techniques of data analysis are also presented. Each section is handled separately as indicated.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed a survey research method to address the research objectives and problems. Research design refers to the plan for carrying out the study (Mc Millan, 2000). The data collected is mainly concerned with the education and training needs of the teacher librarians, using questionnaire administrated to teacher librarians, school principals and administrators).

The study essentially adopted the following steps to march forward the research plan:

1. Identifying research objectives.
2. Preparing a preliminary list of research questions.
3. Analyzing selected library and education research literature from the past 20 years to make an overview of the teacher librarians' education and training more widely.
4. Searching other studies that have already been completed on the education and training of teacher librarians.
5. Developing the survey instruments (questionnaire) and selecting the data collection method.
6. Selecting the sample of schools and school Administrators working with the teacher librarians training and education.
7. Obtaining authorized letters and permission to involve selected sample schools for the data collection work.
8. Distributing the questionnaire to the sample.
9. Collecting data and sending reminders for delays.

10. Presenting and analyzing data according to the completed questionnaires collected from the sample.
11. Evaluating conclusion regarding teacher librarians training and education needs.

At this research design stage, the researcher made very attempt to address the problems to suit the requirement of the course design as well as the needs of the teacher librarians training and education in Sri Lanka. After framing the research questions and deciding upon manageable sample, researcher developed the instrument for gathering data and information relevant to the problems. The next stage was delivering the survey instrument to the sample and collecting their response.

POPULATION AND SAMPLING

This study focused on the investigation of problems in teacher librarians training and education programmes in Sri Lanka context. The population chosen for this study was the people who are directly involved with the field of school librarianship; namely the teacher librarians who were appointed to the 4000-library development project Schools island wide by the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, the principals of those schools and the administrators who were involved with the project coordination (Zonal and Provincial Directors of education – in charge of library development project in their levels).

Examining the problems of the whole cohort demands an unlimited quantity of time, labour and money. So that researcher had to choose a justifiable sample from this vast Population island wide and limited the survey to the selected sample in only

one province i.e., Sabaragamuwa, Sri Lanka. (The socialistic republic of Sri Lanka is made up of nine provinces and 25 districts.) Sample is spread over the two districts of Kegalle and Ratnapura in Sabaragamuwa province. There are 415 schools facilitated by the library development project out of the 1007 schools in the province. Sample was randomly selected.

The researcher used a list for the appointment of teacher librarians to collect the data in both Ratnapura and Kegalle districts. In each 50 schools of the sample one teacher librarian and one principal were selected to respond to the questionnaire. The eight school administrators were selected in seven zonal education offices and the department of provincial education in Sabaragamuwa province. All selected school administrators were directly involved with the Library Development Project in the province. So, a total number of 108 questionnaires were distributed among the sample.

Prior to collecting data, data collection approval was first obtained from the Faculty of Computer and Information Technology (letter was annexed), University of Malaya, Malaysia and the approval for conducting the survey in the selected schools was obtained from the Department of Provincial Education, Sabaragamuwa, Sri Lanka. The Provincial Director of Education, Sabaragamuwa informed the seven zonal Directors of Education and the 50 selected school principals, within the province to assist, complete the questionnaires and return to the researcher's address. Self addressed and stamped envelope was also attached to the questionnaire to be returned to the researcher's address. The questionnaires were also sent to the seven zonal coordinators of library development project in the same province.

PROFILES OF THE SAMPLE

Teacher librarians' profession has not been well established before in Sri Lanka. The responsibility of managing the school library is handed over to one of the member of teaching staff. The normal belief of teacher for this responsibility is that it is a simple and light job among the school duties. Most of the school members have been neglecting the librarians' profession and the library duties in Sri Lanka schools. However, it was found that most teacher librarians were newly appointed and principals and administrators also have very little experience in teacher librarians' profession in Sri Lanka.

A total of 63 questionnaires from all school education officers, 25 Principals and 30 teacher librarians were completed and returned (68.04 %) on due date. However, only 60 questionnaires were completely accepted for data analysis. The researcher visited and reminded some schools to complete the questionnaires. Reminders were also made through the telephone, for those schools within the sample that have telephone facilities. However the researcher did not submit any reminder to those schools that do not have telecommunication lines and are not within reach due to geographical barriers.

Approximately 41.7% questionnaires were not returned. Only 55.6% complete questionnaires were used for the study. Another 2.7 % of incomplete questionnaires were also rejected from the data-analyzing task.

As earlier stated that sample consisted of three groups of respondents within the 50 schools in urban rural areas and eight education officers in the Sabaragamuwa province. These fifty schools represented of 50 principals and 50 teacher librarians. Questionnaires were distributed among these 108 respondents. Only 55.6% complete questionnaires were used for the study from 25 teacher librarians, 27 principals, and 08 education officers.

To ascertain the respondents' working experiences in the sample, they were asked to indicate years of working experiences in part A of the questionnaire. According to the current situation in Sri Lanka, very recently only teachers are appointed as teacher librarians to develop school libraries.

The response revealed that, nearly 88 % of teacher librarians are under 20 year's experiences. Only 3 of them reported having more than 20 years working experience. The majority of the principals reported having between 11 to 30 years experiences and the education officers are also in the same range. The highest percentage of the respondents was in 11- 20 years experiences range (41.7%).

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The study made use of a seven-page questionnaire as the data collection techniques. The time and resources available to the researcher did not permit visits to all schools to conduct interview or adopt other 'face to face' techniques. Therefore questionnaire was prepared for data collection and measures the purpose. The questionnaire was prepared in English language and then translated to the Sinhala medium for easy understanding of the respondents. The covering letter and the self-addressed stamped envelope were attached to the questionnaire before sending it to the respondents. In addition to that the second covering letter addressed principals and zonal education directors, issued by the provincial director of education were also attached.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts. To enhance reliability, structured questions were used. Part (A) of the questionnaire contained 10-structured general information questions directed towards respondents' qualification and experience. This part also includes the following variables, which provide demographic data: status, working place (according to the given type), education qualifications and other library and computer experience etc.

Part (B) of this questionnaire focused on the training and education programmes for teacher librarians. Three questions were prepared as likert-scale type questions. These questions were mainly focused on the kind of education or training programmes important for the teacher librarians and measure their opinion about the available training programmes. The researcher included some questions in the

questionnaire to indicate suitable places for the teacher librarians to get their training and education. Respondents were asked to respond to 22 statements using a five point likert-type scale varying from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The respondents were asked to indicate using (✓) mark in the given spaces. Respondents were also requested to add other ideas that they think essential for the questionnaire.

Part (C) of the questionnaire is divided into seven sections. All questions were adopted according to Likert scale rating five ranges of agreements. The areas of the variables were:

1. Collection development
2. Acquisition
3. Library management
4. Resource management
5. User education
6. Personal and skill management (Personality management)
7. Teacher librarians' leadership

The respondents were asked to respond to 31 statements in seven sections. The answers were rated in five-scale namely (1) very essential, (2) essential, (3) somewhat essential, (4) not essential, and (5) undecided. The spaces were given to the respondents to put (x) mark on the relevant number according to their opinion in scale of choices. The respondents were also requested to include their other independent ideas in the given spaces. The last question was open-ended and respondents were also asked to write their suggestions on teacher librarians' training and education in the given space.

Appendices C and D contained a copy of the survey instrument in English language and Sinhala language respectively with the letter of approval to conduct the study.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The sample of fifty schools was selected among the seven education zones in Sabaragamuwa province. The selection of samples was based on a priority list. The researcher requested the Provincial Director of Education, Sabaragamuwa to issue a permission letter for collecting data. The researcher personally asked the seven Zonal Directors of Education in Sabaragamuwa province: Ratnapura, Balangoda, Embilipitiya, and Nivithigala in Ratnapura district and Dehiovita, Kegalle, Mawanella in Kegalle district to facilitate the data collection work. The approval letter was issued to address the selected School Principals and Zonal Directors of Education.

However, the researcher had to carry out the study within a short period of few months, utilizing his own financial and other resources. Another constraint that the researcher faced was the very short time duration for collecting data. It was done in a short vacation spent in Sri Lanka as the researcher was expected to continue his research study programme (MLIS) in a foreign university i.e. University of Malaya, Malaysia.

The questionnaire was translated into Sinhala language to facilitate better understanding among the samples. The questionnaires were mailed to the samples in October 2001 and they were given a period of three weeks to complete the

questionnaire. The letter of approval from the provincial education authority was also attached to the questionnaire. Follow-up reminders were made by the telephone and personal visits to some schools. It was very difficult to follow-up, because of limited time and geographical barriers of some of those schools. Some colleagues of education office Sabaragamuwa were given the responsibility to pass reminders when they visited those schools for classroom supervision. Unfortunately, some respondents did not reply the questionnaire by the due date.

VALIDITY OF THE DATA COLLECTED

In unobtrusive analysis, researcher tends to use small samples in terms of the number of respondents tested and the number of questions asked. This is to ensure that the large sample will involve considerable costs and incur administrative difficulties in the way of various responds of the respondents. However, researcher using unobtrusive analysis need to access and demonstrate that quality of the data collected. They need to address the issue of validity and reliability in their response. Require and adherence to specific strategies employed to increase the quality of data collected prior to distribute the questionnaire.

The validity access the extent to which the main research instrument, a list of 21 reference questions, measures accurately what it purports to do. In this study, the purpose of the questionnaire is to determine or measure the clear and understanding questions and responds rate of the likert-scale, that is percentage of positive and negative perceives of respondents. Ensure validity requires a representative collection of responds items.

On the ways to ensure content validity of a research instrument is to obtain the opinion of colleagues in the field. In this respect, the original questionnaire constructed was submitted to a group of graduating Master of Library Information Science (MLIS) students, who are also practicing librarians and library project coordinators for recommendations on format, readability and level of difficulties.

In order to determine the reliability and validity of the questionnaire the researcher visited four schools in the Ratnapura district, Sabaragamuwa and distributed questionnaires to the teacher librarians as a pre-test. This was done with the approval from the school principal. During this pre-test the researcher did not face any problem. The teacher librarians also did not face any problem in answering the questionnaire.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher had taken into account the methods of presenting and analyzing the data gathered from the three groups of respondents. The data collected using the procedure described in the earlier section was reported. Appropriate statistics include frequency counts, percentage, means and standard deviations. Statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 10.0 for windows was used to analyze the data. The training and education requirements of the teacher librarians were tabulated to demonstrate which requirements were rated essential in each part of the responded questionnaire. Responses were calculated according to the rated criteria. Some of the important parts were described using graphs and cross tabulation data. The results obtained are presented in narrative and tabulate form in the following chapter.

SUMMARY

This chapter explained the method used to conduct the study. The study employed a survey research method. The aims and the research questions were described at the beginning of this chapter. The steps of the study build-up were pointed out earlier, including the instrument used for collecting data and analyzing method used for the collected data. The data used in this study were based on the responses of 25 teacher librarians, 27 school principals and 08 school administrators, which returned the complete questionnaires sent to them in beginning of October 2001. The original sample was 108 people in above three categories. Only 55.6 % complete questionnaires were used for the study. A structured questionnaire consisted of three sections was developed covering the training and education needed for the teacher librarians. Most of the questions were arranged in Likert-type scale. The data collected were analyzed and reported using SPSS Version 10.0 for windows.

The next chapter presents the data analysis for this study.