

Status of School Library Development in Sri Lanka

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1. Introduction

There are four types of schools in Sri Lanka; Government School (9790), Private Schools (68) and special schools (17), Pirivenas (Monasteries) (659) and International Schools (87). Government schools which offer free education to all including free text books and uniform material are controlled (Funding, Policy Making, Monitoring, Education, Supervision) by the government. These Government schools can be further divided in to two sub categories; National Schools which are directly controlled by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Provincial schools controlled by the eight Provincial Ministries of Education, but under the authority of policy making and monitoring of the MOE. The table below indicates the medium of instruction in our schools.

Table 1 - Schools according to the medium of instruction

Medium	No. of schools
Sinhala only	6661
Tamil only	2831
Sinhala & Tamil	45
Sinhala & English	186
Tamil & English	46
Sinhala, Tamil & English	21

Private schools, special education schools, which are for the disabled students and the Pirivenas, follow the common curriculum of the county. In addition to the other subjects, in Pirivenas special languages and religious subjects are taught.

International Schools in Sri Lanka are independent of government authorities and their medium of instruction is English. They teach to prepare students to sit the foreign examinations.

Student/teacher ratio varies according to the type of school. In government, private and special schools it is about 20-21 but in Pirivenas it is about 11. In general there are about 40 or sometimes more students in popular urban schools. Most of the rural schools are less popular and have a lower number of students due to lack of infrastructure and other facilities.

Methods of assessments

The following table provides an insight in to the common assessment methods used in Sri Lankan schools.

Table 2 - common assessment methods used in Sri Lankan schools

Stage	Grades	Assessment Method	By Whom
Primary	1-3	Competency based	Class Teacher
	3-5	Assessment Marks, Test Scores	Class Teacher
	5	Test Scores, Competency based National Exam (Scholarship) (Aptitude Test to select good students)	National Examination held by the Department of Examination
Secondary	6-11	Teacher assessment, Test scores	Class teacher
	10-11	School based assessment	Teachers under national guidelines / criteria
	11	National examination (G.C.E. O/L)	Dept. Of Examination
Collegiate	12-13	Out come based Teacher tests	Class Teachers
	13	National Exam G.C.E. (A/L)	Dept. of Examination

Table 3 - Schools with Library Facilities

Category	No. of Schools	No. of Schools having permanent libraries*	%	No. of Schools having non - permanent libraries*	%
Government schools	9790	4000	41	2000	20
Private schools	85	68	80	17	20
International schools	87	87	100	-	-
Pirivenas	600	600	100	-	-

*Permanent libraries – A separate place with adequate space according to the standard criteria of the Ministry of Education.

Non permanent libraries – A room with some book cupboards, book shelves or a small collection of books.

Staff of School Libraries

Both professionals and teacher librarians manage school libraries. Recently MOE decided to appoint teacher librarians to all schools, which have libraries according to MOE standards. 2814 teachers were selected to appoint as Teacher Librarians and have already under gone a five-day preliminary training. MOE has suggested to the Public Services Commission to change their designation as teacher librarians. After the initial training, selected teachers were assigned school libraries to fulfill a list of duties identified by the SLDU.

Training opportunities

There are two kinds of training opportunities for teacher librarians and professional librarians; in service training and long-term educational programmes. In service training activities are designed by MOE or Provincial Departments of Education to make them aware on current needs, issues and trends of the system. Formal education programmes are offered by Sri Lanka Library Association, University of Kelaniya and National Institute of Library & Information Sciences (NILIS). NILIS specifically offers following education and training programmes for teacher librarians ranging from certificate to Masters level.

- Certificate Course for Teacher Librarians
- Certificate In Teacher Librarianship
- Certificate in Information Technology for Teacher Librarians

- Diploma in Teacher Librarianship
- Post Graduate Diploma in Teacher Librarianship
- Masters In Teacher Librarianship

Number of books in Libraries

Number of books in School Libraries varies from school to school. Standard Provision is 5-10 books per a pupil. But existing average is 5 books per a pupil in school Libraries. However this average number consists of some outdated material since collections are not updated constantly. Therefore information contained in the material is not appropriate to the needs of the students and teachers.

Other resources

Other types of resources available are indicated in the following table.

Table 4 - Other types of resources available in libraries

Category	Percentage of schools
Television	50
Video Recorder	10
CD/VCD Player	5
OHP	10
Radio	90
Cassette Recorder	90
Computer	10

Even though most of these resources should be in school libraries, in some schools they are scattered in laboratories, computer rooms etc. because our libraries are not given due recognition as learning resources centres.

Activities Performed by school libraries

- Lending and borrowing – as a routine practice
- References – To support curriculum learning
- Reading Circles – To enhance reading enthusiasm
- Classroom Libraries – To use leisure time for reading
- Birthday Gifts – To develop the library collection
- Book Boxes – To improve reading habits using leisure time
- Wall Papers (Creative Kids Associations) – To improve reading and information skills
- Topic files – To provide specific information
- Language Collections – To improve language skills
- Literacy Associations – To improve learning skills
- CAT (Computer Assist Learning Programmes) } To use new technology for teaching and learning
- Media based Learning /Teaching collection } To produce own collection using available information.
- Teachers productions (Audio/Video) }
- Children's productions (Audio/Video) }

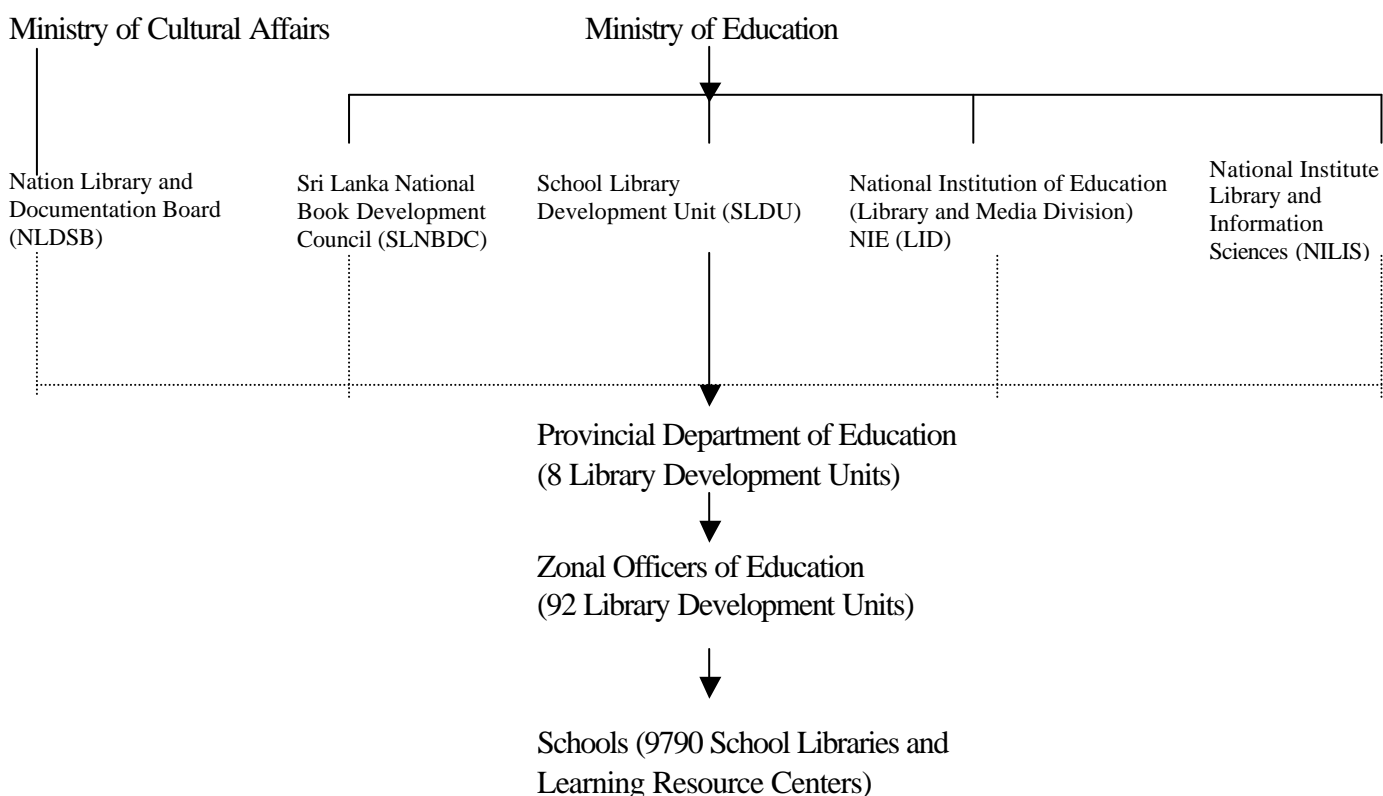
Special Events and Activities:-

- **Birthday Gift Project** - This was launched to develop the book collection in school libraries. Students can gift a selected title in consultation with the teacher librarians to mark his/her birthday.
- **Book Boxes for Leisure Reading** - Small cardboard cartons including 40 leisure-reading books are provided to schools where space is limited. These are made to suit

according different grade levels. When students are free, library leader of the classroom takes an appropriate box to the classroom for others to read.

- **Evaluation Project on Reading** - When students borrow books it is recorded in their Library card and periodically teacher librarian evaluates the reading habits of individual students. This information is used for corrective measures at a later stage
- **Special Library Days** - Celebration of International School Library Day takes place in Sri Lanka from 2000. It was decided to hold a library week beginning on School Library day, from year 2002. Library and reading development activities for these two occasions are launched country-wide with the help of the community (parents, publishers, bookshops) and the government institutions (National Library, NILIS, National Book Development Council).
- Literary month is being celebrated in September with a large scale international book fair, competitions and such other activities.
- From October 2004 a "National Reading Month" was declared by the National Library, and school libraries as well as public and university libraries carried out a variety of activities with a great interest.

2. Administrations and Co-ordination System of School Libraries in Sri Lanka



Ministry of Education is the authorized governing body of the school libraries. Policymaking, planning, monitoring, preparing standards and guidelines are the main tasks of the MOE. In addition, it launches special projects with the use of government and foreign funds, with the help of Provincial Departments of Education. Libraries in 323 National Schools are also directly supervised and directed by the School Library Development Unit (SLDU) of the MOE.

National Library and Documentation Services Board is involved with the policy formulation, conducting awareness programmes, supervision of training and other relevant activities. Since they have expertise, MOE obtains their support for policy formulation and implementation activities of special projects.

Sri Lanka National Book Development Council is responsible for the books sector and literature development activities of Sri Lanka. SLNBDC helps SLDU to prepare and maintain criteria for books for school libraries and also establish the literature associations. Since they directly deal with the publishers, booksellers and printers. SLDU is getting their help when launching the special activities such as international school library day.

National Institute of Education (NIE) is responsible for school curriculum. It is also responsible for designing of curriculum for teacher librarians in National Colleges of Education and producing AV material to suit the school curriculum.

National Institute of Library and Information Science (NILIS) at present is catering to the education and training needs of the school library sector in Sri Lanka. NILIS advises the MOE, on library curricula, training needs of different stake holders and other policy matters.

Provincial Departments of Education

The eight Provincial Departments of education are planning, monitoring, supervising bodies of the school library sector on behalf of SLDU. They prepare their own policies, criteria, guidelines and standards for school libraries according to the National and Ministry of Education policies, guidelines and directions. Each Provincial Department of Education has a Provincial Library Coordinator

Zonal Education Offices

In each Zonal education office there is an officer to implement the activities of school library development. They visit the schools and supervise, evaluate, provide awareness and guidance to implement the activities effectively.

3. Special Library Development Projects

World Bank funded project to develop 4000 school libraries. Three major phases are in this project; Development of 4000 libraries, Launch Book Based Language Enrichment Programme (BOBLEP), Establishment of National Institute of Library & Information Sciences.

Activities of Library Development

- Build New/Renovated library buildings
- Develop 2000 existing libraries
- Supply books (Sinhala, English, Tamil) for all 4000 libraries
- Supply furniture for libraries
- Supply Audio Video equipment
- Select and train 4000 teacher librarians
- Awareness programme for 4000 principals on library activities
- Aware all officials in Education sector on library activities
- Train MOE, provincial and zonal officers who are directly involved with library development and reading habit development activities
- Provide opportunities, for 14 officers to obtain MSc. degrees in Library and Information Management.
- Launch research studies to evaluate library usage and other activities implemented by School Library Development Unit
- Supervise, monitor and assist to develop identified practices of school libraries and introduce new activities to the school libraries

Activities of BOBLEP

- Provided BOBLEP books for 7000 schools with primary classes.
- Train 2500 primary teachers to launch the BOBLEP.
- Trained 25 selected English teachers as BOBLEP coordinators to implement, monitor and supervise the BOBLEP programme

- Trained selected NCEO lecturers, Teacher Centre Managers on BOBLEP strategies.

Future plans

- Produce Audio/Video documentaries to support curriculum.
- Provide library facilities for all schools of the country.
- Enhance reading habits of school children using appropriate strategies to Sri Lankan culture.
- Turn school libraries into attractive Learning Resource Centres with effective practices
- Enhance the school library usage of school children and teachers in their teaching learning process and in their leisure times.

4. Problems and issues of school libraries

- 50 percent of schools do not have permanent library facilities according to the required MOE standards.
- No permanent staff to manage the school libraries.
- School libraries are still following traditional patterns.
- Difficulties to introduce new practices for the school libraries.
- Difficulties to supervise and monitor the large system with 9826 schools.
- Limitation of funds to promote the facilities and activities of libraries at once.
- Lack of human resources of the library field since the development of school library field started recently.