



CURRENT SCENARIO OF GOVERNMENT AIDED SECONDARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN THE BAJALI CIRCLE OF BAJALI DISTRICT, ASSAM (INDIA)

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Abstract:

Library plays a vital role in enhancing reading habits. The main objective of the school library is to assist the students to broaden their sphere of knowledge. A healthy reading habit grown at school level can help a student to achieve their goal in future. This study aims to study the present scenario of secondary school libraries in Bajali circle of newly formed Bajali district of Assam. Studied the availability of library services in concerned schools based on data collected through questionnaire from 38 numbers of secondary schools of Bajali circle in the Bajali district, Assam.

Key words: School library, Library service, Reading habits.

1. Introduction:

Creating reading habits at primary and secondary level is a very important issue in making a person's foundation of life. If a student makes a good habit of reading by using library at his/her school, he/she can easily overcome all the problems in his/her life. Schools are the main platforms of formal education. Former president of India Dr. S Radhakrishnan said "Libraries are the heart of an institution", libraries are the part and parcel of the schools. Reading is the main task of the students' community especially at secondary level. By and large, it is mandatory to read the prescribed textbooks in their classes. Only reading of syllabus prescribed textbooks is not sufficient to expand a student's sphere of knowledge. To know the cultural heritage, geography, history, economy, political scenario, current affairs, recent developments in different branches of knowledge, to expand the imagination of mind, to grow the power of creativity, etc. students need to read books outside his syllabus. Books are the weapons against various evils of society like superstition, intolerance, illiteracy, poor economy, gender inequality, political turmoil, etc. Library plays a vital role in school education, besides school curriculum, library assists student to adapt with his/her culture, history, heritage, customs and universe of knowledge through relevant books, journals, magazines, learning materials like maps, globes, audio visuals and digital gadgets, etc. The NEP 2020 emphasizes the teachers and faculty, including the librarian to have an attitude of service. Keeping that in mind the library becomes the education service centre of resources in print, digital, and personnel. To build an education for an individual, schools and libraries must provide a safe, welcoming place, where he/she is intellectually stimulated and where the library become a learning hub.(Bhojwani 2022) It is however, disheartening that government secondary schools are running with very poor library infrastructures, in most cases schools are running without libraries. This pathetic status had adversely effected on the academic performances of the prospective young hearts and probably throws them to foggy and smoky environment of knowledge.

2. Objectives:

Following objectives are taken into account while conducting the study.

- 2.1. To know the present status of the available library in terms of library infrastructure.
- 2.2 To identify the library collection in the surveyed school libraries.
- 2.3 To know the professional library staff engaged in the surveyed school libraries.
- 2.4 To know the library hour/ library classes allotted for students.
- 2.5 To suggest some measures for development of government aided secondary school libraries in the state of Assam.

3. Methodology:

In order to collect the relevant data for the study, a set of simply designed questionnaire were send to concerned secondary schools of the Bajali block of the district. In addition, interviews of some teachers were taken into account through phone calls; moreover some nearby schools were physically visited to collect first hand information for the study.

4. Secondary School Libraries in the study area:

Bajali is the recently formed district of Assam, which was formally declared on 12th January, 2021. It is the 34th district of Assam, earlier, a subdivision of Barpeta district. The district is surrounded by Baksa district in north, Barpeta district in south and west and Nalbari district in east. The geographical area of this district is 418 square kilometre. Pathsala town is the district headquarters of the district, Bajali circle is the oldest administrative unit of the area formed during the British rule. Since time immemorial, the livelihood economy of this area was controlled by agricultural practices. The educational infrastructure of this area is satisfactory as compared to the adjacent districts. There are altogether 38 numbers of government aided secondary schools within the Bajali circle, table-1 shows basic library information of the these schools. Out of 38 schools, 10 numbers school provide both secondary as well as senior secondary schooling, 2 numbers provide only senior secondary and 16 numbers of schools provide only secondary level of schooling. It is however shock to note that all these schools are running without functioning proper library system. Many schools are running without library facilities, the rest are running for the name shake only with very poor library facilities. Very poor library facilities in these schools have badly affected the growth of reading habits among the students community.

Table-1. Library position of Secondary Schools in Bajali circle of Bajali District, Assam.

Sl No	Name of the School	Establishment Year	Location	Library Room	Reading Room	Staff	Library Hour	Library Collection
01	Bajali HSS	1926	Pathsala	Yes	Yes	00	00	2321
02	Patacharkuchi Vidyapith HSS	1935	Patacharkuchi	Yes	Yes	00	00	2550
03	Vidyabhaban HS	1950	Nityananda	Yes	00	00	00	960
04	Rehabari HSS	1952	Rehabari	Yes	00	00	00	750
05	Rawta Madan HSS	1952	Saderi	Yes	00	00	00	700
06	Baghmara HSS	1953	Baghmara	No	00	00	00	00
07	Pathsala Girls HS	1957	Pathsala	Yes	Yes	00	00	1500
08	Hathinapur Vidyamandir HS	1955	Hathinapur	Yes	00	00	00	400
09	Choukhuti HS	1958	Choukhuti	Yes	00	00	00	800
10	Bongaon HSS	1959	Bongaon	Yes	00	00	00	450
11	Bapuji HSS	1959	Singimari	Yes	00	00	00	420

12	Adarsha HS	1961	Dharamtala	No	00	00	00	00
13	Paka Sariha HSS	1961	Paka Sariha	Yes	00	00	00	442
14	Pragjyotish HS	1962	Gobindapur	Yes	00	00	00	336
15	Nareswar Rana HSS	1963	Bamakhata	No	00	00	00	00
16	Patacharkuchi Girls HS	1963	Patacharkuchi	Yes	00	00	00	450
17	Akaya HS	1964	Akaya	Yes	00	00	00	370
18	Ganakpukhuri HS	1964	Ganakpukhuri	No	00	00	00	00
19	Madhya Bajali HS	1966	Ratanpur	No	00	00	00	00
20	Dakshin Bajali HSS	1968	Jalikhata	No	00	00	00	00
21	Dakshin Bijni Girls HS	1970	Bijni	Yes	00	00	00	270
22	Bongaon HS	1972	Bongaon	No	00	00	00	00
23	Padmashree Chandraprabha HS	1973	Saderi	Yes	00	00	00	452
24	Janata HS	1976	Dumuria	Yes	00	00	00	780
25	Uttar Bajali HS	1976	Muguria	Yes	00	00	00	450
26	Navajyoti HS	1979	Daisingri	Yes	00	00	00	400
27	Swahid Akshendra HS	1981	Bamakhata	Yes	00	00	00	350
28	Barbhitha Doloi Pathar HM	1981	Doloi Pathar	No	00	00	00	00
29	Titka HS	1982	Titka	Yes	00	00	00	800
30	Puthimari Ambikagiri HS	1982	Puthimari	Yes	00	00	00	340
31	Mainamati Balika HS	1983	Hathinapur	Yes	00	00	00	200
32	Pathsala College (jr.)	1984	Pathsala	Yes	Yes	00	00	6327
33	Kapil Kalita HS	1986	Barbang	Yes	00	00	00	421
34	Chauliabari HS	1986	Chauliabari	No	00	00	00	00
35	Jnanpith HS	1987	Bhogpur	Yes	00	00	00	300
36	Phingugarh HS	1987	Bhotana	Yes	00	00	00	390
37	Madhya Bajali Junior College	1988	Nityananda	Yes	00	00	00	507
38	Kathalmuri Ghat HS	1988	Kathalmuri	Yes	00	00	00	398

5. Analysis of Data:

5.1 Library building, reading room, etc:

After analyzing data collected from the field, it is revealed that out of 38 numbers schools, 29 numbers of schools have library room (76.31%), altogether 09 schools are running without any library room (23.69%). There are no separate library building present in the surveyed schools, the rooms allocated for library are also not suitable for the specific purposes. Rooms used for library uses are not properly designed; books are stored in a room where proper ceiling, ventilation, lighting, flooring, interior decoration, etc are absent. In some cases, books shelves are confined in the room of head of the institution. Reading room facilities are present

in 04 schools only (10.53%), the rest school libraries are running without reading room facilities. Schools having library facilities allow students to borrow books for stipulated days for studying at home.

5.2 Library professional staff:

It is surprised to note that all schools are running without library professionals. Schools where library prevails (76.31%) are looked after by a teacher in charge, the in-charge teacher maintain a register for issue and return of books. Due to absence of library professionals in the schools, the libraries are not managed in a scientific way, books are arranged haphazardly in the shelves. The school libraries are running without following any classification scheme and cataloging code, etc. Moreover, use of computers in the libraries are also not seen anywhere in the surveyed schools.

5.3 Library Hours:

It is very important to involve the students in library seating, special library period for each class can help a student in this matter. This practice has immense potentiality to grow the reading habits of students. Librarian or in-charge teacher can prepare some lesson plan and give various types of project work related to library books in such scheduled classes so that students are compelled to read in the library hours. After analyzing the data, it is found that no schools have scheduled library hours. Libraries are opened with the availability of the in charge teacher's free hours. The important matter to notice here is that schools are running without scheduled library period, therefore, students are not fully aware of the importance of library to broaden their sphere of knowledge. Libraries in these schools are confined only to issue and return of books for a specific period to the students.

5.4 Library Collection:

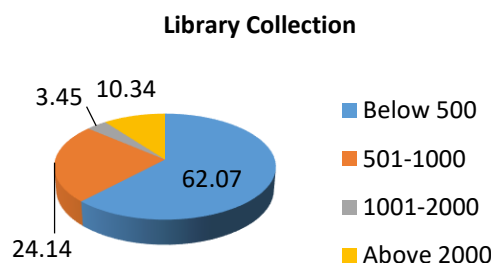
Library collection is very important to attract the user community of any library. In secondary schools library, library collection should be prosperous with books, journals, magazines, newspapers, digital or virtual learning materials on general knowledge, current affairs, history, geography, current science, who's who, cultural heritage, local history, various entrance exam related study materials, etc. After analyzing the data it is found that, library collections are not satisfactory in most of these school libraries.

Table-02. Library Collection.

Sl no.	Library Collection.	No of Schools.	Percentage
01	Below - 500	18	62.07
02	501-----1000	07	24.14
03	1001----2000	01	03.45
04	Above -2000	03	10.34

Total= 29 nos.

The survey data reveals that, out of 29 schools (having library rooms), 18 school libraries have the collection below 500 (62.07%), 07 school libraries have the collection in between 501-1000 (24.14%), 01 school library have the collection in between 1001-2000 (03.45%) and 03 school libraries have the collection above 2000 (10.34%).



6. Findings and Suggestion:

On the basis of analyzing data the following suggestions have been forwarded to improve the present status of secondary school libraries particularly in the study area and state of Assam as a whole.

6.1. A good and well furnished library building is a need of hour to facilitate various services to the user's community. Study shows that, none of the school has a good library building, library services are provided through poor infrastructure with lack of library furniture. Government should take necessary steps to develop

the library infrastructure for all government aided secondary schools of Assam. This may help to seed the library culture in school campus.

6.2. The role of a professional librarian cannot be ruled out to develop the library services in the secondary schools. It is very unfortunate that government aided secondary schools are running without professional librarian. As the school authority has no role to appoint any person, government should appoint professional librarian in every secondary schools to develop the library services in the state.

6.3 Every school should take necessary steps to cultivate reading habits among the students. In this connection, school authority can prepare special library class for different classes by allowing library related project works. School authority should take initiative to organize book exhibition, storytelling, library talk, readers' award, etc. to attract the students which may lead to grow the reading habits among the students.

6.4 An attractive and valued library collection is an asset to any school library which can easily impress the user community. Proper planning is necessary in developing the library collection in the greater interest of the students. From the interpreting data, it is revealed that library collection is not satisfactory in most of the secondary schools. Schools have no funds to procure new books and journals. The concerned department of government should take some necessary steps in this regard. There should be annual library book grant to the schools under government schemes.

7. Conclusion:

From the analysis of data collected from the respective secondary schools and interpreting the same it can be concluded here that present status of government aided secondary schools are not pretty well. The different education commission gives importance to the role of library in school education, but different picture is seen in schools selected for this study, where role of library is neglected. At the same time private secondary schools are well equipped with library services to develop their student's personality and extend the sphere of knowledge. The government aided secondary schools need to overcome these problems. The education department of the state government should take necessary steps while implementing new education policy (NEP-2020).

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