

The Role of Libraries in Encouraging Reading

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Our school started in 2012 in the Dineshpur area of Udham Singh Nagar district in Uttarakhand. We have twelve teachers and approximately eighty students in our school. In the beginning our school had limited resources but we tried to do our best in the given limited resources. For example, we used the first to fifth Uttarakhand state textbooks and NCERT books for reading to the children.

Then we thought that there must be books related to stories other than textbooks in our school and decided to purchase new story books for the students. The District institute librarian helped us in the selection of books for the children who are early learners. We also bought books from the book fair for our students.

We had a big hall in our previous school which we used as a book distribution area because there was no library as such in our rented premises. It was different from the usual library as it did not have shelves, chairs and tables and reading corners. However, this didn't mean we restricted our students from reading. We arranged the necessary resources for reading to them. From the beginning, there was no specific structure in the functioning of our library. From the beginning, students were allowed to select the books of their choice even if the books were not their class level. They are not forced to read books that other people chose for them - the selection of books was done independently by the students. At that time more than sixty five percent of the students read the books and books were issued for reading at home. Though we can't definitely say how many of them seriously read the books, but they must have looked at them, even turned the pages of books because they could tell the stories in their own words.

Process

We keep the books on the floor in a line so that they are visible to everyone. Students come in when school is over and see the books on the floor. They take the books, turn the pages, look at other books and finally select the book according to their

choice. They enter details of the books chosen in the notebook allotted for their class themselves and are responsible for the maintenance of the record of books taken by them. The teachers guide and support them. All teachers are involved in this process. We have a table on which we tag the newspaper so student can also access the newspaper in the lunch interval and go through it and collectively read and discuss the news according to their interests. Initially we have around 400 story books for the students of primary level. Students who find the process difficult can take the help of the teacher and elder students. All the teachers are involved in this process of running the library.

Simultaneously, we talk to the students about the use and care of books and how to keep them in good condition. Initially we teachers stitched and pasted the torn pages of the books but later on the students started doing this work with the help of teachers. We have introduced the concept of 'book hospital'. In this, those books which have torn pages and need binding and stitching are kept, later on, in a box which is kept near the books. We also check the record of the books before the end of the session, so that we come to know how many books are in good condition for use again and how many can be repaired to be used in the next session. On the basis of this, we take a decision for procuring new books for the library.

Observation

As teachers we also know the importance not only of reading, but also of reviewing the books. So we have introduced the daily practice of reading story books and having a discussion on what has been read. It is also a part of our self-development process. We generally do this for the improvement of our English- speaking and have found that it has benefited us a lot. It gives us an opportunity to express our thoughts in organised manner in front of groups of people.

We shifted to our permanent building in Dineshpur in July 2015. We now have a big building and huge infrastructure here. We have a big separate library with lots of facilities in our new premises. The number of books is increasing day by day in our library. The District Institute librarian helps us in the process of selecting and getting books for the school library.

The increased resources and the availability of the books have made things easier for the students. There is a variety of books installed in the library according to the age and level of the students. We have tried to arrange the study material which they can use as reference in their respective subjects.

Some of the problems have been that, a few months after students started using the new library, we saw the library was not functioning well. The books were kept untidily in the shelves. It was difficult to maintain records of the books. The number of books lost and getting torn increased. As we now have from first to tenth standard in the school, we realise that different age groups have different choices and different interests. So we have decided that the selection of books should keep in mind the above points.

In the new library we arrange the books subject wise so it will help the student in searching the books according to their need. There are shelves of Hindi stories, English stories, math's, science, social science magazines and newspapers and journals. Students take the books from the respective shelves but when the period was over they put it in the other shelves so when the new class will enter in the library they have to make more efforts in findings of the books of their choice because it was not kept in the proper shelf.

Now the number of students in our school has increased to 350. We have classes from first to tenth standard and the number of teachers we have presently are fifteen. The number of books in the library have also gone up. Teachers have to devote maximum time in the classroom processes and related work in their respective subject. So it has affected their intense involvement in the working of the library. The number of active and regular readers have not proportionately increased and even those who show interest in books choose short story books as their first preference. Fewer students choose reference books and serious

reading.

However, as we know the importance of the library in developing the habit of reading among students, we have decided to introduce a daily classroom library period in our class. The students have time to go through the books everyday. The books are sorted according to the class and level of students in English and Hindi and are kept in their classes for one month so the students can read the different books daily. Knowing that students could get bored with the same books, it was decided that after a fixed period of time the books would be replaced.

We have also tried to keep the books in separate shelves according to the level as primary class level books, upper primary class level books, high school class level books, Hindi story books, English story books etc. Coloured slips of paper are pasted to differentiate between subjects. In primary class level books are kept in the lower shelves, upper primary class level books are in middle shelves and high school books are in the top shelves. This system works well, though after some time, the books get mixed up.

Planning

Once the processes of reading become settled, we have decided to introduce some activities, such as sharing the stories, reading out of the stories and discussing the stories so that the students learn the ability of expressing views and putting thoughts into words.

- We have a library committee which discusses ideas for the betterment of library and which will help in improving the reading capability of the students. Every year some teachers take on the responsibility of the library.
- We try to maintain a kind of structure so that every student has access to the school library so (s)he will get the chance to find books according to their needs and interests.
- Using atlases and dictionaries for different activities also increase the vocabulary of the students which help in reading fluency.
- Sharing and discussion motivate not only the student who read the books properly but also motivate the others to have opportunities to present in front of the class.
- If the students have a close relationship with books they can write their own stories, scripts

for role play and read fluently in front of a big group of students in the assembly.

- We want to ensure the involvement of students in all aspects of the library.

This is how we have tried to evolve a sense of responsibility towards the library books and available resources and help them to learn to love books.

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