The Role and Importance of Librarians in the Service Quality of Enriched Libraries

Fatma Uyar

Medical Documentation and Secretariat, School of Advanced Vocational Studies, Dogus University, Istanbul, Turkey
E-mail: fuyar@dogus.edu.tr

Review Article

ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT

Libraries are among the prominent elements of educational content in schools. School libraries in Turkey contributed per se to this notion until 2014. The Ministry of National Education has been carrying out the project "Okullar Hayat Olsun" since then, which led to the establishment of enriched libraries and being a partner of said contribution. Enriched libraries with their modern design, technological equipment, games, activities and recreational areas aim to provide services across Turkey by considering equality of opportunity in education as per contemporary educational standards. Enriched libraries also need professionally trained librarians to serve their intended framework. The employment of librarians, which is also valid for school libraries, is indispensable for enriched libraries. A library cannot be expected to provide quality services, unless there is a librarian, who received professional training in the field, regardless of the type of library. To that end, this study discusses the role and significance of librarians in the service.

Keywords: School libraries, Enriched libraries, Librarian, Library service.

I. Introduction

The school is the first place, where children and young people receive education after their families. Most of the knowledge, skills and habits acquired during their education are gained in school. Schools are obligated to provide education to children and young people in all aspects of education, which provide the knowledge, skills and habits needed and to be heard. "Considering that education and training in our age continues uninterruptedly in all areas of life, it is known that learning spaces are not limited to classrooms only" (Z-Kütüphane, 2013).

One of the most important places that allow learning outside of the classrooms is school libraries. School libraries are places that heavily contribute to learning and education; however, they cannot exist on their own. Libraries exist with librarians. This also applies to school libraries. School librarians, much like other librarians, are the ones who provide the services available in their library to their users in the best possible way. Therefore, if quality services are expected to be received from a school library, there must be a sufficient number of librarians. The aforementioned requirement is also valid for enriched libraries, which are equivalent to school libraries with respect to their target audiences and service purposes.

Turkey has started to establish enriched libraries within the scope of the "Okullar Hayat Olsun" project, carried out under the auspices of the Ministry of Education in 2014. The aim of this project is to provide equal opportunity in formal education, to equip the school libraries according to the requirements of the time and to help the students to carry the education and training process to the dimension of lifelong learning. Enriched libraries are those that are established with the necessary physical and technological equipment to serve the library users and especially students, in the best way possible by using the information age facilities. At this point, as mentioned above, enriched libraries must have a sufficient number of librarians to provide quality services. Based on this requirement, the research provides conclusions and recommendations on the role and importance of librarians in the quality of service of enriched libraries.

II. Enriched Library

The enriched library is defined as a "social activity area that allows students to enjoy knowledge, learn and recreational activities in schools with their aesthetic and ergonomic design" (Z-kütüphane, 2016). It is a part of project "Okullar Hayat Olsun", which is coordinated by the Ministry of National Education and conducted by the partnership of Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs and the Association of Municipalities of Turkey (Okullar Hayat Olsun, 2019).

The characteristics of the enriched libraries are as follows (Z-kütüphane, 2016);

- Providing equal opportunity at the point of access to information,
- Being equipped with materials such as audio books and electronic books,
- Modern and aesthetic design,
- Available pedagogical compatibility,
- Portable shelves, included in the design,
- Wooden and fabric covered walls,
- Offer of a library environment that evokes the desire for reading.

The Ministry of National Education aims to ensure that students can find the pleasure of reading and excitement of discovering information with these enriched libraries, which are designed according to the needs of the information age.

Additionally, teaching students and parents how they can make the most of their library experiences, developing both electronic and written media usage skills and expanding enriched libraries are among the desired goals of this project. High quality school library services through the utilization of enriched libraries is also aimed within this context (MEB, 2019).

Enriched libraries have reached thousands in numbers across Turkey's seven regions from 2014 until today. They must have professionally trained librarians to fully elucidate the abovementioned characteristics and to achieve their goals. Providing services without a librarian in a library would be the most obvious obstacle, hindering the library from fulfilling its functions properly.

III. Librarian

It would be useful to focus on the concept of librarianship in order to fully understand the place, importance and function of the librarian in the library. Librarianship is a field of service to meet the information needs of the society, as well as a science that tries to develop principles, theories, tools, methods and techniques to realize this service in the most effective and efficient way (Fenerci, 2003, p. 283). As it is understood from the definition made, librarianship is accepted as a science which aims to serve the society in many ways.

Librarianship has been accepted as a profession with its evolution into science. With the emergence of written information sources, the library has become an essential element of its professional development as an institutional structure, while it has also played an important role in defining the area for centuries. Developments in the production of information resources and changes in the social structure have reshaped the "library" institution at every stage of the historical process, which also enabled the emergence of the profession of "librarianship" as a scientific and professional branch (Toplu, 2010, s.646).

Librarianship is also interdisciplinary field. The interdisciplinary nature of librarianship is emphasized in almost all periods and this emphasis is further enhanced in the process of transferring information to the electronic environment (Toplu, 2010, p. 674). The librarianship profession, which has important features in all aspects, can only serve the quality required by professionally trained librarians.

The librarian, within the scope of the functions of a library, performs tasks such as the provision, editing, protection, placement and rendering the documents so that they are ready to be used. In this context, the librarian carries out collection development activities to meet the current and potential requirements of the user and produces access tools that are compatible with user approaches. The material to be included in the collection can be in a wide variety of media (printed, electronic, audio and video tapes, CDROM and so on) and in various forms (text, graphics, sound, images and so on). At this point, the library is faced with the responsibility of a balanced collection development, knowing and controlling the structural and functional properties of documents. The aforementioned responsibility will be performed in the best way by the institution librarian and/or librarians (Fenerci, 2003, p. 288).

Librarians have significant duties and responsibilities in many subjects, such as the physical and technological equipment of libraries, the adequacy of the collection, its suitability to users and the user's speed of access to information.

IV. The Role and Importance of Librarians in the Service Quality of Enriched Libraries

The concept of service is defined in many ways by the Turkish Language Association (2012) and one of them is "to see someone's job or do a job for someone; task, care". It is possible to define the concept of quality as "to meet the current and future requirements of the users and/or customers or even to be vaccinated" (Önal, 2004, p. 29). The aim of organizations based on quality is to work together with all members to ensure the long-term success of their organizations and to ensure social benefits as a result of the satisfaction of their users and/or customers. When the definitions are considered, it is understood that both the concept of service and the basic point of concept of quality aim to conduct studies that benefit the target audience. Libraries should also continue to work in order to show all kinds of activities that benefit the target user according to the type of library. The aims of enriched libraries are of guiding quality to determine what their services will be. Enriched libraries need librarians to accomplish aims such as ensuring equal opportunities in education, supporting students to obtain quality education with the library, discovering the

knowledge and internalizing lifelong learning activities.

Thousands of enriched libraries since 2014 have been established across the seven regions of Turkey. In the first half of 2019, they continue to be established at full speed. Reaching a large number of enriched libraries in all regions of Turkey is an important step in terms of equal opportunities in education. Still, this step alone is not enough. Libraries may be established without a librarian, but they cannot survive as such. This also applies to enriched libraries; however, it is also observed that not all enriched libraries have a librarian. A research study, conducted in Ahmet Mesut Yılmaz Primary School, shows that students need a librarian at the points of access and usage of information sources in the enriched library of their schools (Ak and Çetintaş, 2015, p. 30). In another study, conducted in Atatürk Secondary School, one-year experiences of 6th, 7th and 8th grade students were observed in enriched library. From the point of view of librarians, the results revealed that two officers were assigned temporarily to the enriched library as of its opening and were dismissed at the end of fourth month. Another person was assigned temporarily in their place and his/her duties ended two months later. Since no officer was employed, the enriched library remained closed for a few weeks at the beginning of the new academic year. Then, with the decision of the administration, the students started to work on the watch bill under the guidance of Turkish teachers. Therefore, this method has caused some problems such as failure to provide order and desired services. The lack of staff rendered activities such as playing chess difficult, while using computers during the breaks was restricted and only book loans were allowed in the meantime (Öztürk and Taha, 2018, p. 10).

It is not just the information obtained from students; the information received from the school administrators also point to the necessity of librarians and/or librarians in enriched libraries. Referring to the perspectives of students and school administrators, a study conducted in seven different schools in Turkey shows that enriched libraries are useful to students, in terms of technological and physical equipment, but the lack of librarians creates irregularities in the library with especially crowded points being out of control (Duran and Özen Ertan, 2018, p. 74).

As it is understood, serious issues arise, when enriched libraries serve without librarians. On the basis of the problem, it is seen that there has not been an arrangement for librarians to be employed, since the establishment of enriched libraries. Enriched libraries are established within the scope of a set of technical specifications, prepared by the Ministry of National Education. The name of the specification is "Technical Specifications for Enriched Library Installation and Equipment". The sixth edition of specifications was prepared in 2019. Specifications consist of ten headings and provide extensive information regarding the requirements for the establishment of enriched libraries, the scope of the technical specifications, general conditions for the establishment and equipment (renovation and repair, ceiling structure of the enriched library, structure of the entrance door, curtain structure, interior paint, heating system, fire safety, furniture type, internet infrastructure, book selection and procurement) of enriched libraries (2019). However, there is no information in this sense about librarians. Due to the content of technical specifications, it may be considered normal to elude information about librarians; yet, in the book selection and procurement sections of the specification, the necessity or powers of the librarian and/or librarians are not mentioned. It is only mentioned that the selection and procurement of books of the Library Resources Identification and Selection Committee, which is formed by the administration, is given according to the School Libraries Regulation and the Standard Regulations of School Libraries (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Destek Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü Ders Kitapları ve Yayımlar Daire Başkanlığı, 2019).

Article 10 of the School Libraries Regulation, to which the technical specifications prepared for the enriched libraries refer with respect to the selection and procurement of books, dictates the persons, who are to be responsible from the selection and procurement of books. Accordingly, a commission for determining and selecting library resources is formed with the chairmanship of the school principal, the relevant department heads, the library club adviser teacher, librarianship club representative, a member of the parent-teacher association, the school student council chair and the librarian or the library officer.

The point to be taken into consideration here is the expression of "librarian or library officer". The School Libraries Regulation does not require the librarian to be present in the school libraries. Moreover, according to article 7 of the Regulations, the librarian is assigned to school libraries with more than 3.000 books. In cases, where a librarian is not appointed, the teacher, who has taken a librarianship course (if there is one) or a teacher to be determined will be appointed by the administration with an officer to assist the teacher in question. In this case, it would not be wrong to say that the school libraries with less than 3.000 books will serve without a librarian. Again, when looked at the Standard Directive for School Libraries; article 5 concerning the staff states that "the personnel, who will be assigned responsibility in the library, is to be selected from amongst those, who graduated from the relevant departments of higher education institutions or who possess the certificate of participation in the trainings on the subject of librarianship, provided by the Ministry" (2006, p. 1). At this juncture, it is clearly seen that there is no mention of the obligation of librarians, who have received a bachelor's degree in librarianship.

As it is observed from the School Libraries Regulation and the Standard Directive for School Libraries, there is no obligation for the librarians to be assigned in the school libraries. Studies on enriched libraries, the School Libraries Regulation and the Standard Directive for School Libraries are taken as bases for this claim. Thus, it is also not necessary to assign librarian to enriched libraries. The information obtained from research studies

on enriched libraries confirm this result as well. The research results also show that enriched libraries without librarians experience issues at the point of service. For this reason, it is important to assign librarians to each enriched library, regardless of the number of books in them.

When a sufficient number of librarians is assigned to enriched libraries; these libraries would be able to succeed in creating collections that are intended for the target audience, using the library resources efficiently, being open during the designated hours and hence, providing quality services.

V.   Conclusion and Recommendations

Enriched libraries have become important factors, contributing to education in Turkey. Enriched libraries are established in all schools in Turkish regions since 2014. This is an important step for the sake of equal opportunity in education. Due to their technical and physical equipment, these libraries attract students specifically. Enriched libraries are also capable of keeping up with the requirements of the era. Thus, they are expected to contribute to education in Turkey; however, it is understood that enriched libraries serve without a librarian. This leads to major problems. One of the problems relates to the hours of enriched libraries being open. Enriched libraries are planned to be open until 21.00 o'clock (Z-Kütüphane, 2013). Yet, this is not possible, for there are no librarians in enriched libraries. Therefore, users have limited access to information and library use. Library staff, who are temporarily assigned to the library service, prove to be disrupting. After a while, the connection between the users and the library is broken for this reason.

One of the key elements of libraries is the staff. These personnel must hold a bachelor's degree in library studies. This requirement also applies to enriched libraries. Each enriched library must have a sufficient number of librarians. The number of books requested by the School Libraries Regulation should not be expected to be assigned to the librarian. Libraries are strengthened with librarians. To that end, the librarian should be taken into account with all the elements of the libraries, as the enriched libraries are being built.

A regulation should be prepared for enriched libraries. If the existing School Libraries Regulation is to be taken into consideration, it should be reorganized to include enriched libraries. In particular, Article 7 of the School Libraries Regulation should be reorganized on the basis of the necessity of being a librarian in schools and enriched libraries without any conditions. This way, the problems encountered while serving without the librarian of libraries would be eliminated. The quality of access to the library, the quality of the collection and the quality of meeting the needs of users would be enhanced this way.

References

Ak, Ş., &Çetintaş, H. B. (2015). Eğitimde zenginleştirilmiş kütüphanelerin yeri ve önemi: Ahmet Mesut Yılmaz ilkokulu zenginleştirilmiş kütüphane uygulaması. *Milli Eğitim*, *208*, 18-32.

Duran, E., & Özen Ertan, N. (2018). Ortaokul öğrencilerinin z-kütüphane ile ilgili görüşleri. *Akademik Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, *6*(69), 65-77.

Fenerci, T. (2003). Kütüphanecilik ve disiplinlerarası niteliği. *Türk Kütüphaneciliği*, *17*(3), 283-293.

MEB. (2001). Okul kütüphaneleri yönetmeliği. Retrieved from http://mevzuat.meb.gov.tr/dosyalar/95.pdf

MEB. (2006). Okul kütüphaneleri standart yönergesi. Retrieved from http://mevzuat.meb.gov.tr/dosyalar/548.pdf

Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (2019). *Zenginleştirilmiş kütüphane (z-kütüphane) kurulumu ve donatımına ilişkin teknik şartname (versiyon 6).* Ankara: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı.

Okullar Hayat Olsun. (2019). Retrieved from http://okullarhayatolsun.meb.gov.tr/?islem=bilgi_detay&id=26#.XL7v2okzbIU

Önal, İ. (2004). Kaliteli eğitimde kütüphane. I. Ulusal Okul Kütüphanecileri Bildiriler Kitabı (pp. 28-42). İstanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık.

Öztürk, H., & Tağa, T. (2018). Ortaokul öğrencilerinin bir yıllık z-kütüphane deneyimleri: bir durum çalışması. *Türk Kütüphaneciliği, 32*(1), 7-18.

Toplu, M. (2010). Kil tabletlerden elektronik yayıncılığa kütüphanecilik felsefesinin gelişimi ve dönüşümü. *Türk Kütüphaneciliği, 24(*4), 644-684.

Türk Dil Kurumu. (2012). Retrieved from http://www.tdk.gov.tr/

Z-kütüphane (2013). Retrieved from www.z-kutuphane.com

Z-kütüphane. (2016). Retrieved from http://z-kutuphane.meb.gov.tr/Home/Hakkimizda

Fatma UYAR graduated from Ankara University Information and Document Management Department in 2011. In 2019, she completed the Department of Information and Records Management at Atatürk University. In 2018, she started to work as a faculty member at Doğuş University, Vocational School of Higher Education, and she still continues to do so.