

School Library: How to Break the Walls

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ABSTRACT

The present paper analyzes the possibility of the school library breaking the four walls to which we are used to, using data collected during field research for a doctorate research, from observation and interview with students. Three schools in Belo Horizonte city were researched, one of which really broke the walls of the library, taking the collection to the classrooms. Preliminary observation data showed significant differences among the use of the three spaces, which became clearer in the interviews. The results showed that the differential is, however, in the performance of the professional present in this place. It was evident that the school library should concern about the professional, regardless of the space. Breaking the walls of the library was not the most effective solution to bring students closer to reading and the available materials. So, it is up to the librarian, and not the collection, to break the barriers.

Keywords: School Library, Digital Natives, School Librarian, Media Specialist, School Library – Educational Role, Ethnography

INTRODUCTION

It is known that the post-industrial era is characterized by a society centered on information and knowledge, having its economy based and dependent on communication. Thus, the so-called Information Society brings with it new educational paradigms as emphasized by Furtado (2004):

Since one of the new paradigms of education is learning to learn; that is, acquire the ability to learn, knowing how to obtain, use, and generate new information; information systems become extremely important, as they can contribute to education democratization, that is, to facilitate and increase access to education, and, moreover, to contribute to the information received to become knowledge, improving the quality of life of citizens. (Furtado, 2004)

This new educational paradigm gives the individual the responsibility for her/his learning, without worrying about the context in which he/she is inserted. Morin (2006), at the request of UNESCO, has elaborated a book where he analyzes the current society and draws reflections on what he calls the seven knowledges necessary for the education of the future: 1. the blindness of knowledge (it is necessary to know what really means to know); 2. the principles of relevant knowledge; 3. to teach the human condition; 4. to teach earthly identity; 5. to face the uncertainties; 6. to teach understanding; 7. the ethics of humanity. Through the reflections of Morin (2006) it is clear that thinking about the education of this century is to go beyond what was hitherto posited. In this sense, the student ceases to be a repository of the knowledge transmitted by the teacher and becomes a terrestrial citizen in formation, with her/his complexity and living in a complex society.

Given the current social conjecture, in the world dominated by information, where the subjects have difficulties in being inserted in this process, the role of the school library and the librarian is highlighted, since this space and this professional have an important role in the training of students, within an information literacy perspective.

This article intends to reflect on the current school library in the Brazilian context and its way of acting with the current students, the so-called digital natives. For a more effective performance, one option is the rupture of the library walls.

The article presents, first, a review of the literature about school libraries in Brazil. It briefly reviews the history of school libraries in the country, presenting the paradigms of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, which continues to this day. The concept of informational literacy and the instructional role of the

librarian in Brazil is discussed in the sequence, emphasizing that in our country the librarian does not receive teacher training. Finally, the current public of school libraries, the digital natives, are discussed. From there, the methodology of the research is presented.

Thus, from preliminary data of a doctoral research, students from 03 different schools in the city of Belo Horizonte were observed and then participated in an ethnographic interview.

Among the 03 schools, one really adhered to the concept of breaking walls, undoing the library space, and forwarding its collection to so-called knowledge halls, where students have their classes daily. The collection was arranged by age group and subjects, according to each hall. The main results are presented and discussed. In the last section, along with the conclusions, the limitations of the work and the suggestions for future research are presented.

SCHOOL LIBRARY IN BRAZIL

The history of the school library is closely linked to the history of education, which in Brazil is presented in a lacunar manner. Its origins are based on religious schools, whose declines begin in the late years of 19th century, which opens possibilities for the installation of so-called normal schools. The normal course had the objective of training teachers to work in the teaching of primary education and was offered in public courses of secondary level (today high school). On the creation of the first Brazilian school libraries Válio (1990) emphasizes that

The creation of school libraries, as they are understood today, began to happen in the country with the foundation of normal schools. The first to be created was the School Library of Normal School Caetano de Campos, São Paulo, on June 30, 1880, and, years later, on June 16, 1894, the Library of the Gymnasium of the State of the Capital was inaugurated (INL, 1944). (Válio, 1990, p.18).

The implantation of the first Brazilian school library, with the characteristics that we know today, took place at the end of the 19th century, however the debates and reflections about this space and its functions only started in the country from the middle of the 20th century. An analysis of these discussions makes it possible to perceive changes in the concept of school libraries over the decades, as well as in their conjectures and challenges. The changes also affect the performance of the librarian in the school context. Vianna, Carvalho, and Silva (1999) analyzed a series of documents and found 16 (sixteen) concepts for the school library. In the first studies developed, the school library was seen as a laboratory, a place where school research could be conducted. Among the authors cited in this review, Costa (1975) already glimpsed the pedagogical role of the library. The vision of the place as a laboratory is often taken up in the various concepts in the course of time.

The analysis of the various concepts for the school library shows changes during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. These changes also reflect changes in Brazilian education. Before the 1970s, what predominated in the national literature on school library were manuals for the implantation or maintenance of these spaces. This can be credited to the fact that the debate did not characterize the education of this time, having the textbook as the basis of the teaching-learning process. Within the traditional concept of education, in which a student's cumulative and repetitive ability should be developed, the school library had its role restricted to the mere deposit of a book, and its basic function was considered to be the reproduction of the repressive and unilateral action that happened inside the classrooms. In this way, the school library was not valued, since the teacher and the didactic book were considered as the only transmitters of knowledge.

In the 1970s, the school was demanded to form economically productive subjects, which marked the capitalist model of education. It was also the moment when discussions about citizenship surfaced. In August 1971, Law No. 5692 (Law N. 5.692, August 11, 1971) proposed a reformulation of teaching, which had as its general objective to provide the student with the training of skills that enable their development for self-fulfillment, for work and for conscious exercise of citizenship. Thus, the humanist formation gave way to actions aimed at forming a qualified workforce. These changes are also reflected in school libraries, which became to be understood as information and culture centers serving the school community. School research gained strength as a teaching-learning method and the training of readers is

one of the great functions of the library. However, this change of vision of the library was founded as an expectation, not reflected, still, even nowadays.

The 1980s bring with it the discussions about new technologies. Law 7044/82 (Law N. 7044, October 18, 1982) modifies Law 5692/71 (Law N. 5.692, August 11, 1971). However, it maintains four ideas considered fundamental as teaching objective:

- development of the potential of the learner;
- self-realization;
- preparation for work;
- preparation for the conscious exercise of citizenship (Silva, 2001, p. 40-41).

For the school library, this decade has brought an impetus in the discussions, from its conceptualization to the ways of enjoying the benefits offered by the new technologies. Contradicting the traditional concept of the school library, the literature of the time showed the importance of this space as a resource to the teaching process, serving as an alternative place for the development of this process. By placing itself as an instrument to support teaching, the library came to be necessary and began to offer its services to teachers, expanding its scope of users.

The expansion of the library use by the school community allowed students, who until then limited themselves to the information contained in the textbooks, other options in the search for knowledge. Faced with this reality, the practice of school research gained space in the arena of debates, although pointing out positive and negative points. Among the negative points, the most criticized was the fact that, generally, the school research in the library has become synonymous of mere copy. Together with the debate on school research, the importance of training and forming readers gained strength in the literature of the area. Although the library is a way of guaranteeing the citizen the right of access to reading, the way of undertaking such an enterprise had not yet proved fully effective. It is also noted that despite so many speeches in support of the importance of the library, what was perceived in the 1980s is that it was still precarious.

From the 1990s, the students became the focus of action: their potentialities were developed, their freedom was recognized and continuous learning was stimulated. Thus, the library gained new functions, really seeking to contribute to the formation of the student. The Information Society required a new model of individuals, more flexible, critical, aware of change, aware of their rights and duties. This change is also reflected in education and, consequently, in the school library. The individual should be able to select what is relevant to them, giving priority to reading, research and selection skills. Thus, the teacher's posture might change and the school library appeared as the place most conducive to the exercise of these skills.

The 1990s took up previous concepts, sometimes emphasizing the importance of information, and the importance of socio-cultural coexistence. The research regained importance with the Internet advent, but still presented problems. Also, the reading came to be valued, but emphasizing its ludic aspect, of enjoyment and pleasure.

Researches developed in the 1990s in Brazil show that the school library was not present in most schools, especially in public schools. When they existed, they still had several problems, such as lack of working conditions, lack of human resources, collection and funding investments.

It is also perceived that the studies seek, for the most part, to establish the concept of school library. Thus, Silva (2001) makes a brief summary where she points:

- *the need for the school library to be integrated with the work proposed and developed in the school and especially in the classroom, serving the school program and supporting its activities;*
- *the importance of the school library to provide informational support to teaching, constituting an extension of the classroom;*
- *the contribution of the school library to the improvement of teaching and to a better understanding of the school educational action and reduction of the cultural distance between the students and their social environment;*

- the school library's performance as an instrument of pedagogical support, to meet the individual interests of the students, allowing them to acquire personalized knowledge;
- the school library's commitment to developing reading habits, research, attendance, as well citizenship;
- in some cases, the school library role as a way of filling the lack of a public library, among others (Silva, 2001, p. 24-25).

What can be seen is that the school library has not yet solidified in Brazil. Not all schools have this equipment, and even fewer are the number of librarians in their staff. Garcez (2007) points out that only 1.4% of educational institutions that have a library also have librarians. This situation denotes that the importance of the school library in Brazil remains only in theory.

Among the possible possibilities, what can justify the unsatisfactory performance and the precarious functioning of the Brazilian school libraries is a consequence of the political actions related to this area being fragmented in the country.

The implementation of a program or system of school libraries in Brazil should be part of plans, goals and strategies of the bodies responsible for educational policies, as well as be supported by legislation and linked to the set of laws governing the educational system (Furtado, 2004).

Another problem that may contribute to this reality is the lack of knowledge on the part of the teaching staff about the role and possibilities of the school library in the teaching-learning process (Silva, 2001).

This delicate situation of school libraries was experienced in the United States in the 1980s, when they were ignored in the document *A Nation at Risk: the imperative for educational reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). At the time, this absence caused an uprising in the American librarians, who initiated movements to show the importance of the library in the formation of the students. That's how the movement of information literacy gained strength. (Campello, 2003).

Information Literacy and the Librarian Instructional Role

Literature indicates that discussion of Information Literacy appeared in 1974, in a paper by Paul Zurkowsky (Dudziak, 2003; Melo & Araújo, 2007). He used the expression *Information Skills* in a report to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science entitled "*The information service environment, relationships and priorities*" and was interested in creating a 10-year plan for student training for the consumption of information products. "The expression *Information Skills* referred to people able to solve their information problems using relevant sources, which included the use of technology" (Melo & Araújo, 2007).

The Brazilian scientific literature still debates about the concept of informational literacy and about the best translation of the term from English. According to Campello (2003), Caregnato (2000) was the first author to mention the expression in Brazil:

new ways of designating the educational service offered by libraries to their readers: information skills development and information literacy. The terms used already indicate a concern with the expansion of the concept and are particularly attractive when the talking about information society. (Caregnato, 2000, p.50)

In 2003, Dudziak defined information literacy as:

[...] continuous process of internalization of the conceptual, attitudinal and skills fundamentals necessary for the permanent understanding and interaction with the informational universe and its dynamics, in order to provide lifelong learning (Dudziak, 2003, p. 28).

The emergence of the information literacy term in Brazilian literature of library and information science brings reflections of authors who realize the need to expand the educational function of the library, building a new educational paradigm for school libraries and, thus, expanding the concept of user education and rethinking the role of the librarian in the learning process (Campello & Abreu, 2005). According to this premise, the librarian or the media specialist has a different role in the users' education processes, in order to better meet their needs in the information society. These new assignments help the

librarian to stop being just a professional with technical functions and to interact more with the users (Silveira; Vitorino & Santos, 2013).

Thus, it is necessary to break with the notion of library as a mere appendage of the school, making it a vital space in the teaching-learning process, both for the students and for the school collective (Dias & Santos, 2004). *“It can be considered that information literacy is a step forward in the path of the librarians’ career, in the search for more space for exercising their educational role”* (Campello, 2009a, p.7).

Informational literacy has, in its concept, three basic articulations: information society, information technology and constructivism. Faced with these concepts and the new perspectives of society, one can see that the concept of information literacy is composed of the following items:

- Investigative process (or research process)
- Active learning
- Independent learning
- Critical thinking
- Learning to learn
- Lifelong learning (Dudziak, 2001, p. 61).

These components follow the premises of the new educational model, in which the subject is responsible for building her/his knowledge and for its constant updating.

In addition to being an important tool for the teaching-learning process, the school library needs to think about its performance. It should go beyond what is expected of a traditional library, that is, it is not enough to organize and make available access to the collection, but it is necessary dynamism and insertion in the pedagogical aspects. As Roca (2012) mentions, *“it is clear that the school library must be linked to reading practice and informational competence, since these curricular contents require and justify the continued use of the library.”* (Roca, 2012, p. 15)

To function in an educational way, the school library should have its work developed with the collaboration of the school's faculty team. As Felix (2014) attests, in schools where the school culture favors this collaboration it is possible to find effective school libraries. In her research, the author testifies to the existence of the educational role of the school library in some Brazilian school libraries and emphasizes that,

finally, as a synthesis, a conclusion that emerges is the importance of the articulation of teachers, librarians and principals as determining agents for school libraries to act effectively in the learning, education and orientation of students. (Félix, 2014, p. 111)

School Librarian Training and Working

The librarians, especially those who work in the school context, should be willing to serve as a catalyst for information, in a dynamic and integrated way to the pedagogical work of teachers. In this way, they should be competent not only in library techniques, but also should have appropriate connection to the area of Education.

On the other hand (at least in our country),

they must be attentive, not confusing their function, that is, having a clear definition of who the teachers are and who the librarians are, since the librarians were not prepared to be teachers just as the teachers were not prepared to be librarians (Ellwein, 2006, p. 91).

In the Information Society, in which information is really the center of the discussions, the school library can serve as a center for cultural dissemination, through activities such as storytelling, lectures, meeting with writers, among others. To do so, it must present a suitable and pleasant physical environment that would attract students (Furtado, 2004).

However, the role of the librarian in the school environment is not always easy, as shown by the research by Morais (2009), in which all the librarians interviewed stated that they were not prepared at the undergraduate level to coordinate school libraries (in Brazil the requirement to become a librarian is to have bachelor's degree in library science and to be accredited to a regional council of librarianship). On the other side, Campello (2009b) emphasizes that Brazilian librarians are aware of their role as educators,

as well as the technical functions they need to perform. However, they face difficulties, ranging from the small number of people on their staff to the lack of knowledge, on the part of the faculty of the school, of the functions that the librarian should (or should not) play.

Campello (2009a) has identified in her work that the educational role of the Brazilian librarian, despite appearing in the discourse since 1960, still does not reflect the practice. And one of the obstacles to this role being played more efficiently is the lack of interaction between the librarians and the teachers.

The question of the formation of the librarian to act in the school context can be improved through postgraduate programs, as Pereira (2009) demonstrates when analyzing the creation of the Specialization Course in School Library in the Anísio Teixeira Higher Education Center, in Espírito Santo State. According to the author, the course sought, in its scope, to provide the librarians with the necessary knowledge to act in the educational context. It can be noticed that the creation of specific courses for the performance of the school librarian would be a good option.

Faced with so many issues, as Castro and Calil Jr. (2014) point out, school librarians should be alert to the new public in schools: digital natives. These young people need differentiated attention and actions focused on their profile. This is another challenge for librarians working in schools.

Digital Natives

We are facing a generation of people who have been born with the internet, computers, and video games. It is a generation that dominates well the technology, uses cell phone, tablet, television remote control. This generation can assume different denominations, according to different authors. If the nomenclature is not well defined, the characteristics of this group are: those born after the invention of information and communication technologies, who spend much of their time connected, which makes the differentiation between real and digital not always clear to them.

For the purpose of this article we chose to use the term Digital Natives, according to Palfrey and Gasser (2011), who characterize them as those who have access to digital technologies, have the skills to deal with these technologies and spend most of their lives connected, without being able to distinguish their life online from their offline experience.

Lemos highlights (2009) that this generation is made up of subjects who want information quickly and are accustomed to multitasking. Thus “digital natives live immersed in different learning communities, opening several windows at the same time” (Lemos, 2009, p. 39).

Information Science, mainly Librarianship, in Brazil, still focused little on the topic of Digital Natives. The search in databases has few results, which demonstrates the need to reflect more about it. Especially in the case of the School Library, which acts directly with these new subjects, it is essential to understand them and understand what they think about the library and the librarian.

METHODOLOGY

The research was developed in two stages, the first being the non-participant observation, and the second the interviews with students from an ethnographic perspective. The research was previously submitted and approved by the research ethics committee, since in addition to involving human beings, it involved minors. Three schools were searched, each with a specificity in the school library issue.

School A is public, located in the municipality of Belo Horizonte, and has what we can call a traditional school library. The school serves students from 6 to 14 years old, in fundamental school (grades 1-9) and has classes in 2 shifts. (In Brazil, students have classes in a shift of about 4 hours and a half. There are students who study in the morning, others study in the afternoon, and some schools offer the night shift for students who work or engage in other activity during the day. Teachers usually teach in more than one shift.) In this school, the research was developed in the afternoon shift, with students from 12 to 14 years old (grades 7-9, approaching the American middle school). The library is in the back of the school, and has a good physical space. Its collection is placed on shelves and there are four tables in the space. It does not have the ideal capacity for an entire class at the same time, but when it is necessary some adaptations can be made. The responsible librarian works in this and also in two other schools, so she acts as coordinator. In addition to the librarian, the library staff is composed of 2 library assistants and

2 teachers in function deviation. The library is open uninterruptedly from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, including lunch time.

School B is a private school, for K-12 students, and has a small library with a limited collection. The school library, as in school A, is also located at the back of the school. In this library, the operation is very restricted, being opened 12 hours a week with the librarian, to attend the 2 shifts. In this way, the library functions for a few periods in the week, which does not create a habit of library use by the students. Although the librarian is only present at school for a few hours a week, some teachers use the space for diversified classes. In this school, the research was performed in the morning shift, including students between 14 and 18 years old, grades 8-12.

School C is also a K-12 private school, but it has a very special teaching method. Its method presupposes a change in the teaching perspective. The lectures were replaced by a methodology of individual study guides, in the perspective of inquiry learning. Within these premises, the traditional classrooms were transformed into halls of knowledge, where the students of the same cycle (the cycles for them correspond somehow to the grades) share the space and the teachers. Thus, the library, in 2015, also changed: the collection was arranged in the knowledge halls, according to the age group and the disciplines/subjects of knowledge. There is a librarian that works in the school, whose function is related basically to the collection technical processing. The users control the circulation themselves. Therefore, during the whole period that the student is in school, in class, he is present in the library or, at least, he is near some part of the collection. The research was performed in the morning shift, with students aged 13 to 18 years, corresponding to grades 9-12.

The observation occurred in the period of 03 (three) months, in place, according to each observed library system. The months of observation served to know each school and, according to their specificities, the observation was different in each one. At school A, the observation was held in the library during the whole class shift. This choice of place of observation was due to the fact that the library was busy and used by the students. At school B, since the time the library was opened was short, the students rarely attended the space, so it was decided to do the observation in the classroom, following one of the teachers of the school. Finally, at school C, due to its own characteristics, the observation was made in the hall of knowledge of Languages and Humanities, where classroom and library were in the same environment.

OBSERVATION RESULTS

The observations pointed out some questions for reflection. As said, in each school the observation was made in a different way, but always focused on the students, so as to know them and to understand how they deal with the information, the books, and, consequently, the library. At school A, it could be observed that, at the beginning of the semester, most of the students looked for the library space as a quiet place to use the cell phone. Thus, about 15 students were seen at break time (they usually have a break time of 15 minutes between 3rd and 4th classes), lying on the floor using the cell phone. This situation changed over the months from the work of the library staff, who sought to carry out activities that stimulated the use of books and library space for reading.

At school B, the observation began in the library, but with the dismissal of the librarian at the very beginning of the fieldwork and the short time that the library was open to the students, we began to observe the classroom of a certain teacher. Thus, we could get to know the students of 06 classes, following how they seek the knowledge and deepening the relation with the subjects of the research. It could be noticed that, for the most part, the boys showed more interest in the class than the girls. In addition to showing more attention, interacting more, relating the new information to the previous information, they promoted many reflections beyond what was being explained by the teacher.

At school C observation made it possible to see in the same space the lesson and the use of the library. It was found that the use of the collection was rather limited to what was requested in the study scripts. As previously stated, in this school students study through pre-written scripts given by the teachers. In these scripts, it was already indicated the text book or the material that should be read to

answer the questions. It was noticeable that the students did not go beyond what was indicated. As for the literary collection, the students seldom used it.

Based on the observations, the students were selected for the ethnographic perspective interview. Thus, the interview had the proposal of being almost a conversation, so that the subjects felt the willingness to expose their opinions. In that way, even if the script was reasonably long, the interview was light and allowed the participants to talk freely and express themselves.

INTERVIEW RESULTS

As mentioned before, the present paper proposes to think the question of the walls in the library, trying to answer the following question: for this new generation, would breaking the physical barriers of the school library be the solution? Thus, the data collected in the interviews will be analyzed from this perspective: the relation of the students with the physical space of the library.

Through observation it was possible to affirm that the library is a space that many students use not only to take a book, either literature or textbook, but also where they can spend free time. In school A, at break, the place was very crowded. By option of the library staff, at each break time (at school there were two) only 15 students could stay at the same time inside the library. Access cards were issued and these were well disputed. At school B, the library was sparsely attended and the students did not know the place or the possibility of using it. At school C, since the library and the classroom were merged in the knowledge halls, where the classes took place, library was not perceived as a specific space.

The conclusion that the school library can be a space not only for reading, but also for coexistence, socialization, coming from the observations, was reinforced by the interviews.

Students highlight the library as a place of socialization, as an alternative space to the classroom. When these students are asked about their ideal library, the description of a dedicated space is unanimous. Among the students attending school C, where the library was willing to break the walls of the library, one emphasized that its ideal library would have walls: (...) *I think it [the ideal library] had to have a cozy climate, so, wall ... is ... few windows like that with glasses, just to take a breath ...*

Students idealize the library as a separate space from the classroom, a place where they can attend and use the services.

In the students' speeches, it is also possible to perceive that the librarian has an important role for the good use of school library. All of the interviewees highlight the need for a person to make the mediation between the collection and them. (...) *for instance, if I'm looking for such a thing, then the person follows the whole process to find the book (...)*.

Thus, data indicate that students appreciate the library space and value the work of professionals who help them in the search for the information they seek.

CONCLUSION

The paper proposed to analyze how the physical rupture of the library walls would be positive for the students' attendance by digital natives. After analyzing the data, it was noticeable that these students actually have a different relationship with the information, but the existence of a structured library space is important to them.

Possibly, breaking the barriers of the library is something that must be done not physically, but by the professional acting there. In library C, in which the fixed breakage of the walls and the approximation of the users to the collection were observed, it was also observed that the librarian's function was very restricted. She did not have the opportunity to play the role of information mediator, which could encourage a much valuable use of the collection for the school's new pedagogical proposal. It is concluded, therefore, that it is up to the librarian to establish a relationship with the students and, consequently, to assist them in the use of the school library. Many of the students indicate that they like to have their own books, at home, but they enjoy the library space. They appreciate the library environment and the possibility of using it.

In this way, the research indicates the librarian's need to improve her / his performance in order to connect with the students and connect them to the school library.

The limitation of the research is obviously related to the number of cases studied (3), which allowed us to explore reality, but was insufficient for any generalization. Proposed future studies may, for example, compare the reality of public school libraries with private education in a municipality, map quantitatively the views of students on school libraries by municipality, among others.

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