Description and Evaluation of the Information Literacy Program in a Private School in Lebanon: A Case Study

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The purpose of this study was to describe the information literacy program offered through the library of a private elementary school in Beirut, to evaluate its effectiveness, and to formulate recommendations for improving library programs in similar schools. This was done through examining the components of the school library and the perceptions of librarians, teachers, students and parents related to the role of the school library. Study participants consisted of all students and teachers of second and fourth grades, 18 parents, and the librarian and assistant librarian. Data was collected through teacher questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with the librarian and assistant librarian, phone interviews with parents, and observations of student to librarian and teacher to librarian interactions during library class sessions. Results of the study showed the role of the school library in developing students’ information literacy skills and in motivating students to read. The librarian’s instruction as well as her positive attitudes towards students enhanced lessons and helped students learn information literacy skills. However, results from the observation sessions showed little interaction between teachers and librarian. Parents’ interviews revealed that most parents were not aware of the library program at their children’s school.

Introduction

There is a general agreement in the school library literature that the purpose of a school library program is to help students become information literate lifelong learners by teaching them effective and responsible use of information in all formats. The school library is seen as a focal resource of a school curriculum; it provides not only books and other resources, but also instruction and activities that support classroom learning.
Developing information literacy has, indeed, become the heart of the school library’s functions. Information literacy is the ability to identify which information is needed and when it is needed; it is also the ability to locate, evaluate and use information for a purpose (American Association of School Librarians and Association for Educational Communications and Technology [AASL/AECT], 1998). Information literacy is considered essential “to the pursuit of lifelong learning, and central to achieving both personal and economic development” (Bruce, 2002, p. 1).

This paper describes and evaluates the information literacy program implemented through the library of a private elementary school in Beirut. To our knowledge, there have been no similar studies conducted in the Lebanese context about information literacy programs in elementary school libraries. This case study is intended to provide insight into the implementation and practice of such information literacy programs.

**Background and Framework**

The information literacy program in the school’s library is guided by the standards set forth in *Information Power* by the American Association of School Librarians and Association for Educational Communication and Technology (AASL/AECT, 1998). According to *Information Power*, the school library program should be focused on improving teaching and learning by providing information literacy programs characterized by authentic student learning and aiming at creating a community of learners. Effectiveness of these programs requires “collaboration, leadership, and technology” (AASL/AECT, 1998, p. 47), that is, leadership and commitment by school administration, budgets that promote wide use of technology, teachers willing to make effective use of the library and collaborate with the librarians, and efforts by the librarians to enhance, enact and reinforce the above and to link their role to the school curriculum. The school library program should reflect the school’s mission and goals for student achievement and ensure that students and teachers are “effective users of ideas and information” (AASL/AECT, 1998, p. 6), and that the program is “dynamic, enthusiastic and student centered” (p. 2).

In this study, the library’s information literacy program was assessed with regards to its ability to help students learn to use research skills independently as stated in the school’s library mission statement: "provide instruction in acquiring, using, and evaluating information and ideas.” The literature on information literacy offers many different definitions of the term (Herring, in press). Herring describes the "information literate student” (p. 1) as one capable of locating and evaluating relevant sources of information, transferring those skills to other settings, and reflecting on what information to select and where to use it. The primary goal of information literacy skills instruction is to empower students to go beyond the limited information found in textbooks and to help them become self-sufficient users of information (Iowa City Community School District [ICCSD], 2004; Smith, 2005).

The school library supports the school curriculum by being an extension of the classroom. Thus, a specific unit of study can start in the classroom and continue in the
library which serves as a ‘research center’ for teachers and students where resources in a variety of formats can be used to extend learning activities (AASL/AECT, 1998; Miller & Anderson, 2002; Smith, 2005) in a safe, comfortable and positive learning environment (Champion, 1993). The school library program also can motivate students to become active readers by exposing them to a wide range of age appropriate resources in all formats that reflect their experiences and interests (American Library Association [ALA], 2006; Credaro, 2002; Thomas, 2004; Smith, 2005). School librarians encourage reading through various activities in the library such as reading aloud, book clubs, book talks, literature circles, book displays and group discussions, through "sustained silent reading, self selected reading, and extensive reading" (Krashen, 1993, p. 2).

Integrating information literacy skills into the curriculum, especially into classroom instruction, as Doll (2005) suggests, requires planning and cooperative teaching between the librarian and the classroom teacher. Collaboration can be achieved when both have shared goals, similar visions for students’ achievement, and mutual respect for each other’s expertise (Brodie, 2006). The librarian’s expertise in information skills, strategies and resources, together with the teacher’s knowledge of the curriculum and diversified teaching methods can help students acquire the skills needed to live in the information age (Buzzeo, 2002). Collaboration is the key to building partnerships for learning. It has a vital role since the librarian works with teachers, administrators, parents and other members of the learning community to “plan, design, and implement programs that provide access to information that is required to meet students’ and others’ learning goals” (AASL/AECT, 1998, p. 51). O’Connell (2002) argues that when learners acquire the skills needed to learn and find information and construct knowledge rather than having it transmitted, education becomes an authentic learning experience which develops students’ lifelong ability to learn.

**Research Methodology**

This descriptive and evaluative case study was conducted in a school selected because it has a library program that distinguishes it from the majority of Lebanese private schools which vary widely in the level of their library services. To our knowledge, only few other schools (about seven schools, mainly international schools in Lebanon) invest in library provisions and teacher librarians for their students. The selected school is a private school in Beirut that caters for all levels from kindergarten to grade 12 (3 year-old to 18 year-old students). It offers Lebanese and French Baccalaureate programs, the English-language International Baccalaureate program, and College Preparatory programs. It caters for 2508 students among whom 737 students are at the elementary level (6 to 12 years old). It is a reputable, multicultural institution based on the concepts of American education. Four directors run the different levels (preschool, elementary school, middle school and high school). Each of these level-based sub-schools has its own suitably resourced library. The present study considers particularly the library of the elementary school.
**Participants**

Participants in this study included members of the library staff, teachers, students and parents. The librarian and the assistant librarian at the elementary school library, teachers of all subjects at the second and fourth elementary grade levels, all students in the second and fourth grades, and a sample of students’ parents participated in the study.

At the time of the study, the librarian (40 years old) and the assistant librarian (60 years old) had several years of experience in the elementary school library. Twenty-three teachers (19 females and four males) taught the various subjects at the second and fourth grade levels. Their age ranged between 27 and 40 years old, and their teaching experience ranged from 1 to 22 years of experience.

Students of the second and fourth grade levels were selected to provide information about the quality of information literacy skills learned at the elementary grade levels. Second grade students were chosen because they would have just begun their exposure to the library’s information literacy program; fourth graders were chosen to allow an assessment of their skills acquired after two years of exposure to the program. Students of each grade level are distributed in three classes (sections A, B and C), and each class includes 26 to 28 students. In all, 166 students were involved in the study. Parents were interviewed for their perceptions and opinions about their children’s information literacy skills.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Official approval for conducting the study at school was secured from the school administration. Sampled teachers were informed by the director about the purpose of the project. Letters were sent to parents in order to get their permission for conducting interviews with their children; as well, 18 parents consented to participate in the study. All participants and school principal were assured confidentiality and anonymity.

Qualitative and quantitative methods for collecting data were used to complement one another and to allow triangulation of findings. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews and library class observations.

*Interviews with Librarians*

Semi-structured interviews with the librarian and the assistant librarian were conducted. The 16 interview questions explored the extent and process of librarian’s and assistant librarian’s collaboration with teachers, the way they support the curriculum and assist teachers in helping students acquire information literacy skills, and the amount of time they spend formally teaching groups of students or library visitors. The interviews took place in the library and were audio taped. The duration of each interview was about thirty minutes.

*Questionnaire*

A questionnaire was administered to the 23 teachers of second and fourth grade classes. The purpose was to determine the way in which teachers collaborate with the librarian,
the way they teach information literacy skills in their classroom, and their perception of the library’s role in promoting information literacy skills. The questionnaire consisted of a set of 35 Likert scale statements, one matching question and one open-ended question. The Likert scale statements were formulated based on a set of criteria developed on the basis of an extensive review of literature (e.g., Bruce, 2002; Carnegie, 2002; Hartzell, 2002; Krashen, 1993; Miller & Anderson, 2002; Ryan & Capra, 2001; Scheirer, 2000; Thomas, 2004; Todd, 1999; Turner & Rielding, 2003).

The Likert scale part of teachers’ questionnaire included statements about the library’s physical layout, relationship between teachers and the librarian, and effectiveness of the school library program. The matching question examined the specific literacy skills that students are supposed to acquire from their library instruction, and the open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire investigated teachers’ perceptions of the information literacy program effectiveness and their views about its implementation.

The questionnaire was piloted with three teachers of third grade classes of the same school, providing a sample of teachers with similar characteristics of school culture. Piloting the questionnaire allowed to identify and rectify ambiguities, poorly worded questions, and unclear choices. It also indicated whether the instructions to the respondents were clear. For example, the statement “The space arrangement in our school library sufficiently accommodates reading and research activities” was changed to “Our school library is well designed for reading and research activities” for more clarity to respondents.

**Focus Group Interviews with Students**

Upon parents’ approval, six focus group interviews, three for each grade level, were conducted with groups of three students each (18 students in total). The group discussions allowed students to exchange ideas and express their opinions. The interview questions covered the same themes for all groups, but their formulation and wording were modified to meet the reading and comprehension level of each grade. The aim of these focus group interviews was to determine the extent and quality of their use of library resources, the kind of assistance and instruction they got from the librarians, and whether they were able to use research skills appropriate to their age level, namely, locate, use and evaluate the information.

For the composition of student groups, the help of grade level coordinators was sought for the selection of three students from each grade/section, according to their level of achievement (high, average and low). Each group was thus composed of three students from the same class, with different achievement levels. All interviews were audio-taped upon the permission of the interviewees’ parents. Audiotapes were later transcribed for analysis.

**Phone Interviews with Parents**

The parents of the 18 children selected for focus group interviews were asked to participate in phone interviews. The aim was to elicit their views concerning the school’s
library program and the way it enhanced their children’s information literacy skills. Each phone interview included 16 questions and lasted around 20 minutes.

**Observations**

Six observations of library classes were conducted, each with one of the 6 sample sections, during storytelling and/or research activity sessions. The purpose of the observation was to examine the interaction between librarian and students, between teacher and students and between librarian and teachers. Frequencies and directions of those interactions were recorded to identify the dominant members who participated in the discussion. The “Verbal Flow chart” technique was used. Students in each class section were identified by number codes such as, student #1, #2...and so on and represented by circles in the flow chart. The librarian, teacher and assistant librarian were represented by rectangular boxes in the middle of the flow charts. Arrows were drawn from the box or the circle representing the participant making a comment or asking a question to the box/circle of the other participant to whom the comment/question was directed. A counting number was then placed in the middle of each arrow of a participant student to indicate the number of times he/she made a verbal interaction. Six flow charts, one for each class section, were constructed.

**Data Analysis**

Simple descriptive statistics were used to analyze the questionnaire data. Frequency tables were used to show the percentages of agreement/disagreement with the Likert scale statements. The results of the questionnaires were linked to the research questions to provide elements of answers about the effectiveness of the information literacy program that is being implemented by the selected school library.

The interviews were transcribed and major themes and codes, considered to be criteria for answering the research questions, were developed. Data from the interviews and observation notes were classified under those themes and codes according to the following scheme:

1) Role of the library in developing children’s information literacy skills
   - Physical layout and library services
   - Collection of resources
   - Staff sufficiency
   - Staff knowledge and qualification
   - Staff’s attitude towards library users

2) Librarians’ relationship to school constituents
   - Collaboration and relationship with teachers
   - Relationship with the Director

3) Implementing the information literacy library program in the library
   - Motivating students to read
   - Providing instruction and practicing information literacy skills
   - Evaluation of skills

4) Other issues
As for the observation charts, interactions were coded and classified according to their number and direction. Results from the questionnaires, interviews and observations were compared in order to increase the trustworthiness of the results of the study (triangulation of data).

Findings of the Study
The results of this study are presented here according to the themes related to the research question, the recommendations of Information Power namely leadership, collaboration, authentic student learning, and library program’s connectedness to the curriculum and the community, and the four standards for libraries: collaboration, information literacy skills, use of technology, and reading for pleasure. Information literacy skills and use of technology are combined together for their relatedness.

The participant school considers its information literacy program as an integral part of the school curriculum which, according to the school’s mission statement, aims to "develop and consolidate a range of learning skills with emphasis on the acquisition of new concepts through deduction and generalizations, using critical thinking as well as hands-on experiences."

Collaboration
The school librarians collaborate with teachers in planning and teaching, assist students and teachers, and provide them with resources in three languages (Arabic, English and French) and in a wide variety of formats.

Access and Friendly Environment
Classes have access to the library through both fixed and flexible scheduling, which allows students to access the library during breaks or upon teacher’s request. The interviewed librarian, assistant librarian and parents agreed that the library’s role is to “provide students with intellectual and physical access to materials, in addition to encouraging students to read and become information literate.” This seemed clear during the observation of several activity sessions held in the library, which aimed to help students acquire the basic information literacy skills.

Most teachers "strongly agreed" that their school library is organized and designed so students can read or work comfortably and that its welcoming atmosphere invites students to visit. All teachers of the second and fourth grades agreed that the number of hours the library is open during a school day is adequate to the teachers' and students' needs and that the "library provides students and teachers with resources that support the school curriculum.” They also agreed that the library "provides access to a full range of resources in all formats (print and electronic).”

The interviewed students confirmed that they go to the library once or twice a week to read, work on their research or try to find what they need and that the librarian and assistant librarian are always there to help. The children found the library to be a "very friendly” place to sit, read and listen to a story “because it’s peaceful and quiet.” They "feel welcome because it’s a school library and we can just walk in and borrow books, and if we
didn’t find the books we want, we ask the librarians”. They use the library “within my schedule and during recess to sit, read, use the computers or get more knowledge,” and “check out books, do research and educate my mind.” The above findings are consistent with findings of Limberg and Alexandersson (2003) that students view libraries as places for leisure, refuge and knowledge, and of Breivik (1998) and Champion (1993) that the library should be a "natural home" that provides a safe, comfortable and positive learning environment.

**Curriculum-related Activities**

Students came with their teachers to the library upon prior reservation made by the teacher. Storytelling and research activities held in the library were based on the unit being taught around that period of time in the classroom.

Data from interviews revealed a friendly relationship between librarians and teachers. The librarian said that teachers appreciate the work done in the library and “feel that the librarian has her own technique of explaining” (Librarian’s interview).

Data from questionnaires supported this and confirmed that the library provides a schedule that allows students to visit the library in order to read, listen to stories or do research.

The analysis of observation flow charts affirmed that the librarian showed interest, answered questions immediately, and interacted frequently with students. The observation sessions revealed that the librarian called all the students by name to ask if they had any questions or to elicit responses.

**Librarian-Teachers’ Relationship**

The librarian stated that she promotes the library program with the teachers and seeks out opportunities to consult with and inform them about the activities in the library. She usually asks them about the unit they are teaching in the classroom and what kinds of information they are going to search for, and shows them the worksheets she has prepared for the library session. Both the librarian and the assistant librarian stated that there is a good relationship with teachers who usually appreciate the work done in the library.

Data from teachers’ questionnaires confirmed this kind of relationship. However, they showed that some teachers were not knowledgeable about the library program or about skills that their students should be learning. Observation data revealed a friendly relationship, but showed, as well, that the majority of teachers do not collaborate with the librarian during library sessions, nor do they get thoroughly involved with implementing the research activity in the library. Interaction was rare between the librarians and the teacher during the library class sessions. For example, during the observation of grade 2A (storytelling session), there was no interaction between the librarian and the teacher; also, while observing a research activity for grade 4B, there were only three interactions between the teacher and the librarian (Observation Flow charts). So, despite a respectful collaborative relationship between them as recommended
by Bruce (2002), little interaction was observed between the librarian and the teacher during the library class session.

However, the literature recommends a higher level of collaboration between teacher librarians and classroom teachers. For example, librarians can teach students information literacy skills and techniques that are needed in current classroom assignments and also reinforce what was learned in class, as recommended by Herring (in press). In his study, the teacher librarian introduced students to the technique of mind mapping and showed them how to use and go back to their mind maps while writing classroom essays. Thus, the librarian supported and reinforced classroom learning.

More specifically, Weibel (1992) and ALA (2006) recommend that school librarians should collaborate with teachers to design and implement projects that engage students in developing critical thinking and research skills. Doll (2005) found that the school library program’s success depends on collaboration, cooperative program planning and cooperative teaching between the librarian and the teacher. The above results come to unveil a problem in the perceptions that teachers have about their and the librarians’ roles. It seems that they see them as two separate roles whereby they teach the subject matter and the librarians teach information literacy. They do not perceive these two domains as integrated.

Parents’ Involvement
Data from the parents’ interviews revealed that they rarely or almost never visit their child’s library, although they like to be more involved “in what’s going on... because my children don’t talk about what’s happening with them in the school.” They are not fully aware of the school library program and are not involved in the library processes. One parent did not even know that she could visit the library; others were unaware of what their children learn during their library classes, “to be honest, I don’t know anything about the library” (Parent’s interview). The librarian stated that she does not invite parents to participate in library activities, “the parents are not really involved in the library activities.” This finding is not in harmony with the recommendations found in ALA (2006), Henri and Boyd (2002), and Hartzell (2002), for example, that librarians need to build a positive relationship between the school library and all members of the learning community. Effort is strongly needed to involve parents in the library program and activities.

Relationship with the Director
The librarian and the assistant librarian said they have full support of the school director, “definitely, hundred percent.” They confirmed that she cares for the library, encourages all its activities, suggests new ideas, and raises important issues about the library and its program during the faculty meetings: “she’s very involved, she’s very caring for the library” (Librarians’ interview).

Most teachers agreed that the school director supports the library, is aware of the school library program, encourages the integration of the library program into unit planning, and consults with the teachers about the school library program. This shows
consistency with the criteria set by many publications on school library programs (e.g. Henri & Boyd, 2002; Van Vliet, 1999).

**Information Literacy and Use of Technology**

**Basic Information Literacy Skills**

The librarians listed, in the interviews, specific information literacy skills necessary for grade 2 and grade 4 students to develop: “how to handle a book, knowledge of the parts of a book, how to check out books,… differentiate between fiction and nonfiction books… between opinion and facts, how books are shelved in the library, and how to use the resources (both books and computers)” (Librarians’ interview).

Data from questionnaires revealed that most teachers agreed that their students know how the library is organized according to the shelving system, how to check out books and how to find information independently in nonfiction books, dictionaries and encyclopedias. Most teachers agreed that their students know how to handle books with care and are able to identify parts of a book such as title, author, illustrator and so on.

Similarly, interviews with parents showed that most of their children know how to identify parts of a book, how to handle a book without damaging it and how to get a book from the shelf. Most parents believed that their children are good researchers and have the necessary research skills for their age.

In the focus group interviews, students said that they are able to identify parts of a book, “when you open the book you see the title and the picture, you open a book, you see again the title, author and the illustrator” (Grade 2 students’ interview). They demonstrated that books should be held in two hands and should be kept in “good shape”; pages should be turned softly so “you don’t rip it” and that it should not be dropped into water because “the papers will get wet and the book will get ruined” (Grade 2 students’ interview). Most grade 2 students and all grade 4 students know that there is a library catalog which they can use to locate a book in the library: “like when you want to find Harry Potter, you go to the internet to x website, click on library, click on library catalog and then you put the title of the book, it gives you the number and then you go to the shelf and get the book” (Grade 4 students’ interview).

Based on the above, the library under study fulfils the recommendations found in many publications, such as Abilock (2004), AASL (2006) and ALA’s (2006), that the school library should play an important role in helping students acquire basic information literacy skills. Carnegie (2002) considered libraries to be places where people of all ages can get help with their learning needs; this help could be in the form of a program, a scheduled lesson in the library, a one-on-one tutoring session, or just-in-time lessons from the librarian or library staff member. Data from the focus group interviews in this case study indicated that students are using the library regularly during their scheduled hours or during their recess to sit, read, listen to a story, conduct research and use the computers. This finding is consistent with the studies by Miller and Anderson (2002) and Todd (1999) that the librarian can provide students with literacy skills practice through an open and flexible schedule where students can visit the library on a daily
basis to meet their needs or upon the teacher’s request. The researcher found that the participating school is achieving that role in the literature.

**Direct Instruction and Practice of Information Literacy Skills**

Information literacy skills in this context include reading, research skills, and use of library resources. In her interview the assistant librarian stated that the library program supports the school curriculum and teachers by providing students with instruction on how to search and find information: “our main goal is to teach students information literacy skills which can be done by providing instruction as well as designing activities to practice these skills” (Librarians’ interview).

The students’ interviews indicated that they felt comfortable asking the librarian and the assistant librarian for instruction on how to use a specific resource in the library such as encyclopedias, nonfiction books and library catalog as well as the Internet.

The results of five observation sessions of research activities on recycling and plagiarism revealed that in both grade levels the librarian gives information about the topic. She also provides instruction on how to find and use specific resources that answer students’ questions.

Teachers’ questionnaires indicated that most teachers (15) agreed that their students learn information literacy skills from the librarian’s instruction during the library class and that the library program provides instruction that helps their students to become independent users of information. All except one of the teachers agreed that the program integrates the use of technology for students to learn and use research skills.

**Displays**

Students found that the library displays, especially those put up for special days, make the library an inviting place to visit. Most teachers indicated that they can display their students’ work in the school library. This was affirmed by most of the interviewed students, but they added that it mainly happens during special occasions, “mostly during the Reading Week when we have to make our book cover” (Grade 4 students’ interview).

Thus the library under study satisfies to a certain degree the recommendations made by Daniels (2002), Krashen (1993), and Turner and Rielding (2003) that the school library media program can be enhanced by developing displays that show students’ work and celebrate holidays and special occasions. However, it may need to make this practice more regular, not only on special occasions, so that students and teachers would feel that they have at the library space that is always available for their displays. Such a space, as compared to the classroom, has the advantage that it is a public space, which makes the displays a way of communication and exchange of ideas to the whole school community.

**Expert Help**

A successful library media program requires an adequate number of qualified librarians (ALA, 2006; Hartzell, 2002; Kuhlthau, 1987). Students best acquire information literacy
skills that they need to become independent and active life-long learners when taught by an expert in the field.

Most teachers affirmed that their library had sufficient qualified librarians, and the observation data revealed that the librarian was highly enthusiastic and receptive when interacting with students. For example, during the storytelling activity, one student made 16 interactions with the librarian; and during a research activity, another student made 11 interactions with the librarian (Grade 2A and 4A flow chart). In both instances, the librarian listened and responded to every question that the students raised.

Students’ interviews showed that they usually asked the librarian and the assistant librarian to help them use the computer to search for books or find information, “if we can’t find the information and the books we want, we usually ask the librarians” (Grade 2 students’ interview). However, not all the teachers agreed that their school library has sufficient librarians even though they agreed that their students were learning information literacy skills from the librarian.

Reading for Pleasure

All students said they could easily find books they like to read in their school library, and half of them would like to take out more books per week “six books to read them every time” (Grade 2 students’ interview). They also agreed that the library has enough computers connected to the Internet.

Students’ interest in books was observed in action when, at the end of each observation session, all grade 2 and grade 4 students chose books to check out. The interviewed parents agreed that their children borrow books regularly, find interesting things to read, and are happy with the books that are available in the school library.

The above findings show that the school library under study satisfies Ghikas’ (2001) recommendation that the library should provide to the largest possible number of individuals’ access to, and delivery of the largest amount of resources. It also goes along the recommendation by Credaro (2002), Thomas (2004), ALA (2006), ICCSD (2004) and Smith (2005) that readers should be motivated with varieties of age appropriate resources.

Students’ Book Talking

Students’ interviews revealed that they usually discuss the books they have read with their friends, not with the librarian because "she is so busy" (Grade 2 students’ interview). The librarian usually conducts book talks and read-aloud activities that encourage them to read and gives them the chance to read to younger children, “now in May we gonna read to small kids” (Grade 4 students’ interview).

Data from interviews and questionnaires indicated that the library program promoted reading through activities such as reading aloud and book talks on some occasions such as National Reading Week or International School Library Day. The librarian or teacher reads aloud to students. It is common practice that the librarian “organizes book talks…whenever they have new acquisitions or before any long vacation such as Easter or Christmas” (Librarian’s interview).
Most teachers confirmed that their school library program fosters reading and noted that the librarian invites local authors to visit the library and meet students during school year in an attempt to motivate reading.

The above findings reflect the role that the library is playing in motivating students to read, based on Krashen’s (1993) assertions that the school library media program motivates students to read through various library activities such as reading aloud, book talks, book displays and group discussions, and on Doiron’s (2003) that information technology, fun reading strategies and quality children’s books promote literacy.

By recapitulating all the above evidence, we can claim that the studied school library program supports school curriculum and teachers, and helps students acquire information literacy skills by providing both instruction and skill practice. It possesses the features outlined by AASL (1998) which stated that the main aspect for the success of the school library program is to have the librarian instruct both students and teachers on the effective use of all resources. This study is also in harmony with the findings of ICCSD (2004), Thomas (2004), and Smith (2005) who believed that engaging and challenging library activities can help students acquire information literacy skills, and with Miller and Anderson (2002) and Todd (1999) who stated that the school library media program helps students develop the information literacy skills by providing instruction that has direct application to the classroom curriculum.

Findings about the basic information literacy skills that grade 2 and grade 4 students have developed are in harmony with Thomas’ (2004) recommendations, and results matched the findings by Turner and Rielding (2003) that the school library media program encourages and engages students in reading, and provides students with all the skills to access, obtain, use and evaluate information. These skills are essential for developing in students what O’Connell (2002) calls "meaningful authentic learning" whereby students construct knowledge rather than act as passive receivers of information.

Conclusion

This study attempted to show the role that the library plays in developing children’s information literacy skills. The physical layout and services of the library invite students and teachers to use print and non print resources that support the curriculum and offer leisure reading opportunities. The availability of sufficient, knowledgeable staff and their positive attitude towards library users encourages the use of the library and so does their positive, friendly and respectful relationship with teachers and students.

The librarian’s readiness, availability and skill in providing instruction, answering questions and encouraging inquiry promote the development of information literacy skills. However, the study showed that few parents were aware of the information literacy program at their children’s library, that teachers were not fully involved in the library program, and that students had few opportunities for talking about the books they have read.
Recommendations and Implications for Practice

The study has explored and discussed the information literacy program in one Beirut private elementary school. This is an aspect of education that is neglected in most Lebanese schools. The findings of this study have set the stage for a number of future studies which could help lead to an understanding of the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of library programs in similar schools.

In this case study, some positive aspects relating to the implementation of the library program at the elementary level in the participant school were identified. The school has successfully built up the library collection according to criteria based on the school curriculum as well as on the students’ interests. The librarians need to keep up their positive attitude and eager willingness when dealing with and helping library users and when conducting library activities that encourage students to read.

Closer collaboration between librarians and teachers is needed, however, if the school wants to develop information literate students. More involvement by teachers in designing and implementing the library program, creating activities, and working with students during library classes is recommended. Teachers need to coordinate more closely with the librarians through informing them about units currently being taught and about students’ preferred activities. Overall, the teaching of information literacy skills and techniques needs to be integrated into the school curriculum to ensure their acquisition and transfer.

More involvement of parents in the school library activities is recommended. This might be fostered through a variety of tools and activities. A booklet outlining the policy, rules and regulations of the library, as well as information about the library program, would be a tool to help parents and the school community get acquainted with and involved in the library’s activities. The librarians might disseminate information to parents about activities scheduled to be held in the library and then report to parents at the end of a class unit how their children’s literacy skills evolved. Other initiatives might be to develop a book club for parents, or to assign a “parents’ day” every month so that parents can visit the library, read to their children, and help in the implementation of library activities.

The approaches to motivating student reading used by the classroom teachers and the librarians should be examined. The students have expressed their desire for access to more books and for more opportunities to talk with others about the books they are reading. Both increased access to books and frequent opportunities to engage in book talking are factors that have been shown to motivate students’ engagement as readers (Krashen, 1993).

The results of case study research such as this study of one school cannot be generalized to other schools, but it could give insight to others into the role that the library plays in this school and in other similar schools. Further research is recommended that includes a larger number and variety of schools (both private and public) to strengthen our understanding of information literacy programs and to help in advocating the need for information literacy programs in Lebanese schools. More
research should also be focused on how to increase collaboration between the librarian, teachers and parents as well as with the other members of the learning community.

References


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