

Need for Professionally Qualified Contract Librarians for Effective Library Services in Rural Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) in Gujarat: A Review

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Abstract

School libraries are considered crucial institutions for the development of reading culture, information literacy, digital learning, and lifelong learning, as outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. However, in rural Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) in Gujarat, the effective implementation of library services is hindered due to the non-availability of professionally qualified librarians, lack of proper ICT facilities, and delayed recruitment of librarians. This review critically analyzes the role of professionally qualified and contract librarians in providing continuity and quality of library services in EMRS in rural areas. This study uses a systematic narrative review approach and is based on the analysis of the latest academic research articles, government policy documents, and professional guidelines on school libraries, tribal education, NEP 2020, and library staffing. Significant research and policy gaps related to professional human resources in EMRS libraries were identified, and the correlation between the qualified human resources of the library and the quality of services was highlighted. It also confirms that professionally managed libraries can play a vital role in achieving educational equity, promoting reading, developing information competencies, and realizing the vision of NEP 2020. This study suggests evidence-based policy measures that can be taken to enable library services in rural EMRS to be strengthened by employing the appropriate professional manpower.

Keywords: Contract Librarians, Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), National Education Policy 2020, Rural School Libraries, School Library Services

1. Introduction

The school library has become more than a mere collection of books; it is a vibrant learning resource center that enables reading, information literacy, digital learning, critical thinking, and lifelong learning. Modern educational policies and international professional standards recognize the proper role of an effective school

library that can contribute to and enhance the teaching-learning process by dispensing and enriching knowledge resources equitably and by providing services that are learner-centered. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also supports this view by focusing on foundational literacy, reading culture, experiential learning, digital education, and holistic development of students, making school libraries more strategic in the context of ensuring quality education in India.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) are a government initiative of India to offer quality residential education to the ST students of the geographically remote and educationally backward areas. The EMRS libraries are residential libraries and are the main organized source of academic information for students. Indeed, tribal students have less access to public libraries or commercial learning centers and fewer learning resources through digital technology away from school than their urban peers. This implies that the school library has an immediate influence on students' academic engagement, self-directed learning, and learning outcomes.

While the infrastructure of EMRS has been expanding with good efforts, library services have not always been at the same rate or less. A review of the literature revealed the existence of many issues in rural school libraries, including inadequately trained librarians, poor ICT infrastructure, lack of library automation, and a lack of information literacy programmes. These constraints hamper the role of librarians as significant and active educational partners, as envisioned in the NEP 2020. However, what is more important is that the lack of professionally qualified librarians impacts the provision of core services, including collection development, reference services, promotion of reading, managing digital resources, and working with teachers.

Some of these issues have been exacerbated in several educational institutions due to the extended period since regular librarians were recruited. In this context, professionally qualified contract librarians may be a possible transitional solution that will ensure continuity of library services until permanent employment is made. However, the available literature has not given much attention to this policy option, especially for rural EMRS in Gujarat. This is a significant lacuna in the library and information science literature that has not been the subject of specific scholarly work.

The present review critically analyses the need for professionally qualified and contract librarians to improve library services in rural EMRS in Gujarat. To formulate evidence-based decisions for recent scholarly research, national education policies, and professional guidelines for assisting educational administrators, the National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS) was established to enhance school libraries and services as per the objectives of NEP 2020.

2. Review of Literature

It is apparent from the research and evidence of the past few years that the school library should not be perceived as a repository of books, but as a facilitator of learning, functioning as a knowledge hub that promotes reading culture, information literacy, digital learning, and lifelong learning. Professionally managed school libraries are a consistent part of quality education and student achievement, as recognized in international professional frameworks. The latest studies also reveal that physical facilities, information resources, and the availability of qualified individuals who can connect the use of the library to learning and teaching are important factors that influence the quality of the school library. The literature review in the current study yielded five themes.

2.1 School libraries and Quality Education

The school library's impact on reading practices, critical thinking, independent learning, and academic achievement has been demonstrated in recent research studies. School libraries have contributed to providing educational opportunities by emphasizing learning through experience, multilingual approaches, digital literacy, and learner-centered pedagogies since the inception of NEP 2020. Researchers are universally in agreement that libraries need to serve as a place for learning and not simply as repositories of books. However, the realization of these aims will depend on the provision of professional library services and competent staff.

2.2 Library Services in Rural and Tribal Schools

Research indicates that rural and tribal school libraries differ significantly from urban school libraries. The lack of educational resources, geographical isolation, and weak information services, and ICT resources make students more dependent on school libraries. The key areas of focus highlighted in the studies conducted on Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) were access to education, residential schooling, infrastructure, and policy implementation. Comparatively, fewer studies have been carried out on library services and their contribution to the quality of education. The development of libraries in tribal residential schools is thus a field that is relatively untouched in library and information science.

2.3 Professional Librarians and Library Effectiveness

Regardless of the material studied, one of the most consistent results from the literature reviewed is the well-documented importance of professionally qualified librarians in the development of school library services. Their duties go beyond normal circulation to collecting, information literacy instruction, digital resource management, reference services, reading promotion, user education, and instructional support with teachers. Several studies indicate that when library collections and technologies are funded, there are significant educational benefits only in the presence of competent library professionals. However, studies on the link between employee staffing and service quality in government-funded residential schools are still very few and descriptive.

2.4 NEP 2020 and School Library Development

The literature reviewed shows NEP 2020 as a paradigm-shifting policy that puts school libraries back on the agenda to ensure equal access to knowledge, digital learning, and lifelong learning. While the policy goals are elucidated in many publications, few critically examine the institutional conditions essential for the policy success. Specifically, there has been a lack of focus on professional human resources as a precursor to successfully implementing policy expectations for effective practices in libraries, particularly in rural educational environments.

2.5 Research Gap Emerging from the Literature

The findings highlight some key areas of deficiency. Previous research has been conducted on school libraries, NEP 2020, tribal education, library automation, and professional librarianship, which are treated as distinct areas of research. Few investigations combine these elements in a single analytical approach aimed at rural EMRS. Furthermore, the idea of having professionally qualified contract librarians as a transitional solution for the continuity of library services while the recruitment process is prolonged has

been scarcely discussed in scholarly literature. Likewise, there is a lack of data on EMRS library services in Gujarat. This review consolidates policy documents, professional guidelines, and recent literature and explores the contribution of professional and contract librarians to the enhancement of library services in rural EMRS.

3. Objectives

In the present review paper, an attempt has been made to critically analyze the role of professionally qualified contract librarians in enhancing library services in the Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) in rural areas of Gujarat. The specific Objectives are as follows:

1. To study the scenario of library services in rural EMRS in Gujarat.
2. To analyze the significance of professionally qualified librarians in enhancing school library services.
3. To check the content of NEP 2020 and other professional norms related to school libraries and school librarians.
4. To become aware of the main problems affecting the smooth operation of EMRS libraries, particularly in the staffing of the library.
5. To make evidence-based recommendations for enhancing library services based on effective human resource policy making.

4. Methodology

The qualitative narrative review method was adopted in this study to synthesize the relevant scholarly and policy literature on school libraries, Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), professional librarianship, and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. As this is a review paper, primary data was not collected.

The review is based on published literature sourced from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government reports, policy documents, and professional guidelines. The most recent literature (2021 onwards) is given special attention, while seminal policy documents and internationally accepted standards are considered where necessary. The sources include publications about School Library Development, tribal education, Library Management, information literacy, and Professional Staffing.

The thematic analysis of literature was used to critically analyze the literature. A series of themes emerged, repeated results were spotted, and policy views along with gaps in the research were identified and then brought together to understand the relationship between the effectiveness of library services in rural EMRS and professional librarians. The context of the study was mainly Gujarat with inputs from the literature which is relevant to school library development from all over India and also abroad.

5. Results and Discussion

The outcome of the literature review, literature documents and professional guides showed that the school library is not just a “Book store” in today's world but has its own importance in quality education. Resourcefulness in reading culture, experiential learning, information literacy, Digital education, and

lifelong learning being highlighted in the NEP 2020 as other domains of educational vision. These objectives significantly enhance the educational role of the library at school, and the library is able to provide affective learning for school education only by developed library administration. The results of the literature reviewed lead to the conclusion that infrastructure of the library is not only vital in achieving these policy goals; it also depends on qualified library personnel.

5.1 Professional librarians and quality library services

Simmons may have drawn the most consistent conclusion from the literature studied, and that is that there is a critical need for the school librarian to be professionally trained to improve services in the school library. School librarians have several roles and diverse and complex library responsibilities with respect to the above areas today. At present, school librarians have a range of roles and complex and varied responsibilities in these areas. These functions are not only associated with circulation but also can directly impact students' learning and self-learning. Therefore, the effectiveness of school library will not only rely on the physical resources, but will also rely on human resources who can facilitate the school library collections in the form of learning.

5.2 Difficulties faced in Rural EMRS Libraries

Numerous problems have been pointed out in the literature and they are related to the Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) Library Services in the rural areas. These include the lack of professional qualifications of librarians, delayed recruitment, inadequate ICT infrastructure, the lack of information automation, and lack of ICT resources, as well as lack of information literacy programme opportunity. Geographically located in far-flung tribal areas, school libraries are an important source of educational resources for many EMRS. Hence, the impact of weak library services could be more in the field of education in EMRS may be compared to that of the schools where the alternative sources of information are more available.

5.3 Contract Librarians as a Transitional Strategy

The literature review also revealed that there was no mention of professionally trained and qualified contract librarians as a temporary arrangement in the recruitment process for providing library services when recruitment takes a long time. In short-term appointments, the appointments are preferable, but in long term, a permanent appointment is preferable but has negative impact on continuity of library operation. The evidence in this paper indicates that once regular appointments expire, a competent contract librarian could fill the gap during the transition between appointments so that important library services, such as library management, promotion of reading, information literacy programs, and support for the digital information are maintained.

5.4 NEP 2020 Policy Implications

The results highlight the fact that NEP 2020 is clearly associated with the future of growth of school libraries. The policy fosters learning student-oriented, digital learning, multi-lingual learning resources, and intimacy culture that is based on the ability of Library professionals in carrying out Library services. International guidelines also concur that a school should be a place for learning and that the school library (SL) should be a part of the classroom. Thus, improving the professional manpower must also be considered as part and parcel of the vision of NEP 2020 for EMRS instead of administrative demand. Effective staffing

of the library is an essential factor to ensure the effective implementation of Library infrastructure in order to attain the desired educational outcomes.

5.5 Overall Discussion

Through the literature review it was found that there are studies already conducted on the two variables like school library and the two concepts like NEP'20, tribal education and library management separately. But in related aspects of rural EMRS in Gujarat, there is not much research/academic work done to date to integrate these dimensions. The research about effective use of the library services by professional staffing, however, is too light. This review therefore contributes to the literature by synthesizing that from both an educational policy and professional standards perspective, as well as that from the library science perspective, as to how professionally qualified library staff members were a key component of the quality of the education that took place at tribal residential schools. As per overall evidence, the improvement in functioning of human resources in the profession is seen as good strategy towards the improvement of library services and equality in education on EMRS in rural areas.

6. Findings

It is observed that school education objectives and vision described in NEP 2020 will remain only a dream, if the school libraries are not well managed. From the literature reviewed, it can be inferred that professionally trained librarians play an important role in promoting reading culture, information literacy and digital learning using the library resources. In the context of rural Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), the problems faced are the lack of professional staff, lack of timely recruitment of staff, lack of adequate ICT infrastructure and limited automation. availability of continuity in Library services in the form of professionally qualified Contract Librarians when the need arises is also poor because there has been inadequate scholarly work done on the existence and role of professionally qualified Contract Librarians. The results conclude that enhancing the professional HR personnel's capabilities could be seen as a strategic goal to address inequitable educational access and better library service provision in rural EMRS.

7. Suggestions / Recommendations

From the review, the following recommendations were made:

1. The regular appointments of professionally qualified librarians to all EMRS should be made a priority.
2. Use of professionally qualified, contract librarians, as a temporary measure for library services while permanent appointments are made.
3. Strengthening the existing programmes to promote reading and enhance information literacy and digital learning needs in the library framework should be directly related to the implementation of NEP 2020.
4. Improve the IT infrastructure in Rural EMRS Library, library automation, internet access and access to digital resources.
5. Regular library staff continuing professional learning need to be conducted to improve library services and to align library functions to the changing demands of education.

6.Future policy initiatives should acknowledge the school library as a part of the teaching and learning environment and not as a support environment.

8. Conclusion

School libraries are vital learning hubs for enabling quality education, information literacy, digital learning and lifelong learning. The present review is proving that professionally qualified librarians have an immense role to play in the smooth functioning and development of any eklavya model residential school (EMRS) particularly in the geographically remote areas. NEP 2020 offers a comprehensive and robust policy guidance towards the enhancement of school libraries; but, the effective implementation of the policy calls for a proper professional human resource, physical infrastructure, and technological development. The review indicates that there is existing gap in literature on role of the professionally qualified contract librarians as a stepping stone to ensure continuity of library services in rural EMRS. EvidenceBased Policies and Interventions will promote improved quality of Library Services and other positive changes in Educational Equity for tribal students. The study will be useful for further study in the school library development, staffing of school librarians in schools and policy making in tribal education in India.

Acknowledgements

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools during this research paper preparation and language editing is to assist the process.

Funding Information

No specific grant(s) in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors were obtained for this research.

Conflict of Interest

The author has disclosed that there is no conflict of interest with respect to the manufacture and/or sale of either any products mentioned or any products used in their study that might influence the results of this paper.

Author Contributions

Bhavsingbhai Govindbhai Rathva: conceptualization, methodology, literature and final editing.

Dr. Keval Patel: Supervision, critical Review and intellectual guidance.

Data Availability Statement

No dataset was generated or analyzed in the current study (systematic review paper) so there is no applicability for data sharing in this article.

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