

The Role of Teacher-Librarians and Information Literacy: A Case of Four MARA Junior Science Colleges in Kedah, Malaysia

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Abstract— This paper discusses the results of a study being carried out in four selected MARA Junior Science College (MJSC) in Kedah, Malaysia who are teaching various subjects. It focuses on teachers' perception on the roles of teacher-librarians. The instrument used was adapted from a questionnaire developed by Council on Teacher Education (C.O.T.E). From 200 questionnaires distributed, 157 questionnaires were returned. The results of the study revealed that, teachers overall agreed that teacher-librarians is an important part of the instructional team in their class. In order to improve students' achievement and develop effective collaboration with classroom teachers, teacher-librarians must become part of the instructional process. It must be used by all teachers to increase the quality of learning in the classroom to benefit all students.

Keywords— *Teacher-Librarians; school library; teachers' perception; Information Literacy; Malaysia*

I. INTRODUCTION

Schools today are focusing in developing information literacy program for their students. In order to implement lifelong learning among students, teacher-librarians also known as library media teacher should collaborate with school teachers in lessons planning [1]. This is also consistent with The American Association of School Librarians Standards for the 21st Century Learner mentioned that school libraries are essential to the development of information literacy and learning skills [1]. However, are teacher-librarians capable and competence to perform their roles towards information literacy? Do all school teachers realize and understand about the roles of teacher-librarians? What are the teachers' perceptions towards the role of teacher-librarians? The Library Association of Malaysia feels that if it is to be cost effective in supporting quality education, the person in charge of the library must be a person above of average capabilities who has a considerable degree of expertise in the fields of both library science and education [2].

In Malaysia, beginning 2006, the government has started entrusting qualified teachers as teacher-librarians in every school [3]. The roles of teacher-librarians are very significant in every school. This is the way they can help in developing

information literate person. Teacher-librarians are also information experts who help in developing information literacy skills among school students by cooperating with other school teachers to make sure learning become more effective and efficient including cooperating in administrative operation. The Association of Teacher-Librarianship of Canada point out that the role of the Teacher-Librarian in the 21st Century is to provide leadership in collaborative program planning and teaching to make sure both physical and intellectual access to information and commitment to voluntarily reading [4]. The roles of teacher-librarians do not only focus on students but are also responsible in helping school teachers in the learning process and lesson planning. School teachers cannot limit their sources of information such as textbooks only. An innovative approach, termed "resource-based learning," was introduced into school library literature that instruction must provide access to a variety of media formats and technologies [5]. There are many sources that can be as lesson tools either paper or electronic format. Lesson planning involves teachers in interpreting and transforming a significant range of information to specify learning exercises, schedules, teaching and learning resources, means to control the class, and learning objectives [6]. Therefore, the teacher-librarians have to assist teachers in achieving all of these. All the questions can be answered by investigating the teachers' perception on the role of teacher-librarians. After review of teachers' perceptions, effective and efficient collaboration can be established to create information literacy skills among school students.

This paper focuses on teachers' perception of the roles of teacher-librarians in selected MARA Junior Science Colleges (MJSC) in Malaysia. MJSC known as Maktab Rendah Sains MARA (MRSM) are boarding schools built by the Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) in almost every state in Malaysia. There are 42 MJSC nationwide with 38 in peninsular while the remaining four are in Sabah and Sarawak. In this study, four MJSC had been selected and they are Merbok, Pendang, Kulim and Kubang Pasu. The responsibility of teacher-librarians was important in education process. When school teachers and students do not understand the role of teacher-

librarians, it will become difficult to implement learning process that is effective and efficient.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Teacher-librarians

Teacher-librarian is an information expert who provides information directly to the school teachers and students. In Malaysia, a school library is generally managed by teacher-librarians. A teacher-librarian is a certified teacher who also has training in librarianship. In Malaysia, in terms of academic qualifications, 4.8% of the teacher-librarian had a Masters degree, 45.2% had a Bachelor's degree, 32.1% had Diplomas, 9.5% had an HSC/STPM qualification, and 8.3% had MCE/SPM as their academic qualifications [7]. Teacher-librarians are fully qualified teachers, who typically undertake post-graduate education in library studies [8]. Nevertheless, the teacher-librarian performs four main leadership roles: teacher, instructional partner, information specialist, and program administrator [9]. Also supported that the importance of retaining the word "teaching" in the title of Teacher Librarian, stating that Teacher Librarians have a whole-school curriculum perspective in addition to their managerial experience [10]. This shows that teacher-librarians is very important in school daily operation and it has been mentioned in a research paper "Novice Teachers' Perceptions of the Role of the Teacher Librarian", teacher-librarian is a professional teacher with a minimum of two years of successful classroom experience and additional qualifications in the selection, management and utilization of learning resources, who manages the school library and works with other teachers to design and implement resource-based instructional programs [11]. This is statement supported that in Malaysia the experience as teacher-librarians ranged from 0 to 14 years, with a mean of 4.1 years [7] [20].

B. Roles of Teacher-librarians

The source of the definitive statements in the literature on the roles expected of the teacher librarians in the educational setting [12]. Three basics roles are: as information specialist, teacher, and instructional consultant. However, in 21st century, all teacher-librarians have changed their role according to the information environment and have to cope with new technologies [13]. Today teacher librarian plays many distinct yet interrelated roles in order to accomplish goals as a teacher, as a collaborator, as a curriculum leader, as an instructional leader, as an information expert, as an information technologist and as a program manager[14].

Previous study also discusses how the role of the teacher librarians has changed in the last 20 years [15]. However, the major changes are the recognition of the consultative role and changes in the teaching role to incorporate thinking skills, cooperative learning, and literature based reading and resource based learning. The study about the role of teacher-librarians mentioned that "a teacher-librarian's job" was to preserve forms of recorded knowledge, foster public education and continue a historical mission that provided a foundation for democratic society [16]. It was indeed a noble brief for

teacher-librarians in general, but inadequate in the contemporary educational context.

The Association of Teacher-Librarians of Canada and the Canadian School Library Association established a joint committee to define the competencies necessary for effective teacher-librarians in the 21st century. The project was designed to revise the qualifications for teacher-librarians and to serve the needs of both teacher-librarians and administrators. It was based on prior work of the Association for Teacher-librarianship in Canada (ATLC) and the Canadian School Library Association (CSLA) and research findings [4].

Following can be described as professional competencies for teacher-librarians [4]:

1. Places a priority on staff relationships and leadership in the implementation of change.
2. Provides leadership in collaborative program planning and teaching to ensure both physical and intellectual access to information and commitment to voluntary reading.
3. Knows curriculum programs mandated by the province, district and school.
4. Understands students and their social, emotional and intellectual needs.
5. Has information expert in evaluating learning resources in different formats and media, both on-site and remote, to support the instructional program.
6. Develops and promotes the effective use of informational and imaginative resources in all formats through cooperative professional activities
7. Manages library programs, services and staff to support the stated goals of the school.

A standard document for school library media specialist preparation has been produced [17]. This document briefly reviews the evolution of professional standards for teacher-librarians over the last century, and noted that "the instructional role of the school library media specialist has emerged over the years and assumed importance" [17].

III. BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Maktab Rendah Sains MARA or MARA Junior Science Colleges (MJSC) are boarding schools built by the Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) in almost every state in Malaysia. MARA is a statutory body with its own financial system to help ensure the success of education and the development of Bumiputeras. The first MJSC was established in 1966 in Seremban as an effort to achieve the goal of MARA in training and education. There are 42 MJSC nationwide. 38 in peninsular while the remaining four are in Sabah and Sarawak.

In this study, four MJSC had been selected and they are MJSC Merbok, MJSC Pendang, MJSC Kulim and MJSC Kubang Pasu. MJSC prides itself in innovative curricular experimentation drawn from best practice of schools,

particularly those of the United States. Each school is well endowed with state of the art classrooms, laboratories and school libraries. This research was limited to a sample of school teachers from selected MARA Science Junior College (MJSC) in Kedah only. Each MJSC are divided into four departments that are: -

1. Department of Social Science
2. Department of Science
3. Department of Language
4. Department of Mathematic.

Quantitative method has been chosen because this research is confirmatory rather than exploratory. A questionnaire was developed with the aim of collecting data. The questionnaire was designed by adapting questionnaires developed by [18] and several previous researches relates to this topic. Among them was the questionnaire developed by McDonald (2006) in his research on "The Role of Technology in Interactions between Secondary School Library Media Specialists and Teachers". The questionnaire was modified in order to suit to this study.

A pilot study has been conducted and the questionnaires were distributed to fifteen teachers at secondary school in Kedah. Finally, the questionnaire had been distributed to the 200 (N = 200) respondents from four selected MJSC. However only 157 (n = 157) were returned and processed. Analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 17.0 for Windows.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From 157 respondents, 43 (27.4 %) of the respondents were from MJSC Pendang and MJSC Kubang Pasu. 41 (26.1%) from MJSC Kulim followed by MJSC Merbok which comprised 30 (19.1%). The majority of respondents 92 (58.6%) are female teachers and 65 (41.4%) are male. In this study also indicates that the majority of respondents 153 (97.5%) have a Bachelor's Degree while, 4 respondents (2.5%) possesses Master's Degree. Majority of teachers 77 (49%) are below 29 years old, followed by 56 respondents (35.7%) are between 30 to 39 years, while 24 respondents (15.3%) are between 40 to 49 years. Results in Table 1 shows that 18 (11.5%) of respondents teaches physics, followed by chemistry and general science 17 (10.8%). English teachers are 16 (10.2%) of respondents, followed by 15 (9.6%) of respondents are teaching Islamic Education, while 14 (8.9%) respondents are teaching Mathematic and the lowest number were art teachers 9 (5.7%).

No	Subject	Frequency	%
1	Physic	18	11.5
2	Chemistry	17	10.8
3	Science	17	10.8
4	English	16	10.2
5	Islamic Education	15	9.6
6	Mathematic	14	8.9
7	Biology	13	8.3

8	Accounting	13	8.3
9	Bahasa Melayu	13	8.3
10	History	12	7.6
11	Art	9	5.7
	TOTAL	157	100%

Table 1: Teachers' Teaching Subject

V. THE ROLES OF TEACHER-LIBRARIANS IN INFORMATION LITERACY

Through a set of questionnaire that consists of questions on the role of teacher-librarians, it contained ten questions including level of respondent understanding on the roles of teacher-librarians, respondents' perception on the ability and skills of teacher-librarians, what teacher-librarians do in order to support teachers and students such as participates in school and district curriculum development and consults teachers in seeking information for lesson plan, and respondents' perception on how important are teacher-librarians within the school.

As in Table 2, the highest responses 69 (43.9%) of respondents agreed teacher-librarians has an ability to apply appropriate standards guidelines to develop and evaluate school library collection and services. The findings also showed that most of respondents 75 (47.8%) agreed on the role of teacher-librarians to assist students in identifying and assessing information in the school. Only 12 (7.6%) of respondents strongly disagree. Most of the respondents 72 (45.9%) agreed that teacher-librarians informed teachers, students and administrators about new materials and services. Data showed 56 (35.7%) of respondents agreed that teacher-librarians participated in school and district curriculum development and assessment. A positive number of respondents 67 (42.7%) of the respondents agreed that teacher-librarians assist teachers in seeking information for lesson plan. Majority responses from the teachers agreed that the teacher-librarians implement their roles. This indicates that the teachers know about the role of teacher-librarians. This was supported that the teachers know but were not sure of the role of teacher-librarians because of the lack of collaboration between them [11]. The findings were identical to a study in a research that aimed to determine the essential competencies and the education required for teacher-librarians to perform their role [9].

Respondents believed that teacher-librarian is an information expert. From the survey 70 (44.6%) of respondents agreed and 67 (42.7%) of respondents believed (agree) that teacher-librarians play important roles within the school. This finding is identical to a research designs by [19]. Nevertheless, some of the respondents 61 (38.9%) also agreed that teacher-librarians need to have specific skills to perform important roles within school and 69 (43.9%) respondents agreed that teacher-librarians has the ability to assess the information needs and interests of teachers and students. The data has been shown in Table 2. SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Not Sure, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

STATEMENTS	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. Teachers'	7	49	69	31	1

understand about the roles of teacher-librarians.	(4.5%)	(31.2%)	(43.9%)	(19.7%)	(0.6%)
2. Teachers' perception on ability of teacher-librarians to apply standard guidelines.	17 (10.8%)	69 (43.9%)	37 (23.6%)	27 (17.2)	7 (4.5%)
3. Assist students in identifying and assessing information.	22 (14%)	75 (47.8%)	27 (17.2%)	21 (13.4%)	12 (7.6%)
4. Informs teachers, students and administrator about new materials and services.	21 (13.4%)	72 (45.9%)	33 (21%)	22 (14%)	9 (5.7%)
5. Participates in school and district curriculum development and assessment.	22 (14%)	56 (35.7%)	46 (29.3%)	28 (17.8%)	5 (3.2%)
6. Consults teachers in seeking information for lesson plan.	20 (12.7%)	67 (42.7%)	29 (18.5%)	28 (17.8%)	13 (8.3%)
7. Teacher-librarians as information expert.	28 (17.8%)	70 (44.6%)	29 (18.5%)	18 (11.5%)	12 (7.6%)
8. Teacher-librarians play important roles.	34 (21.7%)	67 (42.7%)	25 (15.9%)	27 (17.2%)	4 (2.5%)
9. Need to have specific skills to perform important roles.	54 (34.4%)	61 (38.9%)	11 (7%)	21 (13.4%)	10 (6.4%)
10. Ability to assess information needs and interest of teachers and students.	19 (12.1%)	69 (43.9%)	44 (28%)	18 (11.5%)	7 (4.5%)

Table 2: Roles of Teacher-Librarians

VI. COLLABORATION BETWEEN TEACHER-LIBRARIANS AND SCHOOL TEACHERS

This set of questions had been designed to investigate the collaboration between teachers and teacher-librarians and how effective is the collaboration. This section also consisted of ten

questions including what teacher-librarians do in order to develop collaboration; encouragement by principal for teachers to plan with teacher-librarians, and teachers' perception about collaboration.

From Table 3, the results showed that 79 (50.3%) respondents agreed that teacher-librarians are part of the instructional team for the class. Respondents believed working with teacher-librarians would improve students' achievements. Furthermore, they believed (agree) that working with teacher-librarians would improve students' enjoyment of learning. Interestingly, in this study, it was found that the perception of teachers in terms of collaboration received the highest responses with 71 (45.2%) respondents agreeing that working with teacher-librarians would improve teachers' teaching skills.

The results also found that 58 (36.9%) respondents agreed that teacher-librarians have an important place on the agenda of staff meetings. Furthermore, 50 (31.8%) respondents agreed that the principals encourage teachers to plan with the teacher-librarians. This finding supports previous studies by [21] [22] when they reported that the principals were satisfied with teacher-librarians and used direct communication to get services by teacher-librarians.

STATEMENTS	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. Teacher-librarians part of method instructional team.	16 (10.2%)	50 (31.8%)	46 (29.3%)	35 (22.3%)	10 (6.4%)
2. Working with teacher-librarians improves students' achievement.	24 (15.3%)	79 (50.3%)	36 (22.9%)	10 (6.4%)	8 (5.1%)
3. Working with teacher-librarians improves students' enjoyment of learning.	35 (22.3%)	64 (40.8%)	37 (23.6%)	13 (8.3%)	8 (5.1%)
4. Working with teacher-librarians improves teachers' teaching skills.	33 (21%)	71 (45.2%)	29 (18.5%)	18 (11.5%)	6 (3.8%)
5. Teacher-librarians has important place on the agenda of staff meetings.	25 (15.9%)	58 (36.9%)	44 (28%)	18 (11.5%)	12 (7.6%)
6. Principal encourages teachers to plan with the teacher-librarians.	18 (11.5%)	50 (31.8%)	47 (29.9%)	32 (20.4%)	10 (6.4%)
7. Teacher-librarians					

encourage teachers to use a range of resources beyond the textbook.	23 (14.6%)	55 (35%)	44 (28%)	26 (16.6%)	9 (5.7%)
8. Develops appropriate services for teachers according to goals and objectives of teaching.	19 (12.1%)	56 (35.7%)	47 (29.9%)	22 (14%)	13 (8.3%)
9. Often plan lesson with teacher-librarians.	13 (8.3%)	42 (26.8%)	38 (24.2%)	37 (23.6%)	27 (17.2%)
10. Consults with teachers incorporating information materials and skills into the classroom curriculum.	12 (7.6%)	48 (30.6%)	50 (31.8%)	33 (21%)	14 (8.9%)

Table 3: Collaboration of Teacher-Librarians and School Teachers

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study revealed that, teachers overall agreed that teacher-librarians is an important part of the instructional team in their class. The role of teacher-librarians should be informed to all teachers to ensure that these roles can be implemented. This can be made clear where the teacher-librarians have been given a special place in the agenda of the meeting. Therefore, teachers should know the role of teacher-librarians.

Roles of the teacher-librarians such as assisting students in identifying and assessing information in the school library, informing teachers, students and administrator about new materials and services and consult teachers in seeking information for lesson plan. It must be used by all teachers to increases the quality of learning in the classroom to benefit all students.

Teacher-librarians must carry out research in order to understand and know the interest of teachers and to find ways on how to attract them to use teacher-librarians services. Research into the experiences of individual teacher-librarians would be valuable; so too would be closer examination of teacher-librarians' views of themselves in relation to their roles and responsibilities.

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