

The Provision of Library Services and Facilities for Visually Impaired Students in Visually Impaired Schools in Karnataka: A Study

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ABSTRACT

The study describes the facilities and services available to visually impaired students in Karnataka. In this study, data were collected from visually impaired schools in Karnataka using a questionnaire method. The study found that 18 schools investigated had school libraries; however, no full-fledged library services and facilities are available. The visually impaired population does not have the necessary knowledge and skills to utilize the current electronic environment's resources and services. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can provide user-friendly and adequate services for these students who have been ignored for a long time. In addition to the IFLA guidelines, the University Grants Commission has issued guidelines for developing library and information services for people with blindness. As explained in this study, libraries should provide exceptional facilities and services for visually impaired students as well as provide suggestions for improving library and information services for these students.

KEYWORDS: Visually impaired schools, School library, Information and Communication Technology, Karnataka

INTRODUCTION

Library users nowadays are able to access all kinds of information sources and services through the latest and most updated techniques in the digital era. Every user has access to virtually any information on the Web

from anywhere in the world. Bringing people together has become more accessible thanks to the Internet. It is possible to acquire and share knowledge among users, even if they are completely unknown to one another. Using digital technology, we can provide equal library facilities for all students, including

those with visual impairments. As library and information professionals, we should not ignore the needs of visually impaired students and should have a fair attitude toward them.

A visual disability can develop due to accidents or medical conditions or can be inherited. The severity of some visual disabilities remains constant, while others can deteriorate, improve or fluctuate over time. There is no indication that people with sight disabilities need to make individual accommodations all the time. Compared to properly sighted students, visually impaired individuals have to work harder to differentiate themselves from their visually impaired counterparts.

The library and library professionals offer library and information services to disabled people without discrimination. Libraries must commit to ensuring that their users are able to access the full range of services and facilities regardless of their differing abilities. People with disabilities have to overcome physical obstacles and psychological barriers to access the library and communicate their needs. This will alleviate the barriers to 'library collection development' and access. Professional library staff who serve the visually impaired must possess specialized training and skills.

THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dodamani, Anand, and Keshava (2020) conducted a comparative study on adequate library support for Special Education programs recognized by the Rehabilitation Council of India, New Delhi. The survey found that libraries attached to special education institutes face funding, infrastructure, collection, ICT facilities challenges and accordingly proposed various resolutions to these issues. A survey of 87 visually impaired customers of Mysore district libraries was conducted by Khaisar & Ali (2019). They examined their familiarity and use of several assistive technologies, whether training was needed, problems they faced, etc. According to the study, most of them indicated the need for training on assistive technologies. In addition, staff members answered that the main challenge they face is a lack of skill. It also offers a brief overview of various assistive hardware and software

options available to differently-abled individuals.

In another study, Sanaman and Kumar (2014) examined the accessibility of assistive technology in National Capital Region libraries for people with disabilities. Researchers used questionnaire tools to gather data from institutions and libraries that serve people with disabilities as part of their survey methodology. Their study focused on 15 libraries, as many libraries did not have sufficient assistive technology facilities for differently-abled patrons. In order to improve student learning, school library programs (SLPs) are vital, Kachel (2017) argued that they alone could train students to become successful academically and to develop as individuals. In order to maintain the library programs and certified librarians, it is essential to identify and market the SLP's unique contributions to 55 students' success. In conclusion, students no longer have the option of learning effectively by relying on physical library collections.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- Identify library services and facilities designed for visually impaired students.
- To know the various special services offered by school libraries.
- Finally, based on the above, to suggest the best practices to be followed in the libraries to provide optimum services to the user community in the era of the ICT.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The present study focuses on library services and facilities for visually impaired students. The data was obtained from schools in Karnataka that serve visually impaired students. Only visually impaired students are included in the survey, and 18 visually impaired schools' libraries are selected in Karnataka.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is relevant to the present scenario. It is crucial to make a study to identify the library facilities and services of visually impaired students. The study would help get a fairly good idea of the current status of library services for visually impaired students and their information requirements. The study

would be helpful to those who propose launching special libraries and those already in the area. Therefore, the study's outcome would, it is hoped, provide valuable information to the academicians, librarians, sociologists, and the government.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis and interpretation is one of the most crucial and central steps of any research conducted, and undoubtedly, it is the heart of any research. After collecting data with the help of relevant and appropriate tools and techniques, the next and most crucial step is to analyze and interpret the collected data with a vision and mission to solve the problem.

Table 1: Visually Impaired Schools Surveyed For The Study

S. N.	District	Taluk	School Name	Established
1.	Mysore	Mysore	Government School for Blind (Boys)	1901
2.	Mysore	Mysore	Ranga Rao Memorial School for Blind (Girls)	1988
3.	Dharwad	Hubli	Government School for Blind Children (Boys)	1955
4.	Dharwad	Hubli	SadguruSiddaroodh Blind School Hubli	2000
5.	Kalburgi	Kalburgi	Government School for Blind Children	1961
6.	Belagavi	Belagavi	Maheshwari School of Blind Children	1978
7.	Vijapur	Vijapur	Sri ShivasanaHaralaiahVidyavardhaka Blind Children	1990
8.	Tumkur	Tumkur	Sri Siddaganga Blind School	1978
9.	Tumkur	Kunigal	Karnataka Navachetana Blind School	1999
10.	Chikkamagalore	Chikkamagalore	Ashakirana Blind School	1990
11.	Shimoga	Shimoga	Sharada Devi School for Blind Children	1986
12.	Raichur	Raichur	Shri ManikPrabhu Academy for Blind	2005
13.	Bidar	Maniknagar	Shri ManikPrabhu Blind School	2001
14.	Haveri	Haveri	Gnanajyothi Blind Children School	2007
15.	Uttarakannada	Mundagod	JnanaPrajna Blind School	2001
16.	Ramanagara	Ramanagara	JSB Free Residential School for Blind	1988
17.	Kolar	Sidlaghatta	Ashakiran Blind School	1991
18.	Chitradurga	Chitradurga	Tikshna Special School For Blind	2000

Table 1 shows the school surveyed for the study;18 Selected school libraries in Karnataka. The oldest school in the survey was Government blind school Mysore, which was established in 1901. The Department of Empowerment of the Disabled and Senior Citizens is responsible for managing it. Given that the school is located in an urban area for visually impaired students, the library collections and services must reflect how visually impaired students read. This group and service offers Braille print and electronic information resources, which are augmented by large photo books and "regular" print books.

Table 2: Availability of Library in Schools

S. No.	School Library	Frequency N=18	%age
1.	Yes	18	100
2.	No	00	00

Table 2 presents the availability of libraries in schools; it is happy to note that among all the respondents in the study, all the schools have a library in schools 18 (100%). Fresh minds in schools need access to a library as a source of knowledge. Students develop the habit of reading through this program. A school library should be available to all students. As the repository of knowledge, the

school library plays a vital role in the lives of students. Different methods can be adopted in libraries to involve students in learning. The library staff assists students in developing their study and skills and gives them advice on how to utilize the latest technology for their learning.

Table 3: Syllabus of Schools

S. No.	Syllabus of Study	Frequency N=18	%age
1.	State Syllabus	18	100
2.	CBSE	00	00
3.	ICSE	00	00

Table 3 provides the information on the syllabus of schools surveyed under study; it is pretty clear that all the respondents in the study follow the state syllabus 18 (100%). The CBSE, ICSE, and State boards are the most apparent boards where students can lay a basis for their future. However, each of these boards differs in their syllabuses and how they train the students during the course. Of course, it can have a lifelong impact on how they perceive education and apply it in real life. Each board has its unique way of teaching and assessing a student with strong objectives.

Table 4: Medium of Instruction of The Schools (V.I)

S. No.	Medium of Instruction	Frequency N=18	%age
1.	Kannada	18	100
2.	English	00	00
3.	Hindi	00	00

Table 4 shows the medium of instruction of schools surveyed in this study; all respondents in the study have Kannada as their medium of instruction. A teacher's medium of instruction is the language in which he or she instructs. When the language, or educational content, is taught through the target language, the learner is more likely to become familiar with it, have more opportunities to communicate in it, and therefore develop control over it.

Table 5: Accessibility of School Campus (V.I)

S. No.	Accessibility of School Campus	YES	No
1.	Disable Friendly Building	18 (100%)	00 (00%)
2.	Disable Friendly Seating	17 (94.4%)	1 (5.6%)
3.	Drinking-Water	18 (100%)	00 (00%)
4.	Separate Dormitory for Boys and Girls	18 (100%)	00 (00%)
5.	Accessible Public Areas Such as Toilets	18 (100%)	00 (00%)

Table 5 shows data on the accessibility of the school campus. In the survey, one school does not have disable friendly seating; classrooms are crowded in this school (5.6%). Deleting friendly buildings, drinking water, separate dormitories for boys and girls, and accessible public areas such as toilets 18 (100%) have been deemed to be appropriate. The most profound way architects can serve society is to design for disability in classrooms. All students, including those with disabilities, are entitled to an excellent educational experience. With a comfortable and supportive learning space, students can live happier and healthier lives outside of school; improving accessibility facilities, making adjustments to support students with disabilities, and even installing equipment to support clinical care, schools can help to make the education system more inclusive of visually impaired students.

Table 6: Specialized Services of The Library

S. No.	Specialized Services	YES	No
1.	Library Automation	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
2.	Subscription to accessible e-text, e-books, websites	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
3.	Audio-Visual Materials	18 (100%)	00 (00%)
4.	Assistive Technologies	18 (100%)	00 (00%)
5.	Qualified Librarian	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
6.	Library staff with Training in Computer Applications	00 (00%)	18 (100%)

Table 6 presents the specialized services of the library among respondents surveyed under study all the libraries having audio-visual materials and assistive technologies in their library 18 (100%) and there is no library in the study that have library automation, subscribing to accessible e-text, e-books, websites, no qualified librarian, and no Library staff with Training in Computer Application in their school library 00 (00%). Automation is a term for technology applications where human input is reduced. Libraries are restricted by a number of significant factors, including the absence of planning, inaccessibility to software, trade restrictions on hardware, lack of skilled personnel, lack of standards, and a lack of cooperation.

Table 7: Specialized Information Services of The Library

S. No.	Specialized Information Services	YES	No
1.	Staff, Expert on Braille	18 (100%)	00 (00%)
2.	Separate Reading Room	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
3.	Special-Arrangement	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
4.	Audio Recording of Library Materials	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
5.	Specially Designed / Sized Signs	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
6.	Specially Designed Shelf Marking	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
7.	Following the Library Service's Performance Indicators	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
8.	Following the National Guidelines	00 (00%)	18 (100%)

Table 7 presents the specialized services of the library; all respondents in the study have staff experts on school; no library has a separate reading room, unique arrangements, audio recording of library materials, specially designed signs, or shelf marking that follows the National Guidelines. The term "specialized

services" is used in the Regulation to mean as follows: "services other than internet access services which are optimized for specific content, applications, or services, or a combination of them, where optimization is required in order to meet requirements for the content, applications, or services."

Table 8: Specialized Information Services

S. No.	Specialized Information Services	YES	No
1.	Book- Talks / Discussion	18 (100%)	00 (00%)
2.	Photocopy Assistance	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
3.	Braille Translation	18 (100%)	00 (00%)
4.	Audio Recording of Library Materials	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
5.	Reading out	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
6.	Access to Internet with Assistive Technology	18 (100%)	00 (00%)
7.	Modification of Lending Process	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
8.	Reformatting to Another Medium	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
9.	Alternative Format Materials	18 (100%)	00 (00%)
10.	Retrieval of Materials From the Stacks	18 (100%)	00 (00%)
11.	Art, Cultural and Recreational Programme	18 (100%)	00 (00%)
12.	Home-Assignment	18 (100%)	00 (00%)
13.	Document Delivery Service	18 (100%)	00 (00%)
14.	Directory of Braille Experts	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
15.	Orientation Programme	18 (100%)	00 (00%)
16.	Access to CD-ROM / Online Database with Assistive Technology	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
17.	Directory of Accessible Web sites	00 (00%)	18 (100%)
18.	Catalogues of Materials in Alternative Formats	00 (00%)	18 (100%)

Table 8 presents the responses of specialized information services in the school libraries among all respondents all libraries providing book- talks/ discussion braille translation Internet access with assistive technology alternative format materials retrieval from the stacks Art, cultural and

recreational program, home-assignment, document delivery device, orientation Programme and no libraries providing photocopy assistance, an audio recording of library materials, reading out, modification of lending process, reformatting to another medium, access to CD-ROM/Online database with assistive technology, directory of accessible websites, catalogues of materials in alternative Formats 18 (100%).

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- It is happy to note that among all the respondents in the study, all the schools have a library in their schools 18 (100%).
- It is pretty clear that among all the respondents in the study, all the schools have the following state syllabus 18 (100%).
- Among all respondents in the study, all schools have Braille staff experts on school.
- Among all respondents surveyed, they have audio-visual materials and assistive technologies in their library 18 (100%).
- Among all respondents, all libraries providing book- talks/ discussion braille translation access to the Internet with assistive technology alternative format materials retrieval of materials from the stacks Art, cultural and recreational program, home-assignment, document delivery device, orientation Programme.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a need to establish full-fledged library facilities and services with print, braille, assistive technology, and electronic resources.
- The appointment of a librarian and library staff that are qualified, skilled, and trained is vital to the development of the library. Orientations programs/ Induction programs may be done at regular intervals.
- Updated Information and Communication Technology / Assistive Technology for visually impaired students may be provided efficiently and effectively for their academic information support.

- Specially trained staff to be employed to assist the visually impaired students in the school library.
- The infrastructural services and facilities should be based on Universal Design Principles, keeping these people's needs in mind.
- Institutional policies should be implemented in the school library. The authorities should need to implement the policies whether any improvement need, do it properly.
- Like NGO s proper computer training should give these people which will reduce the barrier to information.
- A provision of funds should be made available from the central/state/local government to school related to this field that provides services and Assistive Technologies to these people.
- School students should be made available in assistive forms like conventional braille or audiobooks from the first to the tenth standard when printing textbooks for regular students.
- All the information resources details will be made available online.
- Usage of advanced technology and audio-visual aids should be implemented during the library period for these people.
- Libraries of such institutes should be provided with advanced latest learning materials like talking books.
- Technical skills and vocational training should be given.

CONCLUSION

Libraries are important sources of knowledge, which have a significant impact on society. There is no difference in information needs between sighted and visually impaired students. A visually impaired student wants access to relevant and suitable information sources in their preferred reachable format, just as sighted students might read a newspaper or download electronic or digital information sources from the internet. There are significantly fewer books available in reachable formats for visually impaired students than for regular students. Having an efficient and effective library and information service for them is therefore vital. In this study, we examined whether school libraries

in Karnataka provide adaptive facilities to support the visually impaired. The study found that the school libraries in Karnataka are grossly under-equipped in this regard and that excuses abound.

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