

DID YOU KNOW

Promotion of Reading and Library Grants: An MHRD Initiative

Onshangla Zimik*

Reading can be defined as the ability of an individual to identify and comprehend printed words. The reader employs symbols as triggers to retrieve information stored in their memory, which they then use to formulate a reasonable understanding of the writer's intended message. It's easy to overlook the intricacies of the reading process. For many individuals, reading is a reflexive activity, and they rarely take the time to reflect on the complexities involved in the process.

WHY IS READING IMPORTANT?

The contribution of reading in improving learning outcomes has been demonstrated in various research studies. Reading is a step towards developing command over language and writing skills. It enhances vocabulary, creativity, critical thinking, imagination and expression, helping children to relate to their surroundings and real life situations. However, it does require continuous practice, development and refinement. Thus,

there is a need to create an enabling environment in which students read for pleasure and develop their skills through a process that is enjoyable and sustainable.

WHY DO WE NEED LIBRARIES?

Children need access to quality books and other reading material to develop and grow as readers, thinkers and writers. The need for a library in every school is recognised by the National Curriculum Framework, 2005 and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. The library is an essential component of the school, providing not only resources for learning, but also strengthening the purpose of reading for pleasure, recreation and further deepening of knowledge and imagination.

Evidence from the National Achievement Survey, 2017 has clearly brought out that school children who have access to a school library, and who read story books have higher levels of learning.

* *Research Scholar*, Department of Comparative Literature, School of Language Literature and Cultures Study, Central University of Gujarat

Initiatives by the Department of School Education and Literacy

Keeping this in view, the Samagra Shiksha scheme was revised in March 2018, to include the provision of library books to all schools covering all classes from I–XII. The library grant amount varies from ₹5000/- for stand-alone primary schools to ₹20,000/- for secondary/senior Secondary schools.

Guidelines have been issued earlier with regard to the utilisation of the funds under the Library Grant of Samagra Shiksha. These present Guidelines emphasise the promotion of reading as a whole apart from development of libraries and procurement of library books and the activities that can help achieve these goals.

The Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, has initiated a massive integrated teacher training programme, *NISHTHA*—National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers’ Holistic Advancement to build the capacities of around 42 lakh teachers and heads of schools, faculty members of SCERTs, DIETs and Block Resource Coordinators (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Coordinators (CRCs). The modules include sensitising the teachers on the importance of reading, how to manage libraries and carry out reading-based activities to develop a culture of reading amongst children, and help improve learning outcomes.

Procedure for Identifying, Printing and procuring library Books:

- A selection committee will be constituted at the State/UT level to select books for school libraries under the library grant of Samagra Shiksha. The secretary education shall be the chairperson.
- Eminent children’s literature writers, school principals, teachers, educationists and other persons associated with children’s education and learning should be part of the selection committee. The director SCERT and State Project Director (SPD), Samagra Shiksha, shall also be members.
- Story books, magazines and comics published by NCERT, NBT, CIIL, SCERTs and other central and state government agencies can be considered for selection, including publication division of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- States and UTs are encouraged to develop their own story books including local lore and folktales through SCERTs and DIETs by involving teachers, parents and others. Famous stories from the paired State/UT under *Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat* (EBSB) may also be selected. Children can also develop storybooks for other children.
- In case the States/UTs face difficulties in purchase of library

books in regional languages through NCERT, NBT, etc., they may utilise 20 per cent of the funds for procurement of library books in regional/local languages from publishers who publish books in regional/local languages.

- The books that can be procured under the library grant of the *Samagra Shiksha* include the following:
- Storybooks
- Reputed children’s magazines and comics
- However, the funds cannot be used to procure textbooks, reference books, exam related publications or any material unsuitable or inappropriate for children till the age of eighteen.
- The books will be categorised for age-appropriate reading. Books for Classes I–V will be known as *BULBUL* series, Classes VI–VIII as *KOYAL* series and Classes IX–XII as *MYNAH* series. The logos for these series are shown below.

BULBUL KOYAL MYNAH

- In case the book is appropriate for more age groups then two or all three bird logos should be used.
- All books must have the logo of the *BULBUL*, *MYNAH* and *KOYAL* series, either printed on the cover page or pasted using

a sticker, which must bear the name of the *Samagra Shiksha* and the year of purchase, i.e., year when *Samagra Shiksha* funds are used.

- Based on suggestions received from States, it is advised that these books may be printed and distributed to schools by following the same procedure for printing and distributing the textbooks.
- All books procured for libraries under *Samagra Shiksha* scheme must be procured at State/UT level by the committee.
- States and UTs may place direct orders with NCERT/NBT/CIL/I&B/SCERT and other publishers for procurement of the books or obtain the copyright of books.
- Supply of books should be at the state headquarter, and in case of larger States, the district level. Distribution up to school level may be done as in the case of textbooks.
- For visually impaired children, library collection should include tactile map books and *Barkha* Series from NCERT as well as audio books from National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and NCERT.
- MHRD will upload soft copies of books on the *DIKSHA* portal of shagun online junction (www.seshagun.gov.in). States

and UTs can download these, translate if required, and print and distribute these books.

- Ebooks may also be preloaded on digital devices and sent to schools.

Setting up and Managing Libraries:

A library must be child-friendly, attractive and colourful. Libraries may be of different kinds:

- A standard physical library with reading area, display shelves, stock room, issue/receipt counter.
- Reading corners which can be located in a part of the classroom, or any other convenient space in the school.
- Classroom library inside a classroom where books can be accessed during class period.
- Rotating library where books are interchanged between classes/sections/students.
- For effective management of libraries, schools can constitute a library management committee and Students Library Council (SLC).
- Bal Sansads (Child Cabinets), where available, may be given responsibility to maintain the books in the reading corner.

Library Activities and Promotion of reading culture:

- To promote reading amongst students, schools need to establish vibrant libraries as a

learning centre, set up reading corners and create a print rich environment.

- Various child-friendly components such as poem corners and message boards can be developed.
- Innovative and low cost ways to display the library books to make them accessible to children readily may be adopted.

The suggested reading activities are:

- Read aloud
- Book-making
- Shared reading
- Extending/rewriting the story
- Library treasure hunt
- Book review
- Drama
- Reading by older students to younger students
- Story-telling/ Talking hour
- Reading by parents and volunteers to children
- Spelling bee
- Theme-based reading

Schools may also involve alumni, youth icons, parents, retired personnel, college students to encourage community involvement and foster a sense of ownership in promoting reading culture to ensure long-term impact and sustainability. Innovative ways such as celebrating language festivals, organising monthly story-telling sessions, reading events and literature fairs may be carried out for promoting reading.