The School Library: The Foundation of Quality Education

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 “ The library is the land of words which have something to say.” Octav Bibere

 “The library is the only place where the books come to life.” Filippo Turati

When you enter a large library, you feel how books themselves compose a fascinating world able to provide new dimensions of human life. As a temple of books, the library, the oldest socio-cultural institution made by people, shelters much of the wisdom of the world.

The library is a cultural institution which includes different readers, including those with complex needs and those with simple ones, and from the youngest reader in primary school, to the most advanced students.

The library of the third millennium is an attractive space for community life. As the institution adopts a dynamic, open-minded and flexible attitude, it facilitates access to information increasing social and intellectual capital for all of human society. The public perception of modern library services is in a position of rapid change, propelling it to the position of cultural center of the community in which it operates.

We cannot imagine a world without libraries and therefore without librarians because the librarian is the best advocate for libraries—protecting them (and their contents) from the elements of nature, as well as from those who believe that there is no longer a need for libraries.

The school library is the younger sister of public library, and is a critical component in children’s education. My own vocational training was in teaching (I graduated as a Romanian and French teacher), and at the time, I did not understand why the destiny considered it more appropriate for me to become a librarian. In 2006, when I joined the “George Poboran,” secondary school library I started everything from scratch. Through hard work I managed to organize a small but beautiful school library out of a room that housed many books in disarray. In time the book collection grew and my little library became a space of culture.

Using my knowledge of Romanian and Universal literature, I have successfully created a high quality reading selection, which is perfectly molded to the needs of students and teachers in our school. I tried to buy books for our school library in various fields: literature, biology, geography, history, pedagogy, sociology, sciences, and reference works.

By reading a diverse selection of reading materials, students begin to develop critical thinking skills, which provide a degree of selectivity. In this way, the reader will tend to choose those materials with which he or she identifies, which will help him or her to grow spiritually and intellectually.

By diversifying reading in this way, for the student, the library could become a museum space that exhibits the most successful literary objects. The teacher and librarian are those who can transform this literary museum into an open, welcoming, and active space for students.

Through talking, brainstorming, and engaging in educational activities, the teacher or librarian has the power to bring the fantastic world from the book closer to the reader, in which the students become true partners of communication, transforming books into a living universe.

Teachers have an essential role in shaping and developing the taste for reading. Young personalities are closely related to the act of reading, as our characters are shaped in a particular way by the knowledge we have learned from books.

Also through reading, both parents and teachers can identify some children’s unique talents which are closely related to the type of intelligence they possesses.

During the act of reading, a bridge is built between the reader and the author. They meet in the atmosphere and in the conflict of story. The reader experiences the author’s feelings: loving, fearing, and hating along with the author. The reader finds himself or herself in the characters of the book, he or she recognizes its typologies, discovers thoughts and passions, or maybe identifies with life problems that he or she has also experienced.

More than any of the audio-visual techniques that promote cultural values, the act of reading provides to the one who browses a book, unique opportunities for reflection and meditation, beyond the satisfaction that comes from learning. Therefore it is estimated that reading (books, magazines, newspapers, various publication) should be one of the most widespread and intense activities of modern humans.

The school library is not just a room that holds many books. Through its varied reading and educational activities in collaboration with teachers, it helps to educate students. And because education is not only an accumulation of information acquired during classes, but also about leisure reading and about good books, the library is the space where the student meets the friendly professional who is ready to introduce him or her into the magical world of books.

Book reading has an important role in educating children’s sensitivity, stimulating his affection, generosity, kindness, aesthetic taste, optimism, love of life and a rich set of emotional traits that enrich their souls.

And then, no matter which path a student chooses in life or whatever profession he or she will practice later, general culture and spiritual wealth are also provided by books—inseparable friends in all circumstances, providing both ways to relax and continuing education.

The child, when is reading a book, identifies with literary characters who appear in the story and, in this way children form a pattern of personality. Initial contact with books is very important, so the child should be encouraged and guided.

Mihai Eminescu said: “ Read! Read always and your brain will become a laboratory of ideas and images that will draw meaning and philosophy of life.” We can say that for the individual reading can have a special significance. A Latin proverb says that “he who writes, reads twice,” because reading is not just about skill and understanding, but also about a connection to the world of ideas through the book.

Personal notes are part of the technical intellectual work of reading. They contribute to the discipline of the act of reading and of study, allowing the reader to develop critical thinking skills, while also synthesizing the content. The literature teacher or the librarian are those people who can help the student get used to the technique of taking personal notes. This is because reading books is not just about the accumulation of information. Reading, beyond loving it or hating it, means passing it through the filter of personal thought, critical sense, or the desire of reader to tell his point of view.

In conclusion, it must be stressed that a good and healthy education cannot exist without reading. Reading develops one’s personal culture, it educates and disciplines the personality, makes life more beautiful and easier and, last but not least, reading is the way to knowledge, as it covers all of life’s problems: love, disappointment, fear, political and social issues, history, difficulties, people’s beauty, ugliness, strengths and weakness) and self-knowledge.

Through reading, we discover our roots, learn the history of our nation, or we can identify with a hero or heroine from a book, thereby guiding our own character formation. Thus, reading means knowledge and self-knowledge from several perspectives: the historical one, the cultural one, the social one, the political one, and the psychological one. This multiple knowledge and self-knowledge can be done under the supervision of the parent, teachers, or librarians. They can direct reading of texts. For example, tales can be perceived psychologically, as motivational texts. The character Cinderella from the famous fairy tale, becomes an example of faith, patience and wisdom, turning, in the end, into a real princess. The main teaching that emerges from the tale is that nobody can become an important person without passing, first, through certain tests.

Another teaching would be is that in life we must always have courage and never be discouraged, because no matter how challenging a situation is, at some point, things will always improve.

Reading tales from this point of view, children can gain more confidence in themselves having as a model the characters from fairy tales. In the same manner, young readers can be helped to know themselves, spiritually speaking (through reading and explaining religious texts in the class) historical (through addressing historical literary inspiration, besides the formal study of history in the classroom) or moral.

In school year 2016-2017, in this sense of knowledge and self-knowledge, the George Poboran School Library initiated an educational project named “ Reading as an inner journey”. The project had as objectives developing student’s sensitivity and affection, cultivating beauty, the enrichment of cultural and spiritual horizon of children and discovering talents by harnessing intelligences that children possess.

Things have become more complex in this school year, when our school library launched two educational projects in partnership with cultural institutions from our city (Teacher Training, School Inspectorate Olt, County Library Ion Minulescu).

The projects are called “The library and the librarian in the society of yesterday, today and tomorrow” and “Reading, knowledge and self-knowledge. ” Their main objective is to train children as well-anchored people in a healthy culture based on moral values, respect for the book and for the act of reading, the training of strong and beautiful personalities, the awareness that reading has in our lives, the (re)discovery of the history of book and of the library and the emphasis of the role that libraries had played in society by people of culture, whether those people are librarians, writers, philosophers, mathematicians, etc.

The modeling or training of reading as a mechanism of learning is based on the assumption that reading is directed by the reader, both from the semantic and from the communicative perspective, and involves cognitive and linguistic operations.

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