Identifying and Understanding Innovative School Library Projects

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Abstract

A school librarian is an innovator. They are quick to come up with ideas and are open to new ideas from others, too. School libraries have always been situated within a broad social, and educational context. The twentieth century was a period of intense social change in Turkey. To understand what is happening, the development of school library needs to be placed in the context of its wider environment, the trends that have affected it, the educational changes and world views that have both developed as a result of those strategies and, in turn, contributed to them. Turkish School Library System is designed to recognize a nationwide school library structure that has displayed innovative methods, projects, products, or organizational enhancements, such as using activities, library architecture, current and emerging technologies for library processes or information service delivery. The aim of this paper is to find out and to describe innovative projects affecting the development of school libraries in Turkey. Examples of innovative projects of Turkish school libraries include reorganization of Turkish education system, school library legislation, enriched library projects. In this paper, the participants will recognize the innovative school librarianship projects in Turkey and learn the effects of them. These projects will help to increase the productivity of innovative school library projects today and the future.

Keywords: Turkey; Innovative Turkish school library projects; Innovation implementation in school libraries.

1. Introduction

Joseph A. Schumpeter pointed out (1992) that innovation is the core of economic growth, and enterprises shall strive to implement innovation to improve their competitiveness. If education system has implements innovation, it can enhance its employees' competence and improve their job performance, and the overall educational institutions can grow more competitive than before. If an organization has new strategy that can change the service method for customer, then it can be regarded as innovation (Daft, 1978). Innovation is the behavior of creating new products, associated with the concepts of applying new technologies, creativity, researching, developing, exploring, transforming ideas into earnings and integrating inventions into services and products. Innovation is critical and vital to the long-term success of every institution. Not only do they have an understanding of innovation management, but also follow technological developments, develop services, prepare products and offer them through appropriate marketing techniques. Innovation management is the whole of the activities that needs to be done continuously for the growth of the institution which concerns all the departments of the institution. It is the transformation of corporate objectives into appropriate and tangible benefits.

In professional publications, the structure of information centers, user expectations, service environments, and

the diversity of the environments in which they are published, not only addresses daily problems but also directs what needs to be done in the future. Generally, every research is expected to lead to change and innovation. In this study, first of all, concepts related to innovation management were introduced. The basic elements of school libraries forming the establishment and service process are mentioned. It has been revealed how Turkey looks at innovation management within the context of contemporary developments, national decisions and documents. In other words, national documents, projects and institutions that are expected to lead to innovations in school libraries have been examined. Our work has been completed with comprehensive evaluations and conclusions.

The primary purpose of the study is to explore innovative Turkish school library projects   in technology integration and current educational developments. A second purpose is to find out and to describe innovative projects affecting the development of school libraries in Turkey, from the Ottoman period until today's. Examples of innovative projects of Turkish school libraries include mosque schools project, reorganization of Turkish education system, invitation of foreign researchers and academics to contribute to the development of Turkish school libraries, school library legislation, enriched library projects. In this paper, the participants will recognize the innovative school librarianship projects in Turkey and learn the effects of them. These projects will help to increase the productivity of innovative school library projects today and the future.

2. Literature Review

In order to understand how school library project can effectively carry out innovation, this study reviewed many comprehensive researches of related innovation issues conducted by many experts and scholars in last thirty years. This study not only enhanced the understanding of innovation from those documents and literatures but also proposed solution for the problems discovered by those researchers.

Innovations and economic developments are not easy, but not inaccessible. The important thing is that all efforts are managed successfully (Betz, 2010). Today, digital information and communication technology is creating profound effects beyond space and time.

No matter what the technologies are designed for, they affect society, education, culture, life, science, individuals and countless factors. People use new digital technologies in formal education, which makes their experience natural and useful. Innovations are evaluated as the reactions of the institution against the changes in the internal and external structure, the decisions and activities of the services (Damanpour, 1991). Corporate innovation is a factor that contributes significantly to the exchange of information, learning ability, work efficiency and quality of the related institution.

Innovation will make significant gains in the performance of institutions. The gains can be realized by the following operations:

• Reducing management costs,
• Improving the processes,
• Reducing operation and labour costs,
• Diversifying service areas,
• Increasing the workplace satisfaction of employees,
• Increasing employee productivity,
• Improving the quality of products and services along with production processes,
• Maintaining and increasing market share,
• Taking measures to protect the environment and save energy,
• Increasing the visual appeal of products and media,
• Expanding the announcement and distribution (Oslo Manual, 2005; Uzkurt, 2008, p. 94).

The innovative institution has some key features. Among these features, leadership is the leading one. This is followed by the organization's vision, organizational structure and the presence of its employees. In addition, the importance of the institution for education and development, teamwork and the existence of a creative organizational climate are necessary. Those who contributed to the successful completion of innovative work include idea makers, supervisors, sponsors and project managers (Tidd, Bessant and Pavitt, 2005, p. 502).

The information that will form the basis of innovation consists of information that has not been expressed clearly and yet verbally, which may arise from previous experiences, competitors, technology research, discussions and transfers. With the effective management of the innovation process, all information produced from different sources inside and outside the organization is brought together in a meaningful way. By converting the information provided to a significant value, new products, services and solutions with high added value are provided (Tidd, Bessant and Pavitt, 2005, p. 502). It would not be the right approach to talk about a particular innovation management that can be proposed to each institution. Because the structure, sector, budget, financial resources and technological infrastructure of institutions vary. Considering these characteristics, it is better to develop innovation management specific to each institution.

2.1. Innovation implementation in school libraries

According to Tytler's (2007) report, there are five innovation procedures to improve teaching and learning characteristics. The first is the desire of the organization to have **an organizational vision** in the field of innovation. Second, there should be **a powerful support system** to create a suitable organizational system in the providing more funds and adequate resources for design a teaching model. Third, to choose **action plans** to develop innovative teaching activities to improve creative thinking and to encourage learning for the entire organization. Fourth, there should be **a development team** to exchange and share resources, to solve difficulties in teaching and learning, and then to seek solutions. Finally, it should be **evaluated the success** of innovative teaching in terms of both teaching and learning, such as methods, materials, and teaching aids.

School libraries must identify strategies for innovation. In general, they should develop innovative methods and alternative strategies for their institutions based on their budget, backgrounds, management attitudes and a little bit of luck. School libraries can be done innovative projects in any of the following ways:

- Through becoming an integral part of the teaching team
- Through planning core activities in the national curriculum
- Through transferring new knowledge and skills to new circumstances
- Through forging constructive relationships
- By sustaining integration into teaching and learning
- By being innovative with physical and virtual library space
- By accessing and using rapid advances in technology such as e-books, apps and social media.
- By using the virtual library
- By creating a link to the online public access catalogue from every department page; showing relevant library and external resources; giving advice on citation; and reminding users about information literacy
- By playing role in the management of the school.
- By contributing to societal well-being, the growth of democracy, and the development of knowledgeable society.

3. Method

The purpose of this research is to investigate Turkish school library projects and describe innovative projects. The study was guided by three research questions that examined the extent to which nationwide perceived school libraries to be technology areas and resource centers. Our basic research questions are the following:

1.   What is the structure of the Turkish school libraries from the Ottoman period until today's?
2.   Which innovative projects are provided in Turkish school libraries?
3.   How do school libraries in Ankara, Turkey adapt to the changing innovative activities?

To answer the research questions, we investigated the structure of the Turkish school libraries, the innovative school library services and the several aspects of innovative school library services.

3.1. Structure of the Turkish School Libraries

During the Ottoman period, libraries were usually built as part of the "külliye" built for education, health and worship purposes. During the period of the Ottoman Empire, there were several educational institutions in elementary, secondary and higher levels (mosque schools, madrasa, enderun) (Önal, 1995). The history of school library services in Turkey goes back to the 1700s (Soysal, 1969: 19; Cunbur, 1960). With the establishment of the Ministry of National Education in 1857, schools were put under the administration of that Ministry. Thus, school libraries also reported to the Ministry of National Education. However, unlike modern school library services offered by many schools today, services offered during those times were limited. School libraries were traditional institutions and they were not functional (Önal, 1995). The first legislation on school library services ("Bye-law of School Libraries") came into being in 1959 which was revised in 1976 and then 2001. In 1981 an organizational system went into effect within the Ministry of National Education, in which a School Libraries Branch was created within the Department of Publications. Since 1999, secondary school libraries in Turkey have begun to follow the principles of the School Library Manifesto that was developed by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) in consultation with the IFLA Section on School Libraries and Resource Centers and the International Association of School Librarianship and endorsed by UNESCO (Önal, 2004, 143). Through the efforts of school librarians, School Librarians Association was officially established on 17 December 2010. In the academic year 2017–8, the 65.568 education institutions run by the Ministry, there are 1.030.130 teachers and 17.885.248 students at all levels (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2019). The tremendous pressure of this large student population on the education budget of Turkey will bring into sharp focus of providing school library services in an economic sense.

Turkish school libraries have a long history. In comparison with the notable achievements over the past two decades in the development of school librarianship, Turkey has only partial success to offer. Despite some efforts during those years, the level of school library development in Turkey has not reached what could be considered as a recognized minimum level in staffing, resources, facilities or buildings. Nor are they universally recognized as being a vital and an integral component of the education system

3.2. Innovative Projects in Turkish School Libraries

The official transformation of innovative works started with the School library by Law published in 1959, 1976, 2001. Innovative services are stated in the School Library by Law regulation as follows:

"With the help of the general aims and basic principles of Turkish national education, students are willing to learn, study and use new technologies that are scientific-minded, have a habit of reading, have gained the habit of reading, are aware of their rights, duties and responsibilities, and to make necessary arrangements related to school libraries in order to help them grow up". These aims are not only to make clear the place of school libraries within the educational system. The regulation also explains that with the information services provided with education activities, school libraries will continue their tasks that will positively affect the lifelong learning activities of individuals. In Turkey, the School Library by Law was renewed in 2001 to adapt to the current developments. School libraries are responsible for the effective use of library collection not only by students but also teachers and other staff.

In Turkey, the Ministry of National Education conducts innovative projects in the fields of library and information management and tries to spread information services in education through the services of school libraries. Among the studies carried out are:

Atom-Boy (Aile Teknoloji Okul Merkezli Bilgi Okuryazarlığı – Family Technology School-Based Information Literacy) is the project that aims to improve the information literacy skills of the students created within the framework of the Youth Project Support Program for 2015.

EBA Project: Educational Informatics Network (Eğitim Bilişim Ağı – EBA) provides teachers and students with reliable, accurate e-content appropriate to grade levels. The school library supports specified information services. While many digital source designed by Ministry of National Education and educational companies volunteering to share contents are published on EBA, students and teachers will also have the opportunity to offer the content they create. Therefore, there will be a pool of source which will be open to anyone keen on learning. This will also open educational doors to everyone and provide a basis for carrying education outside the buildings. So is to say that it will be an integral part of the educational life. It will enable students to be self-determining and self-learning individuals (EBA 2019).

FATIH Project: Movement of Enhancing Opportunities and Improving Technology (Fırsatları Artırma ve Teknolojiyi İyileştirme Hareketi – FATIH) is aimed to create equal opportunities in education and training environments of Turkey and to ensure effective use of IT technologies in the courses. Interactive board system and Internet infrastructure were established in classrooms and school libraries. Fatih project a tablet computer is provided to each student and teacher (FATIH 2019).

Ortak Hafıza (Common Memory): With the help of this project, it provides detailed information services in education, schools and school libraries (Ortak Hafıza 2019).

SEECEL (South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning): SEECEL's mission is to work on systematic development of lifelong entrepreneurial learning as a key competence, in line with policies and practice of those of the European Union, implemented through structured regional cooperation (SEECEL, 2019).

Turkish Education Portal: It includes formal education activities where students, teachers and educational materials in different locations are brought together through web technologies.

Z - Library Project: Enriched Library (Zenginleştirilmiş Kütüphane – Z - Kütüphane) is a project with the use of internet service and digital book content (E-book, Z-book), school libraries have been established in Turkey. This project aims to support students in preparing their homework with digital learning content, to reproduce and popularize the production of books, to improve the external physical characteristics of schools and to make libraries a "lifelong learning center"(Z-Kütüphane 2019; Alaca and Önal 2017).

Global projects affecting Turkish Education System are as follows:
- E-Twinning
- European schoolnet
- International Computer and Information Literacy Study / ICILS
- Innovative Technologies For an Engaging Classroom / iTEC
- Acer-European Schoolnet
- Special Education Needs Network / SENnet

Innovative school library projects provide and support to these services:

- Cooperation with institutions providing education, culture, information and document services;
- Organization about educational, entertaining and relaxing activities;
- Seminars on information literacy;
- Access to Internet;
- Attraction of spaces;
- Access to information resources (books, e-books, digital images, audio books, e-newspapers);
- Contribution to collection development for enriched documents, music records, e-magazines, videos, newspapers, bibliographic databases and other e-resources.;
- Teaching about digital library interface;
- Medical advisory services with support of health institutions;
- Organizing meetings and seminars;
- Prepare reading books for children and young people;
- Organize cinema days;
- Social media usage (blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Sina Weibo, Flickr),
- Applications for mobile devices;
- Learning for children, meeting, study and playing areas;
- Provide suitable environments for young people to make projects and prepare presentations;
- Attractive and comfortable interior design;
- Raising awareness about green library applications;
- Monitoring new services with constant development request.

Students can achieve integration with the innovative school libraries in any of the following ways:
- through understand and learn the curriculum topics
- by sustaining understand subjects easily with examples and applications from real life
- by sustaining develop research, inquiry and critique skills
- by using the physical and virtual library space.

Innovative projects can become important to the work of school libraries through providing experiences for students that enable them to learn effectively and how to be innovative people in their life.

3.3. Adaptation to the changing innovative activities

There are 146 general secondary schools in 25 districts of Ankara. 11 (8%) of these secondary schools are science secondary schools. Among all school types, students from Science Secondary Schools in Ankara have the highest academic achievement. A total of 389 students and 197 teachers between 16-26 April 2018 were interviewed in 11 science secondary schools. Innovative school library projects and their activities are placed in Table1.

Table 1: Adaptation to the changing innovative activities

School Name	Organizational Vision	Support System	Action Plans	Development Team	Evaluated the Success	Innovative Projects
Ankara Fen Lisesi	+	+	+	+	+	FATIH
Cumhuriyet Fen Lisesi	+	-	+	+	+	FATIH, EBA, SEECEL, E-Twinning
Meliha Hasanali Bostan Çubuk Fen Lisesi	+	-	+	-	+	FATIH
Hasanoğlan Atatürk Fen Lisesi	+	-	+	-	-	Yok
Özkent Akbilek Fen Lisesi	+	-	-	+	+	E-Twinning,
Hasan Hüseyin Akdede Fen Lisesi	+	-	-	+	+	FATIH, eTwinning
Mehmet Doğan Fen Lisesi	+	-	+	+	-	FATIH
Mustafa Hakan Güvençer Fen Lisesi	+	-	+	+	+	FATIH
Polatlı Fen Lisesi	+	-	-	-	-	Yok
Ankara Pursaklar Fen Lisesi	+	+	+	+	+	SEECEL, FATIH, ATOMBOY
Yavuz Sultan Selim Fen Lisesi	+	-	+	+	+	FATIH, E-Twinning

The research process in this study adopted five phases of action study (see also Part 2.1): organizational vision, support system, action plans, development team and evaluated the success, as ways to understand the background of the questions that has been explored by this study. In addition to the five phases of action study, there have been the results innovative projects named ATOMBOY, E-Twinning, EBA, FATIH, and SEECEL. As a result, these innovative projects can be evaluated as the results of innovation and innovation process.

4.Results

Innovation is difficult and uncomfortable and requires courage and determination, but can be exciting and reaffirm why we continue to be school librarians. It is challenging but necessary to maintain inspiration and integration. Being innovative is at the heart of thinking and acting strategically.

In addition, as for the schools with successful innovation, their employees (teachers and librarians) will have better performance for work, and the result will demonstrate that the innovation has improved various abilities for their students and make them to not only have more skill, knowledge, creativity and responsibility for their work, but also make them to be able to fully cooperate with each other in order to complete their work smoothly and improve their job performance then.

5.Conclusion

We believe that becoming an integral part of the teaching, learning and innovative service process is an important goal for school libraries. Opportunities in innovative projects may arise in all of educational areas, which school librarians explored. To be effective school librarians need to consider how school libraries will get involved in innovative projects, what effect libraries involvement has on teaching and learning, and how librarians sustain that level of participation.

As to sum up, if education system has adopted correct methods and disciplines to implement innovation, the work competence of their employees can also be enhanced as well. With the implementation of innovation projects and proper supportive organizations such as school libraries in educational environments, it is believed that education systems can create more innovative generations and achieve greater success within the ever-changing information world.

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