Research on School Libraries in Greece and Suggestions on its Further Development

Georgios D. Bikos[†]

†Technological Educational Institute of Athens/Department of Library Science and Information Systems
g_bicos(at)hotmail.com

Abstract: In this announcement basic characteristics of Greek bibliography on School Libraries are being presented and proposed directions are being suggested these libraries to apply/use. Furthermore our analysis focuses on the libraries educational role and their relation with the School teachers. At the same time, some of the main characteristics of the School Libraries in Greece are being provided.

Keywords: Library, Media center-school library, Teaching methods, Research, Reading, Legislation on school libraries.

I. INTRODUCTION

The School Library institution (SL here on), or the Library Media Centre as it is called today, it's being characterised by the legislation defining its operation on the one hand and by the way it appears as a reality within the school on the other hand. SL is being also characterized by its (pre) history which, according to what we've just referred to, can be described through two kinds of studies: the one of the history of legislation and the state policy concerning the making and the function of SLs and the studying the history of their way of the real operation within the educational status of the time.

Reviewing the relevant to SLs Greek bibliography we realize that there are some titles/books dealing with the two above mentioned Histories of the Greek SLs[16].

II. MAIN BODY: DATA ANALYSIS AND SUGGESTIONS

Although some of the SLs' characteristics may be studied by the researcher in and indirect, more external way - meaning it is not a necessity for personal contact or experience - as for the daily operation of the SLs is concerned (mostly through the methods of historic research and analysis of resources, archives and other facts), their operational and educational reality cannot be defined differently but only through on the spot or direct observation[17] – that is from the inside. And that is exactly what the topic of this analysis. There is therefore a direct need to approach the SLs' operation –as done in some other countries– with plenty of empirical and of quality researches and ways and methods used in social

sciences.[18] That is by setting questionnaires, participant observation[19] used in social anthropology mostly and interview,[20] which is of course being used in a wider range of the social sciences and psychology. And apparently these interviews should be given by SLs' supervisors, the students-users of the them and the teachers of those schools having SLs. The reason we have not used the term "librarians" instead of "supervisors" is because there are not any specialist librarians[21] in Greece, at least in public schools and in some private ones. There are only some teachers that are in charge of their operation[22] but without having received any adequate knowledge in Library Science!...[23] It should also be noted that from the 4101 schools of secondary education existing until June 2011 –as this number has now being reduced by the Ministry of Education-, only 765 of them have got SLs! (Primary schools' SLs operate off the record.)

Such research methods as above mentioned have not been used until today –in Greece-, on essays about SLs. And that is an important blank which can be covered though by generating relevant to SLs graduate and post-graduate essays from Library Science students. It can also be covered by contacting researches of the action research[24] type by the people working in SLs themselves. That way, their operation will probably improve, as the target of every such research is to interfere into the reality under investigation in order to improve it.

Since referred to students' essays there are the following to note whereas the graduate essays by the

---

[16] E.g. T.E. Sklavenitis (1995), S. Kokkini (2002), pp. 86-112, K. Ntelopoulos (2005), 87-88 and I. Aggeli (1976), 153-166

[17] For direct observation and research on the spot (also called fieldwork), G. Marshall (1996), 182 and D. Jary, J. Jary (1995), 233

[18] An interesting quality research concerning the American SLs in J.K. Howard (July 2010)

[19] For participant observation see M. Duverger (1987), 293-296, 301-306, D. Jary, J. Jary (1995), 476, N. Abercrombie, S. Hill, B. S. Turner (1994), 305-306, G. Marshall (1996), 380-381, C. Robson (2007), 372-403.

[20] For the interview as a scientific method of research see M. Duverger (1987), 230-247, C. Robson (2007), 319-337, D. Jary, J. Jary (1995), 337-338, N. Abercrombie, S. Hill, B. S. Turner (1994), 221 and G. Marshall (1996), 257.

[21] http://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CE%A3%CF%87%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE_%CE%B2%CE%B9%CE%B2%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%BF%CE%B8%CE%AE%CE%BA%CE%B7

[22] That however happens in others countries as well e.g. the USA (A. D. Ewbank [March 2011]).

[23] http://www.pi-schools.gr/library/pi-lib/ekthesi/ekthesi_oe-sb_3_leitourg.htm

[24] Kathryn Herr, Gary L. Anderson, The Action Research Dissertation, A Guide for Students and Faculty, Sage publication

students of the sections of Library science are concerned two in TEI Athens and Thessalonica and one in Ionion University in which there is a Post-Graduate Studies Course: in the Library science department of Thessalonica out of the 212 essays up today – all of which can be found on the net – only two are about SLs.[25] Accordingly, in Ionion University out of the 421 essays – none of them exists on the net - only five graduate ones concern SLs and none dissertation.[26] This poverty in essays on SLs is expected as in TEI of Thessalonika and in Ionion University there is no class concerning directly and/or exclusively SLs. In TEI of Athens though where there is a class on SLs and from 2010 it is about them and only, there have been generated four at least essays relevant to SLs and there are two more going.

So what is the case in Greece as far as the study of the clearly educational part of SLs is concerned both in the past and now? Are we familiar with the level of usage in the past and mainly with whether and how much are SLs being used today by the teachers for teaching their classes and giving work to their pupils? Has there been a survey on whether SLs' books are being used by the teachers in order to prepare their class, to show something to their students during the lesson or to receive some special scientific or pedagogical knowledge and probably some knowledge of psychology and teaching? Have there been *empirical researches*[27] (with quantitative-statistic elements, with questionnaires,[28] interviews,[29] or with the method of *participant observation*) regarding their users and the kind of this use? Has the kind and the content of books being borrowed by students depending on their age and on the school they attend, public or private, elementary, high school, general and Vocational high school?[30] Interesting would also be recording the kind of books borrowed by those, unfortunately few, teachers who actually use SLs.

Has therefore the current bibliography clues on how often and how many students or teachers borrow (or borrowed – if the research concerns the past) books from their school's library?[31] Has it concluded in lending material indicators which show the number of borrowed books per student depending on the registered ones in the SL or the total number of the school's students? Are there elements on the profile of the students borrowing books in the past or now? Has the school performance of the students borrowing books often or systematically ever been looked into, so that to check whether it has improved?[32] Has there been a research showing the specialties and the age of those teachers using SL or borrowing more often or more books from it and the content of most of them? (The answer of course is negative since SLs' operation has rarely and only been *regional* subject of library and educational research.) But even if they had – more possibly during pre or post graduate essays – how many have been published in a scientific magazine?

What must be studied more though is not the SLs' educational role generally but more particularly: their relation to the role and the operation of every *specific kind* of school supporting each one of these. That is, the degree and the way related to every SL's operation with the educational work of the school and more specifically a) with the teachers' teaching methods and ways b) with the content of school subject's teaching material, c) with the content of the educational programs offered off schools' daily timetable (mainly cultural programs, health education, environmental training) and d) with the needs of the several school activities such as school celebrations, or even theatrical plays.

No doubt of course that it is not easy to make general conclusions out of every such research for the majority of SLs, as these are being contacted under special circumstances and concern only the particular SL under investigation, as it is known, in Greece at least, that almost every SL operates in their own way! And that is because a) not all SLs have got the same trained personnel as there are no librarians, b) not all SLs have got the same technological infrastructure, same premises and material to use, c) SLs' supervisors do not have the same cooperation with the teachers of the schools they are in[33] and d) the Greek Ministry of Education is not giving the proper attention to SLs, so that to settle the institutional and organizational way of their daily operation. Beyond that though it is a fact that for every SL the operation is being defined by what is called (educational and administrative) culture of the school they operate in.[34] While at the same time the special way of their operation is also defined by the kind of school which they concern e.g. primary, high school,

---

[25] http://www.libd.teithe.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=25%3A2006&Itemid=34&layout=default&lang=el

[26] http://spreadsheets.google.com/pub?key=0AnW3cfT0UPDdDRUNklKZ0JiODg2SDExdDlmcUxQX0E&gid=2

[27] On which researches we call *experienced* see I. Lampiri-Dimaki-Th.K. Papachristou (1995), 29-31

[28] Relevant research in the USA using questionnaire, answered by students users of SL, S. R. Crow (March 2011).

[29] Relevant research in the USA using among other methods the *interview*, A.D. Ewbank (March 2011).

[30] We refer herewith to the investigation of the students' reading preferences, especially the ones who are SLs users. Some opinions on the students' preferences as a result from relevant researches we read in I. Aggelis (1976), 40-42, 72 and in B.X. Charalampopoulou (1963), 159-162. There are also three researches published referring also to children's reading preferences but do not concern SLs' books. These are one of Kazazi, and two of EKEBI. (See in References.)

[31] The only relevant research concerning the SLs' lending operation and was published is one in 2000 and its numbers were announced in a Workshop realised on 13/1/01 by P.E. Petrakis - P.E. Petrakis (2001), 48-49

[32] For researches abroad http://www.iasl-online.org/advocacy/make-a-difference.html

[33] And that is not only due to the different profile among them but also to that not all teachers deal with SL in the same way.

[34] Relevant American research, J. K. Howard (July 2010).

vocational school, public or private. (Note that there have been serious differences even between SLs operating in the same kind of schools.)

So what actually needs to be studied –both with the qualitative and the quantitative researches[35]- is the degree up to which the SLs support, reinforce or broaden the work of the school teachers.

In addition, there are not clues neither on how many teachers teach, at least once a year within the SL (using fully the technological infrastructure or the printed and the rest of its material) nor on how often they do so. And also there not clues on how much and how many students and teachers work with SLs' personnel for a specific teaching aim or scheme in any way, permanently or some times the year.

Apart from the lack of above mentioned elements, the most intense wondering as far as the SLs are concerned is whether their way of operating, their material[36] and also their infrastructure, even their interior, consorts with the new believes about Teaching[37] and with all those the Ministry knows that should the teachers use during their educational work. But in order to achieve such fellow operation between SL and the new teaching methods the SL's supervisor must be familiar with these methods adequately.[38] (The relation between the librarian's work in a SL with the several teaching methods, occurs from a note by Marie Keen Shaw according to which SL's personnel can in a privileged way to promote the modern and well known cross thematic teaching method/interdisciplinary teaching.[39]) We are not certain though that all working in SLs today know these methods, as we do not also know whether all those teaching in Greek schools are adequately familiar with them as well…Therefore it is necessary all those working in SLs along with the teachers to be trained on such methods. (While of course students of Library Science should be informed as well.[40]) Besides, only if both sides have common knowledge of Teaching they will be in position to work with each other effectively, so that SL will be able to perform its maximum as far as its primary target to

operate as a place of education. (Besides an SL librarian always functions as an educator.[41])

Just before concluding the following should be mentioned: one of the basic primary aims of the SL is to cultivate the love of reading into students. Because SLs develop activities, which are not necessarily the same, promoting this love – e.g. operation of reading club – it is proper to investigate and record them[42] as well. While the next stage of these activities' relevant studying is their evaluation based, among others, on the pedagogical science's data.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Closing we note that research on SLs should not only be done mainly according to the methods of the social sciences but also in relation to Teaching and Pedagogical sciences. Besides, what makes a SL different from any other Library is the adjective "school". And anything concerning School by definition relates to Teaching as well as to Pedagogical, word that comes from the Greek word "pedi" meaning child.

REFERENCES

Abercrombie, N., Hill, S., Turner, B. S., *Dictionary of Sociology*, Penguin Books, England (1994)

Kathryn Herr, Gary L. Anderson, The Action Research Dissertation, *A Guide for Students and Faculty*, Sage publication

Aggelis, I., *Οι μαθητικές βιβλιοθήκες στο δημοτικό σχολείο: δανειστικές – βιβλιοθήκες τάξεων (I mathitikes vivliothikes sto dimotiko scholio: danistikes – vivliothikes takseon)* [in Greek], Diptiho, Athens (1976)

Brown, J., Sheppard, B., "Teacher-Librarians in Learning Organizations", in L. Lighthall, K. Haycock (edit.), *Information Rich but Knowledge Poor? Emerging Issues for Schools and Libraries Worldwide*, International Association of School librarianship, USA, 195-212 (1997)

Carroll, F. L., *Guidelines for School Libraries*, IFLA (1990)

Crow, S. R., *Exploring the Experiences of Upper Elementary School Children Who Are Intrinsically Motivated to Seek Information* in School Library Media Research, Refereed Research Articles, Vol.14 (March 2011) Available through the internet:

---

[35] For *qualitative researches see* A. Strauss & J. Corbin (1990), 17-18, J. Mason (2009), while for their *techniques* D. Jary, J. Jary (1995), p.537.

[36] For SLs' material there SLs with knowledge books not following the evolution of the science they present due to their old editions!...

[37] Gary D. Borich, *Effective Teaching Methods*, University of Texas, Austin, Publisher: Allyn & Bacon (2010) or http://www.lavoisier.fr/livre/notice.asp?id=OR2WR2AXLRS OWE and J. Brown, B. Sheppard (1997), 200, 205.

[38] F. L. Carroll (1990), 10-11.

[39] M. K. Shaw (1999), 35-36, 56.

[40] The dpt of Library Science in TEI of Athens has already included a class concerning SLs and teaching the basics of the new teaching methods.

[41] J. Brown, B. Sheppard (1997), 195-212, where SL's supervisor is called *teacher-librarian*, and M. K. Shaw (1999), 30-31.

[42] The following sites are for the readers interested in being informed on the wonderings and the suggestions made by SLs' supervisors and also for the activities "supported" or taken by some well-organised Greek SLs:

http://tuxlibrary.blogspot.com/2011/01/blog-post_30.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+tuxlibrary+%28Greek+Libraries+in+a+New+World%29

http://greekschoolibs.blogspot.com/

http://vivliothiki.blogspot.com/

http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aaslpubsandjournals/slmrb/slmrcontents/volume14/crow.cfm [accessed: 17-6-11]

Duverger, M., *Methods of Social Sciences II* [in Greek], (trans. N. Papadodimas), EKKE, Athens (1987)

Ewbank, A. D., *Values-Oriented Factors Leading to Retention of School Librarian Positions: A School District Case Study* in School Library Media Research, Refereed Research Articles, Vol.14 (March 2011) Available through the internet:
http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aaslpubsandjournals/slmrb/slmrcontents/volume14/ewbank.cfm [accessed: 17-6-11]

Howard, J. K., *The Relationship between School Culture and the School Library Program: Four Case Studies* in School Library Media Research, Refereed Research Articles, Vol.13 (July 2010) Available through the internet:
http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aaslpubsandjournals/slmrb/slmrcontents/volume13/howard.cfm [accessed: 17-6-11]

Jary, D., Jary, J., *Dictionary of Sociology*, Harper Collins Publishers, Glasgow (1995)

Kazazi, M., *Ψυχολογία του Αναγνώστη – Ψυχολογία της Ανάγνωσης (Psychologia tou Anagnosti-Psyhologia tis Anagnosis)* [in Greek], Hellin publications, Athens (2003)

Katsikas, X. – Leontsini, M., *Η αναγνωστική συμπεριφορά του μαθητικού πληθυσμού στο νόμο Έβρου (I anagnostiki symperifora tou mathitikou plithismou sto nomo Evrou)* [in Greek], EKEBI (November 1996)

Kokkini, S., *Σχολικές και μαθητικές βιβλιοθήκες στην Ελλάδα (Scholikes kai mathitikes vivliothikes stin Ellada)* [in Greek] Athens (1974)

Lampiri-Dimaki, I. - Papachristou, Th. K., *Κοινωνικές έρευνες με στατιστικές μεθόδους - 2 (Kinonikes erevnes me statistikes methodous – 2)*, [in Greek] A.N.Sakkoulas, Athens-Komotini (1995)

Marshall, G., *Concise Dictionary of Sociology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-NY (1996)

Mason, J., (edit. N. Kiriazi), *Qualitative researching* (trans. Eleni Dimitriadou), Greek letters, Athens (2009)

Ntelopoulos, K., *Για τις σχολικές βιβλιοθήκες: 4+3 κείμενα (Gia tis scholikes vivliothikes : 4+3 kimena apo vivliothikonomiki apopsi –* [in Greek], Gutenberg, Athens (2005)

Petrakis, P. E., "Σχολικές Βιβλιοθήκες: τρέχουσα πραγματικότητα και προοπτικές", στο *Το παρόν και το μέλλον των σχολικών βιβλιοθηκών ("Scholikes Vivliothikes: trechousa pragmatikotita kai prooptikes",* sto *To paron kai to mellon ton scholikon vivliothikon* [in Greek], Greek Federation of Publishers Booksellers and Union of Greek Librarians, Athens (2001)

Robson, Colin, *The research of the real world: a mean for social scientists and professional researches* (trans. Vassiliki Ntalakou – Katerina Vassilikou) [in Greek], Gutenberg, Athens (2007)

Saitis, X., Saiti, Ά., *Σχολικές Βιβλιοθήκες (Scholikes Vivliothikes - School Libraries)* [in Greek] Atrapos, Athens (2002)

Sklavenitis, T. E., *Η σχολική βιβλιοθήκη το 19ᵒ αιώνα: Η Βιβλιοθήκη του Γυμνασίου Ναυπλίου (1833-1935) (I scholiki vivliothiki ton 19o eona: I Vivliothiki tou Gymnasiou Nafpliou (1833-1935)* [in Greek], «Ο Παλαμήδης» publications, Athens (1995)

Shaw, M. K., *Block Scheduling and Its Impact on the School Library Media Center*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, London (1999)

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J., *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, Sage Publications, U.S.A. (1990)

Charalampopoulou, B. X., *Η σχολική βιβλιοθήκη (I scholiki vivliothiki)*, Christian Union of Teachers publications, Athens (1963) [in Greek]

http://www.libd.teithe.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=25%3A2006-&Itemid=34&layout=default&lang=el [accessed: 31-1-11]

http://spreadsheets.google.com/pub?key=0AnW3cfT-0UPDdDRUNklKZ0JiODg2SDExdDlmcUxQX0E&gid=2 [accessed: 31-1-11]

http://www.ekebi.gr/frontoffice/portal.asp?cpage=resource&cresrc=2910&cnode=424 [accessed: 31-1-11]

http://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CE%A3%CF%87%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE_%CE%B2%CE%B9%CE%B2%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%BF%CE%B8%CE%AE%CE%BA%CE%B7 [accessed: 31-1-11]

http://www.pi-schools.gr/library/pi-lib/ekthesi/ekthesi_oe-sb_3_leitourg.htm [accessed: 31-1-11]

http://tuxlibrary.blogspot.com/2011/01/blog-post_30.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+tuxlibrary+%28Greek+Libraries+in+a+New+World%29 [accessed: 31-1-11]

http://greekschoollibs.blogspot.com/ [accessed: 31-1-11]

http://vivliothiki.blogspot.com/ [accessed: 31-1-11]

http://www.iasl-online.org/advocacy/make-a-difference.html [accessed: 17-6-11]