Learning Resource Centers: An Experience

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Abstract: This paper is a general vision about self experience in Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) at The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's schools, where the focus of activity is for support of the curriculum for the school (elementary, secondary, and high-school) and to make every effort to help students and faculty succeed. It also shows the stages that Learning Resource Centers has passed through, its importance, objectives, tasks, facilities and equipment, and Finally a brief view on Learning Resource Centers Specialists.

Introduction

Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) are trying to make a quantum leap in school libraries from being an information storage to a place for work, activities and meaningful studies inside the frame of a comprehensive system that achieves harmony between the educational goals, teaching methods, sources of information and its tools. Learning Resource Centers seeks for providing a learning environment that is capable of accommodating technical developments and their integration between what is being done inside the classroom, because it is the place where a student can learn as quick as the level of his cognition. Learning resource center facility is managed by qualified teachers, contains different types of teaching and learning resources, Information technologies that the learner can deal with directly to acquire research skills for information and analyzing it in order to build his knowledge using activities based on different learning styles. For this the Ministry of Education In The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia made an ambitious plan to convert school libraries that are more than 30,000 schools for both girls and boys into modern learning resource centers and that is in a Gradual and phased way taking into account many influences such as the phase of study, number of students and availability of qualified management and metric spaces in the school building and more.

Development of School Libraries to become Centers for Learning Resources

Global learning resource centers Passed in several stages which differed depending on the concepts and objectives based on the evolution of teaching methods, until it reached the concept that it is on now a day's which is learning resource centers. The stages of the emergence of these centers can be divided into to the following :

• The First Stage (The Sixties): The concept focuses on traditional school libraries, Which was to collect, store and organize your books for the service of the school community.

• The Second Stage (The Seventies): the emerge started towards the entry of educational technology within the school library, and in this stage the term "Learning Resource Centers" began to be used.

• The Third Stage (The Eighties): The concept evolved to include the integration of technology in education and the use of tools and techniques of education in the school library spread. For this the school libraries gradually shifted into learning resource centers and from this stage the Saudi schools libraries began to evolve based on the global mobility and evolvement.

• The Fourth Stage (The Nineties): the development of school libraries continued with the integration of the ways and means of education and the use of its educational tools became a primary function. At this time the task of the modern LRC specialist crystallized as a partner
of the teacher in the educational process. In the end of the nineties the concept transformed clearly, and the first integrated "Learning Resource Center" in Saudi Arabia was established.

- The Present Stage: We can say that the learning resource centers in this decade reached the stage of integration of the concept and application together. As the trend currently prevailing in many countries of the world is heading towards the complete shift to the "Learning Resource Centers" which is what we have referred to in the ambitious plan to convert the school libraries in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia into learning resource centers.

The Importance of Learning Resource Centers

The education officials in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia agreed that we cannot prepare the student to deal with that huge information resources unless we start from school and provide him with "Learning Resource Center" in every school, which is considered the best way of showing the understanding and goal achievement. For this reason most of the working faculty in education field agreed on the necessity of supporting the educational curriculum with helping and enriching recourses, and providing a learning environment that helps the learner in building his educational and cultural character, some of them also said that living in the third millennium needs a number of skills such as: critical thinking and action, Innovation, cooperation, understanding cultures, communication, computing and depending on self.

This shows the importance of the learning resource center in teaching and learning, it is hard to accomplish any educational policy without using the learning resource center as a tool. It is the place where it is possible to build the learners learning Capabilities, and it also has a significant importance in providing the objectives of the Curriculum.

The objectives of the learning resource center

The overall objective of establishing the Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) in the Saudi schools is enhancing the teaching and learning processes. The LRCs also have other objectives such as:

- Supporting the curriculum through the provision of information sources which link to the curriculum and to disseminate the effectiveness and activity.
- Providing the learner with skills and tools that makes him able to benefit from the developments in information systems.
- Meet the needs of individual differences.
- To provide educational choices that are not available in regular school places.
- Provide educational experiences that encourage learners to become skilled creators of information.
- Provide access to information through blended learning activities in the curriculum.
- Help teachers to diversify their teaching methods and exchange of experiences.

The Tasks of the Learning Resource Center

Before starting to establish learning resource centers in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia identifying the tasks must be carried out by a specialist who operates it, including:

- Providing different information sources related to the educational and learning needs.
- Help students and teachers and train them to use the sources of information.
- Help students and teachers to access to sources of information available in and outside the school.
- Provide advice for teachers on the choice of appropriate educational means.
- Keep record of information sources available within the center.
- Follow the loan and recover any loaned sources of learning.
- Define the new information materials that reach the center.
- Prepare statistical reports required.
Facilities and Equipments

To the satisfaction of officials that the learning resource center is an important integral part of the school, and the design of the center plays a key role in the efficiency of the center It was agreed on:

- **Location:**
  The center should be on the ground floor and near the exits, should also be in a suitable and in the middle of the school building, so it would be easier for teachers and students to reach.

- **Design:**
  Schools vary in size, design and carrying capacity for this the design and size of learning centers differs. But there are basic requirements that must be taken into account when designing a learning resource center such as:
  1. Learning as an individual and in privacy.
  2. Giving opportunity to work in groups.
  3. Adopting modern technology.
  4. Provide comfort to users of the Center.
  5. Provide floor coverings and ceiling insulation to seek calmness.

- **Space:**
  There is no unified size for the space of the learning resource center. What determines the space of the center is the school capacity and the number of students. For these reasons there are four sizes of the learning resource centers in Saudi Arabia:
  1. Learning Resource Center (A) Area of not less than 150 m².
  2. Learning Resource Center (B) Area of not less than 120 m².
  3. Learning Resource Center (C) Area of not less than 80 m².
  4. Learning Resource Center (D) Area of not less than 40 m².
  Accordingly, the equipment differs such as the number of computers and the number of seats and tables.

- **Office equipment:**
  The furniture of the learning resource center must be chosen on the bases of its benefit, suitability for the educational needs, size of the groups in the center, forms of information sources, age and number of students, the furniture should be in a suitable height and size for the students, should also be comfortable to use. The office equipment includes: tables for reading, seats, tables for computers, seats for computers, circular tables, study corner, purses for atlases and dictionaries, and shelves for books and magazines.

- **Technical equipment:**
  The technical equipment that should be provided in the learning recourse center is:
  1. Computers with all its full enclosures connected to a network
  2. A data show projector with all accessories
  3. Display screen
  4. Laser printer running on the network
  5. Color inkjet printer
  6. Scanner
  7. Documentary camera
  8. Digital Camera
  9. External memory
  10. Video Player that supports all formats available in the market
  11. Educational recorder
  12. Intelligent board
  13. Television
  14. Seats for students
  15. Chamfered Tables
Learning Resources Center Specialist

Conditions have been developed for those called (Learning Resource Center Specialist) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's schools such as:

1. He/ She should be a teacher.
2. Professional preparation in the broad area of learning resource centers
3. Educational qualification, especially in the field of libraries and learning techniques.

The learning resource center specialist cooperates with the teachers, students and the rest of members of the learning community at the school in analysis of educational needs for choosing and using the resources that meet their needs. The specialist's role as a teacher, requires him to be knowledgeable of the curriculum by working effectively with teachers and principals. Moreover, the specialist takes the leading role as an expert in the field of access to sources of information in all forms and raise awareness among teachers, principals and learners. Therefore, he works collaboratively with members of the educational community to determine the policies for the program of learning resource center in order to direct all activities that are related to it.