

The reality of employing school libraries in the educational process in Jordan from teachers and librarians' perspectives

Research – Literature

Serhan Ahmed Al Tawalbeh

Al Hussein Bin Talal University- College of Art, Jordan

Sarhan.A.Tawalbeh@ahu.edu.jo

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1406-0955>

Copyright (c) 2024,
Serhan Ahmed Al
Tawalbeh, Afaf Abu
Sirhan



This work is licensed
under a Creative
Commons Attribution
4.0 International
License.

Afaf Abu Sirhan

Al Hussein Bin Talal University- College of Art, Jordan

afaf@ahu.edu.jo

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2059-3582>

Abstract

The study's objective is to investigate the reality of library activities within the curriculum, the frequency of library classes in school schedules, and identify the levels of use of libraries and their contribution to education. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The total library activities within the topics taught in the first ten stages were no more than 92 activities. There is no structured methodology for distributing library activities in the curriculum in all grades. Thus, the employment of libraries in the educational process was weak. Also, the link between libraries and the curriculum prescribed was weak. The study contributes to filling the gaps between the concept of school library education and the reality of school libraries in the educational process. The study recommended that the library activities be sufficiently included in curricula for all grades to allocate library classes in the weekly program for learning library skills.

Keywords

school library, library education, Jordan, teachers, librarians

1. Literature Review

Over the last few years, huge developments have been observed in the advancements and installation of school libraries. They are considered the most important libraries related to child education and the educational process (Ali, 1995). School library is longer just an external activity of the prescribed subjects; but has become a center of learning, where students can use various sources to get information; the main objective has also been to support curricula and transform traditional teaching methods into modern self-learning methods (Abdel-Shafi). According to Aljahan (27-149), the school library plays an active role in the educational process and effectively contributes to continuing education. It further helps students in finding ways and developing self-learning habits. School libraries are functional following the slogan, "Learn how to teach yourself and search for information Since school libraries are identified within educational institutions, it means that there should be a form of coordination between libraries and all the other elements within the educational institutions such as teachers, pupils, the curricula, and the programs. This format was planned interactively so that it functions efficiently and effectively. School libraries in Jordan are seeking to develop their services and activate their educational role by supporting the educational process from the beginning.

Over the last few years, huge developments have been observed in the advancements and installation of school libraries. They are considered the most important libraries for child education and the educational process (Ali). School library is no".

Adomi and Ozioma Anie (520-530) stressed the importance of the school library for both students and teachers. School libraries are associated with the proliferation and establishment of educational institutions and thus act as an integral part of educational institutions. They are essential contributors to enhancing students' education and help develop a realization of any country's educational objectives. It is further considered one of the essential factors contributing to the educational system's success (Chorum et al., 180-184). Furthermore, school libraries that ensure better access to updated educational resources provide students with high-quality literacy skills that are accessible and can critically evaluate the information they provide (Fitzgibbons).

Given the rapid increase in the sources of information, much attention has been gained by the use of digital resources to access information. This new information environment is connective, interactive, and complex, and is no longer restricted to time and space (Todd). Fitzgibbons added that digital technology and computer-assisted information databases, including encyclopedias and

other online available resources, have advanced the use of libraries available at educational institutions. Besides, a positive association between library materials increases students' comprehension, vocabulary, writing, grammar, and spelling skills (Ullah and Farrog, 1-9). This positive association indicates that well-developed school libraries play a significant role in enhancing students' academic performance. Therefore, curricula should encourage students to make use of the library and enrich their information through it.

In Jordan, school libraries attempt to develop their services and contribute to supporting the educational process. The Ministry of Education has developed schools and academic curricula to keep pace with technological development in the digital environment. Therefore, it is necessary to define the concept and importance of the school library from an educational perspective and the mechanism of its contribution to the educational process and determine the current educational role of school libraries in Jordan to involve them in effectively achieving the objectives. According to the Ministry of Education (2013), the number of overall schools in Jordan is 6,355. Among them, 1,544 are kindergartens, 3,582 are primary and secondary government schools, and the overall private schools are 2,773. However, the number of primary and secondary school libraries is 4,811. If we exclude kindergarten libraries, these libraries are distributed according to educational stages: for the elementary stages, 3303 school libraries, and in secondary schools, 1508 libraries. These libraries serve 1726831 students according to the statistics of the number of students in Jordan for 2012-2013. The education directorates serve these schools through Learning Resources Centers, which supervise school libraries by supporting these libraries technically and administratively.

Since a significant increase in learning and human development has been observed in the last few years, it is essential to arrange effective educational practices to increase students' competence (Darling-Hammond et al., 97-140). Recently, the ministry has computerized the curricula and linked them to databases that provide electronic sources of information by establishing the e-learning system (eduwave) employed in the educational process. The ministry did not work within the e-learning system to provide an electronic library or guide schools to have advanced library services for school libraries in conjunction with the availability of electronic curricula. In addition, the Ministry of Education has developed the education system, but there has been no apparent interest in school libraries in this development. After the curriculum has been reviewed in terms of addition, modification or revision, many problems still limit the

educational role of the library; it was noted that there was no systematic and severe activity for the library, where there is no curriculum to teach libraries in the general framework nor the general or specific objectives of all curricula and textbooks (Department of curriculum and textbooks).

The concept of library education refers to studies and exercises that enable the user to understand the library in the modern sense and its organization, and the ability to use it. Successful library education helps users earn library skills, so it becomes part of their cultural and professional composition. Shafi identified two ways that can be implied to teach library skills. The first method relies on (individual guidance) for each student when an educational position arises that requires a particular library skill or when a student faces a problem when using the library. The second method is to teach a curriculum for library education (collectively) with individual guidance and counseling. However, the most effective ways of library education are to link library skills with educational experiences.

According to Reynolds and Carroll (30–34), a librarian teacher is a specialist teacher working in a specialist classroom, with a specialist training in the teacher librarianship to perform the role. The role of school libraries and librarians is essential as it acts as one of the significant factors behind students' achievement. This is due to the explosion of information compatible with the existing means of information, such as digital resources, that have taken place in the past few years. Considering the availability of unlimited information and the obsolete nature and quality of information available on the internet, the role of the school library and librarian is crucial. Reed and Oslund emphasized the collaboration between teachers and school librarians based on the framework developed by Montiel-Overall. The explanation was held in the light of the theory of collaborative behavior. The collaboration between the two entities was explained through four steps. The first step includes sharing time and resources with teachers and librarians. The second step comprises cooperation following commitment and co-planning to a limited extent. The third steps involve increased collaboration, where both teacher and librarian make joint efforts to produce instructional content and mode of delivery. The final part then included planning the instructions for each classroom at least once a year throughout school education.

According to International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (2015) school librarians are commonly expected to enact a literacy support role that may also include literacy instruction. Moreover, another study by Lance and Kachel (15–20) suggests that qualified school librarians can have a positive

impact on students' literacy achievement. However, a recent research has suggested that school librarians may struggle to attend to this aspects of their role due to workload and complexity (Merga). It has also been contended that while school librarians are often enthusiastic to collaborate with their classroom teachers colleagues in areas such as literacy learning and related reading engagement, there is concern that the teaching community more broadly do not understand what school librarians have to offer in this capacity (Merga), and that school librarians may be seen as an unaffordable luxury (Dow and McMahon-Lakin).

While emphasizing the importance of the school library, Hilts outlined that school libraries provide information in several different formats to fulfill the requirements of the textbook and supplement the needs of the work. However, inadequate resources lead to insufficient references, encyclopedias, dictionaries, recent research, etc. (Janes, 549–566). Chorum et al. (180–184) shed light on the problem usually encountered in schools with the availability of few or no resources of information, creating problems for students in identifying relevant materials and references in writing projects and assignments. El-Fadil conducted another study to examine university students' perceptions of academic libraries. The study included higher secondary students and respondents as participants to collect their responses about their experiences with academic libraries. The study's findings indicated that most graduated students relied on digital resources such as the Web for their academic assignments and research. Students further perceived the library as an essential organ for the educational institution, which helps provide educational assistance and standard resources for academic information. It further contributed to developing information search skills among students. Students recognized the importance of information literacy and opted for integrating information literacy into their higher education curricula. Also, the collaboration between librarians and faculty members helps disseminate information literacy. Rahme et al. (223–235) study provide an original empirical sight of the situation of school libraries in Lebanon and their role in development. The finding suggests that focusing on school library programs to promote reading concepts among the students makes the best use of print books while supporting curriculum and research skills that are still underplayed.

Bouazza and Al-Mufaraji (140–147) conducted a study to determine the nature and extent to which the teachers in Oman used school libraries. It further showed a detailed analysis of the teachers' types of material and range of services. Findings of the study indicated that the use of school libraries was minimal; one of the primary reasons was the availability of insufficient learning resources, which majorly included; electronic resources, journals, audiovisual materials, and

internet access. Besides, teachers expressed their deep concerns regarding ineffective and poor services of the school library, which thus served as the primary reason behind students' low progress in education. Sulieman (247-270) conducted a study to determine and identify the school library education level in various Jordan schools. It further explored the concept of education by analyzing the Jordanian school library, affective planning, and the importance of coordination between classroom, library, and the adapted curriculum to achieve the library goals. The study's findings indicated that students had a low level of library education and recommended implementing library education classes at least once a week. The study further suggested that topics covered in the classrooms must align with those covered in library education. Besides, integration and repositioning of the content coherent e-learning resources are additionally required. Finally, a significant need was identified to introduce training sessions regarding the proper use of the school library and to develop a realization regarding the effectiveness of librarians in effective higher education services.