
Comparison of Private and Public School Library Services in Kuwait: A Case Study

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This study is a comparison between public and private school learning resource centres (LRCs) and their services in Kuwait, exploring related job descriptions, training, qualifications, services, resources, policies, and facilities, in addition to the time allocated to inventory in the private and public school systems. The elements studied make a strong case for private LRCs. The private school Learning Resources Specialists (LMSs) all share their views and convictions, to varying degrees, about their roles and about how to improve the LRC services, facilities, and collection resources. The gap between private and public education becomes clear, including the presence of effective LRCs. The study sheds light on the publishing industry in the Arab world, including its weaknesses and its inability to support collections, even when the budget allows. Merely being an advocate of the service is not enough, as LRC services need to be mandated and cannot be left to the intentions and motivations of the individual specialist.

Introduction

Promoting life-long learning and encouraging critical and analytical thinking among school students is the paramount goal of modern education. Learning resource centers (LRCs) stand at the heart of successful education. They provide students with opportunities to read and explore, as well as to build the life skills necessary for searching for and retrieving information. Various LRC resources promote the understanding of different subjects in the school curriculum. By partnering with school teachers and assuming responsibility for incorporating its resources in the curricula, LRC specialists can optimize the learning experience of students and the potential impact of the LRC on student learning.

Information Power (1998) is a classic resource in the school library world that outlines the role of the Learning Resource Center Specialist (LRCS) in optimizing the LRC experience and ensuring maximum student learning. It outlines standards that ensure students are good consumers and producers of information. It places the LRC specialist in a leadership and partnership position with the teachers, collaborating with them and with all involved parties—be it students, teachers, administrators, parents, or others. It also emphasizes the meaningful incorporation of technology in education (American Association of School Libraries & Association of Educational Communication and Technology, 1998).

Literature about private school versus public school libraries is very scarce. Studies that consider school libraries in comparison barely exist. For this study, there were few

relevant resources to locate or look at. Lockheed and Jimenez's study (1994), published by the World Bank, still resonates with the current situation. The study compares private and public education in five developing countries. Privatization of education is generally a viable choice in many countries, and there is bountiful literature both for and against it. Lockheed and Jimenez (1994) stated that

One reason that private schools may be more effective than public ones is that they have more resources to bring to the classroom: better educated teachers, more instructional materials, a larger stock of institutional resources such as libraries, laboratories, or subject rooms (p. 19).

Libraries, as institutional resources, are the subject of this paper. The following is a descriptive analysis of LRCs in three private foreign schools in the State of Kuwait: one American, one British, and one bilingual. Comparing the services of the private schools with the services provided by the public school LRCs is the basis of this study, drawing on previous research on the public school library system in Kuwait (Alqudsi-ghabra, Safar, & Qabazard, 2012). The juxtaposition helps clarify the obstacles and challenges that face school library services in Kuwait, as well as their impact on student learning. The study suggests immediate and future resolutions for optimizing student learning. It further sheds light on public school library services versus private school library services in Kuwait and elsewhere.

Relevant Literature and Study Context

In this section, we provide a background of relevant literature pertaining to public and private education in Kuwait as well as descriptions of the school contexts in which the study occurred.

Foreign Private Education in Kuwait

Private education is an old concept, while the concept of free public education is a new and modern one, originating in the 19th century in Europe and North America (Lockheed & Jimenez, 1994, p. 7). In 1967, the private education system in Kuwait, both Arabic and foreign, was formally started, substantially subsidized by the government. Before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and its subsequent occupation in 1990, a total of 15 non-Arabic foreign private schools operated in Kuwait. However, since the liberation of Kuwait, in 1991, the number of foreign private schools has been on the rise. The occupation experience led people to invest in private education and shook their faith in public education. As Kuwait became open to multinational businesses, the foreign expatriate population increased, as did the need for more foreign schools in Kuwait (Durae, 2012).

Statistics for the 2010/2011 school year show a total of 310 foreign private schools in Kuwait (10 boys' schools, 18 girls' schools, and 282 co-educational schools). These schools serve 119,861 students (66,358 male students and 53,503 female students). Among these, 39,130 are Kuwaitis (23,207 males and 15,923 females) and 80,731 are of other nationalities (43,151 males and 37,580 females) (Al-Failkawai, 2011).

Private schools in Kuwait are administered and regulated by the Private Education Department (PED) of the Ministry of Education (MOE). They must be registered with, and accredited by, the PED, and adhere to its policies and guidelines. The PED oversees the school facilities, the teaching, the administrative staff qualifications, and the curricula implementation. The PED conducts regular inspection and evaluation visits during the academic year and regulates tuition fees (Durae, 2012). The Library Administration (LA) of

the MOE in Kuwait circulates a set of guidelines and policies for acquisition, as well as a list of books/resources censored by the MOE.

Foreign private schools follow the curriculum of their respective home countries. The academic standards of these schools parallel those of the home countries. However, the schools are required to integrate Arabic language and Islamic studies within their curriculum. All private schools receive some governmental support, such as land for school sites and free textbooks for Arabic, Islamic, and social studies. The Kuwaiti government spends over K.D. 5.6 million annually to develop private educational facilities (Durae, 2012). The American School of Kuwait (ASK).

ASK is an independent co-educational college-preparatory school that opened in 1961, and it has been accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools since 1971. The 2009/2010 statistics show a student enrolment of 1,627 students (402 U.S. citizens, 677 Kuwaitis, and 538 students from 44 other nationalities) (American School of Kuwait, 2012).

ASK's Library Media Centres (LMCs). ASK has two LMCs. One serves Pre-K to grade 5 and the other serves middle and high school. Each LMC has a total of three employees: one library media specialist (LMS), holding a Bachelor's degree in Library and Information Science (LIS) and Education, and two assistants, with a Bachelor or Diploma in any field or specialty, or sometimes just a High School Certificate.

Access to ASK's LMCs is provided throughout the school day. Patrons use the facility on school days, from 6:45 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Sunday through Thursday, as Fridays and Saturdays are the weekend in Kuwait. The centres close for faculty meetings, usually on Monday afternoons, or as announced. The LMCs are used for research, study, and circulation. Teachers coordinate with the LMSs to determine when their classes can use the LMC. According to ASK's LMSs, teachers in Pre-K to grade 2 are required to visit the centre for a 40 minute class every six days. Grades 3 to 5 also visit for a 40 minute class, but every 12 days. However, the teaching staff is encouraged to schedule additional times.

Access to the LMCs is not limited to students, teachers, and staff. The administrative staff and the service and support staff, in addition to parents, are allowed access to the facility. They are encouraged to visit the LMCs before the beginning of the school day and after the end of it. The LMCs close only in the last ten days of the school year for inventory. All borrowed items must be returned; otherwise, the students will not receive their final reports.

The Pre-K to grade 5 LMC has 15 computers with Internet access (three for librarians and 12 for patrons), while the middle and high school LMC has 23 computers with Internet access (three for librarians and 20 for students). Additionally, other ICT tools are also available in both LMCs. The LMCs employ the Follett Destiny automation system. Follett Destinybis used by the majority of international schools in Kuwait. The collection of the LMCs consists of printed and electronic material that covers a wide range of resources, directed at different learning styles and teaching methods. All resources are organized according to the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC).

The 2009/2010 school year statistics show holdings of 48,920 titles (30,564 in the Pre-K to grade 5 LMC and 18,356 in the middle and high school LMC) that are available mostly in the English language. The total number of audio-visual materials available in Pre-K to grade 5 LMC is 1,254 items. ASK's LMCs also contain a variety of printed Arabic language material. There are almost 1,000 Arabic titles in just the Pre-K to grade 5 LMC. ASK's LMCs

provide a variety of services, such as circulation (for students, teachers, staff, and parents of ASK's students) and photocopying and printing services pertaining to classroom needs.

A current awareness and reading guidance service is available in the Pre-K to grade 5 LMC, using the Accelerated Reader program. Students are encouraged to read from a series of traditional printed books that are endorsed by the program or teachers. They then take a computer-based test (CBT), which demonstrates their reading competencies. Announcements for services occurs throughout the school, using bulletin boards, flyers, and a monthly newsletter, both in printed format and via e-mail, to all patrons, including parents, and also appears on ASK's Website. Internet access is also provided.

ASK's LMCs host activities to encourage reading, such as book fairs and author visits. ASK's Pre-K to grade 5 LMC organizes a yearly in-house contest for teachers to improve their students' reading competencies. The contest is related to the reading guidance program at ASK for the Pre-K to grade 5 levels. At the end of each year, the classroom teacher who has assigned the most reading books to his/her students is recognized and receives an award.

The library staff members collaborate with teachers. They work together to incorporate the use of library resources across the curriculum. They communicate heavily via e-mail, telephone, and visits. Faculty members, students, administrative staff, parents, as well as support and service staff, use the facilities and services.

ASK's LMCs have developed several policies over the years. Some of those policies have to do with behavioural issues, while others deal with traditional library issues, such as the duration for borrowed material and the number of items to be circulated. Computers for database research, word processing, and Internet access are provided. However, patrons are not allowed to change computer settings, and should adhere to the policies on computer and Internet use.

ASK's two LMCs are active areas in the school, yet they lack a multimedia production area. They do not have a quiet study room, audio-visual area, conference or seminar room, nor does it have a multimedia resource area that has access to educational software, databases, e-publications, or learning objects.

Al-Bayan Bilingual School (BBS)

The BBS was the first bilingual school founded in the countries of the Arabian Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC). It is a non-profit Arabic-English language institution that was established in 1977. The BBS is a college preparatory school that provides education from nursery to high school students (Al-Bayan Bilingual School, 2012).

BBS's Library Media Centres. The BBS has four LMCs, including two at the elementary level: one Arabic and one English. The middle school and high school each have one LMC. The BBS's elementary school English LMC and Arabic LMC both serve 550 patrons. Each employs one LMS. Each LMS undergoes annual internal professional development training and attends one national/international workshop or conference, such as the Near East South Asia (NESA) Council of Overseas Schools Conference.

The 2008/2009 statistics for the English elementary LMC collection is 3,534 titles (5,100 volumes). Additionally, there are 199 entries in 200 VHS cassettes. Most of the reference and teacher reference collection is outdated. Although the fiction collection is fairly large, the content is essentially Western-oriented. The strongest current non-fiction area is the science collection. Therefore, there is currently a lack of multi-cultural literature written

in the English language. Additionally, the collection is not fully automated, and circulation is still carried out manually.

The 2008/2009 school year statistics show that the Arabic elementary LMC collection is a diverse collection that reflects the current curriculum and contains 20,421 volumes. The collection consists of materials primarily published in Lebanon, Syria, Kuwait, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. The “green” section is an advanced section for the fourth grade. The limited number of books published in the region is reflected in the collection.

The LMSs are allocated an annual budget for developing the elementary LMC collection. Several factors affect the acquisition decisions at the BBS, such as teacher suggestions and the current collection evaluation. Orders are made through the Follett Destiny automation system. In addition to the annual budget, the Arabic LMS does direct purchasing during the local annual book fair. A budget of 1000–1500 Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD) is allocated every year. The collection content, quality of books, and book layout qualify new materials. Interestingly enough, the budget is currently adequate, yet the selection to choose from is poor.

As for the middle school LMC, which serves about 519 patrons, it employs two professional LMSs who hold Master’s degrees in LIS; one is responsible for the Arabic collection, while the other is responsible for the English collection. The LMSs get annual internal professional development training and attend the annual Professional Educators Around Kuwait (PEAK) conference. They can also choose to attend some regional conferences.

The high school LMC serves about 392 patrons. It has two professional LMSs who hold Master’s degrees in LIS. The LMSs attend annual internal professional development training, and alternately attend the annual NESAC conference. They have the choice to participate in national/international workshops and/or register in online training courses. The collection holdings of the middle school LMC, for the 2008/2009 school year, includes 15,047 books. It contains 8,080 English works of fiction, 3,551 Arabic works of fiction, 319 audio-visual materials, three globes, three teacher kits, 39 maps, 2,488 works of non-fiction in Arabic and English, and 391 reference materials. As for the high school LMC, the collection holdings include around 6700 English books and 4600 Arabic books. Both collections reflect the current school curriculum and are updated regularly. The English collection is diverse and covers language arts (i.e., English), science, political science, and fine arts. More attention needs to be placed on sports and biographies.

The middle school and high school LMCs annually acquire an average of 700–1,000 items in English and 400–500 in Arabic. The LMSs are responsible for developing the collections of the LMCs. They seek the input of the teachers and students. For example, the LMSs compile a list of subjects that the students or teachers have inquired about throughout the school year in preparation for incorporating them in their next selection round. The LMSs also look for suggestions and recommendations listed in the “Student Library Journal.” The English books and resources are acquired through “Follett,” but the Arabic books are selected and purchased directly during the local annual “Book Fair.” They are then processed through the “Horizon” automation system. Cataloguing and circulation is fully automated.

The LMCs at BBS have flexible schedules. They are open from 06:45 am to 03:00 pm, though on Thursdays they are open to 02:30 pm. Daily school hours are from 07:15 am to

02:30 pm. They open on weekends based on need. Parents are permitted a once-a-week visit on Sundays.

At BBS's LMCs, students are given information literacy classes that cover the basics on how to use the LMC, the parts of a book, the different genres of books, and the DCC system. Other topics are also introduced, such as Website evaluation, copyright and plagiarism issues, documentation styles (e.g. the MLA and the APA), the use of the open public access catalog (OPAC), and database instruction.

The LMCs are available for teachers and students, either on a fixed schedule or on demand. For example, fifth grade students have a fixed schedule and visit the elementary English LMC every fortnight. They attend a compulsory information literacy lesson that includes library basics. However, the middle school and high school LMCs are available for students and teachers in grades 6–12 on demand, and the LMSs plan their program according to the needs of classroom teachers, preparing relevant material accordingly.

The students are allowed to use the LMC computers for research. Other services available for patrons include circulation, photocopying, printing, reading guidance, Internet access, database access, movie and TV viewing areas, and current awareness. In addition, different club meetings take place in the LMCs. Also, the LMCs host/organize several activities during the school year, such as the annual "I Love to Read Week," which consists of a "Book Parade Day," book fairs, and author visits.

At the BBS, the superintendent and principals are advocates of the LMCs. The LMSs seek teacher input on the developments they would like to see in the LMCs. Cooperation is primarily with the language, science, and art teachers in the elementary stage, since these are the only subjects taught in English at this stage. Collaboration with the Arabic, math, and social studies teachers is underway. However, in the middle and high school LMCs, cooperation among the LMSs and the teachers of various subjects is strongly evidenced.

The Gulf English School (GES)

The GES is a well-established international school that opened in 1980. It provides broad education, from the early foundation stage through the university preparatory stage, and follows a modified national curriculum from the United Kingdom (UK) and Wales. Arabic and Islamic studies are taught for Arab and Kuwaiti students, as stipulated and required by the MOE. The GES teachers incorporate a wide range of teaching and learning strategies and resources, including the use of an LMC. According to the 2011/2012 school year statistics, 1,830 students are enrolled at GES (60% Kuwaitis, 25% Egyptians, and 15% from other nationalities). Most GES teachers are recruited in the UK, except for the Arabic and Islamic studies teachers, who are recruited locally. There is only one LMC facility at GES (Gulf English School, 2012).

The GES Library Media Centre. The LMC was established in 1980, serving the reception, primary, and secondary schools. Three professional librarians work in the LMC. They hold Bachelor of Arts degrees in LIS and/or Information Technology (IT). The LMSs do not receive any particular type of training courses—such as technical, computer, management, or communication courses—to professionally develop their skills and competencies.

The LMC does not run on a fixed schedule; teachers reserve classes in advance. Students and teachers are allowed visits during class time and during some recesses. The LMC is open from 07:15 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. during the week (except weekends and holidays);

school days begin at 7:45 a.m. and end at 2:20 p.m. Thus, the LMC is available on demand. The LMSs plan the program, per the needs of the classroom teachers, and prepare relevant material and information accordingly. In addition, accessing the LMC is not limited to students and teachers, as it is also provided to instructional, administrative, service, and support staff, as well as parents. They can visit the LMC before and after the beginning of the school day.

The LMC has a collection that includes books and a variety of ready reference resources, such as magazines, encyclopedias, atlases, and wildlife photography catalogs. The collection is updated regularly. The LMSs are provided, by the administration, lists to choose from twice a year. They can make other requests, emulating collections at comparable schools in the UK.

The main goals of the LMC at GES, as identified in the GES policies booklet, are to: (1) encourage independent reading; (2) improve reading skills; (3) familiarize students with the LMC environment; (4) teach responsibility by borrowing and returning books; (5) provide reliable and varied learning resources; (6) assist teachers in choosing resources; and (7) provide a disciplined and quiet reading environment. Additionally, the booklet also identifies the LMC's main roles as the following: (1) introduce library and information skills; (2) clarify the LMC's rules and regulations; (3) keep the LMC organized; (4) check in and/or check out books/resources; (5) keep discipline at the LMC; (6) catalogue resources and input them into the main computer; (7) label resources according to the DDC; (8) follow up on outstanding resources and issue lost letters; and (9) censor resources according to the MOE guidelines (Gulf English School, 2012).

At the GES LMC, several services are provided, such as circulation, photocopying, printing, reading guidance, Internet access, current awareness, and library and information skills classes. Also, the LMC hosts several activities during the school year. It organizes book fairs and book weeks on the school campus. For example, GES has a book week and an international week once a year. The book week includes famous author visits, book signings, and character parades. During this activity period, the LMSs stock up on the visiting author's books. They organize contests (e.g., a book treasure and hunt during the book week, and issue prizes.

GES administrators collaborate with the LMSs. They provide the LMC with class name lists and send important letters, notes, and late payment notices for library books. Teachers coordinate a weekly library lesson at the beginning of the year with the LMSs. This allows the librarians to organize a library timetable for classes throughout the school year. Teachers ask the LMSs for resources and activity books related to class curriculum topics. They furthermore inform the LMSs about the reading abilities of students. The LMSs accordingly monitor students and provide advice on suitable books.

Communications among the LMSs and the IT technician/s, classroom teachers, head teachers, and administrators, about how to improve the LMC services, is continuous. Nevertheless, little interaction exists among the librarians and the parents of students. The LMSs become enthused when parents occasionally visit the LMC and comment on the reading skills of their children. Parents are allowed to visit the library and ask for advice on books. They are allowed to borrow books to help with their children's projects and assignments.

The LMS's job description at GES is clearly identified and published in a primary policies booklet. This booklet outlines the basic library procedures and guidelines, and

describes the role of the LMSs and the teachers. It explains how library and information skills are taught according to the appropriate academic stage.

Problems at the LMC can be summarized as follows: (1) the facility is not suitable for the increasing students numbers; (2) censorship of books by the Kuwaiti MOE delays the processing of materials and their subsequent provision; (3) parents challenging lost library resources; (4) librarians are fully occupied with organizing the resources in preparation for their circulation; and (5) only 20–25% of the students visit the LMC on a weekly basis.

In this section, we provided a brief comparative overview of the literature pertaining to public and private education in Kuwait and introduced the three schools that provided the contexts for this study. The characteristics of each school are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of the Three Private Schools Examined in this Study

Category	Case No. 1	Case No. 2	Case No. 3
Name of Private School	ASK	BBS	GES
Year of Establishment	1961	1977	1980
Type of School	American	Bilingual	British
Grades Covered	Pre-K to HS	Pre-K to HS	Pre-K to HS
Student Enrollment	1627	1461	1830
Library Media Program	Yes	Yes	Yes
Collection Development	48,920 titles & 1,245 A/V	50,302 titles & 518 A/V	N/A
Number of LMCs	2	4	1
Personnel/Human Resources	2 LMSs 4 assistants (3 and 3)	6 LMSs (1, 1, 2, 2)	3 LMSs
Qualifications	2 B.A. LIS 4 B.A. E	2 B.A. LIS 4 M. LIS	3 B.A. LIS
Professional Development and Training	Yes	Yes	No
Policies / Regulations	Yes	Yes	Yes

Library Resource Centres in Public and Private Foreign Schools: A Comparison

Historical Development

The school library system in Kuwait has always been blessed with a supporting infrastructure which can be traced back to the beginning of compulsory general education in public schools in the early 1900s. The first formal school libraries were started in 1936 at the Al-Mubarakiyah School, formally opened in 1912, and the Al-Ahmadiyah School, officially opened in 1921 (Ali, 1997). The first formal foreign private school library was opened in 1964 at the American School of Kuwait, which had opened in 1961 under the name the International School of Kuwait (American School of Kuwait, 2012).

Kuwait was among the first countries in the AGCC region to start school libraries. According to Mr. Eid S. Shilaash, the Interim Manager of the LA at Kuwait's MOE, "Efforts were taken since the late 1950's by the MOE to develop the school library system in Kuwait,

its facilities, resources, services, as well as its professional and administrative staff” (Alqudsi-ghabra, Safar, & Qabazard, 2012p. 12).

Administration. The public school LRCs are centrally administered, operated, and supervised by the LA of Kuwait’s MOE. It is responsible for planning, constructing, furnishing, developing collections, and supervising the provision of services and resources, in addition to hiring professional staff (Alqudsi-ghabra, Safar, & Qabazard, 2012). The foreign private school LRCs, on the other hand, are administered and operated by the foreign schools themselves, within the policies set by the PED and the LA of the MOE, with censorship being the most important. Thus, the LA only plays a supervisory role when it comes to private school LRCs (Durae, 2012).

Planning. The public school library system in Kuwait lacks a real and strategic national Library Media Program (LMP). It operates according to a general workflow plan for libraries. A professional LMP requires a suitable budgetary allocation to maintain an adequate level of resources, services, facilities, and personnel to make a significant difference in students’ education (Alqudsi-ghabra, Safar, & Qabazard, 2012). Education at foreign private schools in Kuwait incorporates the LRC programs within the school day. The administrators are advocates of library media programs. Teachers, students, and parents are involved and play supportive roles for the LMPs.

Personnel. It is true that the library profession is a predominantly female profession across the world. This is clearly evident in Kuwait’s public school LRCs, where segregation is formally implemented. This has left a number of boys’ public schools without specialists to run the LRCs. Foreign private schools, the majority of which do not deploy segregation, incorporate the use of the LRC within the school to varying degrees, as the samples from this research show.

At Kuwait’s public school LRCs, the total number of professional staff varies depending on the educational stage. The LA’s policy stipulates that there should be three employees at each secondary school, two at middle schools, one in primary schools, and one in kindergarten. The majority of personnel hold Bachelor’s of Art degrees (1024, representing 92.92%), with majors in LIS (Alqudsi-ghabra, Safar, & Qabazard, 2012). Nevertheless, an average of two to three LMSs work in the LRCs of foreign private schools in Kuwait, with the majority holding professional Master’s degrees in LIS. They refer to themselves as learning resource centre specialists (LRCs), or LMSs.

In addition, the job description of all librarians who work in the public school LRCs is carefully prepared by the Professional Development and Training Administration (PDTA) of the MOE, in accordance with the national job descriptions that are specified and enforced by the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) of Kuwait. The professional development and training program of these librarians is also administered through the PDTA. However, little is done on the ground, even though the PDTA stipulates that every librarian can register for three to four training courses every school year. Thus, continuing education and training is needed (Alqudsi-ghabra, Safar, & Qabazard, 2012).

In contrast, the job description of foreign school LMSs is clearly defined and written in the LMP documents published by each school. As for professional development and

training, most of the LMSs working in these foreign schools are encouraged to attend one or two conferences, as well as one or two training courses, yearly.

Access. Patron access to public school LRCs is limited throughout the school day. They can only use the LRC from the second period until the end of the sixth period. The LA does not allow the use of school LRCs in the first and seventh periods, to allow the librarian time for bookkeeping activities. In addition, public school LRCs are officially closed from the end of April until the end of June every school year for inventory reasons. Although students can visit the school LRC with their classroom teachers, as individual students, or in small groups, the space to accommodate them is not sufficient (Alqudsi-ghabra, Safar, & Qabazard, 2012; Al-Ali, Shilaash, & Al-Roomi, 2000). Public school LRCs do not have a fixed schedule, and teachers can book classes in advance.

As for accessing an LRC at a foreign private school, it is available throughout the school day, and 30 minutes before and after the school day. The foreign school LRCs are also open on weekends, based on curriculum needs. Some foreign school LRCs have fixed schedules for information literacy classes. While others do not have fixed schedules, teachers may arrange with the LMSs to book classes in advance or on demand. In turn, the LMSs plan the program accordingly. Some foreign school LRCs use a combination of both systems, as seen in ASK and BBS. Thus, students and teachers visit the LRCs during class time, and also during some recesses.

Moreover, access to the foreign private school LRCs is allowed for students, teachers, and instructional staff. Administrative staff, service and support staff, and parents are also allowed access. The majority of the foreign school LRCs are closed only during the last week of the school year, for reasons of inventory. All borrowed items must be returned to their respective libraries and all claims should be settled.

Collection Development. Based on the automation project of the MOE's LA, the ICT resources of the public school LRCs are limited. The number of computers with Internet access varies depending on the educational stage. The selection and acquisition of resources for the public school LRCs is done centrally by different committees of the LA. Input and suggestions for purchases are usually welcomed from the teachers and librarians in schools, but the final decision rests with LA committees. Even though public school LRC collections vary, LRCs lack a wide range of resources, particularly those that would appeal to different learning styles and teaching methodologies. Emphasis, historically, has been placed on print publications, rather than audio-visual materials (Alqudsi-ghabra, Safar, & Qabazard, 2012). The collection in every public school LRC consists of only print publications—many of which are of no use to students or teachers because they are in poor physical condition, out of date, or unsuitable in terms of subject content, level, or language—that support the curricula, such as books, reference material, and some serials. Materials are catalogued according to the DDC. A fully integrated bilingual system of automation, called "Horizon," has been contracted since 2000 for public school LRCs. However, the vast majority are still operated manually. Eventually, when all public school LRCs are fully automated, some basic steps toward resource sharing will be possible (Al-Ali & Al-Fadhli, 2000). The collections in foreign school LRCs consist of printed publications, as well as electronic materials. The libraries' collections cover a wide range of resources, directed at different learning styles and teaching methods. All resources are organized using the DDC. Most LRCs in Kuwait's foreign schools are automated. These LRCs employ the Follett Destiny

automation system. However, some foreign school LRCs also deploy SirsiDynix's Horizon automation system but only for automation purposes in regard to the Arabic collections.

Services. The public school LRCs provide services only for students and teachers. Library and information literacy classes are not provided. Therefore, such literacy and awareness classes are provided only when the LMS is professionally committed. Activities facilitated by the public school LRCs are limited to annual contest/s, organized by the LA of the MOE, and field trips to the annual book fair (Alqudsi-ghabra, Safar, & Qabazard, 2012).

In addition to services provided by Kuwait's foreign private school LRCs, to all patrons, such as LIS literacy classes, circulation, printing, photocopying, reading guidance, Internet access, and database access, these LRCs also host several academic and social events during the school year.

Collaboration. In public schools, the communication and collaboration among classroom teachers, students, administrators, and librarians is significantly limited, with exceptions only in some girls' schools where the librarians are highly motivated and involved in the school community. Such librarians are blessed with school administrators who are well-informed of the impact of school LRCs. The noticeable lack of communication and collaboration in most schools can be attributed to the absence of a professionally prepared staff (Alqudsi-ghabra, Safar, & Qabazard, 2012; Al-Ali, Shilaash, & Al-Roomi, 2000).

The stance of the foreign private schools in Kuwait in this area is better. The superintendents and principals are advocates of the LMPs. The LMSs collaborate with their school communities. They attend weekly staff meetings, participate in department head meetings, and host several events for PTA meetings, as well as parent-teacher conferences. Teachers use the LRCs for research purposes and instruction. The LMSs are asked for information literacy guidelines. Parents are allowed access to the LRCs.

Policies. The LA of the MOE is responsible for developing policies and regulations regarding LRC services in Kuwait's public schools (Alqudsi-ghabra, Safar, & Qabazard, 2012). As for foreign private school LRCs, each school develops and makes available its own policies and regulations. The LRCs of private schools adhere to the censorship policies that are circulated and enforced, regularly, by the LA. For example, the LA circulates a set of guidelines and policies for books/resources censored by the MOE, in order to help the LRCs make their acquisitions accordingly. Surprisingly, almost all foreign private school LRCs investigated in this research study faced delays in their collection development process that were attributed to the censorship practices of the MOE's LA.

Table 2. Comparison between public and private foreign school LRCs

Category	Public School LRCs	Private Foreign School LRCs
Establish Date	1936	1964
Administration /Operation	LA of the MOE	Foreign private schools
Supervision	LA of the MOE	The PED and the LA of the MOE
Planning /LMP	Not Available	Exists
Number of LRCs/LMCs	1	2–3

Gender of Personnel	Gender	Female majority	Female majority
Number of Personnel		1–3	2–3
Qualifications of Personnel		Majority with B.A. LIS	Majority with M. LIS
Specialties of Personnel		Majority are librarians	Majority are LMSs or LRCSS
Job Description of Personnel		Prepared by PDTA of the MOE according to the CSB of Kuwait	Defined in the LMP document of each private foreign school
Professional Development and Training of Personnel		Little is done; more is needed	1–2 conferences and 1–2 training courses yearly
Time of Access		Limited	Unlimited
Patron Access		Limited	Unlimited
Access Schedules		On demand only	Both fixed and on demand
Facility Space		Insufficient	Sufficient
Collection Development, Selection		Centrally by the LA	Locally by school, but monitored by the LA
Collection Development, ICT Resources		Limited	A wide range
Collection Development, Resources		Limited, old, and print publications only	A wide range, modern, and both print and digital publications
Collection Development, Cataloging		DDC with MARC	DDC with MARC
Automation		Majority manually operated, digitization in progress using Horizon	Majority digitally operated using Follett; some use Horizon
Services/Activities		Limited	A wide range
Collaboration		Limited	A wide range
Policies		LA of the MOE	LMP of each school and the LA of the MOE

Conclusions And Recommendations

The ICT resources, facilities, and collections at Kuwait's foreign private school LRCs are better than public schools in terms of quantity, quality, and variety. The American and bilingual schools seem to be much better equipped than the English schools. It is very true, and documented in the literature, that "In many developing countries, public education leaves a lot to be desired. Teachers are not as motivated to show up regularly, perhaps because they do not feel accountable to the students, but instead to distant government officials" (Escalante, 2007, p.41). This needs to be studied further, and options for privatization need to be looked at as one possible solution. As seen in the comparison, reducing the role of the government role and relying more on the private sector is an option worth investigation (Savas, 2000).

Because private schools compete for students, and are accountable to the parents who pay the bills, they have an incentive to adopt the best teaching practices, and to use staff and educational materials effectively and economically. An additional benefit might be that, if public schools were forced to compete with private schools for students, they become more efficient (Lockheed & Jimenez, 1994, p. 6). Lockheed and Jimenez's study states that private schools more often have school libraries than public schools (93% and 79%, respectively), whereas public schools more often have a copying machine than private schools (85% and 61%, respectively) (1994, p. 24). Interestingly, though their study is old, their observations still seem to be valid.

The comparison in this study sheds light on the publishing industry in the Arab world and its weakness in supporting collections, even when the budget allows, as the case

of the BBS shows. Merely being an advocate of the service is not enough, as LRC services need to be mandated, and they cannot be left to the intentions and motivations of individual specialists, or informal good relations with an administrator or a representative at a ministry. The GES case shows that there seems to be a trust between teachers and librarians. Yet, the lack of parental involvement is clear and detrimental.

Job descriptions, training, qualifications, services, resources, policies, and facilities are clear issues that need to be looked at. Furthermore, the time allocated to inventory in the private and public school systems makes a strong case in favor of private LRCs. In the private schools, education seems to be a priority, and inventory is done without impeding education. The private school LMSs seem to share insights about how to improve LRC services, facilities, and collection resources. They all appreciate the value of the LRC and work on incorporating the use of its resources across the curriculum, and across all grade levels, in order to enrich and enhance the learning experience of students, pushing them beyond the boundaries of textbooks. They communicate heavily through e-mail, telephone, and regular visits.

Some of the issues mentioned above can be resolved with simple solutions, such as enlarging and renovating the GES LRC or adding literacy classes throughout the curriculum. Other solutions need to be considered at the national level. Strategies and policies for dealing with these issues need to be taken seriously for long-term success. If not, the gap between private and public education will continue to increase, including the presence of effective LRCs/LMCs.

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