Sa'i Smart Library Learning Lab:
Disruptive Learning

Sara Saleh Almarzooqi
Sharjah Book Authority, UAE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nationally, schools are unable to cope with the increasing demands imposed upon the teachers and students as the learning systems have not changed. On the other hand, there is an increasing need for librarians to assist curriculum needs in schools and the national education agenda of UAE, of having human talents who are knowledge creators, have sufficient 21st century skills, lifelong learning habits, positive beliefs and behaviors, and knowledge and skills related to STREAM as well as a holistic personality. The role of public libraries could be extended further to work closely with schools in a systemic way that enables both entities to reach another milestone. Schools can establish another supportive educational after-school system to empower teachers and students. A more extensive and rigorous as well as controlled system that all stakeholders, teachers, and parents could share to provide the opportunity for students to be effective knowledge-contributors is planned and shared in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

Education is going through huge disruptions due to the phenomenal growth in emerging technologies and rapid innovations that educators are creating through research. These disruptions are partly triggered by easy accessibility to knowledge via the Internet, the interconnectivity between various gadgets (Internet of Things), the easy availability of empirical data about learner progress (big data and analytics) and the relatively easy co-creation of knowledge. It is estimated that approximately 400 hours of videos are uploaded into YouTube every minute (DMR, 2018). This microscopic account of educational disruptions has various implications on the nature and outcomes of learning. A question that begets intellectual thought is "How are the different national entities, such as the government education ministries, the ICT ministries, and other stakeholders such as libraries preparing learners and teachers to face the multiple latitudes of change?" The United Arab Emirates (UAE), like many other countries is grappling

with how these different entities can collaboratively work together to address the many disruptions that are occurring within the education sphere. As such, an initiative by Sharjah Libraries was launched in 2017, whereby the Ministry of Education (MOE) and some local universities were invited to co-think and collaborate to ensure that learners and teachers are not disadvantaged in the disruptive technological developments that are taking place. What has emerged is a collaborative project that will capitalise on the strengths of each organization. The project is anchored in how the three entities can work collaboratively to create ideas that will enable learners to be more prepared to face future learning challenges which are not about knowledge consumption anymore, but rather, are more about managing information, using that information intelligently to suit one's needs and to re-create knowledge that is useful for personal development. Thus, the issue is one of managing cognitive load, which could be related to motivations and strategies on how to manage it, and one which is an issue faced by Sharjah Libraries.

The Sharjah Libraries have 10,000 members, which is a commendable achievement. However, the libraries face the issue of low library usage by these members, whereby only 3,000 are active members, defined as members who are using the libraries' services on a regular basis. While libraries must contend with the general challenge of information overload and management of technologies, at Sharjah Libraries, the issue is low patronage of the libraries. Thus, there is a gap in the mission attainment of both the libraries and schools they are supposed serve that could be further addressed through a mutually diagnosed problem and collaboration. The various meetings between the MOE, Sharjah Libraries and universities led to the proposal of a project whereby Sharjah Libraries will create innovative instructional spaces to support formal education in schools so that the schools will get teachers and learners ready for the future and Sharjah Libraries will tackle the issue of low patronage that in turn inevitably leads to low reading scores.

The project is in line with the UAE's vision to focus on 21stcentury skills and is flexible enough to be altered and modified for different school and community priorities, since it combines both virtual and physical spaces and will re-conceptualize libraries as supportive entities to schools. The whole system is planned to be implemented as an informal after school program to further enhance the 21st century skills of learners, as well as their creative and higher thinking skills. This study thus will discuss a conceptual framework for the project with a proposed question to lead the discussion:

What is a smart learning model or framework for 21stcentury libraries that positions them as partners to school systems?

BACKGROUND

Libraries can support the formal educational system in numerous ways such as providing technology-driven instructional support, sourcing curriculum aligned to e-resources and assisting teachers and learners to co-create valuable learning content. However, in the UAE there is no evidence so far of an approach that can serve the mission of both libraries and schools in a systematic way. So far, the educational system in the UAE has not been able to exactly meet the expectations, especially in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores of UAE learners. This is evident as is seen in Figure 1 which shows the status of PISA scores in the UAE as historically ranked and future expectations leading to 2020. According to the PISA scores, the UAE results are very much below the average scores set by