

Chapter 38

Assessing Adequacy of Leisure and Recreation Facilities in KFUPM Campus: A Futuristic Need–Gap Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Leisure and recreation facilities are strongly intertwined due to their mutual dependencies. Thus, they build up invisible networks. Leisure and recreation facilities are one of the imperative components for socio-cultural, psychological, and economic development. In the spectrum of sustainable development, it is not possible to initiate development process without strategically planning for leisure and recreation activities. KFUPM was developed with specific leisure and recreation facilities for its community members. This paper examines their adequacy and possible set of actions to minimize the inadequacies in relation to growing and changing needs of the diversified-culture based community. Preparation of a proposed alternative (strategic) action plan to improve leisure and recreation facilities is based on conducting an internal assessment of current and forecasting amenities, and the need-gap analysis. The proposed action plan covers the estimated cost and urgency level for each of the alternative leisure and recreation improvement options. KFUPM must be committed to embracing the vision and strategies presented by this study, and allocate resources to implement strategic plans for improving leisure and recreation facilities that foster productivity and help shape systems for human resource development.

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INTRODUCTION

Leisure and recreation activities are one of the critical dimensions that determine quality of life (Cushman & Alan, 1990). There are common leisure and recreation facilities through which people spend time, and develop skills and competencies as well. Traditionally, leisure and recreation activities are given low priority against the support and assistance provided for socio-cultural and economic development (Kaiser, Godschalk, & Chapin, 1995; Kraus, 1966). Therefore, many development initiatives are only limited to sporadic recreation and leisure choices. When other opportunities are offered, they often involve taking groups of people to large public settings (e.g., community centres, shopping malls, theatres, restaurants, etc.) while very little support is offered for individual participation in community settings that offer greater opportunities for social connections and relationships (Nelson, 2004; Pigram, 1983).

In order to assist people to get involved in leisure and recreation activities, one must be aware of the available and possible opportunities within confinement of the community (Centre on Human Policy, 1990; Centre for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, 1988). This awareness includes the following information,

- (1) Use of various neighbourhood and community places (i.e., who uses them, when, for what purposes);
- (2) Local organizations and associations (e.g., where and when do they meet, what does it mean to be a member, etc.); and
- (3) Where people go and what they do who are of various ages, genders, racial/ethnic groups, religious affiliations, share similar interests, etc.

Such information can be gathered through a wide range of scientific means, such as observation of people and surrounding settings, through

spending time in the neighbourhood, reading community newspapers, bulletin boards, and directories, and talking to a variety of people (e.g., key informants) who know something about the neighbourhood and the community (Amaratunga & Sarshar, 2000; Alexander, 1996).

The University, as a campus town and a community, provides required amenities and services to its residents (e.g., faculties, students, staffs, etc.), such as housing, health, transportation, leisure and recreation, safety and security, etc. Leisure and recreation facilities, including public space, parks, green areas, playground, sport facilities, and community space for social interaction, etc. constitute an important part of daily lives of the campus residents (Cushman & Laidler, 1990). Likewise, KFUPM (King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals of Saudi Arabia) campus town have been designed by taking into account the daily needs for leisure and recreation facilities. The campus is a host of people from wide range of socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and ongoing planning and development efforts by the university administration are to accommodate their diversified needs. In this campus town, though there is an established set of leisure and recreation facilities, it is a strategic task to evaluate them against the increasing demand and adequacy of those facilities. A research project is carried out to evaluate KFUPM's current leisure and recreation facilities with the goal of identifying improvement needs and suggesting alternative and improved actions. This paper, however, is the outcome of that project.

DEFINITIONS: LEISURE AND RECREATION

Leisure

According to Australian Council for Health (1980), leisure is a state of mind, which ordinarily is characterized by un-obligated time and willing

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