Recent trends and approaches in developing general education curricula in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

This study aims to discuss the recent trends and approaches in developing general education curricula in Saudi Arabia. The methodology used is a qualitative methodology based on last studies, books, and papers. The results of this study show that the ministry of education in Saudi Arabia must follows the recent trends and approaches in developing general education curricula that seeks to provide educated individuals with an appropriate scientific education that prepares them for life in the twenty-first century, lead them to the acquisition and mastery of the advanced and enjoyable scientific concepts, and the ability to use and the application of science skills and processes, which in turn leads to improving the level of students in innovative, creative skills, positive scientific trends towards science, and in making sound personal and social decisions. Many factors can guarantee the development of educational curricula such as they must be characterized by clear vision, A specific goal and strategy, development of human potential, keeping up with developments in the nature of work and professional development, Responding to changes in the economy, agriculture, culture, and education, Balance between theoretical topics and practical applications and Availability of appropriate logistics.

Keywords: Saudi Arabia, general education, developing, curricula, recent trends.

Introduction

The curricula are considered one of the most important components of the educational system as the means that achieve the goals of society inside and outside educational institutions. Moreover, they are a frame of reference that includes the content of social knowledge, natural and human phenomena, values, work skills, research, investigation, and analysis, including solving contemporary problems such as unemployment and others. On the other hand, the curriculums play an important role in the educational process as it is the rich source that provides students with information and knowledge, and instills in their attitudes the positive values that reflect the philosophy that society believes in.

One of the most prominent foundations on which to develop any educational curriculum are the students because they act a basic and living pillar when they have been directed in the right ways and when they instilled with modern ideas, so they will have amazing creations that contribute in the desired development. However, this is done by introducing advanced technologies and devices such as computers, laboratories, and tools necessary for each field. Moreover, introducing new teaching methods that balance the relationship between curricula and society, and adopting international experiences in the processes of developing their curricula and adapting them to our religion and our heritage. From this standpoint, generations of conscious and persistent students who are able to achieve and develop their country's goals can be created (Mhi & Jabr, 2017).

In this sense, building normative specifications for curriculum development processes to keep up with the modern educational trends and contemporary global experiences is extremely important, and based on identifying strengths and weaknesses in the processes used to develop general education curricula in the Kingdom are matters that must be taken into account. According to the importance of the above information, this paper will discuss the recent trends and approaches in developing general education curricula in Saudi Arabia.

Problem and questions

This study aims to discuss the recent trends and approaches in developing general education curricula in Saudi Arabia, by answering the following questions:

1. What is the importance of making adjustments to educational curricula in light of recent trends in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
2. What are the most important international experiences used in developing curricula in light of recent trends?
3. What are the strategies must be followed by the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in developing curricula in light of recent trends?
4. What standard specifications should educational curricula be developed according to?

Methodology

The methodology used in this study is qualitative, based on other studies, books, and articles.

Education curricula

Today, the world has become a small electronic screen, not a small village, due to the tremendous technological progress in addition to the information and communication revolution as societies with different characteristics and cultures have become interconnected and dependent on each other. so, possessing new knowledge, values and skills are most needed. The importance of educational curricula lies in reflecting the hopes and aspirations of peoples and societies. Also, they play an important role in the educational process from creating generations and preparing them to advance their societies (Abdel-Khalek, 2018)**.**

The school curriculum definition differs from one to another. So, some see that the school curriculum is the cumulative education of organized knowledge found in academic subjects, while others see that the school curriculum is methods of thinking and researching about a phenomenon, and a third-team sees that the school curriculum is the sum of human

experiences. There are also other definitions of the concept of the curriculum more accurate than previously and confirm its importance, as follows (Al-Tamimi, 2012):

1- Directing the selected experiences provided to the students.
2- Attention to planning to achieve the student's learning goals.
3- Attention to learning outcomes.
4- Attention to methods of achieving educational outcomes, such as focusing on achieving behavioral goals.

This leads us to a very important issue, which is the selection and formulation of the objectives of the curriculum with a precise and clear form. So If the goals were carefully chosen and then formulated in clear terms, then we can layout a theoretical outline of what the curricula content should be, provided that the appropriate choice is made in the light of linguistic surveys and scientific studies, as it appears clearly that the choice of the content of the materials should be based on the educational goals drawn if our goals In the teaching aims to pave the way, the contact side, or others, this is will be reflected in the content.

The importance of making adjustments to educational curricula in light of recent trends in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The current curricula were designed before a period of time and were appropriate for the social conditions at that time, and they played a prominent role in serving the community throughout that period, but the rapid development that occurred in contemporary society in terms of cultural, economic, and technical level, daily lifestyles, means of living, means of production, means of transportation, communication, and urban expansion in cities and villages, and the accompanying migration from the countryside and the desert to the city, had implications for the development of many social relations. on the other hand, the global openness through various media outlets and internal and external trips had a great impact on Social traditions, all of these causes call for a parallel educational change (Mahmoud, 2009).

The underlying reasons behind the importance of making adjustments to educational curricula in light of recent trends in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are listed below (Hussein, 2017):

1. The massive and accelerating epistemic revolution.
2. Technical progress.
3. The existence of a local, national, and global struggle for survival and the transmission of this conflict to educational institutions, affecting its performance and its role in preserving cultural identity.
4. The emergence of new tasks for the school imposed by current and expected changes and transformations in the future, including in particular preparing the learner for global competition and providing him with several skills, such as the ability to compete, choose and the ability to anticipate change and prepare for it.
5. The amazing development in the field of computers and communication media, which affected the nature and tools of education, especially about distance learning methods, which will impose itself and the demand for it will increase.
6. The emergence of new areas related to human life, such as preserving and protecting the environment, combating violence, drugs, peace, international cooperation, and many sciences related to human health and treating diseases, which necessitates considering them in teaching practices and studying how to include them in school curricula.
7. Increasing knowledge in all fields, which requires owning the skill of self-learning, as every day witnesses the emergence of information and discoveries in all disciplines in a way that has been imposed on specialists in various fields to extend bridges of qualitative knowledge to obtain renewed or complementary knowledge that qualifies them to carry out their tasks according to the requirements of the times and techniques.
8. Media openness and cultural communication via satellite channels and multiple media (Facebook - WhatsApp - Twitter - Instagram - and others) led to the

development of society and its characteristics, which necessitated education to focus on its primary function in preserving the positive side of heritage in the new generations.

The rapid progress and development that is taking place in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in recent years requires reconsidering the curricula to keep pace with this development and updating these curricula in a manner commensurate with social and economic transformations and global changes, so the educational curricula must be developed to achieve the following (Habshan, 2013):

1. Achieving interdependence and complementarily between different materials.
2. Define educational goals at various levels.
3. Taking into account the needs of learners through their different stages of development in the light of new social and economic changes.
4. Achieving compatibility between the academic subjects and the existing and expected needs of Saudi society.
5. The link between the educational process and working life, by providing the learner with various professional experiences.
6. Focusing on developing scientific research skills and practical experimentation.
7. Focusing on developing higher mental skills, such as critical thinking skills, creative thinking skills, and problem-solving skills.

The international experiences used in developing curricula in light of recent trends

Educational curricula in many countries of the world have witnessed a continuous movement for developing, reformulating and reforming since the mid-twentieth century, and the goal of this scientific movement is to prepare curricula to keep pace with scientific and technological development, in light of the keenness of many countries in the world to prepare scientifically

qualified and capable human forces change and contribute to the progress of nations and societies.

To this end, countries were keen to follow global trends and achieve global standards for the education, so that they could find a place for them among the developed countries that absorb the achievements of science and its applications. Educationally developed countries such as the United States of America, Canada, Australia, Britain, the Netherlands, and Sweden, as well as many other developing countries, have designed their curricula based on the ideas presented by the curriculum reform movements, which emphasizes the investigative aspect of science and provide students with the skills of scientific thinking Problem solving, developing mental abilities, and avoiding traditional indoctrination, The most prominent and important projects in the field of developing educational curricula are (Aslan, 2011):

I. The curriculum reform movement in the light of the entrance to the interaction between science, technology, and society:

The interaction movement between science and technology and society is the most important movement to reform curricula and develop its content in pursuit of scientific culture, It appeared in the United States of America as a result of criticisms directed at the science curricula in the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century because they are not focusing on the mutual relationship between science and technology. in addition to the emergence of issues and problems of A scientific and technological nature that the science curricula could not keep up with. however, This movement generally seeks to provide educated individuals with an appropriate scientific education (scientific-technological culture) that prepares them for life in the twenty-first century and assumes that learning and teaching science within the framework of (STS) necessarily leads to the acquisition and mastery of educated individuals with advanced and enjoyable scientific concepts, and the ability to use And the application of science skills and processes, which in turn leads to improving the level of students in innovative, creative skills, positive

scientific trends towards science, and in making sound personal and social decisions, In light of this approach, programs have the following characteristics:

- The student identifies problems that suit his interests.
- Reliable (human and material) local resources are used to solve the problem.
- The active participation of the student in the search for knowledge that can be applied in solving real-life problems in life.
- Extended learning outside the classroom, laboratory, and school.
- Focus on the impact of science and technology on the life of the educated individual.
- Emphasizing the skills of science operations that the student uses to solve his problems.
- Emphasizing professional awareness, especially science and technology professions.
- Determine the role of science and technology in the various aspects of life, which is likely to influence the present and future.

II. Project (2061) Science for All Americans:

The main objective of the project is to assist all students in the United States with pre-university education to possess the appropriate scientific, mathematical and technological culture for the end of the year 2061. This project is concerned with scientific enlightenment and defining the basic concepts, topics and trends of all citizens in a scientifically enlightened society, which must be included in the curricula in the various stages of education such as the nature of science, the nature of mathematics, the nature of technology, the relationship between science and mathematics and technology, the history of science and technology, the environment of life, the human system Human society, in addition to a large number of common topics in science curricula such as material composition, the basic functions of the cell, disease prevention, and communications technology. The project consists of three stages:

- The first stage: in which scientific knowledge, skills, and attitudes have been identified that all students must acquire through school education, and at this stage the following is emphasized:
    - Reducing the amount of content in the curriculum courses.
    - Eliminate the barriers separating different areas of knowledge.
    - The interdependence between science, mathematics, and technology.
    - Encouraging higher thinking skills.
    - Present science as influential and influenced by society.
- The second stage: in which the recommendations of the first stage were translated into action plans, and the development of several models for the curriculum, and these curricula were implemented in some schools selected in the United States of America in an attempt to reform the teaching of science and mathematics and this phase ended in 1992 by publishing the report entitled (criteria/intents Quality for Scientific Culture).
- The third stage: This stage continues into the twenty-first century, in which the outputs of the first and second phases are widely implemented.

III. national science education standards (NSES)

It is a project affiliated with the National Academy of Sciences at the National Research Center (NRC), wherein 1995 national science education standards were defined in America to achieve scientific enlightenment for all students in general education stages, and the standards were derived from Project (2061), and are based on the following principles and foundations:

- Knowledge for all students.
- Learning science is an active process.
- The intellectual and cultural traditions that characterize contemporary science practices are reflected in study science.

- The reform of science education is part of the reform of the educational system as a whole.

The Development of General Education Curricula in Saudi Arabia

the individuals can Facing the future by having the ability to plan properly, predict change, anticipate the future, make the appropriate decision, and deal intelligently with advanced technologies. also, by the acquisition of human relationships capable of dealing with others, regardless of ethnic, professional or social affiliations, and by having a mentality that elevates its owner to the spaciousness of the world instead of Bigotry and not accepting the other. so, The curricula should also strive to instill a spirit of tolerance and freedom and teach values through an encouraging environment that respects the entity of learners and their humanity and allows them to open up to the world of research and knowledge (Hussein, 2017).

The process of developing the curriculum is to convert it to the best image so that it achieves the desired goal efficiently at the lowest costs, time and effort. However, the development differs from change because change maybe for the worse, but the development is always for the better. Many factors can guarantee the development of educational curricula, as they must be characterized by the following (Mahmoud, 2009):

1) clear vision.
2) A specific goal and strategy.
3) Development of human potential (technical innovation).
4) Keeping up with developments in the nature of work and professional development.
5) Responding to changes in the economy, agriculture, culture, and education.
6) Balance between theoretical topics and practical applications.
7) Availability of appropriate logistics (unrestricted access to computer-based education techniques, and use of e-mail).

Also, there are many recommendations must be taken in the consideration in the development of education curricula according to the international education issue, shown in table (1) (Almogbel, 2015):

Table (1): international education issues to be included in the curriculum.

Education Level	International education issues to be included in the curriculum
Elementary	• Develop the basics of international education. • Develop local awareness of multiculturalism. • Develop awareness of human rights and emphasize respect for others • Develop belonging and loyalty to the homeland.
Intermediate	• Develop awareness of multiculturalism globally. • Consolidate the values of peace, security and disarmament. • Develop an awareness of human rights and an emphasis on freedom. • Promote environmental sustainability. • Provide solutions to local problems.
Secondary	• Consolidate the values of peace, security and disarmament. • Provide solutions to global international problems. • Achieve awareness of belonging and provide a fair international order. • Develop belonging and loyalty to the homeland. • Develop human rights awareness and emphasize democracy. • Achieve awareness of cultural international understanding

The educational curriculum developed must be based on the interdependence and complementarity of science. And that is by following certain criteria in selecting the vocabulary of the educational curricula, as follows (mohhamed, 2011):

- Taking into account the level of learners and their mental preparations.
- The educational curriculum should be useful for the various problems of the learner.
- Curricula must be comprehensive for educational materials.
- Curricula should be flexible and Changeable.
- The educational curricula must be able to add new meanings to the experience of the learner.
- The curriculum must be appropriate for the learner to be able to respond to it.

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- Educational curricula must be subject to evidence of reason, observation, and senses, and be experimental.
- The educational curriculum must include the basic compulsory sciences and the intended optional sciences.

Conclusion and recommendations

In this study, many sections used to discuss the recent trends and approaches in developing general education curricula in Saudi Arabia. The first section discusses the importance of making adjustments to educational curricula in light of recent trends in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The second section discusses the international experiences used in developing curricula in light of recent trends. The third section discusses the development of general education Curricula in Saudi Arabia. The research found out that the ministry of education in Saudi Arabia must follows the recent trends and approaches in developing general education curricula that seeks to provide educated individuals with an appropriate scientific education that prepares them for life in the twenty-first century, lead them to the acquisition and mastery of the advanced and enjoyable scientific concepts, and the ability to use and the application of science skills and processes, which in turn leads to improving the level of students in innovative, creative skills, positive scientific trends towards science, and in making sound personal and social decisions. Many factors can guarantee the development of educational curricula such as they must be characterized by clear vision, A specific goal and strategy, Development of human potential, Keeping up with developments in the nature of work and professional development, Responding to changes in the economy, agriculture, culture, and education, Balance between theoretical topics and practical applications and Availability of appropriate logistics.

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