

E-curricula: Is it embraced or resisted? A case study of Arabic language teachers

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ABSTRACT

This paper represents an investigation into teachers barriers towards the use of E-curricula in teaching Arabic language. It explores questions about the approaches to teaching and the motivations of using E-curricula. The main research method used was semi structured interviews. Many factors were found to influence the use of E-curricula, some of them were surprising and revealing. An unwillingness to challenge or change traditional teaching methods can be assured. These findings contribute to a better-informed appreciation of the state of teaching as well as E-curricula in basic stage schools in Jordan.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The process of teaching in schools all over the world faces many challenges and pressures brought about by an increase in knowledge, the increase of populations, the revolution in telecommunications and technology in general and the increased demands for learning. These cause a lot of pressure on schools in trying to cope through the improvement of their strategies and the uses of technological developments [1].

One result of these (prewies) has been that many educationalists have recommended the use of technology in the teaching process as the best way to respond to these changes in order to solve growing educational problems. Information technology and communication affected greatly in the domain of education as considered an important element of building communities and the incentive power of changing and the success of nations and peoples became connected with their ability to qualitative learning, therefore it had to seriously think of developing dealing with instruments of learning in a way different from the past, and with what harmonize with modern technicality developments till the community that guarantees a prosperous future for the coming generations, depending on good use of knowledge sources [2].

Instruments of learning in general consist of: school curriculum as considered the means that is used for the sake of finding an educated generation able to coexist in the shadow of any community and under any circumstance, and the different methods of teaching, through which the curriculum is reached to students, and the environment of learning that will embrace the process of learning inside and outside the school, and the teacher who will lead the process of education through his thinking and culture and skills that he owns and the training he receives, and finally the student who is considered the main domain of the process of learning. Electronic learning is known as using multi-means for the sake of improving the process of learning through facilitating obtainment of information. Martin Tsash defines the electronic learning as “the grip of processes connected with learning completed across the Internet, such obtaining information related with the studying

subject, and the matter is not confined for the teacher to inform the student existing somewhere in other place across the computer device with what should he do of duties, then return them to his teacher after answering them, and does not mean pure exploiting the available technical possibilities only, but it is a revolt in the world of learning”[3].

What assisted the spread of electronic learning in the different educational sectors is its overstepping the restrictions of time and place, observing the individual difference among learners, enabling them complete processes of learning unsuitable environments for them, advancement according to their self-abilities, enabling the students to receiving the scientific subject with the technique that fits his abilities through the visible, audible, or the read method and else, and making the opportunity available for learners to prompt electronic interaction in between them and the teacher from other part through the means of electronic mail and councils of discussion and rooms of dialogue and else both spread of learning culture and self-training in the community, the enable improving and growing abilities of learners and trainees with less cost and lower effort, feeling of students with equality in distributing opportunities in the learning process, breaking fear barrier, anxiety at them, enabling students to express their ideas, easiness of access to the teacher even outside work hours, using different techniques in evaluating learners performance, saving a great and renewed balance of the scientific content and tests for each textbook availability of learning content in electronic learning across drawings, visible schemes, written wordings, cassette and video-tapes, that makes the repetition in accordance with different perceptual methods possible, lack of electronic learning cost [4-8] for availability of the electronic learning prompt service across the Internet and the compact discs of storage and the digital video discs and else will lighten the adversity of transference to a far educational centre at the learner, what means that it will save the cost of travel and acquire more of time, and accessibility of information at electronic curriculums because of availability all along the hour, and elasticity of electronic learning, where the learner through the Internet can work with a big group of teachers indifferent parts of the world, any time concords with the schedule of his works, and he can though learn at home, or at place of work, or at any place, in which he is allowed to use the Internet, that is at any time and belittles the administrative burdens for the teacher, that were taking a long time from him at every lectures such as receiving duties and else, for it had become possible to send and receive all these things by the electronic instruments with the possibility of recognizing the students reception of these documents [9] .

From the roles that is expected to radically change at transference into electronic learning or blended learning, is the learner's role considered the new approach of learning and education process, for which the possibilities are exploited to improve methods of his learning for the sake of preparing him to a distinguished role in the contemporary community. The reforms, the process of preparing him to accept this new role does not seem Lessing significance than preparing the teacher, implementing this process needs an experience in dealing with these modern technicalities, in addition to the psychological dimension. The meant here is the students ability to organize the time alone and commitment to deliberation without external pressure, and respect the ethical values in using the Internet, in addition to the health dimension, represented in the concern with the height of the seat, and the size of the computer screen and habituation of the eye remaining a long period in front of the screen, and exercises to train fingers on writing. What should be done is working to save the satisfactory immunity at students against the damages that may be caused by electronic learning, and assisting them on being aware of limits that should be committed with at wading into the digital cosmic world, and assuring that their task is not confined to understanding what is related with the Internet, but to learn criticism and constant inquiry about the quality, benefit and loss account [10, 11].

Studies which discussed the role of technology in the process of learning on reviewing the impact of limited educational software in students obtainment, or impact of using technology in the student's motivation and their trends towards studying. Most studies showed the existence of positive impact in increasing the motivation of student's towards learning [12-14] meanwhile other studies indicated the existence of good impact related with increasing the student's obtainment at their using the computer software in learning [15, 16]. Moreover, many studies recommended to investigate the obstacles of the use of E-curricula epically in Arabic language [17-23]. Therefore, the study sought to answer the following question: What are the barriers towards the use of E-curricula in teaching Arabic language from teachers point of views?

The educational institutions took on itself the responsibility of developing the educational system and the growth of human resources, the available opportunity and knowledge as strategic national wealth, reinforcing the ability to search and learning, and adaptation with elasticity with age requirements, to occur qualitative development in sources of learning, its variant means and employing what the great advancement reached in the modern informatics technicalities. And for the significance of rising the future role of the teacher in electronic learning and the extent of his awareness of this role and his ability to be prepared for it, the study sought to appropriation of barriers which could hinder the proper use of electronic curriculums, especially that educational institutions in Jordan and other states seek designing and producing electronic

curriculums to teach the Arabic language, meanwhile teachers of Arabic language employ some merged-disks and sites at special effort.

Limitations of Study: Teachers of Arabic language in Amman governorate in the first semester 2017/2018 and the stages which they were involved in were basic and secondary stages.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The study investigates the factors which hinder the acquisition of skills needed and the use of E-curricula in teaching Arabic language in Jordan. Certain factors could be explored through the use of an interview conducted with 60 teachers in Amman directorate of education. In the present study, semi-structured interview schedules for Arabic language teachers. Interviews with teachers were lasted around twenty to thirty minutes for each teacher. Because the researcher was keen to interview the teachers in their free time period, the time specified for each school was approximately three working days. The study lasted for 60 working days.

2.1. Procedures of the study

- a. Inquiring the theoretical framework of E-curriculum as well as previous studies related to the topic
- b. Prepare the study instrument and insured validity and reliability.
- c. Application of the study tool to a sample of 60 Arabic language teachers.
- d. Dissemination of students' responses to Excel software, the use of qualitative analysis techniques and, of course frequencies and percentages.
- e. Reaching the study results, discuss and write recommendations.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Information about the obstacles which reduce the use of E-curricula was sought through interviews. The participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they accept different obstacles to reduce teachers' use of E-curricula. These obstacles will be discussed as follows:

3.1. Obstacles related to the equipment

The results of the interviews showed that the majority of the interviewees blamed the MoE for the lack of equipment since it is the main authority responsible for providing schools with it. In the words of one male teacher:

“Frankly, I think that the MoE has a lot to do in this regard. Our schools need proper equipment in quantity and quality and we are still waiting”.

In addition, they criticised the quality and quantity of the existing materials. They blamed the MoE for the lack of these materials. In the words of one female teacher:

“In all the schools of my directorate there is a severe shortage of the needed materials. I think that the only one responsible for this situation is the MoE”.

The previous comment shows that it is necessary for the MoE to support the schools' needs with suitable equipment and software. It should discuss suitable ways of providing the support. In this way it will be easier for both the teachers and MoE to cope with the schools' needs for such materials.

In conclusion, it is not strange that the teachers accepted the mentioned obstacles to prevent them from using E-curricula. However, this obstacle is not the heart of the problem. In other word, the availability of the equipment is ultimately not as important as factor or obstacl as some other main obstacles which will be mentioned later.

3.2. Obstacles related to the school facilities

The majority of teachers expressed their problems in creating an appropriate atmosphere for the use of E-curricula. They mentioned that classrooms are not designed for the proper use of E-curricula. One female teacher made the following comment:

“Every time I try to use any audio-visual equipment, I find myself forced to bring an extension and some curtains to the class because we do not have enough power points and wall curtains”.

This reveals an unpleasant reality. The majority of these schools were built at least thirty years ago. It is only about thirteen years ago that the MoE started to realise the need for better classrooms and better facilities. In addition, the majority of teachers mentioned that they are suffering from the crowded classes. They believed that crowded classes reduce their use of E-curricula because the large class size is something to deal with in addition to many tasks during the limited time of the lesson. In the words of one male teacher:

“Of course you know that the lesson time is 45 minutes. I need about ten minutes to have the students’ attention. In addition, some lessons require me to read, interpret and explain a lot of concepts and finally answering students’ questions. It is difficult to finish my lesson within forty-five minutes in the normal conditions”.

3.3. Obstacles related to the teachers

The interviewees mentioned that the excessive workload of teachers and the extra duties make the teachers exhausted. Teachers are indeed overloaded with different tasks in every school day. One supervisor observed:

“In general, teachers have two kinds of pressure, the first is their teaching workload and the second is the increased duties such as parents meetings and other administrative duties”.

Giving incentives, such as pay rises, could positively improve the teachers outlook and increase the use of E-curricula so the teachers believe. The following typical comment by one female teacher represents this point of view:

“As a teacher, my salary has never increased since two years ago. I think I am not secured in my job. So, I am teaching private lessons after school time. The solution for this problem should come from the responsible authorities in the MoE. They should increase our salaries to encourage us to use the available equipment in our schools”.

The previous discussion shows a deep problem for the MoE. This problem can be summarised as the teachers’ financial situation and their teaching load. Teachers find the present financial situation not acceptable and this creates job dissatisfaction. Incentives are, of course, emotional, spiritual and professional and not just a matter of finance. However, the crucial question to be asked here will be: would incentives be enough in themselves to improve the status of E-curricula? The previous findings and the next section show that lack of incentives is just one obstacle which prevents the wider use of E-curricula. A pay rise will not make a lot of difference in itself- but naturally the teachers assert that it would.

In conclusion, all the previous obstacles related to teachers have two effects, physical and psychological. The major and the most important one is the psychological effect; teachers have a problem in dealing with their workload and they are struggling in how to handle and hold the excessive information mentioned in the textbooks. The following section probes in details their struggle with the textbooks.

3.4. Obstacles related to the textbook

Forty-one teachers asserted that they use different activities to support their lessons. They mentioned that these activities are as important as the textbook. One male teacher gave some examples of what he uses:

“I usually encourage my students to write different articles for different Islamic occasions. I also use religious competitions and visits to the mosque with the students”.

But there are exceptions. Most teachers felt the weight of demand on them to get through the prescribed curricula, as set out in the textbook. Teachers were concerned about existing obstacles like class size and the lack of materials in preventing them from using E-curricula but they were more influenced by the complete dependence on the traditional methods in teaching this subject. One female teacher gave the following comment:

“I am extremely dependent on the textbook because I do not find enough time and materials to make any needed changes”.

For the majority of teachers interviewed (39), the textbook includes a lot of topics which should be covered by the end of the second semester. As a result of this, using any equipment side by side with the textbook is very difficult if not impossible. One female teacher made the following comment:

"I have a lot of pressure from the school head teacher to finish the textbook contents by the end of the year. However, I face a real problem with this bulky book. If I want to use any audio-visual equipment, I will find myself under the pressure of wasting vital time".

It is obvious that the overcrowded textbook is a problem which has a connection with more than one obstacle mentioned in the questionnaire. For example, the heavy workload and other teachers' duties combine with this obstacle to make it difficult for teachers to think about using different equipment. The sheer weight of the subject, and the seriousness, with which it is taken, makes teachers fearful of new ideas or innovative teaching techniques. The head teachers have no concern with this problem, as it is foisted up on them. As one male head teacher said:

"I know that teachers are struggling regarding their bulky textbooks, but I want to make it clear that I have orders from the MoE that teachers should finish the textbook contents by the end of the school year".

In conclusion, the evidence showed that the only major problem which teachers suffer from is the overcrowded textbook which they have to follow exactly. They know that using E-curricula is a fair demand and know that there is no objection between the goals and the content of the textbook in one side and the use of equipment in the other side. Teachers are under a psychological pressure to cope with finishing the textbook in the given time. In addition, it appears that even if all the needed audio-visual aids are available in the school, teachers will not use them.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings showed a lack of the use of E-curricula in Arabic language. A number of factors contributed to the non-use of equipment:

The first major factor which could be seen is the unwillingness of teachers to experiment with new strategies. Teachers seem to be directed by the textbook and there is no way for students to ask or discuss or even challenge any idea mentioned by the teacher. As a result of this teachers are only teaching what is "unquestionable" through the given syllabus.

The second factor which could be seen is the pressure resulted from the mandatory core subject. This pressure comes from the Ministry of Education which obliges teachers to stick with their textbooks as a main source of knowledge and therefore there is little freedom to try to change their methods of teaching.

The third factor is the pressure resulted from complying with the Ministry textbook. At the heart of the matter here is the excessive content compared with the short time allocated for it. As a result of this it is not strange to see the majority of teachers, if not all of them, trying to cover the enormous number of lessons by any means and to be fully dependent on "chalk and talk" in preference to methods enhancing student-centred learning.

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