

THE DEGREE OF SOCIAL STUDIES COURSE TEACHERS' PRACTICE OF TEACHING STRATEGIES BASED ON KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed at exploring the degree of Social Studies course teachers' practice of teaching strategies based on knowledge economy. The sample consisted of 31 male and female teachers teaching this course at Zarqa Education Directorate. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, notes cards which consisted of 33 articles, representing thoroughly procedures that the teacher practices in his or her teaching behavior, were prepared. The findings showed weakness regarding the degree of practicing both strategies; critical thinking and learning through activities ones. And, it recommended the necessity of training teachers of Social Studies course on the strategies of critical thinking and learning through activities.

KEYWORDS

Teaching strategies, Knowledge economy, Social studies course teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge economy is considered one of the approaches that Jordanian Ministry of Education - henceforth JMOE -has recently adopted in developing education in all its fields as an educationally developmental project concerned with preparing our students for effective coexistence in the community of knowledge economy (Ministry of Education, 2009)

Knowledge economy is defined as the attainment of knowledge, participating in it, applying it, and producing it aiming at better life quality through benefitting from the applications of advanced technologies and of scientific research so as to find a number of strategic changes in the nature of the educational process. This is a reaction to the challenges of globalization and information technologies, communication, knowledge universality, development with its comprehensive concept. (Haider 2004; Mahmoud 2010)

The stream of Home Economy is managed by efficacy and excellence. So, schools of knowledge community should create these two (efficacy and excellence) to be up to date which necessitates those in charge of the educational process should have and possess and practice the concepts of Knowledge Economy so as to be able to prepare their students fully and completely. (Hargneaves, 2003)

The focus of Knowledge Economy is human beings as the existence of the modern technological means or tools do not form the age of knowledge without the existence of the

human factor that is able and continuously excelling, so it is important to consider the human factor the knowledge and intellectual capital.

And teachers have the biggest role in the achievement of the educational goals that any community of the international communities puts for the sustainability of the achievement of development of humans considering him the root of the development of any community. And, teachers' contributions to achieve these goals do not only include their role of scientific and behavioral preparation and training for the teachers, but also by the extension of their belief in the educational process and their enthusiasm for the achievement of its goals. (Al-shar'h and Baker 2000)

The teacher of Social Studies plays an important role in the community and this is due to the nature of the course that is related to the environment, community and to preparing the good citizen (Al-Zyadat & Qatawi 2010)

This teacher's recognition of the nature of his major is very important for the success of his work, but this is not enough since there should be other things such as the teacher should have the new teaching methods which are based on knowledge economy. This is not less important than acquiring information, scientific knowledge and the development of practical thinking skills (Al-Edwan and Al-Hawamdah 2010)

To achieve this, the JMOE started preparing an educational and teaching program which is able to create the hosting environment that cares about the teacher and the learner and supplies the teacher with the new methods and the multi-skills that depend on critical thinking, the ability to solve problems, and interacting within different societies. (Al-Omery 2004, Jordanian Ministry of Education 2010)

Teaching strategies are considered the most important educational programs that affect the formation of the educational pattern and increasing its effectiveness. The looked-for qualitative education necessitates getting out of the box of the educational 'frozenness' (which is based on dictation, memorization and recalling) to the vividness of education which results from exploration, research, analysis, justification, and problem-solving. (Ministry of Education, 2005)

Regarding the looked-for teaching strategies which are based on knowledge economy, they are those effective strategies that provide students with knowledge in a qualitative way that develop their thinking. Among these which knowledge economy stresses on are the direct teaching, teaching in groups, learning through activities, tracing and problem solving, critical thinking. (Mo'tamen 2004; Al-Smadi 2010)

The textbooks were designed, including those for Social Studies course, in accordance with the pillars of knowledge economy, and teachers were trained on all related skills which are: thinking skills, self-evaluation skills, life and communication skills, using technology and communication skills, finding and data collecting data skills. (Al-Edwan and Hmidi 2010)

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To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there are no studies or research papers related to the degree of Teachers of Social Sciences' practice of teaching strategies according to Knowledge Economy. There are very few research papers conducted on teachers of other courses. Thatha and Al-Helat (2009)'s study aimed at exploring the degree of Jordanian

Ministry of Education's teachers' possession of teaching strategies and evaluation methods which are in accordance with Knowledge Economy. The findings of the study showed that the degree of teachers' possession of these methods and strategies is medium. Additionally, the findings indicated statistically indicative differences in the degree of teachers' possession of these methods and strategies according to the variable of gender and in support for females, and regarding the variable of number of years of experience, for male teachers whose years of experience are five years or more.

Ryahneh (2006)'s study showed that there are no differences in the achievement between the two groups, the trial that studied units of advanced physics according to the educational development project towards Knowledge Economy and the traditional group who studied by the traditional method. While, there were positive attitudes for the trial group towards the advanced physics units according to Knowledge Economy.

Mohammad (2006) conducted a study that aims to explore the level of teachers of Arabic's attitudes towards the form of the advanced curricula and their content according to Knowledge Economy. The findings showed that the level of their attitudes was positively high.

While, Batarseh (2005)'s indicated the lowness of the level of female teachers' possession of Knowledge Economy in Jordan for the efficiencies of Knowledge Economy: personal efficiencies, general educational efficiencies, specialized technical efficiencies, evaluation and measurement efficiencies, vocational advising efficiencies, communication and Information technology efficiencies, dealing with the market and local community ncies.

Additionally, Chuang (2002)'s study aimed at reporting the development of the educational planning in Hong Kong to tackle the needs of teachers regarding Knowledge Economy. A teachers' training program was developed and the findings showed that most teachers - during their interviews- mentioned that they prefer the new method as they got to be able to compare their thoughts and actions and their results in the classrooms before and after the program.

Touching upon the previous studies, one finds that they cared about studying Knowledge Economy through some variables such as achievement and attitudes. But it is noticeable that (and to the best of the researcher's knowledge) they did not tackle teaching strategies according to Knowledge Economy which gives the present study its importance as it tackles this aspect of Knowledge Economy. The researcher benefited from the previous studies in developing the tool of this study.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Since the teacher is the most important humanitarian input in the teaching-learning process, the JMOE worked on adopting the requirements of education development according to Knowledge economy (ERFKE) - Education Reforms for Knowledge Economy- aiming at advancing towards the application of technology in education and preparing a generation of learners who are able to deal with information and communication technology (ICT). So, the textbooks were designed and teachers were trained on the teaching strategies in respect with knowledge economy. And this study came to answer the following question:

What is the degree of Social studies teachers' practice of teaching strategies based on knowledge economy?

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDENT

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the importance of the study lies in being the first study that tackled teaching strategies based on knowledge economy specially regarding teachers of Social Studies. It is hoped that it will provide a feedback for decision-makers in JMOE about these strategies so as to be benefitted from in the application of the knowledge economy (stage three) It is also possible that this study in the development of these teachers' performance and to specify the training needs that contribute to the advancement of their experiences and their teaching potentials.

PROCEDURAL DEFINITIONS

Teachings strategies based on knowledge economy:

These are a series of steps that the teacher follows so as to convey the content of the material via related effective teaching skills in order to achieve the educational goals including the methods, means, activities, and evaluation. In this study they are limited to: direct teaching, teaching in groups, teaching through activities, problem solving, and critical thinking

Social studies teachers:

These are the teachers who teaches history, geography, and national education for the year 2010/2011 in Zarqa Educational Directorate which is under the umbrella of JMOE.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

- The study sample is represented by teachers of social studies working for JMOE's governmental schools in Zarqa Education Directorate for the year 2010/2011.
- The use of the notes card and its psychometric features.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Study sample

The study sample consisted of 31 male and female teachers of Social Studies teaching at governmental schools of Zarqa Directorate for the year 2010/2011. They were selected randomly.

Study tools

Observation cards on the teacher's teaching performance

The researcher prepared a note-card for the teacher's teaching behavior (appendix one). The tools were designed after revising the previous studies related to teaching methods that are related to Knowledge Economy. The researcher attended 62 periods, two for each teacher,

and the study tools consisted of five main teaching strategies branching into 33 strategies as specified by ERFKE and distributed as follows:

First: direct teaching

- 1- Lecture
- 2- Visiting guest
- 3- Questions and answers
- 4- Worksheets
- 5- Illustrative presentation
- 6- Seminar
- 7- Working through the textbook
- 8- Exercises
- 9- Direct reading activities
- 10- Fast cards

Second: teaching in groups

- 1- Discussion
- 2- Interview
- 3- Internet
- 4- Round-table
- 5- Training the mate
- 6- Think, choose your mate or partner
- 7- Collective cooperative teaching
- 8- Mate System

Third: Learning through activities

- 1- Debates
- 2- Games
- 3- Discussion within the team
- 4- Narration
- 5- Survey
- 6- Field visit
- 7- Oral presentation
- 8- Training
- 9- Simulation
- 10- Learning through projects

Fourth: Tracing and problem solving

- 1- Tracing
- 2- Problem solving

Fifth: Critical thinking

- 1- Meta-knowledge skills
- 2- Visual organizers
- 3- Analysis

This card aims to explore the degree of social studies course teachers' possession of teaching strategies with respect to knowledge economy through comparing their teaching behavior with the articles of the notes card. The card consisted of 33 articles covering procedures the teacher practices in his or her teaching behavior.

To make sure of its validity, the card was reviewed by 10 reviewers specialized in Curricula of Social Studies and the results of reviewing showed the validity of the card and its compatibility with the present study. Also, its stability was calculated through the way of the

agreement of viewers that a supervisor of social studies was asked to use the card at the same time the researcher was doing so.

The number of convenience and inconveniences between the researcher and the supervisor were calculated, then the percentage of agreement was derived using Copper formulation:

$$\text{The Percentage of convenience} = \frac{\text{the number of times of convenience}}{\text{No. of conven. times} + \text{No. of inconven. times}} \times 100\%$$

The percentage of convenience in the first situation was 88% and in the second one was 82% that is the average of the percentage is 85% which indicates the stability of the notes card and its validity for application as a research tool.

STATISTICAL TREATMENT

SPSS was used in calculating the total averages and standard deviation to explore the degree of practicing the teachers of Social Studies of teaching strategies according to Knowledge Economy.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the question related to the degree of social sciences teachers' possession of teaching strategies based on knowledge economy, the averages and standard deviations should be calculated, and the following criteria was adopted so as to specify the degree of the Social Studies teachers' practice of teaching strategies in accordance with ERFKE.(0 -2.33 low, 2.34 -3.66 medium, 3.67- 6 high)

Table (1) The averages and standard deviations for the fields of teaching strategies based on knowledge economy and ordered descended

Rank	No.	Field	Average	Standard Deviation	Degree of practice
1	1	Direct Teaching Strategy	3.87	0.62	High
2	2	Learning in Groups Strategy	3.51	1.14	High
3	4	Survey and Problem Solving Strategy	2.56	0.39	Medium
4	3	Learning through Activities Strategy	3.33	0.79	Low
5	5	Critical Thinking Strategy	2.13	0.43	Low
Total			2.88	1.28	Medium

Table 1 shows that the average of the degree of teachers of social sciences practice of teaching strategies based on knowledge economy regarding the tool as a whole was (2.88) rating medium that is averages of the tools field fluctuated between (2.13-3.87)

The teaching strategy ranked first and the average was (3.87), then the strategy of learning in groups ranked second with an average (3.51). Both of these two strategies ranked high degree of practice.

Then, the strategy of tracing and solving problem came with an average (2.56) and with a medium degree of practicing.

The researcher refers this to the teachers of social studies who are aware of these strategies and their importance in the teaching and learning situation and their role in the creation of effective education. Plus, the very many training courses held by the JMEO that represent an important role in this practice of these teaching strategies based on knowledge economy. Also, this might be related to the ease of using these strategies and that they do not need huge effort from the teacher as it is the case regarding other strategies.

On the other hand, learning through activities strategy came with an average (2.33) and critical thinking strategy came with an average (2.13). And, both ranked low practicing degree for both.

The researcher refers this to the lack of these teachers' knowledge on how to use this strategy easily and clearly in addition to that these two strategies need time and preparation from the teacher for planning, application, and evaluation. So, they ignore it and resort to other strategies such direct teaching and learning in groups.

It might also relate to the weakness of these teachers' care of critical thinking because the first concern of the teacher is to control the classroom and convey the cognitive content according to the plan and limited time so he or she focuses on the quantity not the quality.

The findings of this study match the study of Thatha and Helat (2009) which indicated that the degree of teachers' possession for teaching strategies and evaluation methods according to Knowledge economy is medium. Moreover, this finding disagrees with Batrseh's study (2005) that indicated the lowness of the level of the female teachers' possession of the efficiencies of Knowledge Economy.

RECOMMENDATION

Here are some recommendations which are:

- 1- Taking care of training teachers of social studies on the strategies based on knowledge economy specially learning through activities and critical thinking
- 2- The inclusion of plans clarifying how to use these strategies in teaching social studies in the teacher's manuals.
- 3- The inclusion of courses related to these strategies in the plans of preparing teachers of social studies.
- 4- Revising and developing the policies related to training teachers and developing them vocationally in accordance with ERFKE (1) and (2).
- 5- Conducting more studies about evaluating the reality of Knowledge Economy at Jordanian schools and teachers' attitudes towards Knowledge Economy.

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