

“Building a List of Knowledge-Economy Skills Required in English Language Textbooks for the Elementary Stage in Saudi Arabia”

Researcher:

Wafa Sharaf Mushref Alhassani

Saudi Arabia

University of Jeddah

Master's student in Curriculum and Instruction of English Language

Supervised By:

Dr. Dalal Abdullah Al- Qiawi

Associate Professor in Curriculum and Instruction of English Language



Abstract:

The current study aims to build a list of knowledge economy skills required in English language textbooks of the elementary stage in Saudi Arabia. To achieve the research goals, the researcher applied the descriptive method, in analyzing the previous literature and studies associated with the current research. A list has been set up, including seven domains, and 38 skills and the importance of which was approved by the judges, at a percentage varying between 80% and 100%, which is a high approval rating. Those domains come as follows: knowledge field, economic field, technological field, communication field, social field, environmental field, and national field. In conclusion, the study recommended developing English language textbooks depending on the list of knowledge economy and linking the content of English language textbooks with labor market requirements.

Keywords: Knowledge economy, Knowledge economy skills, Content analysis, English language textbook.

1.1 Introduction

Education has a vital role in developing countries and their economy, as it prepares and develops human capital to encourage innovation, scientific research, and continuing education, enabling governments to invest in knowledge. The knowledge economy is becoming the cutting-edge economy in most countries worldwide; they are making a substantial effort to develop their investments in education and research. As Dr. Hamad Al-Sheikh, the minister of education in Saudi Arabia, highlighted, improving the educational system's efficiency by following best international practices will help the Kingdom meet its Vision 2030 goals.

Saudi Arabia will continue to invest in education and training to prepare young Saudi men and women for the job market and its demands. Saudi Arabia is also seeking to help Saudi children enjoy higher-quality, multi-faceted education, investing primarily in developing early childhood education, refining the national curriculum, training teachers and educational leaders, and redoubling efforts to ensure that the outcomes of education systems are in line with market needs (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016). Almohammadi (2020) demonstrated that this field is one of the goals of Saudi Arabia's Tenth Development Plan, which supports the transition to the knowledge economy. Moving towards a knowledge economy must begin with developing the educational system and school curriculum, in particular.

Knowledge and language are the entrance to national economic prosperity, and the English language is seen as a tool for economic development and a demonstration of a nation committed, through educational processes, to cultivating and, potentially, reconstructing a future citizen and society that is academically oriented and prepared (Alfuraih & Mitchell, 2017). The English language curriculum's role should be more effective in adapting to the knowledge society and knowledge economy.

Accordingly, (Sun, 2014) assured that teaching content and curriculum designs are a current trend in the global ELT field and TESOL International Association. Further, the minister of education puts great importance on the English language to improve students' achievements to be competitive with world standards. However, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia faces challenges in its drive to move towards a knowledge economy that requires teaching students critical thinking skills, which might shape the future of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in this field, as mentioned by Alfuraih & Mitchell.(2017)

To overcome the challenges and achieve this move towards the knowledge economy and its requirements, educators should work hard to define the criteria and analyze the contents of Saudi textbooks based on those skills, considering the nature of the subject, society, and current time requirements.

"Textbooks are frequently the student's major source of information on a particular subject taught in school and may even constitute the only exposure the student receives on a given topic," as asserted by (Keith,1991). Williams (1982) also stated that knowing the content of previous textbooks is essential for understanding the past and present status of education and achieving the intended goals. Similarly, the basis for a better vision and comprehensive understanding of modern education is the deep knowledge of current textbooks, as mentioned by (Abed & AL-Absi, 2014).

Many researchers, like (Alkathiri & Alsaif, 2016) and (Aljlaidi & Alanzi, 2019), in different countries and varied subjects, have paid an increasing interest to analyzing textbooks to check the inclusion of knowledge economy skills and requirements. This research contributes to the ongoing effort to develop curriculum and education to keep pace with scientific and economic progress.

1.2. Research Problem

The Human Capabilities Development Program, (2021) which is one of the Vision 2030 Realization Programs (VRP) aims to make education more relevant to the demands of the labor market and the economy by developing a resilient and strong educational base for everyone and preparing for the future labor market locally and globally to leave a positive impact on the national economy.

The international conference on the reality of the knowledge economy in the education system and the scientific researchers based on sustainable development (Berlin, 2021) intend to develop the elements of the educational system based on the requirements of the Knowledge economy. The conference recommended a sustained effort from educators and researchers to overcome the obstacles of transforming toward a knowledge economy .

Additionally, Teaching the English language depending on the knowledge economy is very important for reaching to achieve economic prosperity and keeping up with developments as it increases our encounters with foreign cultures through the mediums of communications for business, work, education, and tourism (Ghoneim& Elghotmy, 2016). Also, the orientation to the curriculum in the National Transformation Program 2020 focuses on curricula that provide the younger generation with the necessary skills during their education that will support them to become economically productive members.

However, (Aljlaidi and Alanzi, 2019) and (Alotaibi, 2017) proved a lack of knowledge and economic skills in some school textbooks in Saudi Arabia. In addition, according to the Knowledge Economy Index (2018) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the average score of Saudi Arabia is 5.96, which is below the world average, which refers to the importance of increasing the quality of primary and secondary education in this field, as mentioned by (Atiya, 2021) .

According to what the researcher observed during his work in the field of education and the results of some studies that confirmed the low level of achievement in the English language course (Alsinani, 2014) and (Alsughayer, 2010). Accordingly, the researcher intends to build a list of knowledge economy skills required in English language textbooks of the elementary stage in Saudi Arabia. The researcher will answer the following main question:

Q: What are the knowledge-economy skills required of English language textbooks for the elementary stage in Saudi Arabia?

1.3. Research Objectives

This research is a critical component of the continuous endeavor to establish a curriculum and education system that can keep pace with economic and scientific advancements. Additionally, it facilitates the analysis of textbooks by researchers in accordance with the proposed list of knowledge economy skills.

1.4. Research Significance

This research's findings may benefit the following parties:

1. Educational researchers may benefit from the knowledge economy skills to analyze textbooks.
2. This research may help teachers concentrate on teaching knowledge economy skills that textbooks should include to reflect the latest educational trends.

1.4 Research Methodology

The current study used the descriptive method through a systematic analysis of the previous studies to build a list of knowledge economy skills required in English language textbooks for the elementary stage in Saudi Arabia.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 The Definition of the Knowledge Economy

- Knowledge economy is production and services based on knowledge-intensive activities that contribute to an accelerated pace of technical and scientific advancement (Powell & Snellman, 2004).
- According to (OECD, 2013) Knowledge economy is the accumulation of capital, technology, technology-relevant capabilities, and science in the conduct of productive activity, to make knowledge a paradigm of production that keeps reinventing itself.
- The researcher defined it as the way to construct, produce, and develop using knowledge rather than materials and other resources.

2.2 The importance of the knowledge economy

Afouneh (2012) mentions the importance of the knowledge economy in the following ways:

- The scientific and practical knowledge that it contains is the basis for wealth generation, development, status, and accumulation.
- Using its advanced technical means and methods, it contributes to improving performance and increasing productivity.
- It achieves continuity in the development and growth of the economy through renewal, development, and expansion of economic activities, adding new uses to known resources and improving their quality.
- Investment motivates scientific and practical knowledge to form knowledge capital, which contributes directly to generating knowledge production and provides an important basis for expansion and spread.
- Contribute to alleviating the constraint of traditional resources, especially natural ones; add new uses to known resources; and improve their quality. Thus, we guarantee the continued expansion of economic activities, their development, and growth without restrictions. This is particularly true for activities that are closely linked to natural determinants, particularly those that involve scarce natural resources due to high demand.

2.3 Pillars of the knowledge economy

According to (The World Bank Group, 2012), the four pillars of the knowledge economy are:

- **Education & Training** to create, share and use knowledge.
- **Information Infrastructure** to facilitate effective communication, disseminate and process information.
- **Economic Incentive & Institutional Regime** to enable the free flow of knowledge, support investment in Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and encourage entrepreneurship.

2.4 Relevant Studies

Alkathiri & Alsaif, (2016) explored the components of knowledge economy in the Jurisprudence textbook for girls in the first intermediate stage in Saudi Arabia. They used the descriptive analytical method. The researchers used a content analysis card as a tool to achieve the aims of the study. Statistical data was treated using repetitions, percentages, and Holsti's equation. The results indicated several components that should be included in the Jurisprudence course which were distributed on three main domains: knowledge and mental development, technology and communication, and the social, national domain. They recommended considering including the components of the knowledge economy in the Jurisprudence textbook, using technology (in all its forms), and teaching students the skills of self-learning using these technologies concerning trusted websites.

AlOtaibi, (2017A) identified the extent of including fields of knowledge economy in the content of the science textbooks of the three upper grades of the elementary stage in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The researcher used the descriptive analytical method to achieve the objectives. She developed a content analysis card and divided the fields into six fields consisting of 39 indicators. The study concluded that the suggested fields respectively organized according to their appearance in the content are as follows: Thinking skill, knowledge, communication skill, economics, cultural and technical fields.

AlOtaibi, (2017B) identified the knowledge economy skills in the textbook of health and femininity education (Syllabuses) for the first-grade secondary school and the availability of skills in the syllabus. To achieve the objectives of the study, the analytical descriptive approach was followed by the method of content analysis. The study tool consisted of (43) sub-skills distributed into seven domains. The study concluded that domains respectively organized according to their appearance in the content are as follows: knowledge, technology, communication, communication, social, national, economic, and environmental fields.

Asiri, (2018) aimed to build a list of knowledge economy skills to be included in the biology textbooks determined for the secondary school stage in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and determine the extent to which such books contain such skills. The researcher used the descriptive approach, and the study tools are represented in a content analysis card. The study findings revealed that the availability of the knowledge economy skills included in the first-year secondary biology textbook at the first year of the secondary school stage came in descending order as follows: (thinking and problem-solving skills, economic skills, and the preparation for the job market, behavioral skills, information and communication technology skills, social and communication skills), while such skills came as follows in the second and the third years secondary textbooks: (thinking skills and problem-solving, economic skills, and preparation for the job market, information and communication technology skills, behavioral skills, social and communication skills). The third-year secondary biology textbook for both the first and the second semester is more inclusive of knowledge economy skills.

Aljlaidi and Alanzi, (2019) analyzed the content of the Saudi English language textbook "Lift Off" of the 1st grade of intermediate school depending on knowledge economy requirements. The researchers used the analytical descriptive method. They constructed the analytical tool depending on requirements and indicators of the knowledge economy like Information technology, scientific research skills etc. The findings showed that the percentages of knowledge economy requirements inclusion were low. In the light of the above findings, the researchers recommended making a review the content of the Lift Off textbook and including the knowledge economy requirements.

Almohammadi, (2020) analyzed the content of the secondary quarterly system computer and information technology textbook depending on knowledge economy skills. The researcher used the descriptive analytical method to achieve the objectives. She developed a content analysis card and divided the skills into seven domains. The study found a richness of the knowledge economy skills in the field of cognition, technology, communication, and evaluation but there is a scarcity in the economic and social fields. Thus, the researcher recommended that the development of computer and information technology textbooks should be in cooperation with economic specialists and linking the course to the labor market.

Alsaad, (2022) analyzed the extent of including fields of the knowledge economy in the context of Arabic language textbooks of the basic stages in Jordan. The researcher used the descriptive analytical method to achieve the objectives. She developed a content analysis card and divided the fields into five fields consisting of 40 indicators. The results of

the analysis showed that the degree of knowledge economy skills in Arabic language textbooks of the basic stages in Jordan is low for all grades.

3. Recommendations

1. Developing the textbooks of the English language depending on the list of knowledge economy .
2. Including the skills of the knowledge economy in teachers' preparation programs.

4. Suggestions for Further Research

- 1 -Analyzing the content of English language textbooks for the elementary stage depending on the skills of knowledge economy.
- 2 -Designing a recommended unit containing knowledge economy skills .
- 3 -Analyzing the content of other educational textbooks in Saudi Arabia depending on the skills of the knowledge economy.
- 4- Comparative studies between English language textbooks in Saudi Arabia and other countries focusing on the skills of knowledge economy.

Conclusion

The current study aims to build a list of knowledge economy skills required in English language textbooks of the elementary stage in Saudi Arabia. The researcher found the following skills required for English language textbooks of the elementary stage:

1- The cognitive field

- 1- It provides the learner with appropriate opportunities for self-learning.
- 2- It directs the learner to use various sources of knowledge.
- 3- It focuses on the importance of generating new ideas for the learner and enriching his information.
- 4- It focuses on knowledge as both an economic resource and an essential asset in life.
- 5- It connects the curriculum to the real-life situations that learners experience.

2- The technological field

- 1- It includes instructions on using digital resources.
- 2- It uses information technology, communications, and multimedia to express ideas.
- 3- It employs modern technology in knowledge management, generation, and investment.
- 4- It encourages the learner to use social media channels, applications, and email.
- 5- It develops positive attitudes towards contemporary technology and multimedia.

3- The economic field

- 1- It emphasizes the importance of the human mind in investing various economic resources.
- 2- It develops positive attitudes towards economic wealth, preserving it, and understanding how to exploit it.
- 3- It encourages the learner to take initiative, innovate, and engage in productive work.
- 4- It develops the idea of marketing knowledge products.
- 5- It emphasizes the importance of respecting work in all its forms.

4- The environmental field

- 1- It addresses concepts related to natural disasters, their danger to humans, and the challenges they create.
- 2- It carries out activities to benefit from the surrounding environmental raw materials in daily life.
- 3- It focuses on strategies for interacting with the surrounding environment and deriving benefits from it.

- 4- It emphasizes the protection of the environment from pollution.
- 5- It emphasizes the contribution to solving global environmental problems.
- 6- It encourages the effective protection of reserves within the national environment.

5- The national field

- 1- It enhances the student's concept of Islamic and national identity.
- 2- It highlights the importance of belonging and loyalty to the country in which one lives, and enhancing its value for the student.
- 3- It emphasizes respect for the state's laws and regulations within the country.
- 4- It encourages visiting and investing in archaeological and tourist sites in Saudi Arabia.
- 5- It encourages the preservation of national assets and capabilities.

6-The social field

- 1- It emphasizes the importance of participating in household chores.
- 2- It contributes to the acquisition of sound social habits.
- 3- It emphasizes the system of social values in society and strives to embody them through both words and actions.
- 4- It presents activities that require attention to practicing group activities and cooperative learning methods within a team.
- 5- It emphasizes the need to strengthen family ties.
- 6- It includes concepts related to maintaining personal and psychological health.
- 7- It encourages the provision of volunteer services.

7- The communication field

- 1- It trains the learner to express thoughts and feelings clearly.
- 2- It develops in the learner the respect for the opinions of others.
- 3- It develops the learner's discussion skill.
- 4- It develops the ability to summarize heard and presented ideas.
- 5- It develops negotiation and persuasion skills.

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"بناء قائمة بمهارات الاقتصاد المعرفي المطلوبة في كتب اللغة الإنجليزية للمرحلة الابتدائية في المملكة العربية السعودية"

إعداد الباحثة:

وفاء شرف مشرف الحسني

الملخص:

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى بناء قائمة بمهارات الاقتصاد المعرفي المطلوبة في كتب اللغة الإنجليزية للمرحلة الابتدائية في المملكة العربية السعودية. ولتحقيق أهداف البحث اتبعت الباحثة المنهج الوصفي في تحليل الأدبيات والدراسات السابقة المرتبطة بالبحث الحالي. وتم إعداد قائمة تضم سبعة مجالات، و38 مهارة تمت الموافقة على أهميتها من قبل لجنة التحكيم، بنسبة تتراوح بين 80% و100%، وهي نسبة موافقة عالية. وتأتي هذه المجالات على النحو التالي: المجال المعرفي، المجال الاقتصادي، المجال التكنولوجي، المجال الاتصالي، المجال الاجتماعي، المجال البيئي، والمجال الوطني. وفي الختام أوصت الدراسة بتطوير كتب اللغة الإنجليزية المدرسية بالاعتماد على قائمة اقتصاد المعرفة، وربط محتوى كتب اللغة الإنجليزية بمتطلبات سوق العمل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاقتصاد المعرفي، مهارات الاقتصاد المعرفي، تحليل المحتوى، كتب اللغة الإنجليزية.