

Developing the University Skills Course Book at King Saud University According to a Proposed Model Based on Educational Competencies in the light of UNESCO Framework

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Abstract:

The development of university skills is crucial for a student's ability to learn and get through the challenges they may encounter when they first start their studies. This research aims to develop the university skills course book at King Saud University according to a proposed model based on educational competencies in the light of UNESCO Framework in the city of Riyadh. The research concluded that the proposed model based on educational competencies can contribute to the development of the university skills book according to the skills of the twenty-first century, and based on the findings of the research, the researcher recommends applying the proposed model based on educational competencies; to improve the learning environment, increasing their educational achievement, improving their attitudes towards learning the course among learners, and expanding its application to various educational purposes such as training to master certain skills, and not only applying it on the cognitive side.

Key Word: The proposed model; educational competencies; development; university skills course, the common first year.

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I. Introduction

University skills are an essential factor in a university student's life to gain knowledge and overcome the various difficulties that he may face at the beginning of his or her university life. Acquiring it in the first university semesters is one of the factors that contribute to build a student's personality and help him achieve integration between the first year and the rest of his specialized studies. Teaching university skills is also one of the main goals of contemporary education. In recent years, international and regional organizations have focused their great attention on the necessity of teaching these skills and integrating them into school curricula[1].

The interest in university skills has become one of the most important modern trends in the twenty-first century. Trilling and Fadel [2] refer to the general framework for learning and teaching in the twenty-first century, which consists of seven categories of skills that help students use their knowledge in understanding problems and their solutions, such as critical thinking, media, cooperation, and leadership, innovation and creativity, computer and information technology, self-reliant learning, and understanding multiple cultures. Obaidat and Abu Alsameed[3] confirm that many studies have shown that the chances of success at the university level increase by a large percentage if the student is prepared for that stage. As a result, some universities have introduced courses offered to new students at the university, helping them to adapt and move to the university stage by introducing them to the main aspects of university study and the methods of success in it.

York's and Longden's study [4] confirm that learning university skills contributes to raising the level and academic achievement of students and improving their attitudes towards learning, and in a better understanding of research and communication skills, especially that some of studies results indicate the students' need for this. However, Wingate [5] indicates the low level of academic achievement and interaction among students enrolled directly in university colleges, and that they need to study university skills, as it helps to develop student's confidence in their abilities to successfully deal with various academic skills, and develops the ability to face the problems that they suffer including students, and seeking to solve them in scientific ways of thinking. Studies have also shown that teaching university skills develop university work, increases the level of motivation, increases the level of attention, and raises the level of academic achievement [1]. Amer's research

[6] was conducted at the University of Hail in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where it showed the presence of statistically significant differences between the mean scores of female students before and after studying university skills on all dimensions and the overall degree of the scale of positive attitudes towards university studies in the direction of post-studying the subject.

From this point of view, King Saud University has been interested in developing study plans and programs and has taken care of teaching university skills since the establishment of the common first year (previously the preparatory year) by adopting two courses: "Learning, Thinking and Research Skills" and "Communication Skills", then the content of the courses was integrated into the course One named "University Skills". The Deanship has made sure that the university skills course includes a set of skills such as thinking and learning skills and strategies, research and communication skills, and other topics of importance and related to the subject areas [7].

Because of the importance of the content of the university skills course and its hoped role in acquiring skills and achieving integration between the first year and the rest of the school years for students of that stage, developing achievement and improving students' attitudes towards learning, it is important to evaluate and develop the course content from the staff's point of view, and according to specific standards and indicators to develop integrated and comprehensive visions for this course to achieve the desired and desired goals.

There are many methods of development in the educational process in general and in university courses in particular. In order to reach effective development compatible with aspects of change and renewal, international educational institutions, including UNESCO, sought to adopt a development system based on the concept of competency [8], and developed a conceptual framework for the development of curricula based on educational competencies (2016). This trend is confirmed by the results of the workshop that was held at UNESCO head office in (2017), where the director of the UNESCO Office Bokova (2017) highlighted the need to update the curricula in line with the changes of the twenty-first century, and to create an educational environment that attracts students and all elements of the educational environment, and the possibility of achieving This goal is achieved through a competency-based curriculum.

2. Problem Statement:

One of the problems that students face in university studies is the lack of university skills acquisition, which confirms the need for content in university skills, to develop positive attitudes toward university studies [6]. The studies stress the need to develop the skills of students applying to join the university, to know the university skills that common first-year students need, and to develop programs to improve their skills, according to [1], [6], and [9].

In confirmation of this, the exploratory study conducted by the researcher during the first semester of (2020) for ten faculty members for the university skills course showed that there are shortcomings among students in the acquisition of university skills, and methods of practicing them in university life, and shortcomings in the content of the university skills course., in meeting the undergraduate skills needed for common first-year students.

From the above, it becomes clear the need to develop the content of the university skills course for students of the common first-year at King Saud University following the modern trend in educational competencies. In addition, since the establishment of the Deanship of the Preparatory Year at King Saud University and the adoption of the courses "Learning, Thinking and Research Skills" and "Communication Skills" and then merging them into the university skills course, no studies have been conducted to develop the skills content provided to students. Where studies were conducted on various aspects, including a study on student satisfaction with teaching performance and academic programs offered in the Learning and Thinking Skills [7]. And another study aimed at analyzing the need for university skills among first-year students from the academic leaders' point of view at King Saud University [1]. As well as a third study that aimed to find out the degree to which preparatory year students acquired the required academic skills [9].

Therefore, this research will seek to design a developmental model for the university skills course, after the evaluation process and reviewing the previous literature in the field of university skills; to improve the outcomes of the first year at the university level, and to improve the outcomes of the first year's Deanship in various universities in the Kingdom, as King Saud University is a model for most universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to follow. The research will seek to benefit from the conceptual framework of the UNESCO, which is based on the orientation of educational competencies, as one of the modern trends of university skills that seek to achieve educational quality - as previously mentioned - in developing the university skills course in line with the needs of common first-year students. Accordingly, the research problem is summarized in presenting a model based on educational competencies to develop the university skills course.

3. Research Question:

This study attempts to answer the following

1 What is the proposed model based on educational competencies that will help to develop the course book of the university skills at King Saud University?

4. Objectives of the study:

The objectives can be depicted as the following:

1. - Developing the university skills course book by designing a model based on educational competencies.

5. Significance of the research:

- The present research highlights the importance of developing the university skills course book by designing a model based on educational competencies in the light of the UNESCO framework.

- This research is one of the first research that seeks to develop the university skills book, so this research can be a major source for studies in this field.

- The research comes in response to achieving the strategy of King Saud University by developing study plans and programs in line with the vision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2030, which includes enhancing the capabilities of graduates in various disciplines.

- The research may contribute to giving a realistic picture of the planners and developers of the university skills course in the first common year.

- It is expected that the current research will contribute to conducting future studies related to university courses, and comparing the university skills course in different institutions within the Kingdom.

6. Instruments of the study:

The instrument required for the research is a survey questionnaire for the university skills teachers' staff.

7. Definition of the Terms:

The proposed model:

The model was defined as: the expectation, prediction, and detailed mental visualization of a particular system, through the set of experiences that the researcher goes through, and the educational activities and processes for designing educational programs [10].

The model in the current research means the redevelopment of the university skills course book in the common first year at King Saud University by proposing a model based on educational competencies in the light of the UNESCO educational competency framework, and by reviewing previous literature related to university skills competencies, according to several steps, namely: defining the model, analysis (determining competencies), design (organizing competencies), development (course design), experimentation, implementation, and evaluation. It will benefit from the conceptual framework for the assessment of educational competencies, which was issued by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (2016).

2-Educational competencies:

This term is defined as: "a form of knowledge, skills, attitudes, abilities or educational objectives that can be described in the context of learning, education or training" [8].

The researcher defines it procedurally in this research as it is the knowledge, skills, experiences and attitudes of the university skills course that enables to develop the university course book in the light of UNESCO's framework.

3- Development:

It means keeping up with the times and their concepts according to the changes taking place in the environment, culture, science and life, and keeping pace with these variables. However, sometimes it interferes with improvement or modification processes, but with a difference [6].

The researcher defines the development of the university skills course book in the current research as: rebuilding the university skills course book; through a competency-based model in accordance with the UNESCO Educational Competency Framework.

4- University skills course book:

The university skills course means one of the courses which the student begins his or her university life. Its contents include the following: "learning skills, thinking, research, and communication skills [1].

- The common first year:

It is defined as: an academic year aimed at qualifying the student with high morals and providing him with the skills he needs to succeed in his academic and professional life by studying academic courses; To prepare students before joining one of the university's colleges, and provide them with the skills they need to advance and develop in their professional and academic lives [1].

8. Limitations of the study:

This study is limited to the following:

- The current research was limited to the design of a proposed model based on educational competencies to develop a book for the university skills course for students of the common first year.
- The current research was done during the first semester of the academic year 2020.
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II. Literature Review

University skills are among the most important skills in a university student's life because of their key role in the development of the student's personality, and acquiring university skills in the first university semesters is one of the factors that help to overcome difficulties, contribute to building the student's personality and help him achieve integration between the first year and the rest of the university years. Many international organizations have emphasized the importance of university skills [11]. [1] states that the results of research and studies emphasize the necessity of teaching these skills and integrating them into the school curricula.

University skills are the mainstay on which the future of the university student is built in university life, but rather it is a means that the student needs to manage his university life. It also gives the student confidence and self-reliance, develops research and thinking methods, and enhances communication skills, which helps him to excel academically and face many problems, in addition to providing them with various skills.

And based on the importance of university skills in the twenty-first century, it has been approved to be taught in many universities around the world, because it is considered one of the most important modern trends in the twenty-first century [2]. They also referred to the general framework for learning and teaching in the twenty-first century, which consists of seven categories of those skills that contribute to building the personality of the university student and help him understand and solve problems, such as critical thinking, media, cooperation and leadership, innovation and creativity, computer and information technology, and accredited learning. Self-motivated, and understanding of multiple cultures. Both Obeidat and Abu Al-Sameed [3] and York and Longden [4] confirm that many studies have shown that learning university skills helps to succeed at the university level; And it contributes to raising the level and academic achievement of students and improving their attitudes towards learning, and in a better understanding of research and communication skills, and as a result of that, some universities have approved the teaching of the university skills course for new students at the university, as it helps them to adapt and move to the university stage by introducing them to the main aspects of the study University and methods of success in it.

Therefore, teaching life skills, including university skills, is one of the main goals of contemporary education, as international and regional organizations have focused in recent years their keen interest on the need to teach university skills and integrate them into curricula. So, to provide guidance on university skills, UNICEF has created a website dedicated to life skills-based education on the Internet, presenting promising examples of life skills-based education around the world and providing practical materials and tools, so that these skills have a valuable place in the table's Educational works in each country [1].

Moreover, for education to work in a real way to keep pace with scientific and technological progress, it has to play a major role in providing the necessary university skills for the scientifically and technologically enlightened student, as it has become important to integrate university skills into educational curricula to prepare the individual who is able to confront in all circumstances and developments [12].

However, studies have shown that teaching university skills develop university work, increases the level of motivation, increases the level of attention, and raises the level of academic achievement [1]. Amer [6] conducted research at the University of Hail in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where it showed statistically significant differences between the mean scores of female students before and after studying university skills on all dimensions and the overall degree of the scale of positive attitudes towards university studies in the direction of post-studying the subject.

[7] conducted a study that was entitled "Students' Satisfaction with Teaching Performance and Academic Programs Offered in the Learning, Thinking and Research Skills Division in the Deanship of the Preparatory Year at King Saud University "It aimed to reveal the level of students' satisfaction with teaching performance and the academic programs offered in the Learning Skills Division. To achieve the objectives of the study, the descriptive survey method was used. The study was applied to a sample of (2228) students from the Deanship of the Preparatory Year at King Saud University. Among the most prominent results: the average level of academic satisfaction in some of the study questions, such as satisfaction with training packages, student activities and programs, academic advising, and a high level of satisfaction with the evaluation mechanism used. In light of these results, the study recommended the necessity of providing an atmosphere of understanding and transparency among all the students and faculty members of the Deanship.

While the study of [9], which was entitled "The degree to which preparatory year students acquire the required academic skills: an assessment study on King Saud University".It aimed at evaluating the extent to which students' skills were achieved in the preparatory year at King Saud University, and the impact of the

academic path and the tribal level of skill on these skills. The study sample consisted of (446) students in the preparatory year, (589) female students of the colleges, and (115) professors of the colleges. A questionnaire was designed to assess these skills, and a theory for the preparatory year program was developed. The results showed that the female students acquired many skills, and the differences were statistically significant between the three groups, in favor of female college students, in all dimensions except research and health, where the preparatory students' grades were the highest. College professors consider that the skills acquired in the preparatory year are generally average and low in mathematics and statistics, scientific research, health, and entrepreneurship. The general average of the college students' estimates was the acquired skills, and the grades were higher in Arabic language skills, computer skills, personal and social skills, communication and teamwork, life skills and readiness for a profession. There were no statistically significant differences in the level of dimensional skills according to the student's academic and humanitarian track. The study showed the possibility of predicting the level of skills acquired after the preparatory year through the tribal level of the student's skills.

[13], entitled "Measuring the needs for the university skills needed for the first-year students from the point of view of students, faculty members and academic leaders at King Saud University", which aimed to measure the needs to determine the necessary university skills as one of the educational design steps to design the skills course. Undergraduate students of the common first year at King Saud University, from the point of view of students, faculty members, and academic leaders. The researcher used the descriptive analytical approach, and the results of the study resulted in agreement on thirteen university skills.

[1] carried out a study and it was entitled "Analysis of the needs of the common first year students for university skills from the point of view of academic leaders at King Saud University." The study sample consisted of (48) academic leaders at King Saud University. The researcher used the descriptive analytical method, identifying university skills and directing them to the research sample. The results of the research revealed that the most prominent university skills required for first-year students from the point of view of academic leaders at King Saud University are concentrated in eight skills in the areas of searching for information from its sources: time management, techniques of writing scientific research, elements and skills of writing scientific research, information processing, Creative thinking, motivation to learn, and design of scientific research tools.

[14] it was entitled "The first year at university: the effect of a course on academic skills and physical quality of life on students". It aimed to reveal the extent of the relationship between the impact of teaching a university skills course, and the material quality of life related to the labor market. To achieve the objectives of the study, the quasi-experimental method was used. One of its most prominent results was a positive correlation with academic employability skills, problem solving, teamwork, dealing with others, and physical, social and environmental relationships. The recommendation was to improve the quality of life and improve employability skills, additional innovative activities should be developed for writers' activities; To ensure the development of sustainable academic capabilities of students.

Jones's study [15] was entitled "The Unexpected Benefits of Pre-University Skills Training for Students at the Advanced Level", it aimed to study the impact of university skills training on students' achievement and progress. The result of the study was that there were statistically significant differences for students who studied the university skills course in the level of achievement, performance, and speed of transition to higher levels.

The study conducted by [16], was entitled "Improving study skills by combining a unit of the study skills course and repeated reflective seminars", aimed to achieve the objectives of the study using the descriptive approach. The results indicated that 78% of students believed that the course had enhanced their ability to analyze and adapt their study habits. And that the method of continuous seminars and discussion sessions in teaching study skills may be a useful way to make students improve their knowledge and skills and use study skills effectively, and students will also improve the skills of structured learning.

However, the current research agrees with [1], [13], and [7] in that it searches in the field of university skills for the common first year at King Saud University.

_ The current research agreed with some previous studies, such as [1] and [13], in that the members of the study sample are students and faculty members in the common first year at King Saud University, while some studies dealt with students only, such as [6].

_ The current research is unique in that it aims at proposing a model based on educational competencies in the light of the UNESCO framework to develop the university skills course book.

Based on a review of the literature, it can be said that the research results support the importance of the university skills course. It is also evident from the results of previous studies that were concerned with teaching university skills in the first year, the importance and necessity of developing a university skills course and the impact of its teaching, which achieved a high level of satisfaction among many university students in research skills: thinking and effective communication. Therefore, the current study is unique in proposing a model for

developing university skills course book that may help in developing the achievement of students of the common first year at King Saud University, and improving their attitudes toward learning.

III. Methodology and Procedures

To achieve the objectives of the current research and to answer its questions, the researcher will follow the descriptive approach, by relying on related references and previous studies related to the topic of the research. Talking about university skills and their importance, studying university skills at King Saud University, and building competency-based courses according to the conceptual framework based on educational competencies; Since this approach is commensurate with the nature of the current research, which is concerned with collecting facts, data and information about the phenomenon or problem, following it up accurately, analyzing, interpreting and balancing them. Through this approach, the method of survey studies will be used, which aims to describe the reality of the phenomenon to be studied, by revealing the views of members of the research community or a large sample of them directly (interview) or indirectly (questionnaire).

The research procedures are summarized in the following steps:

1. Review the literature and previous studies related to university skills competencies.
2. Preparing a list of competencies for university skills that are required to be achieved, efficiently and effectively, among students of the common first year, according to the framework of UNESCO.
- 3 . Develop a general perception of the content of the form.
- 4 . Designing the proposed model based on educational competencies (according to the proposed scenario shown in the above figure), and presenting it to a group of arbitrators from specialists and experts.
- 5 . Presentation, discussion, and interpretation of research results.
- 6 . Writing recommendations, proposals, and references.
- 7 . The final output of the proposed model.

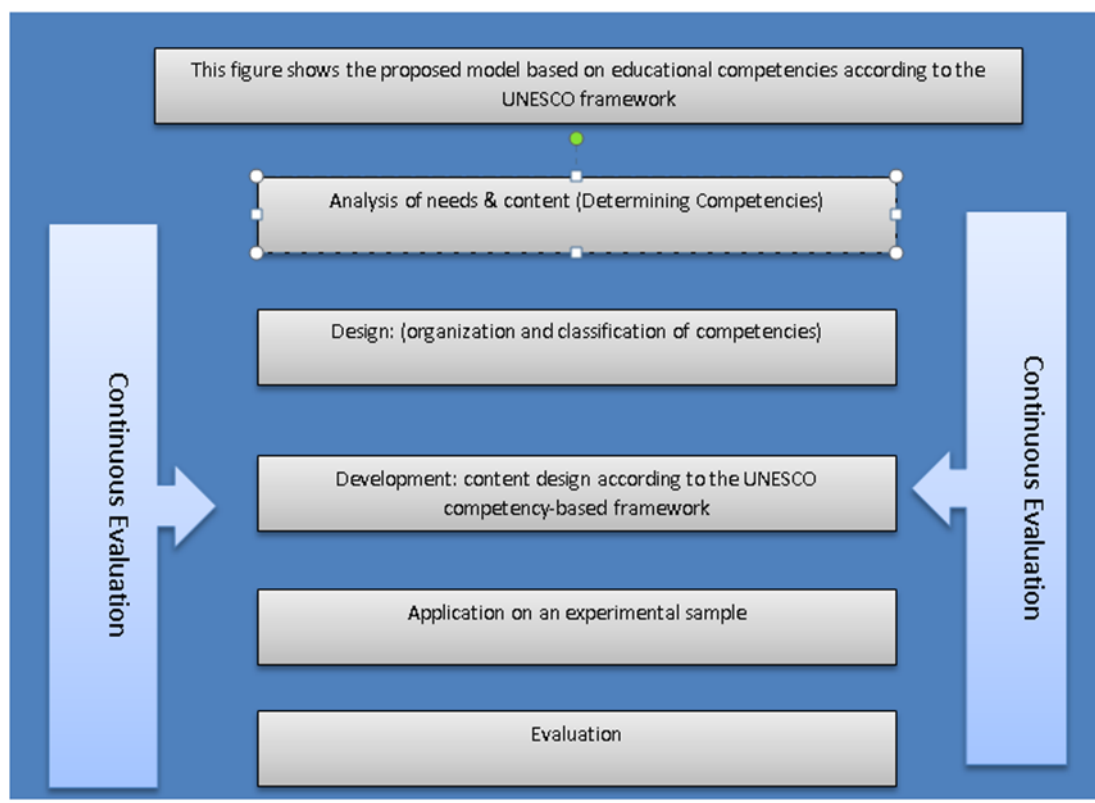
IV. Results and Discussions:

To answer the research question, " What is the proposed model based on educational competencies that will help to develop the course book of the university skills at King Saud University?"

The researcher designed a model based on educational competencies according to the UNESCO Educational Competency Framework for the university skills course, where he benefited from the UNESCO conceptual framework for educational competencies in building the competency-based course, which [8] referred to in building educational programs based on competencies through the following concepts (Figure1):

<i>Priority contents</i>		<i>Priority exit profiles</i>	
Knowledge and know-how		General profile	
1. Emphasis on life skills	<i>Four conceptions of the introduction of competencies in curricula</i>	3. Emphasis on profiles in terms of standards	
2. Emphasis on cross-cutting capacities		4. Emphasis on profiles in terms of families of situations	

The researcher came up with the following model for developing the university skills course book, the university skills course for the common first year at King Saud University. The following is the proposed model based on educational competencies (Figure 2):



V. Conclusion

According to the results of this research, the following conclusions can be ended up with:

- The researcher analyzed the literature and then ended up to build a model based on educational competencies according to the framework of UNESCO in order to reach an effective development in line with aspects of new trends , and changes of the twenty-first century, which international educational institutions sought, including UNESCO, which adopted a development system based on the concept of competence, and developed a conceptual framework for curriculum development based on educational competencies. This trend is confirmed by the results of the workshop that was held at UNESCO head office in (2017), where the director of the UNESCO Office confirmed there was a need to update the curricula in line with the changes of the twenty-first century, and to create an educational environment that attracts students and all elements of the educational environment, and the possibility of achieving this goal through a competency-based curriculum.

VI Recommendations:

In light of the research results, the researcher recommends the following:

- . Applying the developed model at King Saud University and in other local and international universities.
- . Applying the developed model to male and female students.
- Benefiting from the results of this research in rebuilding and developing the university skills course in other universities and circulating it.
- Holding training courses and workshops for faculty members to familiarize them with how to design and implement a competency-based course.
- Conducting studies to measure the effectiveness of the model by developing students' achievement and improving their attitudes towards learning university skills.
- . Developing skills that need more development, especially in light of education and digital and technical transformation.
- Conducting research and studies concerned with measuring the theoretical and applied aspects of the university skills course.

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