

Exploring the Current Practice of Integrating Sustainability into the Social Studies and Citizenship Education Curriculum in the Saudi Educational Context

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Abstract : The study mainly aims at exploring and understanding the current practice of social studies and citizenship education curriculum contribution to sustainability literacy and competency of the ninth and tenth grade students in the Saudi general education context. This study stems from a need for conducting research in general education contexts in order to prepare future graduate students who possess fundamental elements of education for sustainable development. To the best of our knowledge, the literature on education for sustainable development reveals that little research has been conducted so far on general education contexts and this study will add new knowledge in the literature. The study is interpretive in nature and employs a qualitative case study approach, and ethnography methodologies to understand deeply this complex educational phenomenon. 167 participants took part in this study, they were from six general education schools and made up of 25 teachers, and 142 students. Document analysis, semi-structured interviews, nominal group technique, and passive participant observation were used in order to gather the data for this study. The outcomes of the study showed the keenness of the Saudi government on promoting and raising awareness education for sustainable development among its younger generation via a sustainable development promoting curriculum. However, applying this vision in a real school setting, particularly via the social studies and citizenship education curriculum in grades nine and ten, has been challenging for different reasons as revealed by this study. First, incorporating sustainability in the social studies and citizenship education curriculum in the Saudi grade ninth and tenth grade, is based on the vision of the Saudi government but the ministry of education's rules and regulations do not support it. Moreover, the circulars issued by the ministry are also not supportive of teachers and students efforts to implement a sustainable development education curriculum. Second, teachers, as members of this community who play a significant role in achieving the objectives of incorporating sustainability, are often seen as technicians and not as professional human beings. They are confined to the curriculum, the classroom and stripped of their will power by the school management and the educational administration. The subjects, who are students here, are also not prepared nor guided to achieve the objects. In addition, the tools mediated between subjects and objects are not convenient. There were some major challenges regarding the contradictions in incorporating sustainability processes such as demanding creativity from a teacher who is overloaded with tasks irrelevant to teaching and teachers' training programs not meeting the teachers' training needs.

Keywords : practice, integrating sustainability, curriculum, educational context

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