



Assessing secondary school curricula in the light of developing quality of life standards of high school students

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ABSTRACT

The current study was aimed at assessing the curriculum of secondary schools in the light of the requirements for enhancing the quality of life of the students. The components of quality of life were described to build a list of standards and indicators. Additionally, a questionnaire assessing the dimensions of mental (cognitive and emotional), physical, digital, and social health, and environmental awareness was prepared. A descriptive-analytical approach was used on a sample of 258 teachers and educational supervisors in the Tabuk region. The results of the study indicated that there are shortcomings in the secondary school curricula in developing standards and indicators of components of quality of life. Also, results indicated that secondary school curricula incorporated very few practices needed to improve students' quality of life. Difference in statistical significance, due to variables (core subject, job, gender, and years of experience), was found to be less than 0.01.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of quality of life is a complex concept, and this concept is related to the health, educational, psychological and social fields. This concept needs to integrate these aspects to enhance its development practices (Ritchie et al., 2016). The main aim of the educational system is to build a lifestyle for all students based on the development of quality of life. Quality of life (QoL) determines the state of students' mental and cognitive health, and it is linked to the process of developing the necessary skill set for potential academic and career choices. The main aim of education is, thus, related to building capabilities and the

ability to enjoy life (Savarese et al., 2015).

The concept of QoL is related to the general goals of the educational system, especially at the secondary level. It emphasizes the necessity of linking the school curriculum to the development and measurement of cognitive, emotional, digital, and social health, and environmental awareness. In addition, teachers enhance students' life skills through continuous learning, educational activities, and training. These skills must be related to the components of quality of life (Sharfi and Rosenblum, 2016). Further, the concept of QoL is of great significance for acquiring 21st century skills in the digital age. The components of quality of life enhance students in building a variety of thinking and business skills, learning and innovation skills, digital literacy skills, and career and life skills (Raman and Shariff, 2017). QoL is a term that

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most students are familiar with, regardless of their ability to define it. However, its meaning can have different implications for different students. The concept of QoL is much wider than the standard of living or material living conditions; it also takes into account working environments, the amount of social engagement, health status, education attainment, and socio-economic status (Biswas et al., 2018). Furthermore, emphasis is placed on developing the necessary functional, life, and academic skills to enhance the quality of physical and mental performance of all students and teachers (Alva et al., 2017).

The curriculum should be based on preparing the student for life. And, the curricula must support the student to have the basic skills that enhance the quality of this life. This approach should focus on the cognitive, skill and emotional dimensions. Also, the curriculum must be based on the integration of core subjects, physical education, environmental education, and all educational activities that help the student and teacher in developing the components of quality of life. The curriculum enhances the students in developing self-regulation skills, self-efficacy, continuous learning, environmental responsibility, and psychological and mental health (Casey et al., 2014). Also, teachers play a crucial role in school by influencing the process of developing appropriate behavior. Their role in shaping behavior is related to the fields of public health, professional, scientific, and environmental capabilities. Teachers also enhance students' development of social skills, self-efficacy, flexibility in thinking, and solving social, life, and academic problems. In general, teachers contribute significantly to the QoL of students (Chuan et al., 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of developing and measuring the components of QoL for its relational relationship by improving levels of academic achievement, and developing students' skills and capabilities (Goldrich Eskow et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2018). A study by Chadha and Pandey (2015) showed a deficit in the inclusion and treatment of QoL components for secondary school teachers and students. Many studies stress the importance of developing and measuring the components of QoL due to a lack of treatment at the level of elements of the curriculum (Liu, et al., 2015). Bonifas and Napoli (2014) have shown the necessity of designing integrated educational programs to develop the components of QoL. Their study considers the necessity of selecting educational experiences that balance students' personal and academic life while developing their future skills. The development of QoL components promotes reduced academic anxiety while increasing students' academic achievement.

The development of QoL components focuses on

teaching treatments and strategies. Developing the components of QoL requires teaching focused on building mental processes while enhancing educational environments that attract students' satisfaction (Castle and Ferreira, 2015; Hindman et al., 2013). Many studies also stress the importance of including QoL in teaching practices to development and measurement its components among students, especially the insufficient performance of teachers in dealing with them in an integrated manner within the school community. In addition, teachers need training to develop components of quality of life through teaching practices and activities (Bhattacharjee, 2015; Lawal et al., 2015; Shafqat and Khalid, 2015).

Bhattacharjee (2015) indicates the necessity for secondary school teachers to understand the concept of QoL, which tends to cover a variety of areas such as physical, psychological, social, and spiritual well-being, personal functioning, and general limitations. QoL refers to the degree of excellence of one's life that contributes to the person and benefits society as a whole. It was also evident from the experience of researchers in the field of education that some indicators identify deficits in the development and measurement of QoL components, especially at the secondary stage, as it is foundational for university education, and academic and career life. It also shows the shortcomings in the integration of the curricula in the inclusion of a matrix of components, standards, and indicators of QoL.

The educational environment is one of the factors affecting the development of quality of life components. Where educational environments must be prepared based on mental, physical and mental health. Learning environments should be designed in such way that they enhance students' enjoyment of learning, interaction and communication with others (Keesler and Fukui, 2020). This environment should focus on psychological support. Curricula in the scientific, religious, environmental and physical education fields must also be integrated in building the student's knowledge and skills, and developing his abilities. Emphasis should be placed on physical health as a necessity for the development of emotional and mental health (Upadhyay, 2021). In general, the curriculum should be developed with a comprehensive concern of the elements of the scientific content of the courses, the practices of teachers, educational activities, a safe learning environment, and an active school community.

Research questions

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia emphasized the development of secondary school curricula based on international standards. It also emphasizes the sustainable professional development of all teachers. In spite of this, it is noted that there are many shortcomings in the

development of the components of quality of life among secondary school students. Owing to the importance of developing and measuring the components of QoL for students, the current study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What QoL standards and indicators should be developed and measured for high school students?
2. What is the level of inclusion of QoL standards and indicators in secondary school curricula?
3. Are there any differences among the respondents based on the core subject, job, gender, and years of experience?

Research objectives

- Determining the appropriate QoL standards, indicators, and components for high school students,
- Assessing the level of inclusion of QoL standards, indicators, and components in the curriculum elements in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and
- Investigating the differences in the levels of teaching practices among secondary school teachers in terms of job, specialization, educational qualification, gender, and the number of years of experience.

The importance of the study

- The study is linked to the National Vision 2030 AD in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, necessitating the creation of a suitable personality along the mental, physical, psychological, and social dimensions.
- The current study determines the level of inclusion of quality of life components, including mental (cognitive and emotional), physical, digital, and social health in the objectives and content of the secondary school curricula.
- It determines the teaching practices of secondary school teachers related to developing and measuring QoL criteria and indicators.
- Curriculum planners are provided with a list of QoL components, standards, and indicators to be included in the components of scientific content and educational activities.

METHODS

The current study uses a descriptive-analytical approach to analyze the existing literature to determine a list of components of QoL standards and indicators. In addition, content analysis is used to study the level of inclusion of components, standards, and indicators of QoL in the curricula at the secondary level. It is also used to assess the teaching practices of secondary school teachers in the

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in light of developing and measuring the QoL standards and indicators for the National Vision 2030 AD.

Participants

Tabuk region includes 399 secondary schools. These schools are distributed over the Tabuk city, and the governorates belonging to the Tabuk region. The study was implemented in secondary schools of the Tabuk region. The sample of the current study comprised secondary school teachers in all specializations and all governorates of the Tabuk region in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (N = 258). The study sample is described in Table 1.

Material and Procedures

To answer the study questions, existing literature on the dimensions of QoL was analyzed to determine the variables of the study and prepare a list of QoL components: strands, standards, and indicators. A list of QoL standards and indicators was used to prepare a questionnaire for the study sample. The questionnaire included four main strands: (i) mental and cognitive health, (ii) emotional and mental health, (iii) physical health, digital health, and (iv) environmental health, and social health. Each strand includes standards and indicators. Table 2 describes the study tool.

Health literacy was related to measuring the extent to which the content of the curricula at the secondary level and educational experiences that promote physical and mental health among students. Environmental health is related to the extent to which students develop their abilities to invest resources per sustainable development standards, with the development of the skills and values of environmental responsibility. Social life has also been linked to the interrelationship between the school and the home to build family awareness about the quality of family life while building attractive learning environments and teaching communities that stimulate students to communicate, dialog and discuss. Finally, quality of working life was linked to the quality of the educational system, and objectives were linked to developing critical and creative thinking skills, problem solving, and decision-making, with an emphasis on self-learning skills.

The study relied on the participants' responses on a 5-point Likert scale: strongly disagree (1.0), disagree (2.0), somewhat agree (3.0), agree (4.0), and strongly agree (5.0). The researchers communicated electronically with the study participants, including teachers and educational supervisors, to clarify the purpose of the study. The researchers discussed the vocabulary of the questionnaire. She explained that curricula evaluation is linked to a set of elements, the most important of which are

Table 1. Description of the study sample.

Core subject		Title job		Gender		Years of experience	
Type	Number	Type	Number	Type	Number	Type	Number
Scientific disciplines	107	Teachers	225	Male	131	Less than 10	93
Humanities disciplines	151	Supervisor	33	Female	127	More than 10	165
Total = 258							

Table 2. Description of questionnaire.

S/N	Strands	Standards	Numbers of indicators
1	Health literacy related quality of life (S1)	Physical health literacy (SS1)	4
		Psychological health literacy (SS2)	5
2	Environmental literacy related quality of life (S2)	Use resources effectively (SS3)	5
		Environmental responsibility (SS4)	4
3	Quality of social life (S3)	Quality of life of family (SS5)	4
		Quality of life of the society (SS6)	4
4	Quality of working life (S4)	Quality of life of learning system (SS7)	4
		Professional development (SS8)	5
Total	4	8	35

general and procedural objectives, scientific content, educational activities, teaching strategies, and evaluation methods. The tool was applied electronically during the second semester of 2020/2021 AD. Data were prepared for statistical processing.

RESULTS

To answer the question “What is the level of inclusion of QoL standards and indicators in high school curricula?” the statistical averages and standard deviations were calculated and used to describe the main strands, standards, and indicators included in the QoL measurement tool according to the Likert scale: very high (4.2–5.0), high (3.4–4.2), medium (2.6–3.4), low (1.8–2.6), and very low (1.0–1.8). The following tables show the results of applying the study instrument.

Table 3 shows that the statistical mean of the degree of the first standard (SS1) is medium. In addition, the degree of the first indicator (introducing the concept of health and its importance to the student and community) is high, while the degree of other indicators is medium. In addition, Table 3 also shows that the statistical mean of the second standard (SS2) is low, and the indicators vary between medium and low degrees. It is noted from Table 3 that the indicator (developing the components of psychological engagement among students) ranked last with a low degree, indicating the scarcity of practices related to this indicator according to the responses of the study sample.

Table 4 shows that the statistical mean of the degree of the third standard (SS3) is large. The degrees of the

indicators varied between medium and high. It is also noted that the degree of the indicators (training the students in methods of rationalizing consumption in the fields of energy, water, and technology is medium degree and in the last rank on the standard level. In addition, Table 4 shows that the statistical mean of the fourth standard (SS4) is a medium degree and the indicators vary between a medium degree and a low degree. It is noted from Table 4 that the indicator (motivating students to participate in camps, seminars, and workshops on environmental protection) ranked last with a low degree. This indicates a shortcoming in preparing educational activities to build students’ skills in environmental responsibility.

Table 5 shows that the statistical mean of the degree of the fifth standard (SS5) is low. The degrees of the indicators varied between medium and low. It is also noted that the degree of the indicators (connecting the family to the society’s desired values in the 21st century, and clarifying the basic roles and tasks within the family) are low, and in the last rank on the standard level. In addition, Table 5 also shows that the statistical mean of the sixth standard (SS6) is a medium degree, and the indicators vary between a medium degree and a low degree. It is noted from Table 5 that the indicator (developing students’ digital citizenship skills) ranked last with a low degree. This result indicates that secondary school curricula are not linked to the requirements for developing components of digital citizenship.

Table 6 shows that the statistical mean of the degree of the seventh standard (SS7) is medium. The degrees of the indicators varied between medium and low. It is also noted that the degree of the indicators (training the students in

Table 3. Standards and indicators of the strand: Health literacy-related quality of life.

Standards	Indicators	Mean	Std. deviation
Physical health literacy	Introducing the concept of health and its importance to the student and community	3.59	0.97
	Motivating the students to practice physical education as part of daily life	2.61	0.88
	Training the students in methods of disease prevention	2.91	1.02
	Promoting the correct eating habits among students	2.80	1.01
	Average mean of the total of standard: Physical health literacy	2.98	0.54
Psychological health literacy	Developing the components of psychological engagement among students	2.37	0.88
	Developing the components of academic engagement among students	2.57	1.10
	Training the students in methods of building self-confidence	2.54	0.97
	Training students in methods of communicating with themselves and with others	3.03	1.21
	Motivating the students to participate in psychological counseling sessions to face behavioral and learning problems	2.34	0.85
	Average mean of the total of standard: Psychological health literacy	2.57	0.48

Table 4. Standards and indicators of the strand: Environmental literacy-related quality of life.

Standards	Indicators	Mean	Std. deviation
Use resources effectively	Building students' awareness of the elements of the environment and its importance for life	3.47	0.96
	Presenting the concept of ecological balance and the factors affecting it, using examples in the surrounding environment	3.38	0.85
	Training students to discover sources of pollution in the ecosystem	3.45	1.03
	Investigating the relationship between pollution of the ecosystem and the spread of some diseases	3.65	0.98
	Training the students in methods of rationalizing consumption in the fields of energy, water, and technology	3.13	0.86
	Average mean of the total of standard: (Use resources effectively)	3.42	0.39
Environmental responsibility	Interpretation of environmental problems in the local community to students	3.27	0.97
	Training the students on problem-solving skills and their use in environmental problems	3.04	1.02
	Training students in decision-making skills related to protecting the environment.	2.29	0.95
	Motivate students to participate in camps, seminars, and workshops on environmental protection.	1.85	0.70
	Average mean of the total of standard: Environmental responsibility	2.61	0.46

Table 5. Standards and indicators of the strand: Quality of social life.

Standards	Indicators	Mean	Std. deviation
Quality of life of a family	Training students in the skills of dialogue, good listening, and the rules of discussion within their family	2.81	0.99
	Clarifying the basic roles and tasks within the family	2.43	0.89
	Connecting the family to society's desired values in the twenty-first century	1.95	0.62
	Developing the concept of identity among students	3.01	1.15
	Average mean of the total of the standard quality of life of a family	2.55	0.49
Quality of life of the society	Developing citizenship values (participation - responsibility - privacy - respect for the law, etc.)	2.89	1.11
	Developing students' digital citizenship skills	2.53	1.07
	Introducing the different cultural components of society	2.94	1.10
	Promoting the values of community participation among students	2.63	0.90
	Average mean of the total of standard quality of life of the society	2.75	0.51

Table 6. Standards and indicators of the strand: Quality of working life.

Standards	Indicators	Mean	Std. deviation
Quality of life of learning system	Training the students in basic skills in (reading, literacy, mathematical literacy, and scientific literacy)	3.13	1.01
	Training the students in critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem-solving skills.	2.72	0.99
	Training the students in the use of information and communication technology	3.00	1.08
	Training the students in the skills of planning their academic and professional future	2.44	0.98
	Average mean of the total of the standard: quality of life of learning system	2.82	0.54
Professional development	Training the students in teamwork skills as a member or leader	2.92	1.12
	Training the students on the skills to self-assess their performance and identify gaps.	2.57	0.96
	Training the student on self-learning skills to develop performance	3.48	0.91
	Training students in entrepreneurship skills	2.35	1.03
	Training the students in effective management and leadership skills	3.21	0.84
	Average mean of the total of the standard: Professional development	2.91	0.45

the skills of planning their academic and professional future) is low, and in the last rank on the standard level. Furthermore, Table 6 also shows that the statistical mean of the eighth standard (SS8) is a medium degree, and the

indicators vary between a medium degree and a low degree. It is noted from Table 6 that the indicator (training students in entrepreneurship skills) ranked last with a low degree. This result indicates that secondary school

Table 7. Strands and standards of quality of life.

S/N	Strands	Standards	Mean	Std. deviation
1	Health literacy related quality of life	Physical health literacy	2.98	0.54
		Psychological health literacy	2.57	0.48
		Total of strand: Health literacy related quality of life	2.76	0.35
2	Environmental literacy related quality of life	Use resources effectively	3.42	0.39
		Environmental responsibility	2.61	0.48
		Total of strand: Environmental literacy related quality of life	3.01	0.30
3	Quality of social life	Quality of life of family	2.55	0.49
		Quality of life of the society	2.75	0.51
		Total of strand: Quality of social life	2.65	0.36
4	Quality of working life	Quality of life of learning system	2.82	0.54
		Professional development	2.91	0.45
		Total of strand: Quality of working life	2.87	0.35
		Total of questionnaire	2.83	0.16

Table 8. Independent sample t-test of study variables.

Variables	Levels	Sample	Mean	Std. deviation	t-test	df
Core subjects	Scientific disciplines	107	2.81	0.17	1.559	256
	Humanities disciplines	151	2.84	0.15		
Job	Teachers	220	2.83	0.16	1.087	256
	Supervisor	38	2.80	0.15		
Gender	Male	137	2.82	0.16	0.132	256
	Female	121	2.83	0.17		
Experience	Less than 10	123	2.82	0.16	0.431	256
	More than 10	135	2.83	0.17		

curricula are not linked to training students in entrepreneurial processes, despite their importance in the 21st century.

Table 7 shows that the statistical mean of the degree of the strands and standards of quality of life in general is medium. Additional, the degrees of all strands were medium. It is also noted that the degree of statistical mean was close between the four strands. In addition, Table 7 also shows that the degree of the average mean of standards (SS3: use resources effectively) is high, while the degrees of the standards (SS5: quality of life of family and SS2: psychological health literacy) are low. The degree of most standards was medium.

To answer the question "Are there differences among the respondents based on the core subject, job, gender, and years of experience?" the statistical means and standard deviations were calculated, and the values of the independent sample t-test were calculated. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table (8) shows the statistical averages between the study groups for each variable separately are closer. It is also evident from the t-test values that there was no

statistical significance. The following results indicate that there are no statistically significant differences between the averages of the study groups in terms of the variables (core subject, job, gender, and years of experience). The current results indicate the agreement of the study sample about the levels of curricula assessment at the secondary stage and its relationship to the development of QoL components.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that secondary school curricula do not promote the development of strands, standards, and indicators of QoL to a satisfactory (high) degree. The reasons for this result lie in the lack of curriculum objectives and content to directly integrate those strands, standards, and indicators. This result also refers to the fact that teaching approaches still rely on traditional strategies that do not meet the needs of secondary school students in the 21st century. It also notes that teachers' teaching practices are still linked mainly to

cognitive processes, without focusing on the skill and emotional aspects. Secondary school curricula face the problem of lack of connection with life and lack of connection with students' needs directly. In addition, teaching and school practices neglect school activities, which are necessary to build students' abilities and skills in the components of QoL. These results are consistent with previous studies (Lambert and Dryer, 2018; Bonifas and Napoli, 2014) on the necessity of integrating QoL standards into objectives and content, with the need for teachers to be aware of methods of integrating them into teaching processes and practices.

Conclusion

A QoL standard is considered among the contemporary and necessary concepts for students, especially in the 21st century. The curricula are considered an educational tool in building concepts and skills for QoL among students, especially at the secondary level. Curricula include objectives, content, instructional activities, teaching strategies, and assessment methods. The results of the study indicated that there are shortcomings in the school curricula in developing standards and indicators of QoL. Because the average mean of the degree of the strands of quality of life in general is medium. And, the averages means of the most standards are medium. This is due to many reasons related to the curriculum, the teacher or the school environment. Therefore, the current study recommends the necessity of integrating strands, standards, and indicators of QoL according to a multidisciplinary approach, including the interface across the curriculum. Curricula must include components of quality of life as an integrative concept that includes mental (cognitive and emotional), physical, digital, and social health, and environmental awareness. In addition, the training of secondary school teachers on teaching strategies and practices is very important to link scientific content and life situations, designing real educational experiences that preserve students, and enhancing QoL development practices. It also considers the constant need to measure the components of QoL among secondary school students using appropriate measuring tools.

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