

THE IMPACT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN ACHIEVING THE OUTCOMES OF LEARNING THE ARABIC LANGUAGE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ERA THROUGH PARALLEL EDUCATION IN DAKAHLIA GOVERNORATE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the impact of distance education in achieving the outcomes of learning Arabic language during the Covid 19 pandemic era through parallel education in Dakahlia Governorate. The aim of this article is to demonstrate the extent that the outcomes of learning the Arabic language have been achieved. This article relied on the use of the descriptive and analytical method through a questionnaire that contained twenty-five words distributed on five axes: reading, writing, communication, language elements, and measurement & evaluation. This study concluded that distance education has a positive impact on some Arabic language skills, but this form of education does not achieve the desired goal in writing skill and evaluation & measurement process. This study come out with a result that the biggest challenge was in the evaluation axis, where the opinions of a large number of participants agreed that the evaluation results did not honestly reflect the true level of the extent to which learning outcomes were achieved, while the responses on the other axes indicated positive indicators, especially in the axis of communication and the axis of elements The language.

keywords: Distance education, parallel education, Dakahlia governorate

INTRODUCTION

In the first half of year 2020, the world was shocked by a vicious cycle of changes that impacted every aspect of life. For the first time in history, countries across the globe went into lockdowns and closed their borders. Virtually the whole world came to a standstill, and it threatens the lives and livelihood of everyone on this planet. As a result, global economies went into recession to the extent that it became the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Industries across all sectors collapses and it causes a domino effect on all businesses as it is inter-related. Airplanes were grounded, hotels announced closures, well-established international companies filed for bankruptcy, oil prices collapsed until it became negative in June and July, and people stopped going to work due to stay at home orders. These are the colossal magnitude Covid-19 pandemic brought upon us. And oil prices collapsed below zero for the first time in history, as the price of a barrel of oil in the United States reached - 37.63 dollars, all because of the Covid 19 pandemic. (BBC Arabic website - available on 4/21/2020).

Education was not spared either, as a resultant, it caused the largest disruption to educational systems ever recorded in the history of mankind. Schools, colleges, and universities were forced to close affecting nearly all the world's student population. This has caused more than 1.6 billion children and youth to drop out of school in 161 countries, i.e. nearly 80% of the students enrolled in school globally (Mehani 2020).

A drastic and expedient paradigm shift was needed to deal with these changes through innovation and implementation of alternative education systems. This led to the introduction of digital learning and countries had to quickly adapt to these new developments. This has led to a change in traditional methods of education, and prompted a radical shift towards distance education platforms, and the provision of electronic education tools has become a major priority for all countries to ensure the continuation of the education process (Al-Amian, 2020).

Unfortunately, not all countries have an available technological infrastructure in the field of education in place and they were forced to close schools and end the school year several months earlier. Those that had introduced educational technology into their system prior to the pandemic, were the ones able to deal with these developments by applying online teaching, virtual halls, and other smart learning platforms. These developments led to the increase in the production of software and smart applications to support the transformation that education systems were forced to make in the teaching of all subjects, especially the Arabic language. These software and applications were found to be adequate and able to conform to this challenging change, where the method of teaching and learning language skills has changed from the traditional face to face teaching to a more sophisticated level of what is called integrated, smart, or distance education, all of which are names of educational methods that adopt smart technology. These programs have proven a good ability to confront this emergency variable, in teaching all subjects, especially the Arabic language, where the method of dealing with language skills has changed from the traditional method to an advanced level, with the use of the elements of these techniques from sound and kinetic effects with interactive educational situations.

In view of recommendations for countries to implement social distancing and other safety requirements by World Health Organisation (WHO) to curb the spread of Covid-19, governments were forced to increase financial allocations to provide smart technology in education to prevent the collapse of their educational systems. However, due to the lack of preparedness of some formal education institutions in meeting the requirements of distance education, parallel education has been an instrumental and effective alternative. Parallel education is a type of non-formal education conducted by non-governmental educational centres. Most of these centres have accreditation from Education Ministries and employs teaching staffs that are competent and are well equipped with technical skills needed for distance education. The curricula used are the same as those that are taught in

public and private schools and the management of these centres are proactive in upgrading the knowledge of their teaching staff with the latest teaching methods that includes technological capabilities. This type of education attracted large number of students as it compensates what they missed or did not obtain from their schools or institutions. Therefore, this article examines the efficiency of this form of education in achieving the standard outcomes of learning the subject of Arabic language. It thus addresses the shortcomings of formal education, and thus contributes to the development of society (Zaydan 2002: 128-129), while providing the opportunity to provide various training and extracurricular activities within the framework of cultural enrichment. (Al-Attar and Taima 1993). Thus, parallel education supports formal education, corrects it, treats it or complements it, and in some cases it may replace it. (Mubarik, Haifa Bint Fahd 2019)

This study sought to identify the extent to which parallel distance education is able to achieve the outcomes of learning the Arabic language, through distance education through licensed parallel education centers in Dakahlia Governorate, in the first semester of the year 2020-2021. Achieving some learning outcomes in Arabic language through distance education through parallel education centers in the first semester of the year 2020-2021

THE ARTICLE PROBLEM

After two semesters have passed in the implementation of distance education and with the lack of preparedness of some formal educational institutions in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, parallel education has played an influential and effective role in achieving what educational institutions have not been able to achieve. With the multiplicity of learning outcomes for the Arabic language skills and the persistence of these outcomes, despite the urgent need to adapt it to distance education, a research gap has emerged, and that is represented in the ability of parallel education to achieve these outcomes in innovative ways. The question of this article could be formulated in the following:

To what extent has distance education succeeded in achieving outcomes in the learning of Arabic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) through the parallel education system during the COVID-19 pandemic era?

The main question is divided into the following two sub-questions:

First: What are the Arabic language skills for which distance education has been successful in achieving its targeted outcomes and what could not be achieved?

Second: What are the reasons for it?

ARTICLE OBJECTIVES

1. Measuring the success of distance education in achieving learning outcomes in the Arabic language subject for middle school students through parallel education centres.

2. Identifying the Arabic language skills that were positively affected by this type of education as well as those that were negatively affected.
3. Disclosure of the reasons for achieving or not achieving the intended learning outcomes.
4. Attempt to innovate methods that can develop the experience to address the deficiencies in achieving the learning outcomes, if any.

COMMENTARY ON PREVIOUS STUDIES

In the context of seeking to expand the circle of study in the literature of parallel education and distance education, a number of literature related to the subject of this study was reviewed and addressed the issue of distance education, including:

After reviewing previous studies, the researcher discovered similarity of the current study with some previous studies that dealt with distance education and its impact on achieving the goals of the educational process. The only difference is that this study was conducted in an extraordinary circumstance due to Covid-19 pandemic. It gave distance education an unprecedented priority and it is no longer negligible in the field of education, but rather has become the most appropriate and perhaps the only alternative for the continuation of the educational process.

This study discovered previous studies that dealt with distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis focuses only on mathematics, as in the study of Rima Jaber, Suhail Salha and Hisham Dweikat, which dealt with students' attitudes towards learning mathematics remotely during the crisis. The researcher did not find any study done on Arabic language skills during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is known that Arabic language is very specific and distinct that differs from mathematics. Furthermore, this study is distinguished by the fact that it dealt with distance education during the COVID-19 crisis through the parallel education system and not through formal education. This is the distinction from previous studies.

As for the studies done on parallel education, they were outdated as it was conducted between the year 2000 to 2004, and it only dealt with parallel education as an initiative directed at groups that had missed the education train. These studies were mainly about literacy classes and this type of education is not what the researcher dealt with in this study. Moreover, previous studies did not have any form of technology or educational technology which are available to the current parallel education. Thus, it added a new dimension that is radically different from the old view of parallel education.

Arabic language skills: "The Arabic language has four main skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, two skills for language reception (listening and reading) and two skills for language production (speaking and writing). The skill of speaking is the first means of producing language and communicating with others, as well as the skill of writing, which is the second means of transmitting and codifying ideas" (Mustafa, 2014).

COVID-19 is the disease caused by the novel coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. This novel virus was first detected by WHO on December

31, 2019, after a cluster of viral pneumonia cases were reported in Wuhan, People's Republic of China. On the eleventh of February 2020. The Director-General of the World Health Organization indicated that Covid-19 is the official name for the disease, and that (ko) means (corona), and (in) means (virus), and (d) means (disease) in the English language. As for the number 19, it refers to the year (WHO website).

ARTICLE TERMINOLOGY

Distance education: Hassan Shehata defines it as "a modern technology in which data, sound, and images converge on a single medium in the global communication network. In addition, it is a two-way interactive media that allow the student to interact with the latest educational resources such as computer communication networks, videoconferences, real-time long-distance communications, and some of them are not synchronous."

Parallel education: defined by UNESCO as a structured and systematic educational activity often linked to work provided outside the formal educational system (UNESCO Arabic website).

Hassan Shehata defines it as "an education that parallels its curricula and goals with education provided in the public education curricula and is not bound by its admission rules or education systems or methods used in these schools and the duration could be longer or shorter than the prescribed period." (Shehata, Hassan and Najjar, Zainab Dictionary of Terms Educational and Psychology, The Egyptian Lebanese House 2003, page 120).

"It is a type of education that is equivalent to formal education without being a part of it. It provides a first opportunity for those who did not receive any formal education, a second opportunity for those who received part of the education but did not complete it and a third opportunity for those who want to gain more education." (Zidan, 2002: 127).

Al-Ajami (219: 2002) defines it as a type of non-formal education that focuses on the needs of the learner and helps him identify them and is consistent with formal education but not a part of it and it is flexible as it does not have to comply with formal education laws and regulations. It may be a supplementary education for those who want to complete their education, a compensatory education for many children, youths, and adults with the aim of completing their education or additional education for the purpose of upgrading skills and acquire additional information. (Al-Ajami, 2002).

RESEARCH COMMUNITY

The research community consists of private education centres licensed and accredited by the Ministry of Education and teaches the Ministry's or private education's curricula in the Dakahlia Governorate, located in the Arab Republic of Egypt.

The Study Sample

The study sample was represented by Arabic language teachers who teach in licensed education centres in Dakahlia Governorate. A targeted sample was chosen from thirty teachers who possess teaching competencies and the skill of using educational technology.

THE LIMITS OF THE STUDY

The objective limit: The study dealt with the ability of parallel distance education to achieve learning outcomes in the Arabic language subject.

Time limit: This study took place in the first semester of the 2020/2021 academic year

Spatial boundary: Licensed parallel distance education centres in Dakahlia Governorate.

The human limit: Arabic language teachers for the preparatory stage working in parallel education centres in the Dakahlia Governorate.

STUDY CURRICULUM AND PROCEDURES

This study adopted the descriptive analytical approach based on monitoring and analyzing the study problem by designing the study tool, which was a controlled questionnaire by specialists. An intentional sample was selected from thirty teachers who possess teaching competencies and the skill of using educational technology.

This study followed the descriptive and analytical approach based on monitoring and analysing the study problem.

Study Tools:

A questionnaire was designed containing reviewed phrases by specialists, which measure the extent to which the prescribed learning outcomes were achieved. This measure is aimed at teachers who have taught the curricula approved by the Ministry of Education at a distance in parallel education centres. And they themselves are the ones who assessed and measured the learning outcomes In the Arabic language subject for middle school students in special education centres.

The questionnaire consists of 25 statements, which were presented to several specialists in distance education curricula and designing education programs, evaluation, and measurement. At the end of the questionnaire, a question was asked about the reasons that teachers see as the cause of the shortcomings of the evaluation system (if any), and a question about the reasons for the non-achievement of some learning outcomes (if any), and then a statement of teachers' opinion on the most important suggestions for developing the distance education experience.

Study Hypotheses:

Some learning outcomes in the Arabic language subject are achieved through distance education and through parallel education centres in the first semester of the year 2020-2021.

Low rates of achievement of some learning outcomes in the Arabic language subject through distance education through parallel education centres in the first semester of the year 2020-2021.

RESULTS

The results of the study after analyzing the participants' responses indicate that reading skills and language skills were achieved by 81% distributed between good, very good and excellent, according to the respondents' attitudes, followed by the verification of communication skills by 71% distributed between good, very good and excellent. Writing, the verification rate was low, as it reached 36% distributed between good, very good and excellent, as well as the case in the assessment axis, where the verification rate was 30% distributed between good, very good and excellent (with the exception of the two terms that indicate the availability of technical capabilities and the students' ability to deal with them, which amounted to The verification rate in both of them is 88%), and the attached table No. (1) presents these percentages in detail.

In order to explain these results, and by looking at Table (1-1), which shows the percentages of verification in the reading skill, it is clear that 46% of the responses tend to achieve the outcomes of learning the reading skill at the level of good, with a rate of 66%: 80%, and 29% of the responses It indicated that reading skills were achieved at the level of very good, with a rate ranging between 81%: 90%, and 6% of the responses were at the level of excellent, with a rate ranging between 91%: 100%, for a total of 81% positive responses.

In the writing axis, an average of 51% of the responses tended to achieve the outputs of learning the writing skill at the level of verification (acceptable 51%: 65%), while 36% of the responses indicated that the outputs at the levels were achieved excellent by 2%, and very good by 6%, good at 28%, which is low compared to reading skill.

In the communication axis, an average of 70% of the responses tended to achieve the outcomes of learning communication skills between the levels of excellent, very good and good, while 27% of the responses were at an acceptable level, and only 3% of the responses were at a level below expectations, and these percentages indicate that The outcomes of learning the communication skill are achieved at high rates.

In the language elements axis, 81% of the responses were distributed at the higher levels between excellent, very good and good, while 17% of the participants were at the acceptable level, and only 1% of the responses were at the level below expectations. This indicates the achievement of the learning outcomes of language elements at a high rate equal to the rate of achievement of the outcomes of reading skills.

In the evaluation axis, there was convergence in the levels as shown in Figure 1-5 and detailed in Table 1-5, where 54% of the responses were distributed between the levels excellent, very good and good, while 29% of the responses were at the acceptable level, and 15%

of the responses were at the acceptable level. Sub-level responses, and the researcher attributed this convergence in ratios and levels to phrases No. 21 and 22, which indicate the availability of technology, and the students' skill in using these techniques, as the two phrases got high response rates, as opposed to low responses to phrases No. 23, 24, 25 Which revolves around the validity of the evaluation, so these statements have been separated into two groups to extract more accurate results as shown in Figures 1-6 / 1-7

Looking at Figure 1-6, which shows the rates of responses to phrases 21 and 22, which measure the extent to which we provide the necessary technology, and the students' ability to use that technology, it turns out that 88% of the responses were at the higher levels distributed between excellent, very good and good, which is the highest percentage of responses In each study, this indicates the availability of technical capabilities and the availability of skill to deal with this technique.

As for the phrases No. 23, 24, 25, which indicate the validity of the assessment and its translation to the real level of students, they got the lowest response rates, as 30% of the responses were at the higher levels, while 46% of the responses were at the acceptable level, and 25% of the responses were at the lower level. Expectations, which reflects the shortcomings of the assessment process and the extent to which it is true to the real level of students, as shown in Figure 1-7

After reviewing and analysing the results of the questionnaire, the researcher found the following outcomes of learning:

- In the reading axis, 46% of the participants achieved the grades of (Good 66% to 80%).
- In the writing axis, 51% of the participants achieved the grades of (Acceptable 51% to 65%).
- In the communication axis, 50% of the participants achieved the grades of (Good 66% to 80%).
- In the language elements axis, 43% of the participants achieved the grades of (Good 66% to 80%).
- In the evaluation & measurement axis, 29% of the participants achieved the grades of (Acceptable 51% to 65%).

However, the researcher noticed that the statements that measure the availability of technical capabilities and the ability to employ them caused the evaluation axis rate to rise, where the 38% of the participants scored the grade of very good (81% - 90%) for availability of capabilities, which is the highest rate in all the questionnaire statements. Although, the statements indicating the validity of the results of the remote evaluation were low as 46% of the participants scored grades of acceptable (51% - 65%) only.

As for the deficiencies in the evaluation and measurement system, the participants pointed out the following reasons:

1. Poor monitoring in many cases which negatively affects the degree of validity and reliability of the evaluation and measurement.

2. The student being left alone without direct observation from the teacher affects the reliability of the results obtained as it is unknown who answered the questions in addition to receiving help from parents.
3. Lack of diversity in the types of questions asked as most of the questions are objective questions (multiple choice). The students might choose randomly when they cannot answer the question.
4. The central tests sometimes do not address the learning outcomes that have been addressed by the teaching process.
5. There are no tests that measure writing, listening, and speaking skills which are basic skills in any language.

Regarding the question about the reasons for the non-achievement of some outcomes of learning Arabic language skills, most of the answers focused on the following:

1. The student lost the factor of face-to-face communication with his teachers.
2. The curricula being taught now are in fact not intended for such a method of education, rather were designed just before the start of distance learning.
3. Many language skills cannot be achieved without direct support and direct observation from the teacher.
4. The educational process needs face-to-face communication between teacher and student, especially in the pre-university stage.
5. Density of content and too many educational platforms.
6. The difficulty of training students in writing skills as usage of pen for writing is non-existent in distance education. This greatly affected the learning process.
7. Neglecting the textbook and focusing on the platforms.
8. Students' absence from the distance classes.

As for the suggestions to improve the distance education experience, the teachers' recommendations are as follows:

1. Increasing the degree of monitoring the student while taking the tests.
2. Continuous effective communication with parents and raise awareness of their role in the distance education process, as they are an active and essential part of it.
3. Give attention to teaching writing, listening, and speaking skills as reading skill alone is inadequate.
4. Conducting the evaluation in education centres in a safe environment that complies with the safety and health requirements.
5. Innovating digital applications to teach the skill of writing from a distance.
6. Limit the number of platforms used to avoid confusing the student and focusing on the scientific material more than the technology.

7. Diversifying the types of questions to include essay questions.
8. Finding a solution so that writing can be done using a pen even with remote teaching.
9. Restoring the use of textbook by employing it in classes as well as on educational platforms.
10. Ensuring the actual attendance of students by making it compulsory for them to switch on the camera on their computers during lessons.

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