

## **The Social Contents in the Document Educational Policy: An Analytical Study for Teacher Awareness**

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### **Abstract**

*The Document of Educational Policy (DEP) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, issued in 1390 AH/ 1970 AD, was way beyond the times as it addressed various social issues and aimed to bolster such principles and objectives as helped achieve social development and cohesion throughout the many stages of education. This study aims to highlight the social principles including socialization, adaptation, cohesion, and growth as enshrined in the document, making them comprehensible to educators and academicians professionals in the field of education. The study uses an analytical approach to analyze the presence of these components in the educational policy document. Results of the study show that the document emphasizes various social contents such as identity formation, value and attitude building, socialization, skills development, social growth, and patriotism, thus addressing the changing needs of the Saudi society. The study concludes with recommending the larger role of schools in promoting these principles and ensuring that young learners imbibe them.*

**Keywords:** *Education policy, educational sociology, general education, social principles.*

### **Introduction**

Schools play a crucial role in preparing children for adult life by providing them with essential knowledge, skills, and values. The primary goals of education extend beyond academic achievement and involve the holistic development of individuals. Schools are responsible for imparting fundamental academic and literary skills such as reading, writing, mathematics, and critical thinking. These skills form the basis for further learning and are essential in various aspects of adult life, including further education and career pursuits. They contribute significantly to the social and emotional development of children. Interaction with peers, teachers, and other members of the school community helps students develop important social skills, empathy, and emotional intelligence. Learning how to collaborate, communicate, and resolve conflicts prepares them for healthy relationships in adulthood. Moreover, schools encourage students to think critically and solve problems. These skills are valuable in navigating the complexities of adult life, whether in the workplace, personal relationships, or making informed decisions. Education is not just about academic achievements; it also involves character development. Schools aim to instill values such as responsibility, respect, honesty, and perseverance, which are essential for ethical and responsible citizenship in adulthood. They help students develop the skills and knowledge needed for the workforce. This includes not only academic and technical skills but also soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and time management. Career guidance and exposure to

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various subjects also help students make informed choices about their future careers. In an increasingly interconnected world, schools play a vital role in fostering cultural awareness and global competence. Exposure to diverse perspectives and experiences helps students develop an appreciation for different cultures and prepares them to navigate a globalized society. They contribute to the overall health and well-being of students. Physical education programs, health education, and access to mental health resources help students develop habits that contribute to a healthy lifestyle, setting the foundation for a fulfilling adult life. The role of schools goes beyond their four walls as they instill in learners a love for learning and the capacity for lifelong learning. In a rapidly changing world, the ability to adapt and learn continuously is crucial for success in adult life. Ultimately, the role of schools in preparing children for adult life is multifaceted, encompassing academic, social, emotional, and practical aspects of development. A well-rounded education equips individuals with the tools they need to navigate the challenges and opportunities that come their way in adulthood.

The school, thus, in the context of general education, is recognized as a social institution that fulfills important social functions for both male and female students (Khazaaar, 2013; Nasser, 2011). As stated earlier, these functions encompass aspects such as socialization, adaptation to societal norms, internalization of values, emulation of role models, promotion of social cohesion and national unity, and facilitation of students' social development through the practice of social skills and more. The DEP in the Kingdom has specifically addressed these functions and social objectives of schools, outlining them in various sections and clauses. In this paper, my intention is to analyze these clauses and emphasize the significance of these crucial social functions.

#### Research problem

The DEP in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia greatly emphasized many social aspects essential to human development (Al-Saif, 2010). The document outlines social principles and objectives that are intended to be realized across all educational institutions, systems, and stages. The overarching aim is to cultivate generations grounded in Islamic, social, and national values and yet empowered with the skills needed to be less than none. However, some educators may not possess a comprehensive understanding of these social principles and objectives. Consequently, this research endeavors to analyze the document and shed light on these social objectives, enhancing their visibility among educators and professionals in the educational field.

#### Research objectives

1. Highlighting the general social content of the DEP in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
2. Highlighting the social content in the different stages of education (primary, middle, and high school).
3. Bridging the gap between social content and educators to ensure that educators optimally integrate these to their teaching and learning objectives.

#### Methodology

This investigation is based on an analytical approach of the texts of the document of education policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, taking off from Al-Munaqash (2006), also a study in the same genre and which assessed the extent to which the document adheres to international standards, the accuracy of its formulation, and the level of its implementation. The study found some shortfalls as per the international standards, and low degree of implementation. The study proposed recommendations for developing the policy to align it with international standards and activate mechanisms to increase the degree of implementation. This study shares similarities with the current paper in terms of methodology (analytical) and differences in terms of focus on the social aspect and

reading the social principles included in the document. Unlike the earlier study, it serves as a means to increase awareness and application of the document's social principles, as recommended by Al-Munaqash's study.

## **Literature Review**

The document of educational policy in Saudi Arabia

Educational policy is defined as the general constitutional provisions for education. It outlines the fundamental principles upon which educational institutions are established and clarifies the objectives of the educational process, as well as specifies its aims. These provisions may be officially declared through decisions and decrees, or they may be unspoken but implicitly understood by those overseeing educational institutions, their founders, and those guiding their development (Al-Maidani, 1992).

The educational policy is a definition of Saudi academic and general principles that guide the process of education and upbringing to fulfill the duty of introducing the individual to their Lord and religion, establishing their behavior according to Islamic law, meeting the needs of the society, and achieving the goals of the nation (Ministry of Education, 1995). The process of developing educational and pedagogical policies is considered one of the most important requirements for planning and growth in all countries, as it guides thinking, estimation, and directs goals, means, and procedures (Al-Almaei, 2010). In short, it is the theoretical and practical guide of the education sector in a country.

The DEP in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is considered the primary reference for the education system in the country (Al-Munaqash, 2006). The DEP, which includes an introduction and nine chapters with 236 articles, was released by the Higher Committee for Education Policy. It was approved by the Council of Ministers through Resolution No. 779 on 16/17-9-1389 AH. The first edition was published in 1390 AH, and multiple subsequent editions followed with much needed updates of the content.

Based on its status in the region and its leadership and civilizational role amongst the Islamic nations and the world, Saudi Arabia's educational policy is grounded in Islamic principles and the Islamic perception of the universe, humanity, and life, and are also a guiding light for other Islamic nations across the globe.

The DEP in Saudi Arabia serves as a general framework for managing, planning, guiding, and evaluating the entire education system. It takes into account the needs of learners and society in various aspects, such as religion, health, psychology, and social issues. The policy aims to benefit from human knowledge within the framework of Islam to improve the Saudis' quality of life and align education at all stages with comprehensive development plans. Additionally, the policy seeks to interact with global advancements in various fields while maintaining a conscious awareness of the country's cultural identity.

The social contents in the Saudi document of educational policy

The social contents in the Saudi DEP refer to the social principles and objectives that are included and encompassed within the document. These social contents are articulated in several articles throughout its chapters. The study defines social contents as the social principles and objectives included in the DEP in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, specifically related to the social functions of schools towards students in all stages of general education, including socialization, community values, social and national belonging, social skills development, social growth, and social control. The social aspect has received significant attention in the education policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to educate generations on Islamic, social, and national values. The document includes social principles and objectives that aim to achieve these values through all educational institutions and systems. These social contents are articulated in several articles

throughout its chapters, including the goals of education, objectives of different stages of education, and general provisions.

In Chapter Two of the Saudi DEP, the goal of education and its general objectives are discussed as follows:

Goal of education: The section emphasizes various social contents such as identity formation, value and attitude building, socialization, skills development, and social growth for students. Article 28 states that the goal of education is to provide a comprehensive and accurate understanding of Islam, instill Islamic beliefs and promote them, provide students with Islamic values and teachings, impart knowledge and various skills, develop constructive behavioral attitudes, and contribute to the economic, social, and cultural development of society. Additionally, the education system aims to prepare individuals to be beneficial members of their community.

The general objectives that achieve the goal of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia include various social contents such as promoting a sense of social and national belonging among students and instilling pride in their religion and country. The education system also focuses on the social growth of students, providing them with positive guidance, and teaching them to take responsibility. Several articles in the educational policy document highlight these social contents. Some are:

- 1- Article 33 emphasizes the importance of educating citizens to be contributing members of their nation and feel responsible for serving and defending it.
- 2- Article 34 aims to provide students with cultural knowledge and diverse experiences that enable them to be active members of society.
- 3- Article 35 aims to develop students' awareness of cultural, economic, and social issues and prepare them to contribute to solving them.
- 4- Article 48 highlights the importance of educating students about the historical Islamic achievements, global human civilization, geographical and natural advantages, and economic significance of their country.
- 5- Article 53 emphasizes the importance of supporting students' psychological growth and helping them develop holistically, including spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and socially, with an emphasis on Islamic values.
- 6- Article 54 aims to recognize individual differences among students, provide appropriate guidance, and help them grow according to their abilities, preparedness, and interests.

Chapter Three encompasses the objectives of general education stages

These objectives cover various social contents that are appropriate for each stage and serve as a foundation for subsequent stages. Their objectives are sub-divided into the different stages of education.

Objectives of the primary education stage

There are specific objectives that focus on social contents.

- 1- Article 73 emphasizes the importance of instilling the correct Islamic creed in children and providing them with comprehensive Islamic education that encompasses their physical, mental, linguistic, and cultural aspects, fostering their sense of belonging to the Islamic nation.
- 2- Article 79 aims to develop children's awareness of their responsibilities and rights as per the limits of their age and the characteristics of the stage they are going through. It also emphasizes instilling love for their country and loyalty to their leaders.

#### Objectives of the middle school education stage

- 1- Article 87 of the DEP in Saudi Arabia highlights the significance of educating middle school students about the Islamic social life, which is characterized by values such as brotherhood, cooperation, and responsibility.
- 2- Article 88 aims to train students to serve their community and country, while fostering the values of advice and loyalty towards their leaders.
- 3- Article 91 focuses on strengthening students' awareness to enable them, according to their age, to confront misleading rumors, destructive ideologies, and foreign principles that run contrary to Islamic and national interests.

#### Objectives of the secondary stage

- 1- Article 97 emphasizes the importance of fulfilling loyalty to the broader interests of the Islamic nation and to Saudi Arabia in particular, in line with the aspirations and ambitions of this age, aiming for excellence in mental and physical strength.
- 2- Article 98 focuses on recognizing the abilities and diverse preparations of students during this period and guiding them accordingly, in a way that aligns with the general concept of Islamic education.
- 3- Article 103 aims to promote family awareness and the building of a healthy Islamic family.
- 4- Article 107 aims to foster a positive mindset that enables students to confront destructive ideas and misleading trends.

#### General provisions

Article 232 emphasizes that education, in all its forms and stages, is aimed at achieving Islamic objectives and is guided by Islamic laws and principles. Its purpose is to reform individuals and promote ethical, intellectual, social, and economic development in society. The education policy document recognizes the importance of socially conducive upbringing, adaptation, and conformity to societal standards and values. It also aims to foster positive values and attitudes among students, promote social and national cohesion, facilitate social growth and life skills acquisition, practice social skills, and establish a conducive school environment and administrative system geared to achieve these objectives.

## **Results, and Recommendations**

### Results

- 1- The DEP highlights various social aspects such as identity formation, value and attitude building, social upbringing, skill development, and social growth of students.
- 2- The general objectives also focus on social aspects such as achieving social and national sense of belonging among students, fostering pride in their religion and country, promoting social growth, providing proper guidance, and instilling responsibility and positivity. In them
- 3- The objectives of each stage of education also prioritize social aspects that are appropriate for each stage and serve as a foundation for the next stage. These aspects include socially conducive upbringing, reinforcing positive values and attitudes, achieving social growth for students, and acquiring life experiences.

### Recommendations

- 1- School administrations should recognize their educational and social roles as outlined in the DEP, activate the role of the student counselor in caring for educational

and social functions, and incorporate them into guidance and counseling plans, actively involving teachers in this process.

2- School administrations should activate the role of student activities, class and extracurricular competitions to enhance social skills and promote values and other social and educational functions of education.

3- The Ministry of Education is recommended to develop guides that focus on assessing social and educational functions and the extent to which students receive them in primary, middle, and high school stages.

### **Limitations**

The study does not include empirical data and hence, it is recommended for specialist researchers to design scientifically validated social measurement scales to assess the extent to which students receive the social functions recommended by DEP in different educational stages and settings.

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