

The Importance of Art Education in Saudi Arabia: A Review

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Abstract

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) community has experienced considerable developments due to the robust infrastructure it enjoys. A key aspect of any community is its educational sector; accordingly, considering the digitalization of the modern world, the KSA is making attempts to incorporate these developments into its society properly. The current research analyses some studies formerly conducted on the e-learning development in Saudi society and the possible ways to integrate this new technology into the education sector in the future. Numerous studies have concentrated on the significant roles e-learning plays in the education sector. The KSA authorities hope to completely incorporate e-learning services to this sector by 2030. This study uses the Systematic Literature Review approach to review and analyse the importance of learning art and the role of e-learning in this field in the KSA context. The results showed that the KSA lacks a comprehensive educational framework to cover the whole education sector in the country.

Keywords: Art education; Technology; E-learning; Traditional education

1.0 Introduction

According to the authors in [1], [2], the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is experiencing a good level of digitalization in the education sector. This status has been achieved owing to the government's great support. Incorporating e-learning into the education sector could result in several improvements and new opportunities. Most developed countries, e.g., the UK and the US, have been using this technology in their classrooms. It is a long-time synchrony is extensively used in teaching activities in these countries. As an instance of a well-globalized technology, the Internet has been widely adopted as a key source for knowledge acquisition. This technology helps people learn with freedom, almost without any time or stress limitation. Most countries in Europe and North America use such developments to improve the learning experience in their schools and universities; they have also extended it beyond classrooms.

The KSA is recognized in the Middle-east as the country with the highest rate of adopting new technologies in the education sector. In this country, colleges and institutions have seriously grown in recent years [3], [4] It should be noted that the recently-emerged pandemic, the COVID-19, has caused a great transformation in the global perception towards education and its accessibility. Social distance obliged by the pandemic has necessitated more convenient and simply-accessed forms of distance learning. The synchronous and conventional means of knowledge have a deep root in the educational system [5]–[7] making it difficult to overlook this system.

On the other hand, a phenomenon referred to as 'the computer age' has tremendously transformed different (almost all) sectors, and education has not been an exception. The methods for gaining access to educational content and relevant information are increasingly growing worldwide. Despite a surge in the number of educational materials

accessible, several countries have not yet placed themselves properly in this line to maximally use this opportunity. Several online methods have been introduced in this domain to properly gain access to such materials in electronic form; consequently, these materials could be preserved for an extremely long time, even as long as the civilization exists. The KSA is presently facing numerous requests from new students for being admitted into higher education institutes of this country, which accounts for more than 50% of the whole population under 20 [1], [8] This situation necessitates the provision of innovative educational technologies and deeper insights about how to set aside the traditional system dominating yet in this country.

Therefore, this study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to review and analyse the importance of art education and the role new technologies, specifically e-learning, play in this field in the KSA context. The results show that the country lacks a comprehensive educational framework to cover the whole education sector in the country.

The remaining parts of the paper are prepared as follow: Section 2 introduces the research methodology; Section 3 presents the results and discussion, and the conclusion of the paper is presented in Section 4.

2.0 Methodology

The current paper aims to highlight different methods proposed for the use of technology in art education. To this end, this study adopts the SLR method based on the guidelines provided in [9] (see Figure 1). The approach adopted follows a waterfall methodology involving six steps as follow:

- 1) Specifying the research questions;
- 2) Developing an appropriate review protocol;
- 3) Reviewing the literature with the use of this protocol aiming to determine relevant research;
- 4) Choosing suitable repositories;
- 5) Synthesizing the data collected;
- 6) Writing the findings obtained from the review.

Accordingly, the following research questions were set to guide the SLR process:

- a) What models have been proposed in the literature that can guide art education and the use of technology in this field in the context of KSA?
- b) What challenges (if any) are associated with conducting art education and the use of technology in this field?

To extract the pertinent articles, several searches were done on IEEE Xplore, Web of Science, Scopus, SpringerLink, and ACM Digital Library, with the following keywords: "Art education" OR ("Education" AND "E-Learning").

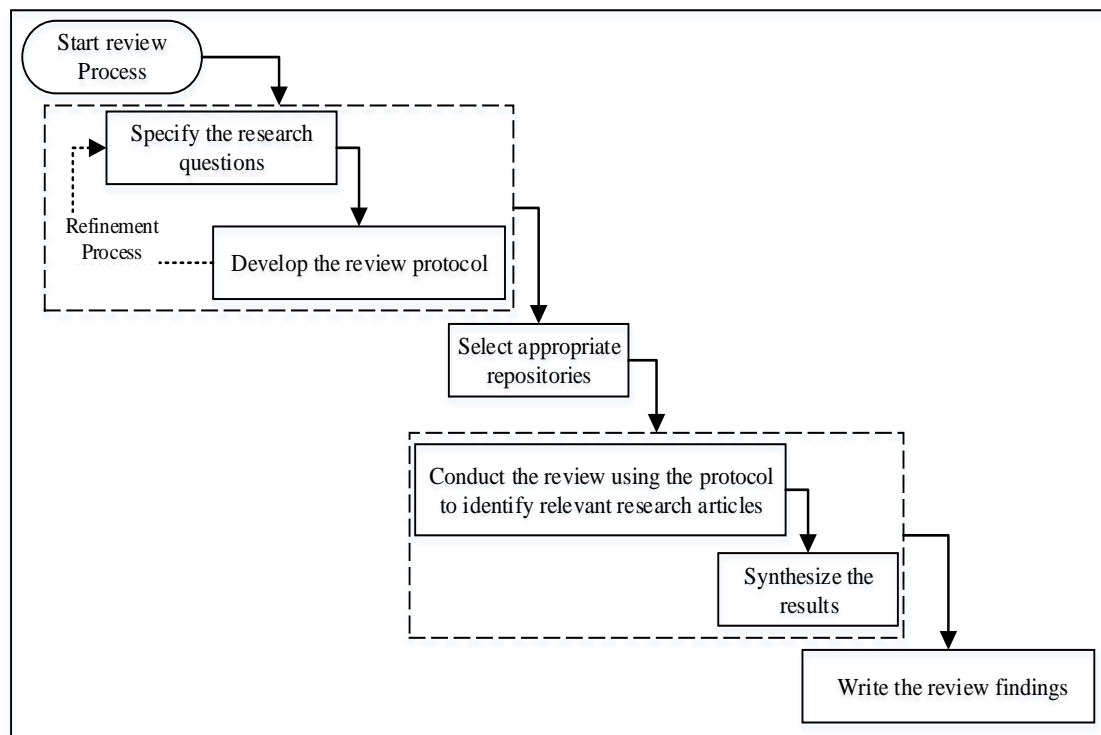


Fig1. Adopted review method [9]

The search performed for this study was limited to the articles published from 2000 to 2021 in relevant journals, conferences, dissertations, books, and book chapters. The articles in other sources were excluded since they were deemed unsuitable as an academic resource. Moreover, the references of relevant papers were searched in order to find more papers of interest. Therefore, Google Scholar was also used to locate other documents about the scope of the present research. Next, the results were analyzed to eliminate duplicated publications. After that, these remaining articles were reviewed by reading the abstracts, introductions, and conclusions to classify the articles as "related" or "non-related" to art education and technologies applied to this field. To end with, the papers were included in this research if they met one of the inclusion criteria presented below:

- The article was pertinent to art education and technology in this field.
- The article was concentrated on e-learning.

The articles that passed this filtration were reviewed to determine the strengths and

weaknesses of art education and the use of technologies in this field in the KSA.

Art Education and Technology in Saudi Arabia

Technology use in the 21st century has reached almost all aspects of life [10]. Technology use in school curricula helps to increase students' skills and abilities to a greater extent [11]. The use of technology in art classrooms promotes and complements knowledge learning and can ultimately lead to the development of the art learners' cognitive, creative, imaginative, and transferable abilities [12].

Therefore, the KSA was interested in developing technology and benefiting from it in the educational process to create various educational curricula. The authorities have shown great care for developing e-learning in the education sector of the country. The government has recently signed strategic agreements with Microsoft and public institutions in the KSA in order to pave the path towards development in this regard. The Saudi Ministry of Education signed an agreement, the largest of its kind with Microsoft, to implement

several programs and projects that contribute to the advancement of the educational process and benefit from the experiences of other nations in the field of education. The Ministry of Education has also studied and formulated a program to use Microsoft software licenses in schools and also the computers in that government department [13].

In [14], the authors maintained that although there is currently a technological revolution in the classrooms in the KSA, the educational program has a standard curriculum. Technology is indeed a driving force for education and self-awareness, and students are growing up and learning with various techniques, such as laptops, iPads, tablets, and mp3 players. The term "digital native" means that young people are more capable of using these new technologies than most adults. In this way, technology could increase the value of the entire educational system by affecting both students and academic programs. Thus, educators must work with these popular devices to establish connections between external interests and art classrooms to raise students' interest [14]. According to the researchers in [15], the world has felt the impact of technology on arts education, and computers can simplify experiences. Still, the importance of access to arts education as an evolving medium has not diminished, particularly through the perspective of art educators. Policymakers are starting to see the value of arts education and arts education experiences as something useful and important.

Moreover, in [14], it is indicated that the teachers could tackle various academic concerns using technology. Art teachers rely on pictures to communicate effectively on imagery; educators use book slides, videos, or reproductions and have their lesson and activity sets. Most educators use images, videos, and copies of texts, and they have their collections of classes or events. Since art teachers usually have limited budgets, they sometimes lack adequate visual assets. Technology is crucial in art classrooms to view certain photos and tools. Therefore, technology in art classrooms is imperative to access these images and resources and share them among all the students. Teachers should be granted flexibility in using technologies in their lessons. In addition, technology now offers teachers innovative ways to deal with different types of students and gives

them multiple means to assess students' comprehension. It also strengthens the relationship between teacher and student [14]. Thus, using technology in classrooms will enhance students' motivation, social interactions, positive outcomes, learning rate, and students' involvement in class and lessons.

The Importance of Art Education

The arts are the essential element of education; just like reading, writing, and arithmetic; music, dance, painting, and theatre are all keys that unlock profound human understanding and accomplishment [15], [16]. "The arts, in general, speak the language of all cultures, which is an advantage in our increasingly more interconnected modern world"[15]. The arts are an integral part of the development of each human being and human experience [17]–[19]. As maintained in [20], some studies have demonstrated that art education in schools can allow students to develop stronger values and motivational factors and improve academic success. Art education is important to the development of humanity and a nation's social and economic health [21], [22]. Due to the increased importance of arts education, involvement with arts education programs involves the creation of a global perspective on the arts and reviewing other countries' arts curricula and the link between these programs and students' achievement [20]. Many countries such as Sweden and Japan have restructured and embraced the arts education within their core curricula [23].

In addition, the authors in [15] stated that recently, due to observing a lack of critical and creative thinking skills in students, American public school systems have started to formulate their views of the art education in the core curriculum. In [24], the researchers stated that in the future, art education must rely on recognizing it as an essential element of the school curriculum and evaluating its effect on students' mental, motor, and artistic development. Moreover, according to the authors in [25], art education is a part of the human experience, and the students can explore the world from the art lens. They can express their opinions, thoughts, and emotions through art. In addition, they can connect with history, culture, and heritage and understand different

values between the skills and students. In a creative process, art education encourages thinking and enhances problem-solving skills to live in the current rapidly-changing world; art is considered one of the most important skills in the 21st century. The arts are linked to the brain's functions as art education leads to the development of neural systems that produce a wide range of fine motor skills, creativity, and balance [17], [26]. In [26], seven reasons have been presented to highlight the high importance of art education:

1. Art education is important for the development of imagination, exploration, and cultural and historical understanding; thus, teaching art to our children is important currently more than before.
2. Teaching arts strengthens students' thinking and problem-solving skills, which leads to the enhancement of educational achievement.
3. Art education develops the creative and imaginative skills of students.
4. Teaching art leads to achieving knowledge about different cultures.
5. Art education helps build motor and social skills.
6. Art education helps solve problems and think critically; thus, it offers one of the most important 21st-century skills, i.e., problem solving.

7. There are several non-academic skills in arts education, through which students are helped to build self-confidence, self-discipline, and responsibility, and respect others and appreciate different cultures and traditions.

In addition, art education helps to enhance students' creativity and innovation and creates new and diverse ideas, hence achieving creative thinking skills such as fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. In [25], it is stated that arts education allows students to express and interpret their passions and strengths. Additionally, the authors in [25], [27] mentioned that art education helps to improve aesthetic values, grow innovation and creativity, and increase engagement. Furthermore, the arts promote social skills, increasing people's awareness and respect and enhancing their perceptual and cognitive skills. In [28], the researchers studied more than 2000 children and found out that those in the arts programs were far better in creative thinking, self-conception, problem-solving, self-expression, risk-taking, and team-work skills than those who were not. Thus, the arts can engage everyone without gender, religion, ethnicity, language, geography, or socioeconomic barriers [27]. Table 1 presents the advantages of art education highlighted in existing studies.

Table 1. The importance of art education.

ID	Author	Advantages
1.	[21], [29]	Art education is important to the development of humanity and a nation's social and economic health.
2.	[28]	<p>Having studied more than 2000 children, the authors found out that those in the arts curriculum were far superior in creative thinking, self-concept, problem-solving, self-expression, risk-taking, and cooperation skills than those who were not; which shows that arts education enhances perceptual and cognitive skills of children.</p> <p>The arts promote social skills and understanding and sharing of culture.</p>
3.	[30]	Art education in any society is part of the general education of this society, and it plays an important role in preparing future generations. Art education contributes to forming the personality of the learners and emphasizing the sensory and emotional aspects and their abilities to imagine and increase

		their association with civilizational, national, and religious heritage.
4.	[31]	Art education is valuable for the positive affective, cognitive, cultural, personal, physical, and social consequences, which help learners cope with the demands of life and enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities.
5.	[25]	There was a significant difference between students' performance before and after developing the art education curriculum. This confirmed the importance of creating an art education curriculum in Sudanese educational institutions.
6.	[27]	Art education had an influential role in enhancing the aesthetic values of higher education students. It is beneficial in strengthening aesthetic values, increasing innovation and creativity, and improving commitment. The arts can engage everyone without any gender, religion, ethnicity, language, geography, or socioeconomic barriers.
7.	[17]	Arts education is an integral part of the development of each human being, and they are a part of the cultural heritage of every human being. The arts are what make us human, most complete as people. Education and engagement in the fine arts is an essential part of the school curriculum and an important component in the educational program of every student. The arts cannot be learned through occasional or random exposure.
8.	[32]	Art is an important component of elementary education. Including art in the elementary classroom has many positive benefits, including helping students develop intellectually, creating a better understanding of different perspectives and cultures, and improving their test scores.
9.	[33]	Arts in the classroom benefit both general education and special education students. The arts allow students of all ability levels to gain access to curriculums that may have been traditionally taught through written and spoken language. The skills have been shown to support students, allowing them to succeed academically and socially.

3.0 Results and Discussion

This study shows that the education sector in the KSA is suffering from several challenges and limitations as shown in Figure 2. This survey shows that the curriculum of Art Education in the KSA has suffered a lack of development over the last decades to be followed by the educational development plan in the country. Thus, the curriculum for art education needs to be improved to be useful for students. Studies showed that the Saudi public-school students lack the requisite creative thinking skills, as verified, and that Saudi teachers are not assisted.

Several studies have suggested an urgent need to rethink the role of creativity in current educational programs due to the increasing disparity between the reality of the classroom and the perceptions of students and others such as parents. Thus, more work is required to take creativity into account in schools of the KSA. Creativity is an important part of art education; thus, the artwork is seen as artistic output. The technical programs offered in schools are among the factors that lead to enhancing innovation and personal expression. Additionally, students lack the creative thinking skills required, and art

teachers and their performance in the classroom are currently the biggest barriers to the growth of creativity in students. Saudi teachers are not encouraged and motivated by the Ministry of Education to make any changes. Further, the inability of Saudi teachers to grow strongly and consistently leads to only moderate skills available in many fields. In addition, Saudi teachers' lack of good and frequent professional

development leads to their only modest skills in several areas. Therefore, the KSA lacks a comprehensive educational framework to cover the whole education sector in the country. This study suggests a highly abstract framework involving the whole education process, concepts, activities, and tasks to manage, organize, structure, and reuse the education knowledge among domain practitioners.

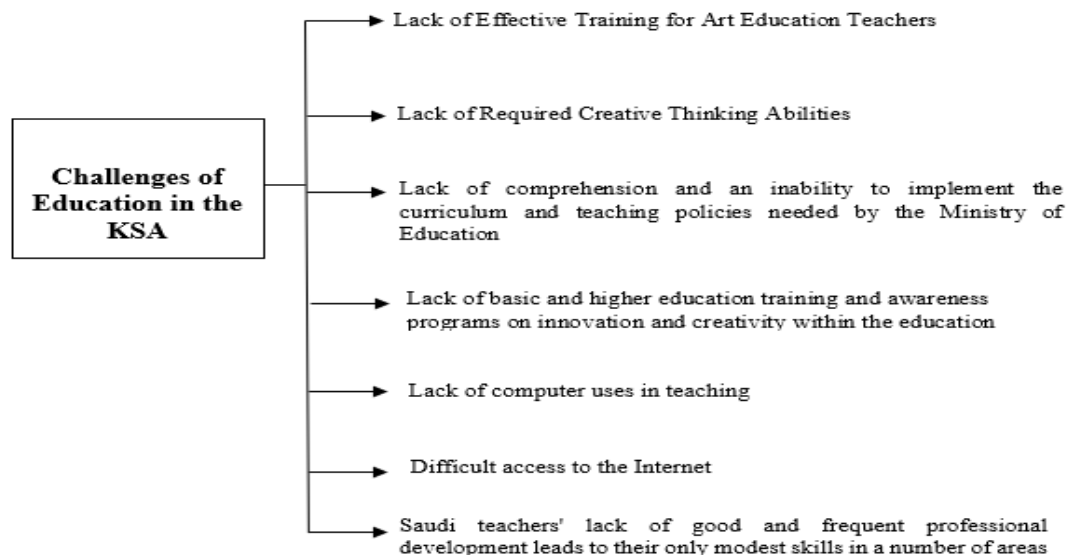


Figure 2. Challenges and limitations of the education sector in the KSA

4.0 Conclusion

This study reviewed the importance of improving art education in the KSA. Several studies have already discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the art education in the KSA. However, they addressed the education sector from specific perspectives. Therefore, this study was carried out to review and analyse the importance of learning art and the use of art education technologies in KSA using SLR. The results showed that KSA lacks a comprehensive educational framework to cover the whole education sector in the country.

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