

Original Paper

The Status of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and English Language in Jordan

Luqman Rababah^{1*}

¹ School of Arts, Jadara University, Irbid, Jordan

* Luqman Rababah, School of Arts, Jadara University, Irbid, Jordan

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Abstract

Jordan's educational system is now based around the concepts of freedom, justice, and human and economic development in order to achieve a high level of productivity and progress. Jordan is one of the developing countries that are consistently attempting to align development with current global educational standards, as one of the Kingdom's top priorities. The Jordan Education Initiative (JEI) (2003), Education Reform for Knowledge Economy (ERfKE) (2003), Connecting Jordanians' Initiative (2005), and English Interactive Online Initiative (EIOI) (2006), among others, have been initiated by the ministry. The Jordan Education Initiative (JEI) was established in the same year as the ERfKE project (2003). Jordan recently revised the learning results for all of its national school subject areas, outlining what content students should know and what skills they should learn at—grade level.

Keywords

English language, initiatives, education reforms, educational system, creativity, ICT

1. Introduction

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a small Middle Eastern country bordered by Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia and the Palestinian territory (World Bank, 2012). Jordan's society can be characterized as young because about 56.2% of the total population is less than 25-years old (WB, 2012). Jordan is not a very rich country in terms of natural resources such as oil and water, but the government has expended efforts over the years to enhance the educational and health standards of her people (Abuhmaid, 2010). As a result, Jordan is considered to be among the developing countries that are consistently trying to align development with current global educational standards, as the Kingdom's top priorities that include the promotion of teaching and learning process reveal. Since his ascension to the throne in 1999, King Abdullah II has attempted to keep Jordan up-to-date with global educational developments

(Abuhmaid, 2010).

2. Educational System in Jordan

The Jordanian educational system has had a long history dating back to the early 1920s. Today, the educational system in Jordan is based on the notions of freedom, justice, and human and economic development in an attempt to achieve a considerable degree of productivity and progress (Drbseh, 2013). The Jordanian educational system stresses the significance of lifelong learning experiences so that students meet present and future needs and stimulate sustained economic development through an educated population and social and economic development. Accordingly, the Jordanian education system encourages excellence, stresses learners' needs, allows universal access to educational opportunities, facilitates equality in the provision of services, promotes the use modern ICT tools, and offers the best teaching and learning strategies and methods to promote student success (MoE, 2010).

In its effort to enhance the educational system, Jordan has an overall educational strategy that was promulgated in 2006 following deliberations about developing human resources for Jordan's future and in accordance with the directives of King Abdullah II. The strategic objectives were to be achieved in accordance with the general philosophy, goals, and policies of the *Education Act No. 3* of 1994, which was a fundamental part of the new strategy issued in 2006. Areas targeted for concern in the 2006 strategic plan included: vision and mission; governance, management, and leadership; the learner; curriculum and assessment; support for learning in school; the learning environment; fiscal reliability and accountability; partnership and linkages (Toukan, Alnoaimi, & Odibat, 2006).

The educational leaders in Jordan have used this strategy to help achieve Jordan's objectives in organizing the programs and practices of teaching and learning to generate skilful students and citizens who can contribute to a Knowledge Economy (Toukan et al., 2006). Presently, Jordan has an educational system in which the primary objective is the development of the human resources of its citizens, as Jordan believes that the strength of human resources is important to the country's framework. Currently, more than 33% of the population of Jordan is using educational facilities and Jordan's literacy is top-ranked in the Arab region (WB, 2012).

Before Jordan's independence in 1946, education was only accessible to the well off. But by the 1950s, Jordan had begun advocating *Education for All*, which Knowledge Act No. 20 supported by making education compulsory for all children until the 6th Grade (Abuhmaid, 2010). Education Act No. 20 was passed in 1964, making education compulsory up until the 9th Grade. Today, basic education has become mandatory for children in ages ranging from 6 to 16 (Abuhmaid, 2010).

Currently, the basic educational system of Jordan comprises a twelve-year program with kindergarten catering to public as well as private students (see Figure 1). The general cycle encompasses 1st to 10th grades and is free and mandatory for all Jordanian citizens. After the 10th grade, two streams for 11 to 12 grades are offered: 1) academic secondary education and vocational secondary education. .More

often than not selection of a particular stream depends on the student's wishes, although the final decision is with the Jordanian Ministry of Education (JMoE). Depending upon the track, four-year universities and two-year community colleges are at the apex of the system.

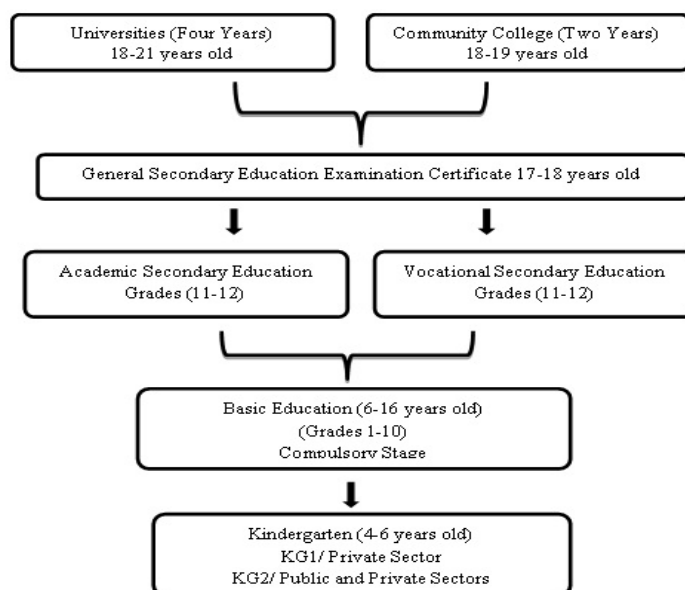


Figure 1. Jordanian Education System

Note: Source for figure (MoE, 2006a).

The secondary cycle is for two years and is divided into two categories: academic secondary education and vocational secondary education. The academic secondary education track offers a comprehensive secondary education stream that culminates with a general secondary education certificate (GSEC) (Tawjihi). The stream comprises common curriculum courses and optional specialized academic or vocational courses. Students are required to study nine subjects in this level namely, Arabic, English, History, Jordanian Studies (including Citizenship), Geography, Chemistry, Biology, and Physics (MoE, 2006a). This academic stream produces university-qualified students.

The vocational secondary education track offers intensive vocational training and apprenticeship and eventually, the award of a certificate referred to as the Vocational Secondary Certificate. The Vocational Training Corporation, under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour/Technical and Vocational Education and Training Higher Council (Tahaine, 2009), offers this stream of education. The vocational/technical track qualifies students for enrolment into community colleges or universities or the job market, with the provision that they obtain passing grades in two additional subjects.

The JMoE has established a basic framework using development criteria and specific indicators. The framework looks at developmental levels of students, in categories including creativity and innovation, English language skills and social, lingual and mental educational aspects (MoE, 2006b; MoE, 2008). The JMoE has included life skills in its educational projects to enhance educational quality by

concentrating on the development of the student's psychological and social skills, the reinforcement of his/her health, emotional thinking, and higher-order thinking. This will ensure that students possess the capabilities to be active and productive society members and to tackle their personal issues (MoE, 2008). The JMoE's objective is to facilitate a learning opportunity for Jordan's youth and develop skills (communication and teamwork, scientific thinking, personal technology, career planning, and scientific research skills) of her citizens that are required for a knowledge-based economy.

3. Educational Initiatives in Jordan

Many initiatives have been launched in Jordan. For instance, MOICT introduced the Connecting Jordanians Initiative (CJI) (2003), which led to the establishment of the Jordan Information Technology Community Centres (JITCC) (Mubaslat, 2012). MOICT also introduced the E-government initiative in 2000 to train 20,000 government employees throughout the Kingdom in order to produce ICT-literate individuals (McConnell International, 2002) as well as the national ICT research and development strategy in 2006 to become an ICT leader in the region from 2007-2009 (Ministry of Information and Communications Technology, 2006).

Accordingly, the JMoE initiated the preparation of a new curricula wherein ICT was integrated for English and Arabic subjects for the year 2002-2003 (MoE, 2006a). The expectation was that by 2008, all subjects in the public schools would be digitized with multi-media contents to be utilized by all schools (MoE, 2006a). The JMoE attempted to create content so that this content enrich the core subjects of the curriculum including math, science, Arabic, English and ICT. This content is electronically generated through the Edu-Wave portal (a local portal open to students, teachers, parents and educators) that students as well as teachers use (MoICT, 2006).

To serve the human resources development and training aspects, the JMoE created ICT training packages for teachers and Jordanian citizens. The ministry has approximately 22 well-designed and equipped computer labs for training throughout the Kingdom, from where the International Computer Driving License (ICDL) can be obtained. Teachers are provided free services in these labs and towards the end of 2006, almost all teachers working in public schools have become ICDL certified (MoE, 2008). The JMoE also enables teachers to immerse themselves in high diploma programs in Information and Communication Technology in Education (ICTE) at Jordanian universities under the auspices of the JMoE. The JMoE has succeeded in training more than 33,000 teachers for ICDL certificates, approximately 11,000 for international certificates, 5,000 for Intel program for future education, and 700 for Word Links and Network Management courses (MoE, 2008). By 2007, approximately 3,200 public schools and 75 Knowledge Stations were linked to the Internet. Knowledge stations have established across the country, and they succeeded in providing trainings to over 70,000 individuals since 2001 (MoE, 2008).

The JMoE also began introducing initiatives like the Jordan Education Initiative (JEI) (2003). JEI was established with the help of World Economic Forum (WEF) in order to take advantage of public-private partnership and in the hopes of improving the application of ICT in the 1st to 12th Grades in Jordanian schools. The JEI offers the following general objectives:

- 1) New methods to both learning and teaching;
- 2) Lifelong learning; and
- 3) ICT industry development.

Moreover, the JMoE also launched the English Interactive Online Initiative (EIOI) (2006), hoping to enhance student creativity and English language skills through ICT-rich environments (JEI, 2010). The JMoE launched several initiatives like ERfKE and the JEI to develop creativity student creativity. The JMoE believes that the introduction of these initiatives is a significant stage in enhancing the students' abilities in order to keep abreast of and tackle 21st-century challenges.

3.1 Educational Reform for the Knowledge Economy (ERfKE)

The JMoE introduced an ambitious large-scale educational reform under the Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy program (ERfKE) in 2003, which is the largest project the World Bank has ever funded (Development Coordination Unit (DCU), 2012). The ERfKE was established with the primary objective of generating an extensive shift of the educational system so that students become equipped with knowledge, skills and attitudes and competencies needed for a knowledge-based economy (DCU, 2012).

The ERfKE project, introduced to contribute significantly to ICT infrastructure investment, aims at developing the National Broadband Network (NBN) and at establishing one or more computer laboratories in schools. The JMoE launched the Jordan Education Initiative (JEI) to reinforce the ERfKE project in the same year (2003) that ERfKE was created. The JEI provides the ERfKE project with a suitable prototype model for discovering best practices and using lessons learned in the employment of ERfKE (McKinsey & Company, 2005)

ERfKE has four primary components (DCU, 2012). Component one reorients policy objectives and strategies of education through governance and administrative reforms. Component one comprises five sub-components, and they are: 1) a redefined vision and extensive integrated national education strategy, 2) revised governance, management, and mechanisms of decision making for facilitating an education system that generates basic skills, core emergencies and learning for a knowledge-based economy, 3) an Education Decision Support System (EDSS) for the efficient analysis of policies and system management and for the promotion of transparency, 4) extensive and coordinated education research, policy analysis and monitoring and evaluation of activities, and 5) effective management and efficient coordination of educational investments catered to reform. In addition, school-based innovations are also supported.

Component two works to transform education programs and practices for the creation of a knowledge economy. This component comprises three sub-components that include: 1) facilitating the development of a new curriculum and improved learning assessments, 2) reinforcing professional development of Ministry of Education personnel, and 3) offering needed resources for effective learning.

Component three works to guarantee the sufficient provision of structurally safe school infrastructures and an environment conducive to learning. Its two sub-components are: 1) the replacement of unsafe and overcrowded schools and 2) upgrading of existing schools to reinforce learning through provision of computer and science laboratories.

Component four caters to the promotion of readiness for learning through early education and to the enhancement of equity in low-income areas by providing kindergarten education for 5-year olds. Its sub-components include: 1) improving institutional capacity for Early Childhood Education (ECE), 2) creating a cadre of ECE instructors, 3) maximizing access to kindergartens for the under-privileged, and 4) encouraging the participation and partnership of both parent and community through public awareness and understanding.

3.2 Jordan Education Initiative (JEI)

The Jordan Education Initiative (JEI) was established in 2003, the same year the ERfKE project was created. The JEI accelerates ERfKE by focusing on Discovery Schools (DSs) performance prior to rolling out ideas and programs nationally under the ERfKE project. The JEI offers the ERfKE with a prototype model to help discover best practices and used lessons learned in the ERfKE implementation (DCU, 2012). The JEI also enables IT and telecom industries leaders to come together with Jordanian authorities to work towards improving education in the country and facilitates a supportive environment enabling every student to achieve his/her purpose through a process of self-discovery, experiential learning and self-determination. Among the many successful JEI projects is the Discovery Schools (DSs) project (JEI, 2010).

3.2.1 Discovery Schools (DSs)

Discovery Schools (DSs) comprises one hundred schools located in Amman. A total of 2,300 teachers in DSs instruct 50,000 students enrolled in these schools. The schools have a long history characterized by reform projects and initiatives. DSs offer ideal conditions for ICT integration showcasing the best practices for other schools to benchmark (JEI, 2010; Selinger, 2010). The JEI has chosen DSs to be the leader of the scheme as they are in a suitable position to demonstrate the way in which ICT can be utilized and to benefit schools and students. The DSs have an appropriate ICT infrastructure, hardware and software, technical support and training compared to non-Discovery Schools (JEI, 2010; Selinger, 2010). DSs are equipped with ICT infrastructure that can offer ways of attracting and directing ongoing educational innovation. DSs provide laptops, data show projectors, wireless access points for classrooms, conduct upgrades of computer labs and lab technicians. Moreover, ICT also helps in

revising the instructional methods and the curricula.

In this regard, the JEI assisted in the adoption of English Interactive Online Initiative (EIOI) in the hopes of developing a dynamic, interactive, EFL course for grades 7 to 12. This initiative is responsible for the implementation of classroom technology projects and e-curricula development in partnership with its private counterpart (JEI, 2010). The JEI has piloted two ICT models for the delivery and use of the e-content, computer labs, portable laptop computers and projectors issued to teachers for use in classrooms (EDC, 2008). In each discovery school there are at least two labs; these are connected under the National Broadband Network. In classrooms using e-content wireless access points and projectors are available. Computer labs are reconfigured as classrooms of about 50 m² each with around 20 workstations per lab. In the Discovery Schools laboratories the desktop computers are relatively new and well-maintained; cooperation exists between the JEI and the JMOE in providing Discovery Schools with e-Learning infrastructure and other resources (EDC, 2008).

Although these e-Learning resources are provided to all schools in the Kingdom besides the Discovery schools, the JEI provides additional resources. The JEI uses two basic e-Learning tools. Most DSs have been provided with multiple computer labs. The JEI provided the teachers with laptops and data show to use in the classroom.

Furthermore, the JEI actively looks into areas of innovation and attempts to develop new international and local partnership and new projects scopes. The outcome of the Jordan Education Initiatives experience with the partners and technology has resulted in an extensive model of education based on technology use (software and hardware), training and change management. The JEI partnered with the Madrasati Initiative (an initiative launched to repair and restore schools for safer, brighter, better equipped learning environment lead by Queen Rania in collaboration with the Ministry of Education), replicated its model beyond the DSs and extended it to other public schools throughout the country. The JEI has also collaborated with global and local partners in raising funds, in cash and in kind, to employ the JEI model in as many public schools as possible (JEI, 2010; Selinger, 2010).

The JEI has four primary aims in its attempt to achieve such projects that are to:

- Improve the education delivery to Jordanian citizens through public-private partnership;
- Unleash innovation of teachers as well as students by encouraging effective ICT use;
- Build the local information technology industry's capacity; and
- Create a reform model that can be benchmarked by other countries.

3.2.2 EFL and Educational Programs in the DSs

Jordan has developed various educational reforms aimed at improving the teaching of EFL. In Jordan, Educational Reform Plan (ERP), Phase III, 2000-2005 has impacted the formal education of English language. Through this reform plan, teaching English language now is mandatory in Jordanian public schools from Grade 1 until the students take the school leaving Exam/GSCE (Tawjihi). On average students study English for 5 to 6 periods weekly and complete 12 consecutive years of studying English

prior to enrolling in the freshman year in the institutions of higher education (Al-Jamal, 2007; Tahaine, 2009). According to (Al-Jamal, 2007), in Jordan the English language is taught as an educational and communicational tool which promotes the relationships between the Jordanian people and the world's citizens. Learning English is crucial for the economy, education, and the development of the nation. English language teaching is a dynamic business in Jordan and conducted on a large scale in the Kingdom owing to its obvious significance to education.

The focus of the ERP (2000-2005) is on the English language as a foreign language needed for the development and modernization. ERP considers the language to be a crucial means of promoting relationships, assimilating with other cultures, understanding and co-operating between the Kingdom and other nations. English knowledge by a sizable portion of the population is deemed critical to the economic, educational and technological development of the country. In the national context, English in Jordan is the key to scientific and technological interaction between Jordan and other nations, and the gateway guaranteeing a place in the world globalization that all nations desire to obtain (Zughoul, 2003).

Educational reforms in Jordan provide critical support to the country's objective of achieving modernization and helping the future generations keep abreast of the challenge of globalization (Zughoul, 2003). Local as well as international sponsors reinforce these reforms. For instance, the Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) in the United States granted the Cisco Learning Institute (CLI) \$2.9 million to generate and deliver English language education in Jordan (Samak, 2006). According to the U.S. Department of State, the award reflects the continuous investment of the United States in Jordan's educational development (Shorofat, 2007). The CLI is responsible for developing and employing an interactive EFL curriculum wherein the JMOE provided a cost-effective, measurable, and curriculum-led learning program to an extensive number of students, teachers and schools. This curriculum is also integrated into an e-learning format by the Jordanian students and teachers from 7th to 12th Grade (Samak & Tawfik, 2006).

In short, the JMoE stressed the use of English language in the educational context and made great efforts in making English a mandatory course. Consequently, the JMoE met its educational goals to make English language compulsory for grades 1 to 4 in all public schools. Currently, English is introduced as a compulsory subject in Jordan as early as 1st grade (age 6) and taught until 12th Grade (Tawjihi, age 18) (Tahaine, 2009).

Since its inception twelve years ago, the JEI has accomplished several important developments geared towards fulfilling its key role as the integrator of technology to bring about quality teaching and learning and effective management of DSs. The JEI succeeded in providing DSs with educational programs, ICT infrastructure, hardware and software, technical support, teaching aids, and training programs that go beyond non-Discovery Schools (JEI, 2010).

Details of these developments are discussed below.

- *Rosetta Stone* is educational software for English language learners piloted by the JEI in DSs. This interactive software assists learners in improving their English language skills. The JEI has employed Rosetta Stone using two different models namely, an online model through the Internet and a network model.
- *One-to-One Learning* was installed by the JEI because they were aware of the significance and growing relevance of the One-to-One Learning Programme. The programme equips DSs with portable computers to increase students' learning opportunities and personalise education. Through the One-to-One Learning project, the JEI attempts to engage the digital generation by urging individual learning experiences and facilitating a more interactive educational environment.
- *E-Blocks* resulted from collaboration between the JEI and Positivo Informatica in October 2010. Positivo Informatica is a Brazilian company that promises to improve students' language skills through the combination of multimedia software, multi-sensory panels and manipulative blocks focused on learning in an educational technological environment. The E-Blocks panel acknowledges the letter, symbol or picture of every block while the software allows the learner to know whether or not the answer is correct or there is a necessity to get rid of a cube prior to proceeding with the exercise.
- *English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Strategy* was piloted by the JEI in an attempt to develop effective techniques to use EFL in all DSs through novel educational strategies.
- Intel Classmate PCs was piloted by the JEI in two DSs with the help of two different models to allow personalized learning for students. This program was been launched by the JEI through two different models: an online model through the Internet and a network model. Those students taking computer-aided lessons in the Classmate PCs environment have more opportunities to work through the Internet using spreadsheets and editing papers using a computer compared to students working in the computer lab.
- Qualcomm is a more intensive version of *One-to-One Learning* and was launched in September 2010. This pilot model employed in DSs focuses on 3G technology. Students in DSs are provided with a notebook to use in schools, at home or wherever they go.
- *After School Programs* refer to programs that equip DSs with video conferencing program and connect high school students on a global level. The programs are a culmination of a successful collaboration between the JEI and the Centre for Global Education (CGE). The participating countries as of 2010 included Australia, Canada, Jordan, Macao, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan and the United States.
- Oracle Academy is an education initiative created for the development of modern technology skills and for the preparation for academic and career success in a 21st-century economy.
- Oracle-Think Quest is an online learning platform the Oracle Education Foundation (OEF) sponsors that assists student development of 21st-century skills, which include communication, high-order thinking, teamwork, cross-cultural understanding, language acquisition, self-direction and

technology skills. Oracle Think Quest was introduced in Discovery Schools in the form of a project environment supporting collaborative learning through technology competitions challenging students to tackle real-life problems, an award-winning Think Quest Library and professional development for teachers. As a part of its implementation, teachers from chosen schools were trained given the chance to participate in national contests.

- UCMAS, which is an acronym for Universal Concept of Mental Arithmetic System, refers to a sophisticated mental development program. Professor Dino Wong from Malaysia developed the program in 1993 in the hopes of capitalizing on the first 12 years of children's lives—the span of years during which 75% of brain development takes place. The programme attempts to improve the mental skills of the students in terms of concentration, observation, listening, imagination, visualization and memory. It also looks to improve accuracy and speed, encourages creativity, self-confidence, and academic achievement and develops significant abilities for mental arithmetic. The JEI organized training sessions catered for learners and teachers on the use of UCMAS.
- Innovative Schools Program collaborated with Microsoft for the Learning Initiative in 2009. The program has been employed in more than 100 countries all over the globe and aims to assist schools to make relevant and effective education. The JEI attempts to expand the Microsoft Innovative Schools Program both nationally and internationally. The program also provides orientation sessions to schools for local and regional schools to help them successfully apply the program and to employ them as pathfinder schools. The orientation is provided to seven Discovery Schools, Madrasati, and Non-Discovery Schools.
- Smart Interactive White boards were installed by the JEI in the DSs in 2009. To motivate teachers to use IWBs effectively, the JEI proclaimed a local competition for teachers to devise a lesson plan through Promethean Interactive Whiteboards. The teachers were told to upload lessons on the Promethean planet through its software and tools. Specific criteria were established to select the ideal lessons that are creative, innovative and interactive.
- Nivio was also a partner of the JEI in the latter's attempt to develop an interactive learning environment and to enable students to smoothly access desktop data, applications and e-contents whenever and wherever they are. Nivio is an Indian company that produces educational PCs and has donated 20 Cloud PCs and 250 of its accounts to be piloted in four DSs. The JEI trained students and teachers on the programs in early 2011.
- Navigator was created by the Tribal Group to be an assessment tool providing schools with a report that shows their status, strengths and challenges. This report allows them to create an improvement plan (JEI).
- School Improvement Program is referred to as a professional development program focusing on the 21st-century learning and teaching. The program was developed for the teachers to be able to develop a learning environment conducive to the acquisition of 21st-century skills. The JEI stressed the

need to work with teachers and facilitate professional development opportunities in 2006/2007. Accordingly, the JEI offers the following types of learning in the modules: collaborative learning, training on strategies of ICT integration in classrooms, critical thinking, and efficient use of e-resources for research, project-based learning and using social networks for education.

- Change Management Program, in the form of Towards New School Attitudes (TNSA), is a program that encourages the development of student leadership qualities in the school environment and enables the evolution of the teacher-administrator-students relationship into one of a partnership. This precipitates seizing of available opportunities and resources and the handling of existing and future challenges. Through a robust working environment, the TNSA brings about leadership among administrators, teachers and students empowering them as partners. TNSA also helps them realize the school's vision by leveraging their abilities to determine their weaknesses and strengths and to cooperate in clarifying the school plan within the provided vision and mission. The TNSA stresses three primary elements namely, creating new attitude towards the process of change, providing the necessary tools to bring about the change process, and building on the process and developing it.

3.2.3 English language teaching and creativity in Jordan and DSs

The JMoE has adopted new policies to meet Jordanians needs to develop their abilities to communicate in English. During 1960s and 1970s, EFL instruction in Jordan was dominated by traditional approaches until it has been shifted toward the Communicative Approach in the mid of the 1980s (Kailani, 1995). In the context in which most commonly instructional pedagogies currently used is communicative language teaching (Al-Jamal, 2007), Jordan has recently developed complete sets of updated curriculum outcomes for all its national school subject areas specifying what content students need to know and what skills should be developed at each grade level.

The general policies that decision-makers and educationalists have adopted have been a considerable force in spreading English across the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Jordan has always an open country, and foreign language instruction has always been a necessary part of the schools and university syllabuses. Language departments have always existed in Jordanian universities and course designers, trainers, supervisors, assessors, who are language policy makers, have been allocated a sizeable role in educating students. Policy makers in Jordan have certainly realized that Arabic alone; they know that English is the key to communication in a very tangible sense could not achieve communication between Jordan and rest of the world. As no law has specifying a second or foreign language use, this void has left the door open to the spread of English (Drbseh, 2013).

Overall, Jordanian government policies are extremely influential in furthering the spread of English in the country. The fact that English has connotations greater than being simply the language of one specific state helps the process. More specifically, the policy in language planning encourages the use of English as a language of wider communication. This trend is publically supported and results in an increase of exposure to English.

English is thought of as an educational and instrumental language in Jordan. It is a means of promoting relations, understanding and cooperation between Jordan and the rest of the world. It is essential to the economy, education and development of the country (Zughoul, 2003). As a result, the JMoE has put great emphasis on teaching English in Jordanian schools. Teacher's books in the secondary cycle clearly state that English is a necessary tool for the country's economic and educational technological development.

According to the Official Ministry of Education Syllabus of English language, a student's needs should be satisfied judiciously. Among these needs is the ability to communicate orally, to read analytically and to write coherently in English. Thus writing skills have been granted much respect and emphasis. This is because of writing's relevance and value in both the academic and vocational fields (MoE, 2006a). This emphasis on writing skills came as the result of a recent approach to language teaching, which views language as a form of human communication, that a good number of educationists and methodologists support (Al-Gomoul, 2011).

The value and significance of English writing skills coupled with attempts to inspire creativity are evident in both Jordanian academic and vocational fields (MoE, 2002). Creativity and English language skills, specifically writing skills are believed to be interrelated subjects. English language and creativity are closely interconnected (Tse & Shum, 2000). Writing skills are deemed to be a thinking mechanism for developing both language and creativity and for the extension of learning in all fields (Lennart Bjork & Brc, 2003). English writing is also an important gateway for thinking and is often linked with creativity (French, 1992). The study of English offers a way for the instructor to develop and maintain students' creativity as English requires mental effort to create sentences and join them to provide meaningful and communicative ideas (Al-Haq & Al-Sobh, 2010 & Majid et al., 2003).

The JMoE has attempted to develop the EFL writing skills of students in general and their creativity in particular in both DSs and non-DSs schools (Ibnian, 2010). For instance, the National Agenda of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2006) suggested the creation of a curriculum based on thinking skills development, creativity and problems solving to enhance educational process outcomes in Jordan (MoE, 2006b). Also, the JMoE has greatly stressed teaching English in Jordanian schools, a fact that is clearly stated in teacher's books in the secondary cycle. The statement reads that English is a crucial tool for the development of the country's education and technology (Al-Gomoul, 2011). Moreover, the Official Ministry of Education Syllabus of English language states that student's needs to communicate orally, to read analytically and to write clearly in English language should be judiciously met. Al-Gomoul (2011) added that indicated the significance of English language skills in Jordanian schools.

Furthermore, the JMoE clearly stated that by secondary school, students should be able to write three well-developed paragraphs on a general interest topic, write three well-developed paragraphs clarifying with a clarified concept and write a story including problem and solution. Additionally, students must

be proficient in writing grammatically accurate passages, with correct punctuation and organization (Rababah, 2003). In other words, all Jordanian secondary school students are expected to develop near-to-native English skills, which will allow their communication over an extensive range of topics to be effective and confident (Rababah, 2003). Similarly, Ibnian (2010) noted that the JMoE attempts to develop students EFL writing skills in general and their writing creativity in particular. Specifically, the National Agenda of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2006) proposed the creation of a national curriculum developed on the basis of developing thinking skills, creativity and problem solving to improve educational process outcomes.

Hence, the JMoE established some initiatives to improve the creativity and English language skills of public schools students including DSs students (JEI, 2010; JEI, 2009). Some of these initiatives are: JEI, 2003, ERfKE, 2003, CJI 2005 and EIOI, 2006. The JMoE is convinced that the introduction of these initiatives represents a significant step towards enhancing the abilities of students to keep abreast of 21st-century challenges. Moreover, the JMoE considers encouraging students' creativity to be at the top of the list of priorities (Ibnian, 2010). In addition, the JMoE is always exerting efforts to match Jordan with the 21st-century's educational developments, which is clear from their educational reform initiatives (JEI, 2010).

As previously mentioned, the JEI is an initiative introduced in 2003 to encourage and improve the creativity and English language skills of the students (JEI, 2010). Many practices the JEI and the ERfKE has encouraged are student-centred activities. Until teachers are knowledgeable of and comfortable with these pedagogical approaches, they will be unable to use them frequently and effectively in their classrooms. At the core of student-centred approaches is the belief that learning is most meaningful to the students when they are actively engaged in creating, understanding, and connecting to knowledge. In a student-centred environment, students are allowed to explore, experiment, and discover. The students are not just memorizing information, but are expected to work with and use the information alone and or with peers. The JEI has chosen DSs to lead the scheme as they are in a suitable position to utilize new ICT systems for the benefit of schools and students. The DSs have an appropriate ICT infrastructure, hardware and software, technical support and training compared to non-Discovery Schools (JEI, 2010). DSs are equipped with good infrastructure that offers ways of attracting and directing ongoing educational innovation and creativity.

In DSs, the JEI supports the emergence of more active, learner-centred teaching approaches. The JEI assisted in the adoption of EIOI in the hopes of developing a dynamic, interactive, EFL course for grades 7 to 12. This initiative is responsible for the implementation of classroom technology projects and e-curricula development in partnership with its private counterparts (JEI, 2010). Furthermore, the JEI has actively looked into areas of innovation and attempts to develop new international and local partnership and new projects scopes.

The EIOI program incorporates pedagogical approaches that deliver a constructive, collaborative learning program in which participants achieve a high level of EFL fluency and communicative competence in real-world situations with an emphasis on communicative and productive skills. A primary goal of the program is to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of students learning as well as their motivation to become lifelong learners. The program is designed for teachers to use in their daily lessons with students in the classroom, as well as by students through exercises carried out in groups and through periodic self-learning in school lab settings. The program exposes students to new ways of learning English and provides teachers with new strategies and techniques to teaching English language with creativity. The EIOI program assets include comprehensive teaching resources covering four critical language learning skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing (Mubaslat, 2012).

Nevertheless, developing creativity and English teaching and learning tend is a topic to big for one single study. The focus herein, therefore, was on methods of classroom instruction in the formal educational system at the secondary level as seen by the selected groups of students and teachers from DSs.

4. Conclusion

The JMoE has launched several initiatives like ERfKE and the JEI to promote the development of creativity within students' minds. The JMoE believes that the introduction of these initiatives is a significant stage in enhancing the students' abilities to keep abreast of and tackle 21st-century challenges. One JEI project is DSs. The schools have a long history characterized by reform projects and initiatives. DSs offer ideal conditions for ICT integration that showcases the best practices for other schools to benchmark (JEI, 2010). The JEI has chosen DSs to lead the scheme as they are in a suitable position to present the ways in which ICT can allow new systems to be utilized and to benefit schools and students. DSs are equipped with good infrastructure that offers ways of attracting and directing ongoing educational innovation and creativity.

The most commonly instructional pedagogy currently used in Jordan is communicative language teaching (Al-Jamal, 2007). However, Jordan has recently developed complete sets of updated curriculum outcomes for all its national school subject areas specifying the content students need to know and the skills necessary at each grade level. The JMoE has attempted to develop the EFL writing skills of students in general and their creativity in particular in DSs and non-DSs schools alike (Ibnian, 2010). For instance, the National Agenda of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2006) has suggested creating a curriculum based on thinking skills development, creativity and problems solving to enhance educational process outcomes. The JEI piloted the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Strategy in an attempt to develop effective techniques for EFL instruction in all DSs through novel educational strategies. In sum, the JMoE established initiatives to improve creativity and English language skills of

public schools students (JEI, 2010; JEI, 2009). Some of these initiatives are: JEI, 2003, ERfKE, 2003, CJI 2005 and EIOI, 2006. The JMoE is convinced that introducing these initiatives represents a significant step in enhancing the abilities of students so that they can keep abreast of 21st-century challenges.

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