

The Role of Effective Educational Curricula in Building Children's Personality at the Primary School Stage

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Abstract:

This study examines the role of effective educational curricula in shaping the child's personality at the primary stage, within the framework of investing in human capital in educational institutions. It aims to analyze the characteristics of effective curricula and their impact on the development of the child's cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions, in addition to exploring the teacher's role in activating these curricula.

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach by reviewing previous theoretical and applied studies relevant to the field, with a focus on Arab and international experiences. The findings indicate that effective curricula are not limited to the transmission of knowledge; rather, they encompass the holistic development of the child's personality and enhance psychological well-being and social adaptability. This makes investment in effective curricula a genuine investment in human capital from the primary stage.

The study concludes with several important recommendations, including the development of curricula to ensure comprehensiveness and flexibility, training teachers in modern teaching strategies, integrating values and life skills programs into the curriculum, and conducting periodic evaluations to ensure that curricula achieve their objectives in building the child's personality.

Keywords: Effective educational curricula – Child personality development – Primary stage – Investment in human capital – School education.

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Introduction:

Investment in human capital is considered one of the most important strategic orientations adopted by contemporary educational institutions, due to its fundamental role in achieving comprehensive and sustainable development. The child at the primary stage is viewed as the cornerstone of this investment, as the cognitive, psychological, and value-based foundations of their future personality are formed during this period. The primary school holds great importance as the structured educational framework that contributes to shaping the pupil's personality and guiding their social and academic behavior (Nashwati, 2010, p. 45).

Educational curricula occupy a central position within the educational system, as they provide the framework through which learning experiences are organized and delivered to learners. The curriculum is not limited to equipping the pupil with academic knowledge; rather, it aims to achieve integrated development encompassing intellectual, emotional, social, and value-based aspects. Tyler

(1949, pp. 3–5) emphasizes that the effectiveness of a curriculum is measured by its ability to achieve comprehensive educational objectives that contribute to building the learner’s personality, not merely improving academic achievement.

In this context, UNESCO reports indicate that effective educational curricula contribute directly to the development of the learner’s personality and the enhancement of their psychological health and well-being, through the integration of human values and life skills within educational content and school activities (UNESCO IITE, 2016, pp. 7–9). Accordingly, attention to the effectiveness of curricula at the primary stage represents an early investment in human capital, aiming to prepare a well-balanced learner capable of positive adaptation and active participation in society.

Research Problem:

Educational institutions face an ongoing challenge in achieving optimal investment in human capital (the pupil), particularly at the primary stage, where the foundations of the child’s personality are established and their cognitive, emotional, and social capacities are formed (Nashwati, 2010, p. 45). In this context, the importance of educational curricula emerges as a strategic tool for achieving this investment, as their role extends beyond knowledge transmission to include the development of the pupil’s psychological, social, and value-based dimensions (Tyler, 1949, pp. 3–5).

Despite this central role, UNESCO reports indicate that many educational institutions still face difficulties in implementing effective curricula in a way that achieves the holistic development of the child’s personality, enhances psychological well-being, and enables positive adaptation to the school and social environment (UNESCO IITE, 2016, pp. 7–9).

Accordingly, the following questions arise, forming the research problem of this study:

To what extent do effective educational curricula contribute to building the child’s personality at the primary stage?

What are the fundamental characteristics of educational curricula that make them effective tools in developing the pupil’s cognitive, emotional, and social aspects?

How can the curriculum enhance investment in human capital in the long term in alignment with the objectives of modern educational institutions?

Objectives of the Study:

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

To identify the role of effective educational curricula in building the child’s personality at the primary stage.

To analyze the key characteristics of effective curricula that contribute to the development of the pupil’s cognitive, emotional, and social aspects.

To explore how investment in human capital can be enhanced through curriculum development within educational institutions.

Significance of the Study:

This study derives its importance from the following:

It contributes to highlighting the relationship between educational curricula and the development of the child's personality, which is a central axis in human capital investment.

It provides an academic framework for educational policymakers and teachers on how to design and implement effective curricula at the primary stage.

It supports efforts aimed at developing educational programs that focus on the holistic growth of the pupil's personality, including cognitive, social, and emotional aspects.

Methodology of the Study:

This study adopts the descriptive-analytical approach through:

Describing the reality of educational curricula at the primary stage and their role in developing the child's personality.

Analyzing curriculum content according to standards of educational and value-based effectiveness.

Reviewing previous studies to present a comparative perspective on how curricula influence the learner's personality.

Concepts of the Study:

Effective Educational Curriculum: A structured educational framework aimed at achieving comprehensive educational objectives, focusing on the development of the pupil's cognitive, emotional, social, and pedagogical capacities (Tyler, 1949, pp. 3–5).

Child's Personality: A set of psychological, social, and value-based traits and capacities that develop in the child during the primary stage, shaping their behavior and interaction with their environment (Nashwati, 2010, p. 45).

Investment in Human Capital: A systematic process of developing the pupil's abilities and skills with the aim of preparing a balanced generation capable of contributing effectively to society (UNESCO IITE, 2016, p. 7).

Educational Effectiveness of Curricula: A measure of the curriculum's ability to achieve its educational and pedagogical objectives, including the development of critical thinking skills, social values, and positive emotional responses in the child (Tyler, 1949, pp. 4–5).

Holistic Development of the Child: A process in which the cognitive, emotional, social, and value-based dimensions of the child are integrated, enhancing their psychological and social balance through an effective school curriculum (UNESCO IITE, 2016, p. 8).

Previous Studies:

Arab Studies:

An analytical study derived from Mar'i and Al-Hilah (2009) aimed to analyze the components of the modern curriculum and its function in building the learner's personality. It adopted a theoretical educational analysis approach. The findings concluded that:

Modern curricula focus on competencies rather than knowledge alone.

There is a necessity for integration between cognitive, emotional, and social aspects.

Al-Otaibi's study (2019) examined the impact of interactive educational curricula on the development of students' social behavior. It adopted a descriptive-analytical approach (with the use of tools to measure social behavior) and aimed to reveal the role of interactive curricula in improving learners' social behavior. The study found that:

There is a positive relationship between the use of interactive curricula and the development of cooperation and communication skills.

A noticeable improvement in students' social behavior within the classroom.

The study by Ajissa and Zaaaf (2024) on the textbook and its role in reinforcing productive values in Algerian society aimed to analyze the role of educational content in instilling social and productive values. It adopted a content analysis approach. The findings concluded that:

Curricula contribute directly to reinforcing values such as work, responsibility, and belonging.

There is variation in the inclusion of values across different school subjects.

Western Studies:

A study derived from Tyler (1949) (applied framework) aimed to establish the foundations for curriculum design. It contributed to:

Identifying four fundamental elements of curricula (objectives – experiences – organization – evaluation).

Emphasizing the connection between objectives and the needs of both the learner and society (Tyler, 1949, pp. 3–5).

The UNESCO IITE study (2016) on the role of the educational environment and curricula in personality development and mental health aimed to analyze the impact of curricula and the school environment on psychological and social growth. It adopted an international analytical report approach. The findings indicated that:

Modern curricula enhance psychological well-being and emotional balance.

The importance of integrating life skills into curricula.

The Character Education Review (2020) study on the impact of moral education programs on students' personality and social skills aimed to evaluate the effect of value-based education programs within curricula on the learner's personality. It adopted a review methodology. The study concluded that:

There is a clear improvement in communication skills and social integration.

An increase in students' levels of responsibility and discipline (Character Education Review, 2020, pp. 12–15).

First: The Conceptual Framework of Effective Educational Curricula

1. The Concept of the Effective Educational Curriculum

Tyler (1949) defines the effective educational curriculum as an organized framework of learning experiences aimed at achieving comprehensive educational objectives that go beyond cognitive attainment to include the development of the child's personality in its cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. He emphasizes that curriculum design should be based on a comprehensive analysis of

the needs of both the learner and society, with clearly defined and measurable objectives, so that the school becomes an educational environment that supports early investment in human capital (Tyler, 1949, pp. 3–5).

2.Characteristics of Effective Educational Curricula:

Effective curricula are distinguished by several key characteristics that contribute to building the child's personality, most notably:

Comprehensiveness: Covering all aspects of the child's development (cognitive, emotional, social, and value-based).

Flexibility: The ability to adapt to differences in students' levels and their diverse needs.

Alignment between Objectives and Learning Activities: Ensuring that each educational experience achieves a specific objective contributing to personality development.

Capacity for Continuous Evaluation: Monitoring the extent to which objectives are achieved and adjusting the learning process according to evaluation outcomes.

3.Objectives of Effective Educational Curricula:

Effective educational curricula aim to build a well-rounded learner by developing cognitive, emotional, and social competencies. They focus on enhancing higher-order thinking skills and problem-solving abilities rather than mere rote learning (Mar'i & Al-Hilah, 2009, p. 45), through the following:

Developing Cognitive Abilities:

Modern curricula seek to move beyond memorization toward fostering higher-order thinking skills such as critical thinking, analysis, inference, and problem-solving. This is achieved through the adoption of active learning strategies (such as problem-based learning and cooperative learning), enabling the learner to apply knowledge in real-life situations, thereby enhancing intellectual independence and decision-making ability (Nashwati, 2010, p. 85).

Enhancing Emotional Aspects:

Promoting psychological and social balance through the development of values and positive interaction with society, as confirmed by recent studies on the role of curricula in reinforcing social values (Ajissa & Zaaaf, 2024, p. 630).

Effective curricula place great emphasis on the learner's mental health by fostering self-confidence, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and the ability to cope with academic and social pressures. A learner who is emotionally balanced is more ready to learn and better able to interact positively with their environment, which directly reflects on academic achievement and overall behavior (Hijazi, 2005, p. 112).

Developing Social and Value-Based Skills:

Curricula work to instill a system of social and human values such as respect for others, teamwork, tolerance, and responsibility. They also focus on developing effective communication skills and constructive conflict resolution, helping prepare an individual capable of positive integration into society and contributing to its cohesion (Abu Jado, 2007, p. 143).

In this context, modern curricula are based on the competency-based approach and lifelong learning, ensuring the preparation of a learner capable of adapting to contemporary changes and actively participating in development (National Curriculum Framework, 2024).

Preparing a Learner Capable of Lifelong Learning and Social Participation:

Effective curricula contribute to forming a learner equipped with self-learning, research, and independent thinking skills, enabling them to keep pace with rapid changes in knowledge and the labor market. They also foster initiative and active citizenship, making the learner a productive contributor to societal development, which reflects a genuine investment in human capital from the early stages of education (Al-Laqani & Al-Jamal, 2003, p. 56).

4.The Importance of Effective Educational Curricula in Personality Development:

Studies indicate that effective curricula represent a strategic tool for building the child's personality. They are not limited to knowledge transmission but also include the development of attitudes, values, and life skills that enhance the child's psychological and social well-being (Character Education Review, 2020, pp. 12–15).

Moreover, curricula that take educational effectiveness into account contribute to achieving balance between the cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of the child, thereby supporting early investment in human capital (UNESCO IITE, 2016, p. 8).

The Role of the Teacher in Activating Effective Educational Curricula:

The curriculum alone is not sufficient to achieve its objectives; rather, the teacher plays a fundamental role in activating its components through:

Guiding learning experiences in alignment with personality development objectives.

Promoting active learning and classroom participation.

Monitoring students' progress and providing continuous feedback to ensure the achievement of curriculum goals.

Second: The Concept of the Child's Personality at the Primary Stage

1.Definition of the Child's Personality:

Educational and psychological literature indicates that the child's personality represents an integrated and dynamic construct composed of a set of psychological traits (such as motivation and emotions), social traits (such as interaction and communication), cognitive traits (such as perception and thinking), and value-based traits (such as principles and attitudes). These develop gradually through continuous interaction between the child and their family and school environment (Nashwati, 2010, p. 45).

Personality is not considered a fixed entity; rather, it is in a constant state of growth and development, influenced by multiple factors such as upbringing methods, the nature of educational experiences, and the quality of relationships within the school. In this context, modern literature emphasizes that the school, through its curricula, plays a central role in guiding this formation, making the development of the child's personality at the primary stage a fundamental entry point for investment in human capital (UNESCO IITE, 2016).

2.Characteristics of Child Development at the Primary Stage:

The primary education stage is characterized by a set of developmental features that directly influence the formation of the child's personality, which can be detailed as follows:

Cognitive Development:

At this stage, the child experiences significant growth in mental abilities, transitioning from intuitive thinking to more organized and realistic thinking. The child becomes capable of understanding, classification, comparison, and solving simple problems, gradually preparing for the acquisition of critical thinking skills. Their ability to concentrate and pay attention also increases, enhancing the effectiveness of school learning.

Emotional Development:

The child begins to recognize and differentiate their emotions, with a growing ability to regulate and express them in a more balanced way. They also learn methods of adapting to various situations (such as success and failure) and gradually develop self-confidence, especially when they receive positive reinforcement within the school environment.

Social Development:

The child's social relationships expand, moving from reliance on the family to interaction with peers and teachers. Through these relationships, the child learns cooperation, respect for rules, teamwork, and conflict resolution, all of which contribute to building their social identity.

Moral and Value-Based Development:

The child begins to internalize social values and norms such as honesty, integrity, discipline, and respect for others. The school serves as a fundamental environment for reinforcing these values through curricula and educational activities, transforming them from abstract concepts into daily behavioral practices.

3. The Importance of the Primary Stage in Personality Formation:

The primary stage is considered one of the most critical and influential periods in shaping an individual's personality, as it forms the foundation upon which later stages are built. During this period, attitudes are formed, tendencies are shaped, and values become deeply rooted.

Ralph W. Tyler emphasizes that organized educational experiences at this stage have a direct impact on shaping the learner's behavior and attitudes (Tyler, 1949, pp. 4–5), as the nature of the objectives and experiences provided determines the characteristics of the emerging personality.

Modern studies also indicate that developing value-based and social dimensions within curricula contributes to preparing a child capable of positive interaction and social participation (Character Education Review, 2020). In the same context, UNESCO reports confirm that early attention to building the child's personality enhances mental health and overall well-being and reduces future behavioral problems (UNESCO IITE, 2016).

4. The Relationship Between the Child's Personality and Educational Curricula:

Educational curricula are among the most important factors influencing the formation of the child's personality. Their role extends beyond the transmission of knowledge to encompass the holistic development of the individual. Effective curricula:

Provide integrated learning experiences:

They consider the child's psychological and social needs and offer authentic learning situations that help the child discover themselves and develop their abilities.

Promote positive values and behaviors:

By embedding values within academic content and curricular and extracurricular activities, helping transform values into daily practices.

Develop thinking and interaction skills:

Through modern teaching strategies (such as cooperative learning and problem-solving), which support independence and build self-confidence.

Contribute to investment in human capital:

By preparing a psychologically balanced child capable of lifelong learning, adapting to contemporary changes, and actively contributing to society (Nashwati, 2010, p. 47).

Third: The Role of Effective Educational Curricula in Building the Child's Personality

1.The Role of the Curriculum in Developing the Cognitive Dimension:

Effective educational curricula constitute the structured framework through which the child's learning experiences are built, where content is selected and organized in a way that takes into account the characteristics of cognitive development at the primary stage. Rather than relying on memorization and rote learning, modern curricula focus on developing higher-order thinking skills such as critical thinking, analysis, inference, and problem-solving.

Moreover, presenting knowledge in applied contexts related to daily life makes learning meaningful and helps the child understand relationships between concepts rather than memorizing them in isolation. Educational studies indicate that pupils exposed to competency-based and interactive curricula achieve higher levels of deep understanding and conceptual comprehension compared to traditional learning, which positively reflects on their cognitive development and their ability for self-directed learning in the future.

2.The Role of the Curriculum in Developing the Emotional Dimension:

The role of the curriculum is not limited to the cognitive aspect; it extends to the emotional development of the child, which is a fundamental component in forming a balanced personality. Effective educational curricula include classroom and extracurricular activities that allow the child to express their feelings, understand their emotions, and manage them in a positive way.

These curricula also contribute to enhancing self-confidence by providing opportunities for gradual success, encouraging participation, and offering constructive feedback. In this context, UNESCO reports confirm that integrating life skills into curricula contributes to improving students' mental health and achieving emotional balance, which is reflected in their psychological stability inside and outside the school environment.

3.The Role of the Curriculum in Developing the Social and Value-Based Dimension:

The school is considered a micro-social environment, and the curriculum is the primary means of organizing interactions within it. Therefore, effective educational curricula work to develop social values in the child, such as cooperation, respect for others, discipline, and responsibility.

Interactive activities such as group work, classroom projects, and cooperative learning also contribute to developing communication and social interaction skills, helping the child achieve positive integration within the group. Al-Otaibi's study (2019, p. 34) indicates that interactive curricula have a direct impact on improving students' social behavior by enhancing cooperation, a sense of belonging, and reducing negative behaviors within the classroom.

4. The Role of the Teacher in Activating the Curriculum:

The teacher represents the essential link in transforming the curriculum from a theoretical document into an effective educational practice. The success of the curriculum depends not only on its content but also on how it is implemented in the classroom. The teacher acts as a guide, facilitator, and motivator by selecting appropriate teaching strategies, organizing activities, and considering individual differences among pupils.

The teacher also contributes to linking educational objectives with the child's real-life context, making learning more realistic and effective. Nashwati (2010, p. 47) emphasizes that a competent teacher is one who can integrate cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions into a single educational process, ensuring the development of a well-rounded learner.

5. The Overall Impact of Effective Curricula on Personality Development:

Contemporary educational literature shows that effective curricula are among the most important tools for building a child's integrated personality. They are not limited to knowledge transmission but also shape behavior, attitudes, and values. They contribute to developing thinking skills, reinforcing social values, and fostering independence in learning.

The Character Education Review (2020) also confirms that value-based education programs integrated into curricula lead to clear improvements in the learner's personality in terms of responsibility, discipline, and social interaction. Accordingly, developing curricula according to standards of educational effectiveness represents a direct investment in human capital, aiming to prepare a generation capable of adapting to change and engaging in lifelong learning.

Findings:

Based on the foregoing, it can be affirmed that effective educational curricula constitute a fundamental pillar in building the child's personality at the primary stage. Their role goes beyond the transmission of knowledge to contributing to the development of a balanced personality across cognitive, emotional, social, and value-based dimensions.

It is also evident that this development can only be achieved through the integration of curriculum components (content, activities, and assessment) with the role of the teacher and the educational environment. Therefore, investing in the development of effective educational curricula represents a strategic investment in human capital, aimed at preparing learners capable of continuous learning and active participation in society.

Conclusion:

This paper concludes that the effectiveness of educational curricula is the decisive factor in shaping the child's personality at the primary stage. Curricula that emphasize comprehensiveness,

flexibility, and continuous evaluation provide pupils with opportunities to develop their cognitive, emotional, and social skills in an integrated manner. Furthermore, the effective teacher plays a central role in activating these curricula and achieving their educational objectives. Accordingly, investing in the design and implementation of effective educational curricula represents a genuine investment in human capital from early childhood.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Develop primary educational curricula to ensure comprehensiveness and flexibility, and to integrate social values and life skills.

Train teachers in modern teaching strategies that enhance curriculum implementation and support the development of the child's holistic personality.

Incorporate value-based education and life skills programs into the school curriculum to ensure optimal investment in human capital.

Conduct periodic evaluations of curricula to measure their effectiveness in developing pupils' cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions.

Encourage continuous scientific research on the impact of educational curricula on personality development and human capital growth across different educational stages.

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