

**Points of similarity and difference between traditional and modern educational curricula,
and the extent to which their importance is utilized in the teaching and learning process**

Najat Abdellaoui

University of Saïda.

Nadjat.abdellaoui@univ-saida.dz

Fatiha Bennadja,

University of Tiaret

bennadjafa93@gmail.com

Received: 08/02/2026 Accepted: 04/05/2026 Published: 02/06/2026

Abstract

Educational curricula are among the basic elements of the educational process and constitute its principal core, because they represent an official pedagogical document issued by the Ministry of National Education to define the framework between the learner and the subject of study; in this way they provide learners with knowledge and experience.

Educational curricula also represent the basic instrument and medium among the parties to the teaching and learning process, namely the teacher, the learner, and the instructional material for which the two processes of teaching and learning are planned. They therefore carry considerable importance in the educational process and cannot be dispensed with in the educational field.

Keywords: educational curricula; teacher; learner; instructional material.

Introduction

Educational curricula are the means leading to study and to uncovering the reality of the cognitive sciences within the educational institution; they represent a set of contents and an educational situation that fall within a defined system and structure, which the teacher and the learner seek to achieve in the educational field.

From this starting point, the following research problem can be addressed: What is meant by educational curricula? What are the points of similarity and difference between traditional and

modern educational curricula? What are the most important elements on which educational curricula are based? How can educational curricula be utilized in the teaching and learning process?

In line with this framing, which points to a core issue contested by different fields of knowledge, this research paper offers a reading of the concepts and foundations that explains the study's terms, namely educational curricula and the most important elements that fall under them. It then turns to the difference between traditional and modern educational curricula, before focusing on the extent to which the importance of educational curricula is utilized in the two processes of teaching and learning.

1. Concept of the educational curriculum

The definitions of this term vary, and they are clarified as follows:

Traditional educational curricula:

The traditional educational curriculum is defined as "the body of information, facts, and concepts that the school works to impart to pupils in order to prepare them for life and to develop their abilities through acquaintance with the experiences of others and benefiting from them. This information, these facts, and these concepts are presented to learners from various domains, such as the scientific, the athletic, the linguistic, the geographical, the historical, the philosophical, the religious, and the artistic." ¹

It is also defined as "a set of educational experiences that the school provides to learners inside and outside the school, through organized educational study programmes, in order to help them achieve comprehensive, balanced development and to bring about desirable changes in their behaviour in accordance with the intended educational objectives." ²

The researcher Muḥammad al-Khawālida defines it as "a set of information, facts, concepts, principles, values, and theories presented to learners at a particular stage." ³

Within the traditional conception of curricula, the school textbook is considered the sole source of knowledge, while the method of teaching relies on rote instruction, imitation, and a single idea. The criterion of success in the educational process is the level of the ability to memorize and recall. The teacher, within the same framework, is the owner of knowledge, whereas the learner

¹ Ḥilmī Aḥmad al-Wakīl and Muḥammad Amīn al-Muftī, *Curricula: Concept, Elements, Foundations, Organization, Development (al-Manāḥij: al-maḥmūm, al-anāṣir, al-usus, al-tanzīmāt, al-taṭwīr)*, Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, Cairo, Egypt, 1999, p. 6.

² Ibrāhīm Muḥammad 'Aṭā, *Curricula between Authenticity and Modernity (al-Manāḥij bayna al-aṣāla wa-al-mu'āṣara)*, Egyptian Renaissance Bookshop (Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya), Cairo, Egypt, 2nd ed., 1999, p. 28. [trans.] The author's name appears in the source in three variant forms across the references (Ibrāhīm Muḥammad 'Aṭā, Amḥammad 'Aṭā, and Muḥammad 'Aṭā); these refer to a single author, given here consistently as Ibrāhīm Muḥammad 'Aṭā.

³ Muḥammad Maḥmūd Khawālida, *Foundations of Building Educational Curricula (Usus binā' al-manāḥij al-tarbawīyya)*, Dār al-Masīra for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, Jordan, 1st ed., 2004, p. 18.

is a recipient who retains the instructional material presented; this conception thereby excludes all the activities carried out by learners that satisfy their particular needs and inclinations.⁴

Accordingly, in the traditional conception, educational curricula are "a limited, systematic set of academic lessons, facts and knowledge, that must be delivered into the minds of learners in one field of study. Their aim is concern with the intellectual side in particular, and with memorization and recall alone. Their method is confined to transmitting information from the teacher to the learner through lecturing and rote instruction, without any positive engagement on the learner's part. Their content is a set of books and prescribed courses filled with theoretical facts and knowledge, with little attention given to classroom and extracurricular activities. Likewise, the process of evaluation aims to ascertain what has been memorized of the information by means of term and final examinations."⁵

On the basis of these conceptions relating to traditional curricula, it may be said that they are all the experiences the learner passes through inside and outside the field of study in order to achieve the comprehensive development of the learner's personality, because curricula are the courses of study that specialists in the educational field prepared, out of their conviction, to achieve educational objectives. They thus bring together the educational outcomes for which the school is responsible, through the realization of the available experiences, by focusing on the teacher and the learner and on what the learners themselves do within the teaching and learning process.

Concept of modern educational curricula:

Dr. Jawdat Aḥmad Sa'āda, in his book *The Contemporary School Curriculum*, defines the curriculum as "an educational plan that comprises elements made up of objectives, content, educational experiences, teaching, and evaluation, derived from philosophical, social, psychological, and cognitive foundations connected to the learner and the learner's society, and applied in educational situations inside and outside the school under supervision, with the aim of contributing to the integrated development of the learner's personality in its intellectual, emotional, and physical aspects, and of evaluating the extent to which all of this is achieved in the learner."⁶

It is also defined as "a subsystem of the system of education that comprises a set of elements reciprocally connected and functionally integrated, proceeding according to a comprehensive general plan, by means of which learners are provided with a set of educational opportunities

⁴ 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Hāshimī and Muḥsin 'Alī 'Aṭiyya, *Content Analysis of Arabic Language Curricula: A Theoretical and Applied View (Tahlīl muḥtawā manāhij al-luḡa al-'Arabiyya: ru'ya naẓariyya taṭbiqīyya)*, Dār al-Safā' for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, Jordan, 1st ed., 2009, p. 29.

⁵ Yahyā Bu'ayṭīsh et al., *Evaluating Teaching Methods in Secondary Education between Theory and Practice (Taḡwīm al-ṭarā'iq al-ta'līmiyya fī al-ta'līm al-thānawī bayna al-naẓariyya wa-al-taṭbiq)*, Mu'assasat al-Rajā' for Printing and Publishing, Languages and Translation Laboratory, Constantine, Algeria, 1st ed., 2014, p. 108.

⁶ Jawdat Aḥmad Sa'āda et al., *The Contemporary School Curriculum (al-Manhaj al-madrasī al-mu'āṣir)*, Dār al-Fikr for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, Jordan, 4th ed., 2011, p. 20.

capable of achieving the comprehensive and integrated development of the learner, which is the supreme aim and the most important purpose of the educational system." ⁷

‘Abd al-Rahmān Badawī defines the method by saying that it is "the path leading to the discovery of truth in the sciences by means of a set of general rules that govern the course of reason and determine its operations until it arrives at a known result." ⁸

It is also defined as "a plan for pedagogical work that is broader than the instructional course; it includes not only the courses of the subjects but also the aims of education, the activities of teaching and learning, and likewise the manner in which teaching and learning will be delivered. The curriculum is also defined through the following aspects:" ⁹

- ✓ A plan for the teaching and learning process that includes objectives, contents, activities, and the means of evaluation.
- ✓ A comprehensive concept that is not confined to the content of the subject of study but proceeds from objectives to determine the methods, activities, and means.
- ✓ A logical construction of the elements of content in the form of units, such that mastering one unit requires mastering the preceding units.
- ✓ An organization of a set of elements and components in a way that makes it possible to reach the desired ends and aims of the act of teaching and learning.

Accordingly, the term "educational programme" is used as a synonym for the curriculum, owing to its common use in educational circles; yet in reality there is a difference between the two terms.

"The educational programme (Syllabus) refers to the information and knowledge that must be imparted to the learner during a given period. If, for example, one speaks of the Arabic language programme, this means the set of linguistic points, whether lexical items, grammatical rules, reading, writing, or the discourse that the teacher is to teach on this basis." ¹⁰

The programme (Programme) is defined as "the determination of the subjects to be taught, the hours allocated to that, and the contents presented during one of the periods of instruction in the sense of knowledge." ¹¹ In other words, it is "the set of courses of study and the scientific information arranged in the form of purposeful axes for a given subject, a given level, and a

⁷ Muḥammad al-Sayyid ‘Alī, *Modern Trends and Applications in Curricula and Teaching Methods (Ittijāhāt wa-taṭbīqāt ḥadītha fī al-manāhij wa-ṭuruq al-tadrīs)*, Dār al-Masīra for Publishing, Distribution, and Printing, Amman, Jordan, 1st ed., 2011, p. 20.

⁸ ‘Abd al-Rahmān Badawī, *Methods of Scientific Research (Manāhij al-baḥth al-‘ilmī)*, Dār al-Nahḍa al-‘Arabiyya, Cairo, Egypt, no edition stated, 1993, p. 5.

⁹ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Ḥathrūbī, *Introduction to Teaching by Competencies (al-Madkhal ilā al-tadrīs bi-al-kafā’āt)*, Dār al-Hudā, Aïn Melila, Algeria, 2002, p. 21.

¹⁰ Arabic Language Curricula for the First Year of Primary School (*Manāhij al-lughā al-‘Arabiyya li-al-sana al-ūlā ibtidā’ī*), National Bureau of School Publications, Algeria, 2003. [trans.] The issuing body is the Algerian Office National des Publications Scolaires (ONPS).

¹¹ Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Ḥathrūbī, *Introduction to Teaching by Competencies (al-Madkhal ilā al-tadrīs bi-al-kafā’āt)*, Dār al-Hudā, Aïn Melila, Algeria, 2002, p. 23.

given educational stage. The curriculum is broader and more comprehensive than this, since, in addition to the courses and the scientific information, it includes a set of experiences that the learner practises personally; it is thus the effective means that achieves the aims of education through careful consideration of its philosophy."¹²

Accordingly, a distinction can be drawn between the curriculum and programmes, in that the curriculum is concerned with objectives and contents, whereas the programme is concerned with the courses and the scientific experiences, as well as instructional media of all kinds, and also relies on methods of evaluation. The curriculum is broader and more comprehensive than programmes, because the latter is a part of the curriculum; in this way the instructional material becomes a part of the curriculum and not the whole of it.

On the basis of the foregoing, it may be said that the conceptions specific to modern educational curricula examined here focus on the learner and make the learner the centre of the teaching and learning process. They are also concerned with all of the learner's psychological, mental, and motor characteristics, contrary to the previous situation in which they were confined to the instructional material and the manner of imparting it. They have rather come to include all educational situations, such as objectives, means, teaching methods, and evaluation. The curriculum is thus a product of the two processes of teaching and learning, and the school is responsible for achieving the educational objectives.

2. The difference between traditional and modern educational curricula

On the basis of what has been presented regarding the concept of modern educational curricula, and relying on the earlier definitions of traditional educational curricula, a comparison can be made between the two conceptions, as in the following table:

Traditional educational curricula	Modern educational curricula
The instructional material is built on logic, and its ideas are separate.	The instructional material is built on the learner's psychology, yet these ideas are found to be interconnected.
It focuses on the instructional material through reliance on the school textbook as a source.	It focuses on the learner as the principal centre of the educational process, and on the elements of the curriculum and its various, multiple sources.
The learner in traditional curricula is considered only a recipient.	The learner in modern curricula is considered an active and positive participant in the educational process.
The teacher is the centre of the educational process, and the teacher's role is important	The teacher is a guide and mentor in the educational process, and the learner is the one

¹² Ibid., p. 24.

in preparing the lesson for the learner.	who prepares the lesson, while the teacher only guides.
The traditional curriculum does not take into account the individual differences among learners.	The modern curriculum focuses on the individual differences among learners.
It does not rely on instructional media, nor on classroom and extracurricular activities.	It relies on instructional media and also focuses on classroom and extracurricular activities.
It does not help the comprehensive and integrated development of the learner.	It helps the comprehensive and integrated development of the learner.
The traditional curriculum is fixed and does not accept any change or modification.	The modern curriculum is changeable and accepts any change or modification.
It does not provide the suitable atmosphere for the learner.	It provides the suitable atmosphere for the learner.

4-1 Elements of educational curricula

The elements of educational curricula consist of four principal elements:

a. Content

Content is considered one of the elements of traditional curricula. It refers to "all the facts and ideas that make up the prevailing culture in a given society or a given era. They are the various scientific, literary, philosophical, religious, technical, and other acquisitions of which human civilization is composed, which are classified within the educational system into subjects such as language, history, geography, and so on, together with the construction of the intended ends and objectives, while the organization of content remains contingent on the requirements of the educational process itself and on the forms of educational work."¹³

In this way, "content is one of the principal instruments that contribute to achieving educational objectives, through the quality of the knowledge that is selected and organized in a particular manner, and it is the answer to the question of what learners learn."¹⁴

From these two conceptions it is concluded that content is the most important element of the curriculum, given that it is an instrument aimed at achieving ends, because it relies on all the acquisitions and ideas that make up the culture of society, and it focuses on educational situations in achieving the teaching and learning process.

¹³ Muḥammad al-Darīḥ, Analysis of the Educational Process and the Training of Teachers (*Taḥlīl al-‘amaliyya al-ta’līmīyya wa-takwīn al-mudarrisīn*), Knowledge for All Series Publications, Rabat, Morocco, 2nd ed., 2004, p. 88.

¹⁴ Ibrāhīm Muḥammad ‘Aṭā, Curricula between Authenticity and Modernity (*al-Manāḥij bayna al-aṣāla wa-al-mu‘āṣara*), Egyptian Renaissance Bookshop, Cairo, Egypt, 2nd ed., 1999, p. 119.

b. Objective

It refers to "every prior description of what is intended to be brought about in the behaviour of learners as a result of the two processes of teaching and learning. This description targets the performance, capacities, and skills that the learner must possess after completing the study, the curricula, or the educational programme; that is, the changes that the curriculum is expected to bring about in the personality of learners." ¹⁵

It is also defined as "the behavioural, procedural specification of educational objectives, which indicates the patterns of behavioural performance that the learner acquires through the various patterns and methods of teaching." ¹⁶

Accordingly, it may be said that the objective means the ends that are sought at the end of each educational stage; a change occurs in the behaviour of the learner, and consequently a change occurs in the curriculum or the course of study. For example, in the field of the Arabic language the general objectives of this subject are determined, then the specific objectives for each stage and according to the category of learners are identified. In this way the objective brings about harmony and integration among the courses of study and achieves values, attitudes, skills, performance, and capacities in the teaching and learning process.

c. Teaching methods

Teaching methods are an important element of the curriculum, and they are closely connected to objectives and content. They are "a set of approaches and methods that the teacher uses in teaching the lesson so as to achieve the objectives that the teacher has determined for it. This requires the teacher to translate the lesson into a number of situations and experiences and to present them to learners so as to achieve benefit from it." ¹⁷

They are also defined as "a set of teaching procedures selected in advance by the teacher, which the teacher plans to use when carrying out the lesson, so as to achieve the desired teaching objectives with the greatest possible effectiveness and in light of the available means." ¹⁸

It is concluded that teaching methods are the procedures the teacher follows to help learners achieve the objectives, and they determine the role of both the teacher and the learner in the educational process. They focus on the methods of teaching the language on the basis of its characteristics and the manner of the learner's acquisition of it, and accordingly they achieve objectives in the two processes of teaching and learning, because the teacher does not teach by subject alone, but by method, style, personality, and relationship with learners.

There are criteria applied to test teaching methods, of which the following may be mentioned:

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁶ Nādir Fahmī al-Zubūd et al., *Learning and Classroom Teaching (al-Ta'allum wa-al-ta'līm al-ṣaffī)*, Dār al-Fikr for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, Jordan, 4th ed., 1999, p. 307.

¹⁷ Husayn Zaytūnī, *Instructional Design (Taṣmīm al-tadrīs)*, 'Ālam al-Kutub, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 1999, p. 280.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 281.

- ✕ The suitability of the method to the objectives of the lesson.
- ✕ The appropriateness of the method to the content of study.
- ✕ The suitability of the method to the levels of learners.
- ✕ The involvement of learners in the lesson.
- ✕ Economy of effort and time.

d. Evaluation

Evaluation is considered the last element of the curriculum. It is "a systematic, organized process that comprises issuing judgements on behaviour, thought, emotion, or reality; that is, judgement on the results of educational measurement." ¹⁹

It is also defined as "the means by which the extent of the curriculum's success in achieving the objectives for which it was set can be determined. Evaluation is therefore closely connected to the objectives drawn up by the curriculum." ²⁰

Evaluation is "not a concluding process that comes at the end of implementing the curriculum, but rather a continuous process that accompanies planning, implementation, and follow-up. It is the basic means by which the extent of the success and achievement of educational objectives can be recognized, and by which the points of strength and weakness in the educational process can be uncovered for the purpose of improvement and development." ²¹

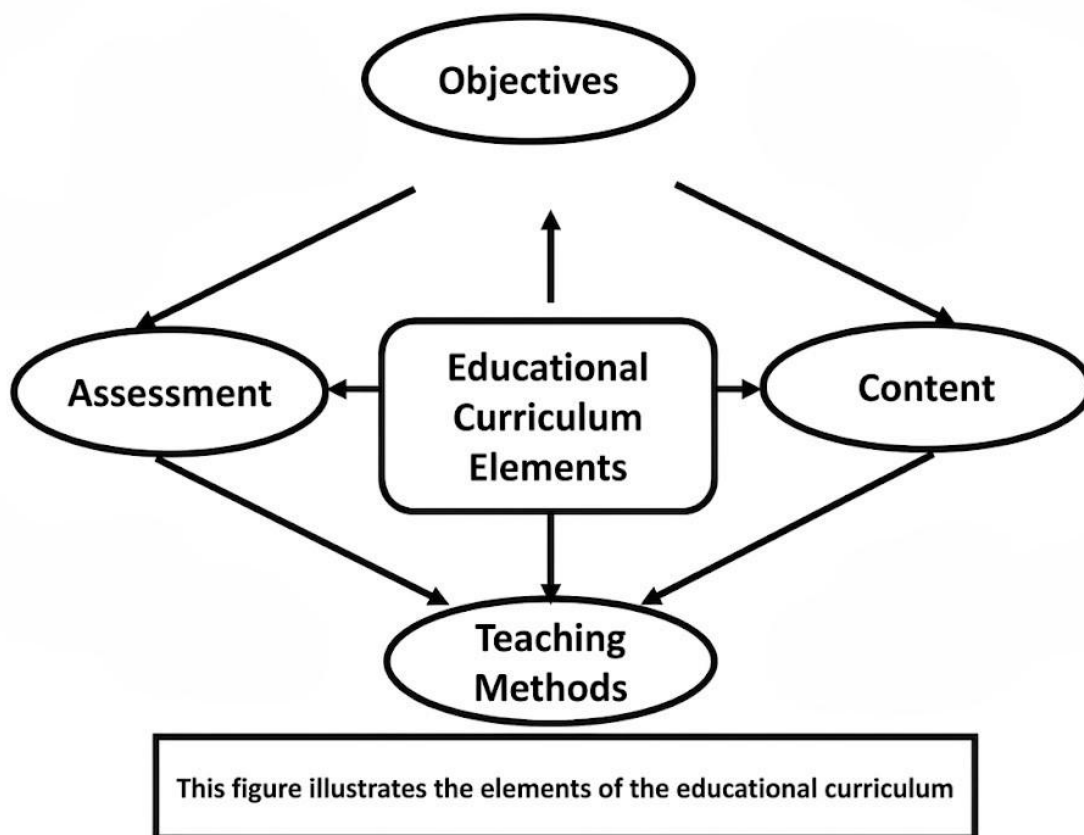
Accordingly, it may be said that evaluation occupies an important position in the system of the educational curriculum, and its importance in the educational process is confirmed. It is an educational process that accompanies field application in order to measure and estimate the extent of achievement of the objectives sought at each stage of the curriculum. Its function consists in providing sufficient information through taking decisions related to quantity and quality. It also preserves the value of the educational objectives and helps to achieve them in the two processes of teaching and learning.

As a summary of the most important of the curriculum elements addressed within the educational system, it may be said that no learning can occur without content, that content cannot be selected without learning objectives, that content cannot be implemented and objectives achieved without teaching methods, and that teaching methods cannot be used without evaluating them in the teaching and learning process so as to achieve the aim of the curriculum. The curriculum therefore encompasses the educational content and its objectives, methods, and evaluation, as illustrated in the following figure:

¹⁹ Ibrāhīm Muḥammad 'Aṭā, *Curricula between Authenticity and Modernity (al-Manāhij bayna al-aṣāla wa-al-mu'āṣara)*, Egyptian Renaissance Bookshop, Cairo, Egypt, 2nd ed., 1999, p. 207.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 207.

²¹ Nādir Fahmī al-Zubūd et al., *Learning and Classroom Teaching (al-Ta'allum wa-al-ta'līm al-ṣaffī)*, Dār al-Fikr for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, Jordan, 4th ed., 1999, p. 307.



4-2 The importance of educational curricula in the teaching and learning process

Dr. al-Manşūrī indicated that the importance of educational curricula in the educational process lies in the following: ²²

- 1) The future of societies is contingent on the type of curricula presented to learners and on the methods and approaches of presenting them.
- 2) The educational situation needs no confirmation beyond the fact that neglecting the development of curricula and remaining with the prevailing traditional curricula in form and content has a negative effect on the two processes of teaching and learning.
- 3) They are one of the principal pillars of the course of education with respect to the future of the learner, since backwardness in building advanced, superior societies is due to the backwardness of the curricula of their educational institutions, which are the factories of men.
- 4) The internal harmony among the elements of culture through the balance between the material and the immaterial aspects.

²² ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Manşūrī, Modern Trends and Models in the Development and Application of Curricula (*Ittijāhāt wa-namādhij ḥadītha fī taṭwīr wa-taṭbīq al-manāhij*), Majallat al-Tajaddud, National Centre for Research and Studies, Tripoli, Lebanon, issue 08, 2003, p. 14.

Accordingly, educational curricula are an important means among the means of education, and they are also the core of the educational process, given what they contain of values, principles, skills, knowledge, and sciences that contribute to achieving the objectives of the educational process.

Conclusion

In conclusion to this research, it may be said that educational curricula are a gathering of the educational outcomes for which the school is responsible, through the realization of the available experiences, by focusing on the teacher and the learner and on what the learners themselves do within the teaching and learning process. They also seek to be managed according to a comprehensive general plan, by means of which learners are provided with a set of educational opportunities capable of achieving the comprehensive and integrated development of the learner, which is the supreme aim and the most important purpose of the educational system.

Bibliography

1. al-Wakīl, Ḥilmī Aḥmad, and Muḥammad Amīn al-Muftī. *Curricula: Concept, Elements, Foundations, Organization, Development (al-Manāḥij: al-maḥmūm, al-‘anāṣir, al-usus, al-tanzīmāt, al-taṭwīr)*. Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, Cairo, Egypt, 1999.
2. ‘Aṭā, Ibrāhīm Muḥammad. *Curricula between Authenticity and Modernity (al-Manāḥij bayna al-aṣāla wa-al-mu‘āṣara)*. Egyptian Renaissance Bookshop, Cairo, Egypt, 2nd ed., 1999.
3. al-Hāshimī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, and Muḥsin ‘Alī ‘Aṭiyya. *Content Analysis of Arabic Language Curricula: A Theoretical and Applied View (Taḥlīl muḥtawā manāḥij al-lugha al-‘Arabiyya: ru‘ya naẓariyya taṭbīqiyya)*. Dār al-Ṣafā’ for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, Jordan, 1st ed., 2009.
4. Khawālida, Muḥammad Maḥmūd. *Foundations of Building Educational Curricula (Usus binā’ al-manāḥij al-tarbawiyya)*. Dār al-Masīra for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, Jordan, 1st ed., 2004.
5. Bu‘ayṭīsh, Yaḥyā, et al. *Evaluating Teaching Methods in Secondary Education between Theory and Practice (Taḥwīm al-ṭarā’iq al-ta’līmīyya fī al-ta’līm al-thānawī bayna al-naẓariyya wa-al-taṭbīq)*. Mu’assasat al-Rajā’ for Printing and Publishing, Languages and Translation Laboratory, Constantine, Algeria, 1st ed., 2014.
6. ‘Alī, Muḥammad al-Sayyid. *Modern Trends and Applications in Curricula and Teaching Methods (Ittijāhāt wa-taṭbīqāt ḥadītha fī al-manāḥij wa-ṭuruq al-tadrīs)*. Dār al-Masīra for Publishing, Distribution, and Printing, Amman, Jordan, 1st ed., 2011.
7. Ḥathrūbī, Muḥammad Ṣālīḥ. *Introduction to Teaching by Competencies (al-Madkhal ilā al-tadrīs bi-al-kafā’āt)*. Dār al-Hudā, Aīn Melila, Algeria, 2002.
8. *Arabic Language Curricula for the First Year of Primary School (Manāḥij al-lugha al-‘Arabiyya li-al-sana al-ūlā ibtidā’ī)*. National Bureau of School Publications, Algeria, 2003.

9. al-Darīh, Muḥammad. Analysis of the Educational Process and the Training of Teachers (*Taḥlīl al-‘amaliyya al-ta‘līmīyya wa-takwīn al-mudarrisīn*). Knowledge for All Series Publications, Rabat, Morocco, 2nd ed., 2004.
10. ‘Aṭā, Ibrāhīm Muḥammad. Curricula between Authenticity and Modernity (*al-Manāhij bayna al-aṣāla wa-al-mu‘āṣara*). Egyptian Renaissance Bookshop, Cairo, Egypt, 2nd ed., 1999.
11. al-Zubūd, Nādir Fahmī, et al. Learning and Classroom Teaching (*al-Ta‘allum wa-al-ta‘līm al-ṣaffī*). Dār al-Fikr for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, Jordan, 4th ed., 1999.
12. Zaytūnī, Ḥusayn. Instructional Design (*Taṣmīm al-tadrīs*). ‘Ālam al-Kutub, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 1999.
13. al-Manṣūrī, ‘Abd al-Majīd. Modern Trends and Models in the Development and Application of Curricula (*Ittijāhāt wa-namādhij ḥadītha fī taṭwīr wa-taṭbīq al-manāhij*). Majallat al-Tajaddud, National Centre for Research and Studies, Tripoli, Lebanon, issue 08, 2003.