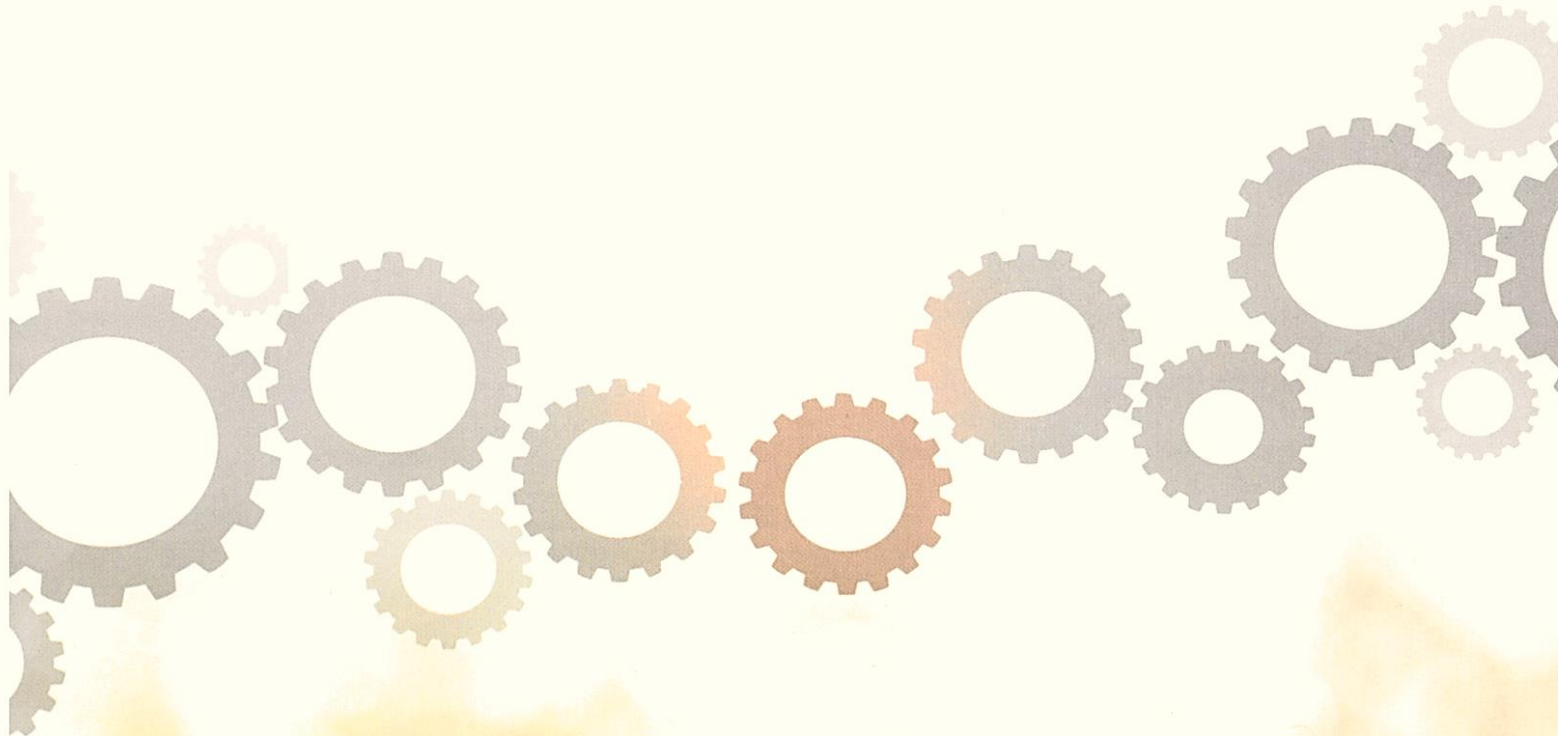


Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Salman bin Abdulaziz University



جامعة سلمان بن عبدالعزيز  
Salman bin Abdulaziz University



# Educational Philosophy

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## **Introduction**

Educational philosophy is an intended human effort to contemplate the various aspects of educational process, its ideological and cultural foundations, and its related social contexts, in addition to other local and global variants. Through this effort, educational philosophers seek to probe the depths of knowledge in diversified fields in order to construct an integrated rational framework that would help to understand the relations between education and practice, on one hand, and education foundations and its influential components on the other.

Universities vary in terms of their adopted educational philosophies, which are mirrored on their different intellectual trends and their strategic priorities. Such philosophies also reflect the views of the parties concerned with the educational process, the relations among concerned parties, and their relations with the university administration.

A university's educational philosophy is directly linked to the philosophy of the programs it offers and to other relevant policies and practices. A clear educational philosophy helps the departments and programs implemented in the university to formulate defined supporting policies and consequently adopt uniform procedures that would smoothly and correctly bring the university's vision and strategic goals into practical reality.

The strategic planner of Salman Bin AbdulAaziz University is adamant on incorporating in the Strategic Plan (14331442-) a goal relates to the construction of an educational philosophy for the university. This goal is a top priority and a key success factor for it helps the university define its identity and forms a guiding compass that would put the university on the right track and govern its activity and practices.

In the light of this approach, the University has worked diligently to achieve not only this goal but all other goals stated in the initial plan.

The process of instituting this document included:

1. Phase one: a review of various literary sources including studies in educational philosophy, local documents pertaining to educational trends, policies and goals in KSA. This review

aimed to identify the proposed core of the document.

2. Phase two: inviting a team of highly qualified and experienced higher education professionals to discuss the proposed initial core of phase one and then identify the core sub-topics and consequently formulate the final project of the document in line with the views of those specialized individuals.
3. Phase three: inviting an elite group of faculty members and university administrators to discuss the outcomes of phase two and to look for the methods to institute the final document.

The proposed document deals with the educational philosophy as defined by the mechanism incorporated in six main cores: the cultural context, education and globalization, learning environment, students and learning process, faculty and education, and community partnership.

It is the hope that this document constitutes the framework of all university academic and administrative efforts utilized in instituting policies and plans that would specify the practices and procedures to enable the university to proceed in the right direction towards the achievement of its goals and avert blunders, errors or a failure.

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## The Cultural Context

Salman Bin Abdulaziz University is part and parcel of the higher education system in Saudi Arabia, which regards Islamic Sharia as both a source and a driving power behind all academic and administrative practices in all Saudi Universities. The university strives to serve the Saudi society in line with its ambitious development plans and secure an advanced ranking position in the developed world. The University's educational philosophy in this context is based on the following principles:

1. Dignifying the principles of the Islamic society and emphasizing its cultural identity in order to control the negative impact of globalization while maintaining the culture of dialogue.
2. Emphasizing the true identity of the Saudi society striving to harmonize it with world cultures in a way that preserves its originality and contributes to the development of human civilization.
3. Showing pride in Arabic language being the language of the Quran and a symbol of national identity as well as showing interest in world languages as the languages of education and the means to effectively open windows of communication with the world.
4. Enhancing the principles of scientific research culture and help spread the related mind-sets and ways of thinking in the society.

## Education & Globalization

The world is witnessing a roaring wave of changes which emanated from the speedy accumulation of knowledge and the fast development of communication methods. This wave stands as the most prominent threat in the face of the long-standing cultural principles of the society and threaten its uniqueness, which deems necessary the need to strike a balance between these forces. The Salman Bin Abdulaziz University's educational philosophy, therefore, is based on the following principles:



1. Acknowledging the effects of the rapid development of knowledge and the communication revolution on undermining all time and space hurdles between world cultures, nations. And acknowledging the present and future challenges that will be shouldered by higher education.
2. Acknowledging the current role of knowledge, its economic value, the changes it imposes on the goals and programs of higher education, and the roles of students and teachers in generating and developing knowledge.
3. Understanding the nature of knowledge-based society and its rules regarding the preservation of the intellectual property rights and the appreciation of intellectual productions in science, literature and arts.
4. Observing the current global technological trends and knowing how to invest them in various educational contexts and applications.
5. Acquainting ourselves with the world quality criteria in higher education and knowing how to realize harmony with those criteria and achieve excellence in all the University activities based on such criteria with establishing special centers for this purpose.
6. Keeping track of the fast-developing changes in academic specializations and interdisciplinary and knowing the impact if these changes on the local, regional and world labor markets.

## **Learning Environment**

University students, teachers, the learning environment, and all related values and relations form the working constituents of the university structure and learning environment. The very nature of these constituents determine, to a large extent, the quality of the learning outcomes and the force of such quality in establishing some salient features that would reflect the vision and mission of the university.

Teaching and learning, according to the University's educational philosophy, rely on a

tradition of educational research in the fields of education, philosophy, and the nature of the modern age, which is characterized by unmatched speed of knowledge growth and an unprecedented development of communication technologies. Such developments have definitely impacted goals and methods of educational process. Having said that, the educational philosophy of Salman Bin AbdulAziz, University is founded on the following facts:

1. Showing serious interest in building a learning community that produces knowledge, and provide supportive university environment that would promote creativity and sustained development.
2. Establishing the concept of life-long-learning and emphasize the real value of time and cherish interest in relevant values and skills by working devotedly to enhance those skills.
3. Showing serious interest in learning and information technology, learning systems, management and distance learning.
4. Contemplating trends relevant to the development of environmental awareness, values of community service, and supporting all related initiatives.
5. Integrating the nature of different disciplines with the teaching and learning processes, on the one hand, with the nature and developmental features of the learner and the context the learners live in, on the other.
6. Stressing the fact that evaluation is a diagnostic and remedial process directly associated with the principles of accountability. Being so, it can penetrate all constituents of the human resources and university assets and consequently procure the provisions of lively and ever developing environment.



## **Students and Learning Process**

A student is a unique “human being” with diversified qualities and capabilities. Within this perspective, students must be respected and viewed as the prime recipient of the university services. Students are the prime resource of ant university perpetual existence. The University’s vision as related to students is derived from the fundamental principles of Sharia (Islamic law), which honors and dignifies man who is encouraged to strive after knowledge acquisition.

Salman Bin Abdulaziz University highly regards students and views them as the focal point. They are the active positive element in the educational system. A student has rights and responsibilities specified by the university bylaws. The University also believes that any educational practices and any related program, goal or a strategy cannot exist without building a vision stemmed from the purpose and achievement procedures of teaching-learning interaction.

In light of the University’s vision of the nature of the students and their active role in learning, the University stresses constructive learning and cognitivism and related trends that highlight the importance of the students as the cornerstone of any educational process. Its philosophy is based on the assumption that learning is an active and continuous building process practiced by learners in order to develop knowledge, skills, and values into a new integrated structure that help achieve the students’ intellectual growth. In this context, learning usually takes place when the learners venture into learning new educational situations or acquiring new experience and integrate such newly acquired knowledge with their prior experimental and learning base to generate meaningful learning.

Basic to this image, learning demands that students should possess key skills pertaining to independent learning (or self-learning), responsibility, self-evaluation, teamwork, use of communication technology and choice of the right technology that would help him/her achieve the desired end and transfer skill-applications into new situations. The University’s educational philosophy is, therefore, founded on the following principles:

1. Starting from the adult-learning studies, or what is known as Andragogy, in identifying the growth features of this age group as well as the personal, psychological and social needs of the learner in order to take all that into consideration while designing the teaching and learning strategies.
2. Identifying the competencies required to ensure the academic programs and the continuous development of the admission criteria to realize the internal and external effectiveness of academic programs.
3. Supporting the students' academic skills and showing keenness on developing their system of values and positive trends.
4. Discovering special-needs students and giving them the support and the special environment that suit their needs.
5. Contemplating the humanistic educational trends, underlying the effects on learning in the process of teaching.
6. Following contemporary assessment trends with focus on the importance of Authentic Assessment, and regarding assessment and feedback as an integral part of the learning process.

## Faculty and Education

The University believes in the importance of staff member who is qualified to educate university students. The university also concerns itself with the studies that focus on teaching as relevant to the characteristics of the teacher, his/her needs, his/her educational duties, professional development, his/her research orientation, and his/her contributions to both the University and the community at large.

Basic to the image of learning (as an active building process done by the learner in order

to modify his/her knowledge structures, skills, values and trends into new structures that help in his/her growth) the University's educational philosophy adopts teaching strategies that emphasize the principles of adult-learning - making the learner aware of the purpose of his/her education, active in learning effectuation, and effectively involved in problem solving. As such, the staff member is viewed a learning facilitator who provides the suitable learning environment for the learners and encourage them to utilize their learning outcomes. The University's educational philosophy, in this sense, is based on the following principles:

1. Offering the learning environment that challenge the students' abilities to cooperate, collaborate, and support each other to possess the life-long learning skills and to transform them into a life style and daily practices.
2. Designing the learning activities that represent real-life experience and stimulate the emotional and physical growth in addition to the intellectual growth in a challenging way.
3. Using teaching strategies that stimulate research, thinking, and student interaction to generate and develop knowledge in areas relevant to inquiry, discovery, problem-solving, cooperative learning, brain-storming, and directing the students to enhance their skills towards scientific research and the development of human knowledge.
4. Using communication technologies to increase interaction among students and interaction between students and knowledge resources.
5. Using corrective feedback and reinforcement to help students learn according to the best standards that reflect the ambitious criteria set by the university prime goals.
6. Striving continuously to strike a balance between the expectations of the academic programs and the students' expectations. Working with the type of students, who fail to cope with the programs, in order to develop their skills to achieve success?
7. Emphasizing the role of leading by the good example of the university staff member to help students acquire positive behavior and subsequently practice it.

## Community Partnership

Salman Bin Abdulaziz University cares about the community where it is established. It regards community affairs as top priority and supports organized volunteering effort to deal with them.

The University is also fully aware that the concept of community is not exclusively local but it is comprehensive to involve the entire human society. This concept fits our living in a global village whose inhabitants are influenced by all that goes around in any of its corners. The University also stresses the importance of participation in community leadership and development and meeting the requirements of its elite community leaders. Within this perception, the university educational philosophy is based on the following principles:

1. In planning, the university depends on scientific research and methodologies as a way to achieve academic, administrative, institutional and overall community development.
2. Studying the trends of total development as designed based on its local community policies, its productivity and service-institutions. The university directly contributes to its orientation with intent to match the university projects and the development plans with the needs of the community.
3. Supporting research projects in scientific fields which serve the community and contribute to solving its problems.
4. Widening the concept of community as far as research and scientific cooperation are concerned to profit the entire human community and establish working partnerships with distinguished scientific institutions and societies without jeopardizing the true cultural and societal identity of Salman Bin Abdulaziz University.

## **Conclusion**

Educational philosophy is the intellectual foundation upon which all policies and educational practices are built. This perception is derived from the opinions of educational philosophers and from the experimental outcomes of teaching and learning studies. Throughout history, educational philosophy is keen on dealing with: the overall purposes of education, the theories that support it, and the underlying logic behind the relation between the material and human components of the education process. Philosophy of education has specified its understanding of the nature of man, or what is known as the nature of the learner, and the view of educators and the role of the education environment in the educational process. This was also supported by theories that explain how learning happens and explain samples that help identify the components of the educational system and their relations, in addition to understanding the relation between education and community at large.

With the continuation of scientific research in the origins of education, learning theories and teaching strategies, a number of educational trends, that represent distinguished philosophical schools, have developed. They contributed to the continuity of educational intellectual movement and support an on-going research in the development of the various educational process components.

The University's educational philosophy reflects an important intellectual framework that attempts to answer a number of questions related, in one aspect, to the social and cultural contexts and, in other aspects, related to the university life starting with the nature of learners and how the university views them; the nature and purposes of university teaching; the explanation of how learning happens, the roles played by the university and its staff in realizing the goals of the university in addition to the nature of the relation between the university and the community.

Therefore, the University is expected to formulate a document that states its educational philosophy and extend specific answers to issues that have direct effect on the various functions of the University and on its relation to the community. The university also explains the relational components among university staff and the various elements of the university



system. The document also displays the direct effects of the educational philosophy on the academic and non-academic policies and practices in general.

The educational philosophy of Salman Bin Abdulaziz University is reflected in six major fields:

1. The cultural context
2. Education and globalization
3. Learning environment
4. Students and learning process
5. Faculty and education
6. Community partnership

This document is of special interest to the University staff members, students, administrators and leaders in general. It is expected that the document constitutes the foundation of its policy-making as well as the evaluation of various academic and administrative procedures.

Besides the importance of this document, it is important to remember that the document forms just a basic block in the overall building, which strives to economize academic and administrative policies and to control the procedures and practices of the university in order to be in line with its vision and mission. This document may lose its value if it is not tied closely to a well-structured and guiding set of values and mechanisms that help monitor academic and administrative practices in order that they won't steer away from this founding educational philosophy.

In conclusion, the formulation of an educational philosophy of the University is the core of this document. However, the conformity between claims and practices or written words and actions is the true validation criterion of this document. In other words, having an educational philosophy cannot be achieved without offering an objective system to monitor the commitment to the constituents of this philosophy and the activities that the University aims to conduct.