ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION WITHIN THE SAUDI GREEN INITIATIVE

Saiyed Al-Khouli

As part of the Green Initiative to spread environmental knowledge in Saudi Arabia, the General Authority of Meteorology and Environmental Protection (GAMEP) launched a program to promote environmental education in pre-university educational institutions in 2008. They did this in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE) and the Saudi Environmental Society (SENS). The program outputs included setting models for environmental education materials.

The Environmental Education Program is one of the important mechanisms for promoting environmental work in Saudi Arabia. The program merges the environmental dimension into the educational process and promotes the practical skills necessary for positive participation in sustainable development activities and projects, together with civil society and the public sector. The Green Initiative aims to mainstream sound environmental concepts and interlinked elements as essential impetus in different areas, for stimulating positive environmental practices. This contributes to building youth leadership skills that can be applied towards responsible environmental practices through understanding and utilizing modern technologies, while keeping up with the global changes.

Some of the main objectives of the executive program for environmental education include: raising awareness among members of the education sector, their families and communities; developing the spirit of cooperation and team work to carry out environmental projects at the local level; enhancing appreciation of the environmental components; and acquiring skills that help achieve sustainable development goals at the local level.

The program’s activities and components – represented in the educational kits and their contents such as books, publications and other related training tools – were designed based on Saudi Arabia’s solemn commitment to international decisions and recommendations in the field of environmental education. The materials adopted positive and active learning, and learning by doing, which leads to positive interaction with knowledge and the available data. The main components of the program resulted in producing two kits for teachers and students. The first kit includes the Environmental Education for Sustainable Development textbook, guidelines for evaluating environmental education materials and a collection of books that support the initiative’s activities. The second, which is the environmental education kit for students, includes seven environmental activity books, wall panels, demonstration posters, and supplementary tools for the implementation of activities.

The other components of the program include a set of posters with pictures of various fauna and their habitats in Saudi Arabia, as well as the most serious risks that endanger them, a map of natural reserves’ sites and guidelines on energy conservation at home and in school. Other products include postcards with pictures teachers and environmental education supervisors on the practical implementation of the initiative’s activities through continuous coordination and cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the Saudi Environmental Society and concerned partners – especially international organizations, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations – in the various stages of implementation.

The program’s slogan was My Environment is My Life, considering that a healthy and clean environment results in a good and safe life, and also signifies purity, loveliness and beauty, goodness and tranquility. We learn from the environment about the environment and for the environment, to build up environment supporters. The program emphasized its conformity with international decisions on the environment, sustainable development and the principles of environmental education. It based its contents on six main characteristics: justice and accuracy, depth, skills building, a pragmatic approach to action, learning process integrity and ease of use.

The Education Kit

The materials of My Environment is My Life were designed to suit the training processes and methods, in accordance with Saudi Arabia’s commitment to international decisions and recommendations in the field of environmental education. The materials adopted positive and active learning, and learning by doing, which leads to positive interaction with knowledge and the available data. The main components of the program resulted in producing two kits for teachers and students. The first kit includes the Environmental Education for Sustainable Development textbook, guidelines for evaluating environmental education materials and a collection of books that support the initiative’s activities. The second, which is the environmental education kit for students, includes seven environmental activity books, wall panels, demonstration posters, and supplementary tools for the implementation of activities.

The other components of the program include a set of posters with pictures of various fauna and their habitats in Saudi Arabia, as well as the most serious risks that endanger them, a map of natural reserves’ sites and guidelines on energy conservation at home and in school. Other products include postcards with pictures
of the most important endangered flora and fauna, landscapes of the most important natural reserves, geological formations, water springs and valleys, with an invitation encouraging people to visit these sites and to preserve them.

The program also includes a component of establishing school environmental libraries that contain books for adults and for young students. Books are selected to correspond with current topics to encourage reading, researching and acquiring more knowledge and information.

Coping with the developments and changes in institutional work regarding the environment, there is continuous action to integrate the initiative with the Saudi Vision 2030 and the programs concerned with the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and to translate the Green Initiative into electronic programs, while retaining its practical aspects.