

## **Harnessing the Power of E-Learning: Countering Extremism and Challenging Deviant Intellectual Currents in Public Schools and Universities**

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### ABSTRACT

Education is the foundation of human development, and it needs to adapt to the changing needs of society. Technology is a key factor in this process, as it offers new possibilities and challenges for learning. In our online survey, we explored the essential role of education in countering extremism and deviant ideologies following the Kingdom's Vision 2030. We collected and analysed data from online questionnaires distributed to various groups. The data revealed a pressing need to strengthen intellectual security, promote moderation, and enhance social cohesion. This study aimed to examine the current role of e-learning (both at the public school and university levels) in preventing extremism and deviant ideologies from the perspective of faculty members and teachers. We also proposed a strategy for enhancing the role of education in this regard, in line with the Saudi Vision 2030. We surveyed 525 faculty members and general education teachers at Saudi University using two online questionnaires. We used statistical methods such as arithmetic means, standard deviations, one-way ANOVA, Scheffe test, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient. The study determined the differences between the sample groups at the significance level of 0.05. The main findings showed significant differences between the sample groups at the same significance level. The study concluded by presenting a clear picture of the current role of e-learning (public school and university levels) in countering extremism and proposing a strategy for improving the role of education in this area, in alignment with the Saudi Vision 2030. It recommended that future efforts focus on developing technical means to implement the strategy.

**Keywords:** *Combating Extremism, Deviant Intellectual Currents, Strategy, Saudi Vision 2030,*

*E-Learning, Intellectual Security*

## **1. Introduction**

Education is crucial for the sustainability and humanisation of cities, as it plays a vital role in the civilisational renaissance and protecting security and homelands. These are the main goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, but they also have global implications. Therefore, we proposed a strategy and highlighted the importance and role of education in fostering intellectual security, which is essential for creating future generations that can face challenges and pursue peace opportunities.

We defined currents of thought as those ideas, opinions, and theories that contradict the doctrinal and societal norms and are propagated by the minds of thinkers and philosophers to achieve total or partial changes. These currents aim to alter the course of moderate common sense and lead to deviation and extremism (Ibrahim, 2020, p. 147).

From this, it is evident that intellectual currents impact the minds and thinking of human beings, leading them to deviant plans and goals. The intellectual security of reasons must be preserved, and the United Nations has taken on this responsibility by adopting the slogan, "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed" (United et al. Organization, 2018, p. 5). Intellectual security can only be achieved by building an inclusive educational system that acts as a strong barrier against the assaults of intellectual currents by enhancing intellectual security and instilling it in the minds of our children.

### **1.1. Education policy and strategies in Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia's educational policy is founded on several general principles and goals that have ensured its consistency and efficiency over the years (Ministry of Education, 1980). Saudi Arabia has devised its strategic plan to implement its educational policy in practice at the public and higher university education level, per global developments, to ensure its optimal performance (Ministry of Education,

1980). King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz's "Tatweer" project has established an ambitious public education strategy based on a set of values to achieve this strategic plan. These values are reflected in the fact that education is the basis for fostering values, focusing on the student, achieving equal opportunities, evolving and aligning with development, being open to society, and relying on the participation of all stakeholders (Ministry of Education, 2021, pp. 16-13).

However, the Ministry of Education still faces significant challenges from the information and communication technology ICT revolution. These challenges are manifested by the deviant intellectual currents that spread their venom into the minds of our children and penetrate them through social media (General Authority for Statistics, 2019). The percentage of social media users in the age group (15-34) ranged from 97.6 to 97.6 per cent for females and 98.8 per cent for males (General Authority for Statistics, 2019).

In line with the efforts to make the public education strategy successful, the Ministry of Education continued to build the knowledge society by preparing a future draft plan for university education, "AFAC," launched in 2005. The plan aims to formulate a long-term strategy that would last twenty-(5) years while defining its vision, mission, and strategic dimensions and developing a clear and practical mechanism for its implementation. The strategic objectives of the AFAC implementation plan covered all aspects of education. It included the administration, systems, educational programs, funding, and infrastructure. This plan was to provide competitive services to university students to motivate them to continue their education, creativity, innovation, and the pursuit of the well-being and advancement of their homeland and citizens (Majmaah University, 2021).

Formal education is an essential strategy affecting many people, especially students. It constitutes an early intervention to prevent cases of extremism from spreading to education as its fertile ground.

Education equips learners with the values and skills necessary to refute myths, exclusionary worldviews, and conspiracy theories that often underpin extremism (UNESCO, 2018, p. 71).

### **1.2. Role of educational institutions in combating extremism and intellectual currents**

Intellectual extremism is rooted in the foundations that shape the relationship between individuals and society. Al-Shamasi (2021, pp. 291-294) discusses several theories that emphasise the role of educational institutions in maintaining intellectual security among students and fostering peace in societies. One of these theories is Social Control, which assumes that people have tendencies to commit and be victims of crime and that their behaviour is influenced by their community, either by conforming or deviating from it. Therefore, it can be argued that the individual's relationship with the socialising institutions determines their susceptibility to deviation.

The theory of constructivism views society as a complex system of interdependent pillars that form the social structure. School is one of these pillars, and dysfunction creates a clear societal imbalance. The spread of intellectual extremism is a societal flaw that can be reduced by educating individuals and raising awareness of its danger to society. The school can play this role as a symbol of intellectual and educational enlightenment in society. The National Center for Combating Extremist Ideology "Etidal" explained the importance of the school in protecting against the threat of extremist ideas and the ways to prevent them with the collaboration of both the family and the school (Etidal, 2021).

Moreover, at the university level, Al-Rumaih (2008) points out that one of the most prominent roles played by universities, besides granting scientific degrees, conducting research, and publishing, is to serve the community, spread culture in it, and address its security, economic, and development problems, especially those related to intellectual extremism and the resulting violence and terrorism (pp. 246-247). Al-Ghamdi (2018, pp. 274-276) explains that a faculty member's role lies in enhancing

students' intellectual security by promoting their social values through educational methods and encouraging them to coexist with society, reject extremism, and work to develop their identity. Students' values of moderation, behaviour, identity, tendencies, and hobbies should be nurtured and guided in the right direction to eliminate extremist thoughts and behaviours. The official curriculum has the most significant impact on students' thinking and values. Two decades ago, the Ministry of Education recognised its role in advancing society and its children and launched the "Comprehensive Curriculum Development" project, the largest in Saudi Arabia's history, to develop curricula aligned with contemporary developments (Sabri, 2009).

Many Saudi universities have sought to revise their curricula because of the importance of curricula in refuting extremism of all intellectual, behavioural, and social types. They have also worked to develop new educational programs and courses to enhance intellectual security, spread moderation, and advocate for them. Among these universities, Qassim University has introduced two courses, "Contemporary Suspicions of Hyperbole" and "Jurisprudence of Terrorism Crimes" (Qassim University, 2019). In 2019, Umm Al-Qura University also launched the "Higher Diploma of Intellectual Security and Sharia Guidance" to enhance intellectual security (Umm Al-Qura University, 2019). The Department of Islamic Studies at Taibah University has also instructed the scientific committees of the Department of Islamic Studies to undertake a comprehensive review of the courses and study plans to ensure their suitability and freedom from intellectual and methodological irregularities (Taibah University, 2021).

The Ministry of Education has given great attention to the programs and activities at the stages of public education. It has continuously demonstrated its efforts to develop them according to the current requirements. For example, the Ministry of Education launched the "Islamic Awareness" program to achieve Islamic awareness for all administration employees and society (Ministry of

Education, 2003). It also launched the "Fatn" program to build students' personal and social skills to protect them from intellectual and behavioural deviations. This program is designed for young students to develop their abilities to make sound decisions, communicate positively, and overcome crises they may face, such as identity loss, belonging, and trust (Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 13).

In 2019, the intellectual awareness program "Hasanah" [Immunity] was launched. It is a national program that involves relevant ministries in enhancing intellectual awareness so that the individual is resilient and protects them from falling into intellectual deviations and the traps of doubt and suspicion (Duaa, 2019). Finally, in 2021, the Saudi Ministry of Education approved the establishment of intellectual awareness units in education departments and universities to promote citizenship values and moderation and counter the ideas of extremism and decay (Ministry of Education, 2021). Through their activities, universities seek to achieve the well-being, intellectual security, and prosperity of the homeland and the citizens, in full compatibility with the goals that Saudi Arabia seeks to achieve through Vision 2030 in cooperation with the Islamic University of Maldives and the National Center for Counter-Terrorism (Naif Arab University, 2021).

The previous review shows the vital role of educational institutions in enhancing intellectual security and rejecting extremism, exaggeration, and extremism for all segments of society. It should be noted that activities are important in educational work, whether in or out of the classrooms, especially if they are based on entertainment-education principles. Entertainment education is one of the essential modern approaches to revealing the personality's potential, strengths, and weaknesses (Al-Saadi, 2016). Therefore, it was necessary to integrate games, especially electronic games, into the educational process, as they occupied the minds of the current generation, where most students spend long hours, with their often violent scenes, different beliefs, and bad morals, which are considered a danger to our society, (Jaber, 2018). The issue of deviant currents of thought and fighting

them through education has motivated many researchers to consider ways to enhance intellectual security for future generations. For instance, Al-Hamad and Al-Azzam (2021) conducted a study to reveal the extent to which the positive citizenship and life skills course enhances university students' intellectual security from their perspectives. The authors concluded that its contribution was high and recommended that such practices be integrated into all universities and academic stages.

Al-Worhan (2021) also conducted a study to identify Saudi universities' role in enhancing intellectual security among students and their level of citizenship. He concluded that the part of curricula and the faculty member's role in strengthening intellectual security had high values, and the role of student activities and programs had an average value. The dimensions of citizenship had high values. Al-Ghamdi's study (2020, p. 338) showed that the educational policy in Saudi Arabia had a high flexibility that enabled it to align with the strategy for the 2020 educational plan and the objectives of the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

Shahwan (2018) pointed out that most teachers concerned about intellectual security lack a clear strategy to support them. Al-Dahmash (2019) also indicated that educational institutions in Saudi Arabia are regarded as models to emulate in confronting intellectual terrorism by organising conferences and seminars to implement their results and recommendations. Al-Dahmash (2019) recommended connecting educational institutions with other sectors of society to coordinate efforts in combating extremist thought. In the modern era, the Internet and social networks are used as means of learning and communicating, as well as spreading or refuting extremism. Alava, Divina, and Ghayda (2017) suggested publishing strategies to prevent extremism, develop critical thinking, and promote education, human rights, dialogue, tolerance, and exchange of opinions. These strategies should help young people identify, report, resist, and prevent the spreading of extremist ideas on the Internet.

One of the studies that explored modern education methods was the study by Backer and Ballantyne (2013), which examined the relationship between education and entertainment. It demonstrated that education and entertainment are not only compatible but also synergistic.

## **2. Discussion of previous studies**

The previous discussion shows that educational policies and strategies are essential and influential in combating extremist intellectual currents and enhancing intellectual security. Moreover, previous studies showed the critical role of educational institutions, such as teachers, faculty members, curricula, and activities, in achieving their goals within the strategic education plan. Therefore, the current study is important because it reflects the vibrant role of educational institutions, programs, and activities. It aims to organise and put efforts within a systematic framework by developing a proposed strategy to combat deviant intellectual currents in light of Saudi Vision 2030. It also describes the reality of public and university education in combating extremism and deviant intellectual currents from the perspective of faculty members in Saudi universities and teachers in schools in light of Saudi Vision 2030.

## **3. The study problem**

Saudi Arabia, like other countries, faces significant challenges in confronting deviant intellectual currents, especially in the current age, due to the technological openness and the proliferation of social media among the two groups of children and teenagers, which is a critical stage in their lives because of the confusion they face regarding their religious and national identity. Moreover, since the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was a pioneer in the field of addressing these currents mainly through education, it was necessary to highlight the efforts made by the Ministry of Education, starting with setting educational policies and devising strategic plans that would implement these policies in practice, and emphasising the role of educational institutions in confronting intellectual

currents with all their components, especially in light of the trend towards e-learning, which is characterised by its flexibility and ease of spreading awareness, science, and knowledge.

From this perspective, the researchers saw the need to shed light on these efforts and the extent of their contribution to enhancing the intellectual security of children in light of Saudi Vision 2030, hence the need to answer the following questions:

1. What is the reality of the role of education (public schools and universities) in combating extremism and deviant intellectual currents from the point of view of faculty members in Saudi universities and teachers in schools?
2. Are there statistically significant differences at the significance level of 0.05 among the study sample members about the reality of the role of education in combating extremism and intellectual currents?
3. What is the proposed strategy for the role of education in combating extremism and deviant intellectual currents in light of Saudi Vision 2030?

#### **4. The study objectives**

1. To identify the reality of the role of education (public school and university levels) in combating extremism and deviant intellectual currents from the perspective of faculty members in Saudi universities and teachers in schools.
2. To identify statistical differences at the significance level (0.05) among the study sample on the reality of the role of education in combating extremism and intellectual currents.
3. • To build the proposed strategy for the role of education in combating extremism and deviant intellectual currents in light of Saudi Vision 2030.

## **5. The limitation of the study**

1. Temporal: The study tools were applied during the second semester of the academic year 1443 AH.
2. Spatial: The study was limited to universities and schools in the western and central regions.
3. Human: The study included faculty members and teachers in Saudi universities and schools, where the study sample consisted of (525) members and teachers.
4. Objectivity: The study was limited to the values that enhance the Islamic and national identity and entrench moderation and tolerance that the educational institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seek to develop, which the vision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2030 aims to achieve.

## **6. Methods**

This study used a descriptive-analytical approach. This approach was suitable for this study, as it helped to describe the study accurately and reach results for the issue under investigation. The approach was useful for cases that involved the typical analyses of research variables, whether the relationship between variables was strong or weak. By analysing the data of these variables, converting them into numerical data, and applying statistical processes, the researcher could reach recommendations that were very close to reality.

The study objectives were achieved by using two questionnaires. Two electronic questionnaires were administered to a sample of 525 faculty members in Saudi universities and teachers of general education schools. The questionnaires were designed to address teachers and faculty members and examine the reality of public and university education policies and strategies in combating extremism and deviant intellectual currents. Each questionnaire was preceded by preliminary information about

the study sample members (gender, nationality, years of experience, specialisation, academic/scientific rank, place of work, region, and job).

The first questionnaire consisted of 54 indicators divided into two dimensions. The first dimension had 16 indicators, and the second had 38, as shown in Table (1). The second questionnaire consisted of 42 indicators divided into two dimensions. The first dimension had five indicators, and the second had 37. The dimensions of the first questionnaire are provided in Table (1).

The dimensions of the second questionnaire are provided in Table (4).

## **7. Statistical methods**

The statistical package (SPSS) was used. The following statistical methods were used: arithmetic averages and standard deviations, One-way ANOVA, Scheffé's test, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and Cronbach's alpha stability coefficient.

## **8. Presenting interpretation and discussion of the results of the study**

### **8.1. Answer to the first question**

To answer the first question, we calculated the arithmetic mean and standard deviation for the responses of the study sample on the questionnaires, their dimensions, and the questionnaire items of each dimension. The arithmetic mean ranked the questionnaire items, and the degree of agreement was assessed, as shown in Table (1).

Table 1  
 Arithmetic averages and standard deviations on the reality of the role of public education policy

#	Dimensions of the first questionnaire	Arithmetic average	Standard deviation	Degree of agreement
1	The first dimension: is the reality of public education policy and strategies and the extent to which it seeks to achieve the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which are represented in the following objectives: strengthening the Islamic and national identity, promoting student values and skills, and promoting the values of moderation and tolerance	4.48	0.58	Very large
2	The second dimension: is the reality of public education institutions and the extent to which they seek to achieve the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which are represented in the following objectives: strengthening the Islamic and national identity, promoting student values and skills, and promoting the values of moderation and tolerance.	4.28	0.66	Very large
Total		4.34	0.60	Very large

Table (1) shows that the arithmetic average of the degree of agreement of teachers on the reality of the role of public education policy and strategies in combating extremism was 4.34, with a standard deviation of 0.60 and a considerable degree, which confirms that there is a massive role for public education in combating extremism. The first dimension came first with a considerable degree of agreement, scoring an average of 4.48 and a standard deviation of 0.58. This result may be due to the attention that the Kingdom's education policy attaches to the issue of extremism, non-violence, and the dissemination of the values of tolerance and moderation.

The second dimension came second with a considerable degree of agreement, scoring an average of 4.28 and a standard deviation of 0.66. This result may be due to the role played by the public education sector in developing its institutions and supporting them with advanced and renewable means in confronting extremism and spreading educational, Islamic, and national values. These values call for tolerance, moderation, rejection of violence, and combating terrorism.

**8.1.1. Addressing the first dimension**

Table 2

Table 2 Averages and standard deviations of the first dimension questionnaire items

#	Questionnaire items	Arithmetic average deviation	Standard deviation	Degree of agreement
1	Public Education Policy Goals			
	Total	4.61	0.70	Very large
2	Public Education Strategy			
	Total	4.26	0.95	Very large

Table (2) shows the arithmetic averages of the degree of reality of the role of public education policy and strategies and the extent to which they aim to achieve the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which are represented by the following objectives: strengthening the Islamic and national identity, promoting student values and skills, and promoting the values of moderation and tolerance, ranged between (4.61 – 4.26), and the standard deviation ranged between (0.70 - 0.95). The degree of agreement of all questionnaire items was very high except for two items, where they had a high degree.

Table (2) shows that the general arithmetic average of the questionnaire items on the reality of the role of the goals of public education policy in confronting extremism was 4.61, with a standard deviation of 0.70. All questionnaire items received a high score, which indicates that the reality of the objectives of public education was remarkable. This result may be attributed to the attention that the leaders of public education and the makers of its general policy gave to developing and modernising public education objectives. They included issues related to the rejection of extremism and terrorism and the promotion of the values of tolerance embodied in the values of Saudi society, which is one of the most tolerant societies open to all countries of the world.

Table (2) also shows that the overall average of the questionnaire items on the reality of the role of the public education strategy in confronting extremism was 4.26, with a standard deviation of 0.95. All items received a high score except for two questionnaire items, where they had a high degree. This finding suggests that public education strategy has significantly strengthened identity and enhanced student values and skills. It has also gone beyond the continuous development and updating of general education strategies to focus on the learner's personality, the development of sound educational values, and encouraging students to participate in international scientific and practical competitions. This result may also be attributed to the attention that public education leaders and public policymakers gave to this issue. This finding confirms Al-Ghamdi's findings (2020, p. 338) in his study of the flexibility of education policy in Saudi Arabia, which enabled the alignment of the strategic plans for education 2020 and the objectives of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which in turn enabled it to face contemporary challenges, including deviant currents.

**8.1.2. Addressing the second dimension**

Table 3 Averages and standard deviations of the questionnaire items of the second dimension

The second dimension	Arithmetic average	Standard deviation	Degree of agreement	Order
The school as an educational institution				
Total	4.10	1.01	Large	1
Teacher				
Total	4.38	0.84	Very large	2
Curriculum				
Total	4.46	0.82	Very large	3
Activities & Programs				
Total	4.13	1.10	Large	4

Table (3) shows that the arithmetic averages of the second dimension item score ranged between (4.10 – 4.46) with a standard deviation ranging between (1.01 - 0.82), and the degree of agreement on the role of public education institutions ranged between high and very high. The rank of the role of public education institutions in confronting extremism and achieving the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 was as follows: (Curriculum, to a very high degree. The teacher, to a very high degree; the school, to a high degree, activities and programs, to a high degree).

The result of the curriculum and the teacher receiving high scores may be attributed to the fact that the student learns and receives the information he learns directly or indirectly from the curriculum or teacher. This result may also be due to the role of public education leaders in the Kingdom. They continuously pay attention to the development and updating of education curricula, as well as their interest in the development of the teacher through his training and professional development. This finding is consistent with the study of Al-Hamad and Al-Azzam (2021) on the importance of curricula to enhance intellectual security.

The finding is also consistent with Shahwan's study (2019) on teachers' desire to enhance students' intellectual security. Table (3) also shows that the overall average of the questionnaire items on the reality of the role of the school as an educational institution in confronting extremism was 4.10, with a standard deviation of 1.01, with a high degree of agreement. This result shows that the role of the school as an educational institution is significant. This result may be attributed to the fact that the school is the second home of the students, where they spend a long time learning and acquiring various information and values. The school is a source of various classroom and non-class activities through which many educational values are developed.

This finding supports Dahmash's findings (2019), as educational institutions in Saudi Arabia are considered role models in countering intellectual terrorism. The overall average of the

questionnaire items on the reality of the teacher's role in confronting extremism was 4.38 and a standard deviation of 0.84, with a high degree of agreement, as shown in Table (3). This result proves the very large role of the teacher in strengthening identity and enhancing students' values and skills. This result may be attributed to the teacher being a student role model, providing them with direct and indirect knowledge and behaviours.

Table (3) also shows that the overall average of the questionnaire items on the reality of the role of curricula in countering extremism was 4.46, with a standard deviation of 0.82, with a high degree of agreement. This result demonstrates the great role of curricula in strengthening identity and enhancing student values and skills. This result may be attributed to the fact that the curricula, through their various activities, information, lessons, and knowledge, are essential learning resources that provide the students with direct knowledge, which helps them indirectly develop different educational values.

Finally, Table (3) shows that the overall average of the questionnaire items on the reality of the role of activities and programs in countering extremism was 4.13, with a standard deviation of 1.10, with a high degree of agreement. This result indicates the great role of educational activities, programs, and events in strengthening identity and enhancing student values and skills.

This result may be explained by the fact that educational activities and programs help to develop various educational values through the interaction between learners and teachers and the exchange of positive communication. The result also reflects the lectures and seminars that teach students various educational values, such as tolerance and moderation, and inform them of the dangers of extremism, violence, and terrorism. The outcome results from the Ministry of Education's decades-long effort to develop awareness programs suitable for current times. The total score of the

faculty members' questionnaire reveals the reality of higher education policy and institutions' role in combating extremism and its dimensions.

Table 4

Arithmetic averages and standard deviations on the reality of the role of higher education policy in combating extremism

#	Dimensions of the second questionnaire	Arithmetic average	Standard deviation	Degree of agreement
1	The first dimension is the reality of Higher Education policy and strategies and the extent to which it seeks to achieve the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which are represented in the following objectives: strengthening the Islamic and national identity, promoting student values and skills, promoting the values of moderation and tolerance	4.28	0.76	Very large
2	The second dimension is the reality of Higher Education institutions and the extent to which they seek to achieve the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which are represented in the following objectives: strengthening the Islamic and national identity, promoting student values and skills, and promoting the values of moderation and tolerance.	3.95	0.82	Large
Total		3.99	0.79	Large

Table (4) shows that the arithmetic mean of the participants' degree of agreement on the reality of the role of Higher Education policy and strategies in combating extremism was significant, at 3.99, with an overall standard deviation of 0.79. The first dimension ranked first with a very high degree, averaging 4.28. This result may be due to the continuous efforts of the Ministry of Education and universities in developing Higher Education policies to reflect their educational mission in preparing generations.

The second dimension ranked second with an average of 3.95, with a standard deviation of 0.82. The positive outcome may result from the significant attention and efforts that the Saudi government and Ministry of Education put into developing universities, aiming to make them among the world's leading universities. This outcome was accomplished by thoroughly assessing their

programs and activities and improving their quality. Improving universities is one of the key objectives of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 plan. This information is in the first dimension, as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5

Averages and standard deviations on the reality of the role of higher education policy objectives in combating extremism

Questionnaire items	Arithmetic average	Standard deviation	Degree of agreement
Higher Education Policy Objectives			
Total	4.28	0.90	Very large

Table (5) shows that the overall average of the questionnaire items of the second dimension was 4.28 with a standard deviation of 0.90, scoring a very high degree in strengthening the Islamic identity, enhancing student values and skills, and promoting the values of moderation and tolerance. This result confirms what Al-Ghamdi (2020, p. 338) noted in the flexibility of Saudi education policy to keep pace with contemporary challenges, including intellectual currents. This finding may be explained by the interest of the education officials in renewing their policy objectives by including issues related to developing students' values that encourage tolerance, moderation and combating extremism. Addressing the second dimension shown in Table (4)

Table (6) shows that the arithmetic averages of the questionnaire items of the second dimension ranged between (3.85-4.00) with an overall standard deviation ranging between (1.06 - 1.03). The degree of agreement on the role of public education institutions was high. The rank of Higher Education institutions' role in confronting extremism and achieving the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 was as follows: Activities, programs, and events came first with a high degree, university curricula came second with a high degree, the university as an educational institution was third with a high degree, and faculty members were the last with a high degree. This rank demonstrates the

significant role of Higher Education institutions in promoting the values of moderation among students.

Table 6  
Averages and standard deviations on the reality of the role of higher education institutions in combating extremism

#	The second dimension	Arithmetic average	Standard deviation	Degree of agreement
The University as an Educational Institution				
1	Total	3.93	1.03	Large
Faculty Members				
2	Total	3.85	1.06	Large
University Curriculum				
3	Total	3.96	1.03	Large
Activities, Programs & Events				
4	Total	4.00	1.03	Large

Table (4) shows that the arithmetic mean of the participants' degree of agreement on the reality of the role of Higher Education policy and strategies in combating extremism was significant, at 3.99, with an overall standard deviation of 0.79. The first dimension ranked first with a very high degree, averaging 4.28. This result may be due to the continuous efforts of the Ministry of Education and universities in developing Higher Education policies to reflect their educational mission in preparing generations.

The second dimension ranked second with an average of 3.95, with a standard deviation of 0.82. This result may be due to the great attention and efforts the Saudi government and the Ministry of Education gave to developing universities among the leading international universities. They did

this by evaluating their programs and activities to improve and bring them to a higher level. This outcome is one of the central goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

Table (5) shows that the overall average of the questionnaire items of the second dimension was 4.28 with a standard deviation of 0.90, scoring a very high degree in strengthening the Islamic identity, enhancing student values and skills, and promoting the values of moderation and tolerance. This result confirms what Al-Ghamdi (2020, p. 338) noted in the flexibility of Saudi education policy to keep pace with contemporary challenges, including intellectual currents. This finding may be explained by the interest of the education officials in renewing their policy objectives by including issues related to developing students' values that encourage tolerance, moderation and combating extremism.

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The result may be attributed to the fact that the activities, programs, events, and curricula ranked first and second because the student learns and receives information in universities directly or indirectly from the curriculum or educational and cultural activities. This result may also be due to the role of the leaders of higher education, who pay great attention to the development and

modernisation of university programs. They also constantly monitor their quality and take care of activities, including holding international and local conferences to combat extremist ideology. This finding is consistent with Al-Dahmash's (2019) findings, as he concluded that the education sector in Saudi Arabia is considered a role model in confronting intellectual terrorism through holding conferences and seminars and working to activate their findings and recommendations on the ground. Most questionnaire items have received a high score, except for one, which got a very high score.

Table (6) shows that the overall average of the questionnaire items on the reality of universities' role in confronting extremism was 3.93, and a standard deviation reached 1.03, with a high degree of agreement. This result shows that the university's role as an educational institution strengthens identity and enhances student values and skills. This result may be explained by the fact that the university is the source of experience and enlightenment for the student; there, he spends a long time learning and gaining experiences and values.

Table (6) also shows that the overall average of the questionnaire items on the reality of the role of faculty members in confronting extremism was 3.85, and a standard deviation reached 1.06, with a high degree of agreement. Most questionnaire items received a high score except for two; one received a high score, and the other got a medium score. This result demonstrates the significant role of faculty in promoting student identity, values, and skills. This result may be explained by the university professor being a role model for all students. It is also shown in Table (6) that the overall average of the questionnaire items on the reality of the role of university curricula in confronting extremism was 3.96, and a standard deviation reached 1.03, with a high degree of agreement. All of the questionnaire items also received a high score. This result demonstrates the great role of university curricula in strengthening identity and enhancing student values and skills. This result may be explained by the fact that the curriculum at the university is one of the most important sources of

learning through its activities, experiences, information, lessons, and diverse knowledge. The curriculum also allows the student to self-learn and research global information resources.

Finally, it is shown in Table (6) that the general average of the questionnaire items on the reality of the role of university activities, programs, and events in the face of extremism amounted to 4.00, and a standard deviation reached 1.03, with a high degree of agreement, where most of its questionnaire items received a high score except for an item that obtained an average score. This result demonstrates the great role played by the university's educational and cultural activities, programs, and events in strengthening identity and enhancing student values and skills. This result may be explained by the fact that educational activities and programs work to develop various educational values because of the element of interaction between learners and teachers and the exchange of positive communication. The result also includes lectures and seminars that teach students various educational values, such as tolerance and moderation, and inform them of the dangers of extremism, violence, and terrorism. It is a natural outcome of what the Ministry of Education has been doing for decades to develop awareness programs that suit the current stage.

### **8.1.3. Comparison of the reality of the role of public education and Higher Education in combating extremism**

Table (7) shows that the reality of the role of public education policy, strategies, and institutions is greater than that of Higher Education policy, strategies, and institutions in their quest to achieve the Kingdom's Vision 2030 goals. This result may be because the public education policy and its institutions are the first source of instilling ideas and values and the first step that educated individuals follow in their scientific and educational journey.

Table 7

Comparison of the reality of the role of public education and Higher Education policies and strategies in combating extremism

Type of education	Axis	Arithmetic averages
Higher Education	The reality of Higher Education policy and strategies	4.28
	The reality of Higher Education institutions	3.95
Public Education	The reality of public education policy and strategies	4.48
	The reality of public education institutions	4.28

Higher education institutions are research institutions that prepare individuals for professional, and research lives to meet labour market requirements. Therefore, their educational objectives have less impact because the learner enrolls in them at an advanced age and has a lot of values and knowledge that shape his personality.

**Answering the second question**

The second question was addressed using two methods. The first method measured the differences between teachers' responses to the reality of the role of public education policy and institutions in combating extremism and its dimensions according to some variables. The second method was by measuring the differences between the responses of faculty members to assess the reality of the role of Higher Education policy and institutions in combating extremism and its dimensions based on some variables:

**8.1.4. First method**

The two-sample t-test (also known as the independent samples t-test) was used to identify the significance of differences in the responses of the study sample on the reality of the role of Higher

Education policy, strategies, and institutions in combating extremism related to variables (gender, nationality) as shown in Table (8).

Table (8) shows that the value of (t) is statistically insignificant for the reality of public education policy, strategies, and institutions. This result shows that teachers' views are consistent, and there is no disagreement about the reality of the role of public education policy, strategies, and institutions in combating extremism.

Table 8  
Test of two independent samples to identify the significance of differences in teachers on the reality of the role of public education policy in combating extremism

Variables	Gender	N	Arithmetic average	Standard deviation	T	Significance level	Verbal significance
The reality of public education policy and strategies	males	99	4.48	0.52	0.63	0.950	Statistically insignificant
	Female	249	4.48	0.60			
The reality of public education institutions	males	99	4.25	0.59	0.515	0.607	Statistically insignificant
	Female	249	4.29	0.69			

One-way ANOVA test was used to identify the significance of differences in the responses of the study sample of teachers of public education schools regarding the reality of the role of public education policy, strategies, and institutions in combating extremism based on variables (years of work) as shown in the following Table:

Table 9  
One-way ANOVA to indicate differences between average teachers' responses in (years of experience) variable

Source of Variation			SS	DF	MS	F	$\alpha$	Statistical significance
Years of Experience	The reality of public education policy and strategies	Between groups	7.59	3	2.53	8.10	0	Statistically significant
		Within groups	107.45	344	0.31			
		Total	115.03	347				
	The reality of public education institutions	Between groups	7.73	3	2.58	6.20	0	Statistically significant
		Within groups	142.93	344	0.42			
		Total	150.65	347				

Table (9) shows that the value of (p) is statistically significant at the significance level of 0.05. This result indicates that there are statistically significant differences in the views of the sample according to years of experience. Scheffé's test was used for dimensional comparisons to identify the significance of these differences, as shown in Table (10).

Table 10  
Scheffé's test for dimensional comparisons in the experience years variable

Dimensions	Years of Experience	Arithmetic averages	Less than 5 years	5 years to less than 10 years	10 years to less than 15 years	15 years and above
The reality of Higher Education policy and strategies	Less than 5 years old	4.02				
	5 years to less than 10 years	4.36				
	10 years to less than 15 years old	4.72	☒	☒		☒
	15 years and above	4.46				
The reality of Higher Education institutions	Less than 5 years old	4.44				
	5 years to less than 10 years	4.03				
	10 years to less than 15 years old	4.50		☒		
	15 years and above	4.26				

Table (10) shows that there are statistically significant differences between the average responses of general education teachers on the first dimension (the reality of general education policy and strategies) in favour of the sample members with experience from (10) years to less than (15) years over the rest of the teachers. However, there are no differences between the rest of the experience categories of teachers. It is also clear that there are statistically significant differences

between the average responses of general education teachers on the second dimension (the reality of public education institutions) in favour of sample members with experience from (10) years to less than (15) years compared to experience from (5) years to less than (10) years. Again, there are no differences between the rest of the experience categories of teachers.

This result may be explained by the fact that teachers with (10) to less than (15) years of experience are more aware of the reality of public education in terms of its policies, strategies, and institutions in combating extremism and spreading the values of moderation. This finding aligns with the result of the Shahwan study (2019), which found that most teachers interested in intellectual security do not have a clear strategy to support them but rather employ subjective strategies to promote moderation. The more years of experience teachers have, the more they know about appropriate strategies to enhance students' intellectual security.

### **The second method**

The two-sample t-test was used to identify the significance of the differences in the responses of the study sample on the reality of the role of Higher Education policy, strategies and institutions in combating extremism based on variables (gender, nationality) as shown in Table (11). Table (11) shows that the value of (t) is not statistically significant for the level of reality of higher education policy and strategies.

Table 11

Test of two independent samples to identify the significance of differences in faculty members' responses

Variables	Gender	N	Arithmetic average	Standard Deviation	T	Significance Level	Verbal significance
Gender	The reality of HE policy and strategies	Males	42	4.31	0.351	0.726	Statistically insignificant
		Female	135	4.27			
	The reality of HE institutions	Males	42	3.79	-1.44	0.151	
		Female	135	4.00			
Nationality	The reality of HE policy and strategies	Saudi	147	4.24	-1.27	0.204	Statistically insignificant
		Non-Saudi	30	4.44			
	The reality of HE institutions	Saudi	147	3.90	-1.85	0.066	

This result indicates that Saudi university faculty members' viewpoints about the reality of higher education policy and strategies are consistent regardless of gender and nationality. The one-way ANOVA test was also used to identify the significance of the differences in the responses of the study sample, faculty members in Saudi universities, about the reality of the role of higher education policy, strategies, and institutions in combating extremism related to the variables (years of work, and academic rank) as shown in Table (12).

Table 12

One-way ANOVA to indicate differences between average faculty responses to the variables of years of experience and academic rank

Source of Variation			SS	DF	MS	P	$\alpha$	Statistical significance
Years of Experience	The reality of Higher Education policy and strategies	Between groups	1.34	3.00	0.45	0.76	0.521	Statistically insignificant
		Within groups	101.63	173.00	0.59			
		Total	102.96	176.00				
	The reality of Higher Education institutions	Between groups	7.77	3.00	2.59	4.03	0.011	Statistically significant
		Within groups	111.32	173.00	0.64			
		Total	119.09	176.00				
Scientific rank	The reality of Higher Education policy and strategies	Between groups	11.839	5	2.368	4.443	.0010	Statistically significant
		Within groups	91.125	171	.533			
		Total	102.964	176				
	The reality of Higher Education institutions	Between groups	15.472	5	3.094	5.106	.0000	Statistically significant
		Within groups	103.623	171	.606			
		Total	119.095	176				

Table (12) shows that the value of (p) is statistically non-significant at the significance level of 0.05 for faculty members' responses to the reality of the role of Higher Education policy and strategies in countering extremism based on a variable (years of experience). Saudi university faculty members' opinions on the reality of Higher Education policy and strategies do not vary according to their years of experience.

However, Table (12) shows that the value of (p) is statistically significant at the level of 0.05 among the responses of faculty members about the reality of the role of higher education policy, strategies, and institutions in combating extremism due to the two variables (years of work, and

academic rank). Scheffé's test was used for dimensional comparisons to determine the significance of those differences, as shown in Table (13).

Table 13  
Scheffé's test for dimensional comparisons in the variable years of experience

Dimensions	Years of Experience	Arithmetic averages	Less than 5 years old	From 5 years to less than 10 years	From 10 years to less than 15 years old	From 15 years and above
The reality of Higher Education institutions	Less than 5 years old	4.22				
	From 5 years to less than 10 years	4.47				*
	From 10 years to less than 15 years old	3.90				
	From 15 years and above	3.83				

Table (13) shows that there are statistically significant differences between the average responses of the sample on the reality of Higher Education institutions in combating extremism in favour of the sample members with experience from (5) years to less than (10) years compared to the sample members with an experience more than (15) years and above. There are no differences between the rest of the categories of years of experience on the reality of the role of Higher Education institutions in combating extremism. This finding may be explained by the fact that experienced faculty members with experience from (10) to less than (15) years are more aware of the reality of Higher Education in terms of the role of its institutions in combating extremism and spreading the values of moderation and moderation. Scheffé's test for dimensional comparisons was used to identify the significance of these differences, as shown in Table (14).

Table 14  
Scheffé's test for dimensional comparisons in the scientific rank variable

Dimensions	Scientific rank	Arithmetic averages	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Lecturer	Bachelor degree	Other
The reality of Higher Education policy and strategies	Professor	4.56						
	Associate Professor	3.97						
	Assistant Professor	4.44						
	Lecturer	4.15						
	Bachelor degree	4.85		*				
	Other	4.00						
The reality of Higher Education institutions	Professor	3.96						
	Associate Professor	3.51						
	Assistant Professor	4.27		*				
	Lecturer	3.91						
	Bachelor degree	4.23						
	Other	4.00						

Table (14) shows statistically significant differences between the average responses of the sample faculty members in Saudi universities about the reality of Higher Education policy and strategies based on the variable of scientific rank. The differences between the sample members were limited to individuals with a bachelor's degree and associate professors and between assistant professors and those with the qualification of an associate professor. However, there are no differences between the rest of the categories of scientific rank.

**Answering to the third question**

To combat extremism and deviant intellectual currents in the light of Saudi Vision 2030, a proposed strategy was designed to activate the role of education. The steps required for this strategy are displayed in Figure (1).

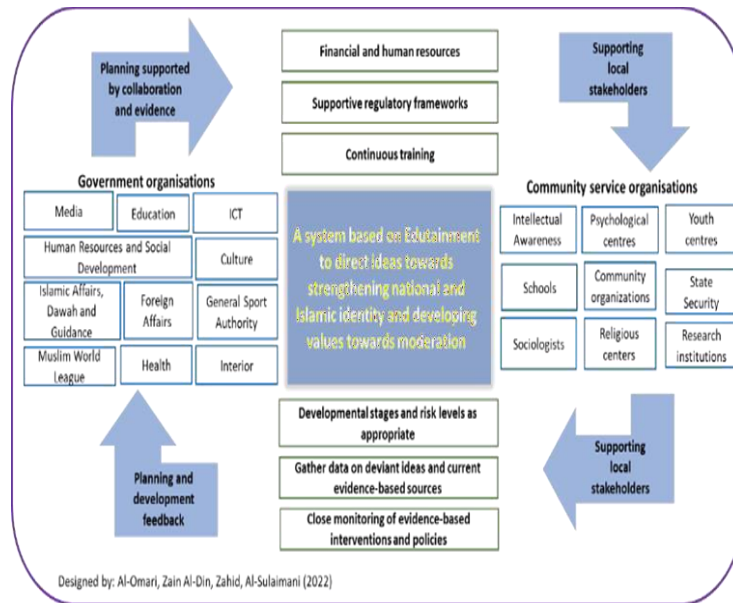


Figure 1. Steps of building the proposed strategy

Based on the results of the analysis of the field survey of the opinions of faculty members in Saudi universities and teachers in schools, and given the cultural and social background of Saudi society and its educational institutions, the proposed strategy was developed, which requires concerted efforts between the institutions and organisations of society as follows:

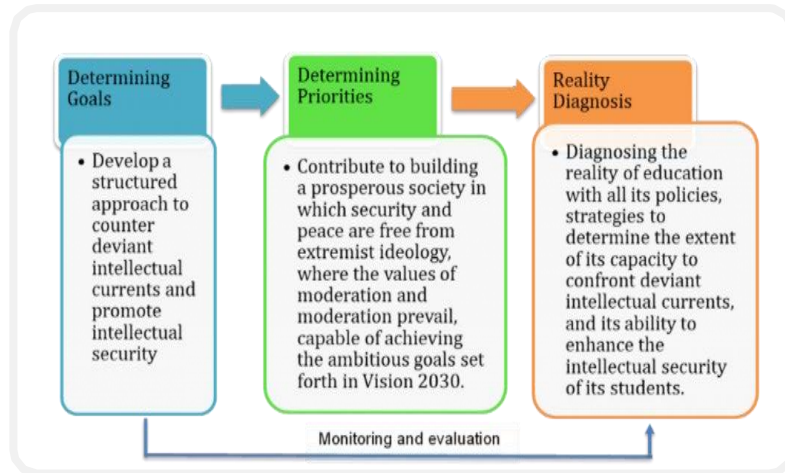


Figure 2. The proposed strategic model to combat extremism and intellectual currents in light of Saudi Vision 2030

The proposed strategy to combat extremism and intellectual currents in light of Saudi Vision 2030 is shown in the model in Figure (2). It is in line with what the Ministry of Education has been seeking for decades to strengthen the national and Islamic identity, combat deviant ideas and call for consolidating the values of moderation and tolerance. The proposed model is consistent with the policies of the Ministry of Education, starting with its development of educational policy and continuing through the strategic plans for its implementation at the various educational stages of public and university education. The model also aligns with the educational policy of establishing intellectual awareness units in various educational institutions in cooperation with the Etidal Center and all institutions of society. This finding meets teachers' need for a well-defined strategy to enhance students' intellectual security, which teachers lacked in the Shahwan study (2019). **Recommendations**

- Implement the proposed strategy in the current research and distribute it to all institutions of society to ensure concerted efforts to enhance intellectual security and refute deviant intellectual currents.
- Encourage universities and schools to educate students about the danger of drifting behind deviant intellectual currents for oneself, the country, and the world.

- Enable universities and schools to take advantage of technology and social media to spread awareness and enhance the intellectual security of students and all segments of society.

### **The future insight**

The following insights align with Saudi Vision 2030 and promote a secure, well-rounded learning environment.

- Personalised Learning: AI-powered platforms will tailor educational content to individual students, enhancing their intellectual security.
- Virtual Reality (VR): Immersive VR experiences will transform education, fostering deeper understanding and critical thinking.
- Cybersecurity Education: Institutions will prioritise teaching online safety and recognising threats to ensure students' intellectual security in the digital realm.
- Ethical AI Education: Students will learn about AI ethics, promoting responsible use and critical thinking about AI technology.
- Collaboration and Global Connectivity: Digital platforms will facilitate global collaboration, exposing students to diverse perspectives and enhancing intellectual security.
- Media Literacy and Critical Thinking: Emphasis on evaluating sources and identifying misinformation will strengthen students' intellectual security.
- Emotional Intelligence and Well-being: Education will prioritise emotional intelligence and well-being, enabling resilient navigation of intellectual challenges.
- Innovative digital applications to enhance the intellectual security of general education students in light of Saudi Vision 2030.
- An inductive study in the history of deviant intellectual currents and the efforts of educational institutions to confront them.

## **Conclusion**

Education is the starting point for building people, so it should be taken care of and developed according to contemporary requirements. There is no doubt that technology plays a vital role in this. Therefore, in our electronic survey, we assessed the reality of the role of education in combating extremism and deviant intellectual currents in light of Saudi Vision 2030 by distributing electronic questionnaires and analysing the data. Based on the data from the study, we have designed a proposed strategy for the role of education in combating extremism and deviant intellectual currents in light of the Saudi Vision 2030 to enhance children's intellectual security and promote the values of moderation and tolerance for all segments of society as an essential element in the humanisation of cities. We aim to disseminate security and peace locally and globally using technical learning tools, books, and regular classrooms.

Hence, there is a need to activate the proposed strategy for the role of education in combating extremism and deviant intellectual currents in light of Saudi Vision 2030 using Smart Learning as the electronic application for learning entertainment in the future. Therefore, researchers will continue on the path towards developing modern means and technologies that will enhance intellectual security and spread the values of moderation as the norm in our digital age.

In light of the study's results, we recommend enhancing intellectual security and utilising the benefit of technology in spreading awareness among students and all segments of society.

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