Assessment of children’s digital courseware in light of developmentally appropriate courseware criteria

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Abstract
Developmentally appropriate courseware can play a crucial role in enhancing children’s learning and development. Research studies have demonstrated that early childhood educators face major challenges in selecting and updating developmental courseware that supports young children’s development. The primary purpose of this study was to assess children’s digital courseware employed in Jordanian kindergartens in accordance with developmentally appropriate courseware criteria. A random sample of 57 courseware programs employed in both public and private kindergartens was assessed using 10 criteria for developmentally appropriate courseware. The findings suggest that the courseware implemented in Jordanian kindergartens exhibited a moderate degree of appropriateness. The courseware was the most developmentally appropriate in the areas of “technical features” and “clear instruction,” while the real-work model and transformations were the least appropriate. Moreover, the findings revealed that children’s courseware implemented in public kindergartens was more developmentally appropriate than those in private kindergartens. These findings and their implications were discussed.

Introduction
In July 2003, the Jordanian Ministry of Education (MOE) launched an ambitious national initiative called Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy (ERiKE 1) to reform the educational system within the country, part of which concerned the provision and quality of early childhood education. The major government’s aim from ERiKE 1 includes improving teaching and learning through new curricula, expanding kindergartens and creating more facilities for them, and training teachers in new methods, computer literacy and education strategies using information and communication technology (Kaga, 2007; MOE, 2008). One of subcomponents of ERiKE 1 focused on the integration of technology into all educational stages, including kindergarten.

The initial phase of ERiKE 1 ended in 2009, after 5.5 years of implementation. During that period, the MOE made great strides for applications of educational technology. The technology component was incorporated into the national kindergarten curriculum launched in 2004 (MOE & NCFA, 2004) and modified in 2006 (MOE, 2006).

After expanding the number of public kindergartens across the country, the MOE introduced computer into the kindergartens’ environment as a fundamental corner alongside other educational corners (MOE & NCFA, 2004). In addition to the increase in the number of computers provided in