

The State of School Leadership in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Planning for Principal Training, Professional Development, and Leadership Succession

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Objectives

- Discuss the state of school leadership selection, training, and development in KSA
- Define Principalship in KSA
- Understand the career paths of those that go into the principalship
- Planning for improved training, professional development, and leadership succession

Principalship in KSA

○ Hierarchy

- Ministry of Education → Regional supervisors → District supervisors → School leaders

○ Characteristics

- Any K12 educator designated by a district supervisor and approved by the higher authority to lead a school.
- Selected from teachers.
- Teachers' education and qualifications:
 - Three years of study with an Intermediate Institute diploma for kindergarten teachers.
 - Four years study with a bachelor degree for elementary, middle, and high school teachers (UNESCO).

Principalship in KSA **continued**

- Core domains of school leaders responsibilities (Alshehri, 2015)
 - Establishing school goals and expectations
 - Managing the teaching and learning process
 - Managing the school operational activities
 - Building an effective team among teachers and school staff
 - Supporting teachers and other staff professional development
 - Collaborating with families and the community

Principalship in KSA **continued**

- Similarities and Differences with other countries
 - Job responsibilities are somewhat similar
 - Leaders characteristics and the way to carry out the responsibilities are different
 - In USA: 97.8% hold a Master or higher (Taie & Goldring, 2017), go through a leadership pre-service training, and hold a leadership license.
 - In Saudi Arabia: 96% hold a bachelor or lower (Barry, study in progress), do not have leadership pre-service training, and do not hold a leadership license.
 - Education in Saudi Arabia is centralized—school leaders often cite lack of autonomy to carry out responsibilities (Meemar, Poppinki & Palmer, 2018).

KSA Effort to Improve School Leadership

New requirement to hold a leadership position:

- Must pass the Qiyas leadership examination
- Must have at least 4-5 experiences in the field of education including teaching experiences.
- Plan to send candidates to universities in the UK and USA to receive theory and practice.
- Taibah University-The George Washington University partnership → Ph.D. in ELA and PMC specifically for school leaders.

KSA Effort to Improve School Leadership

- Clear vision, based on strong pillars
 - Education for all (access: pre-primary 16.34%, primary 96.38%, middle school 80.45%, tertiary 61.1%).
 - Vision for 2030
 - ❖ designed to progressively reduce Saudi Arabia's dependence on oil
 - Focusing more on human resources
 - Making education a priority sector
 - *Total budget expenditure on education 25% (\$57.9 billion) (2015)(Saudi Business council).*
 - Saudi Arabia understands that to succeed in this ambitious program, their schools must be led by qualified leaders.

VISION 2030 on Education

- Develop a modern curriculum
- Engage parent
- Close the gap between education output and job requirements
- Help students make careful career choices
- Improve students' academic achievement nationally, regionally and internationally
- Give gradually more autonomy to schools (900 out of 30,067 schools were granted 21 areas of authorities in 2011)

VISION 2030 on Education **continued**

- The granted authorities to school leaders are divided in two areas:
 - 12 administrative authorities (choosing assistant principal, deducting pay from employees' salaries if they are late or absent, deciding on teachers who can be transferred, rewarding teachers who substitute for absent teachers, adopt models to improve their schools, etc.)
 - 9 technical authorities (adding programs that address some of the school problems, accepting students who are out of the school district, temporary modifications of the duration of classes, determining when a student behavior presents a danger to employees, etc.)

Career paths to the principalship in KSA

(Al Abbas, 2010).

- Work performance and qualification
 - ❖ Relevant exp. in the field of education
 - ❖ Degree, in service training courses
 - ❖ Predisposition towards leadership
 - ❖ Knowledge of laws and regulations governing education and schools
- Collaborative relationship
 - ❖ Ability to establish good relationship with students, parents, teachers and higher authority.
 - ❖ Communicate effectively with others
- Personal attributes
 - ❖ Self-confidence and good character
 - ❖ Visionary, flexible, and courageous

What it's Like to be a New Principal in KSA

Statements reported by school leaders (SL) to Alshehri (2015, pp. 178-189) in his doctoral dissertation research:

- "The background of all school principals including me has nothing to do with school leadership skills and requirements. We were prepared to be teachers."
- "I didn't take any training program as a prerequisite to becoming a principal. I did not study any courses in school management at the university."
- "I started my position without any previous preparation. I attended three day induction program after I was appointed to the principalship job."

What it's Like to be a New Principal in KSA

Statements reported by school leaders (SL) to Alshehri (2015, pp. 178-189) in his doctoral dissertation research:

- "During the first month of my appointment as a school principal, the training and development center sent me a letter inviting me to attend the induction program. It was four-day (20hrs). It was almost all about school regulation."
- "School principals were sent half-year training programs plan and were asked to attend the required programs according to the plan."

Conclusion: Induction or in-service programs or a combination were the only training received to lead schools.

Reasons to pursue

Why become a principal in KSA?

- 1 Personal and professional challenges
- 2 Desire to be a leader
- 3 Self-actualisation or desire to reach potential
- 4 Desire to have a strategic influence on education
- 5 Desire to broaden career options
- 6 Increased salary and benefits
- 7 Stepping stone for a higher position
- 8 Encouraged by a principal or colleagues
- 9 Desire to work with diverse individuals and groups
- 10 Status and prestige of administration

Why Not become a principal in KSA?

- 1 Highly stressful
- 2 Requires a large time commitment
- 3 Is highly accountable for student achievement
- 4 Involves an enormous amount of paperwork
- 5 Insufficient compensation
- 6 Too much responsibility
- 7 Societal problems make it difficult to focus on instruction
- 8 Negatively affects administrator's family life
- 9 Negative influences by parent and community groups
- 10 Lack of support from the educational district

Planning for Leadership Succession

- Discuss the current and future for leadership succession.

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