

SAUDI ARABIA EDUCATIONAL MAP- FROM SAND DUNES TOWARDS WESTERN SKYSCRAPERS PLATFORMS

Abdullah Al-Qanri

School of Education, University of New South Wales
Sydney, Australia

ABSTRACT: *This paper explores the emergence of the concept of education and its ideological roots vis-s-vis Islamic principles and pedagogy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Hence, a general description of the Saudi Arabian educational system and a general account of how and when education was first introduced into the KSA is a necessary step to provide a complete picture the system of education and its rapid developments towards E-learning and/or distance learning status. In fact, all legal decisions within the Kingdom; however, are based on the Sharia Law-Islamic law as set forth by the Holy Qur'an, as stated in the Education Policy document. Therefore, according to Islamic studies constitute a major portion of the curriculum at the educational levels, and even science textbooks emphasize Islamic notions. This, in turn, may propose some obstacles in learning and teaching distance education from a Western ideological perspective. Therefore, the paper will lay out some of these hindrances and pedagogical implication in how to transition from traditional towards a more modern pedagogical education paradigm within the KSA.*

KEYWORDS: Ideology, Pedagogy, Education, Policy Documents, Islamic, Western, Saudi Arabia

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the role and function of the English language and English language teaching in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (hereafter, KSA). First, I aim to give a detailed general description of the Saudi Arabian educational system and a overview historical account of how and when the English language was first introduced into the KSA.. In fact, modern education in KSA dates from 1926 when Ibn-Saud's government first assumed responsibility for education by establishing a Directorate of Education and the educational policy Islamic studies constitute a major portion of the curriculum at the educational levels, and even science textbooks emphasize Islamic notions

In 1926, a Directorate General for Education (hereafter, DGE) was established by a royal decree, the Directorate evolved later on into the Ministry of Education in 1953. This decree gave the Ministry of Education (MoE) control over all educational matters within the Kingdom. Islam, nevertheless, is a core and vital resource of society, judicial and educational systems and in everyday life. This paper traces the beginning of the education system in KSA and gives a general overview of the education system in KSA during and before the Ottoman Empire control of the provinces of KSA-Hejaz and al-Ahsa until 1923 when Ibn Saud invaded these provinces.

The Pre-Saudi Era

It should be acknowledged that the present educational system in KSA is in fact a result of various internal and external factors that shaped and impacted on the current educational system. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia developed from disparate nomadic tribal groups in the pre-Saudi period which is commonly defined as the period from after the birth of Islam in the seventh century till the formal unification of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1926. Al-Ghamdi & Abdul-Jawad (2002) provided a historical background of the educational system in the Arabian Peninsula. They divide this period into the “Golden Age”, “The Wahhabi Period” and “The Unification Period”.

The Golden Age (750-1400)

This Golden Age era is noted for its religious devotion and search for knowledge. This was the beginning of the Islamic civilization in all its glory. Despite this fact, there was no such unified education system or organisation existing at that time. However, contemporary reports show that “the prophet Mohammed urged his followers to learn the rudiments of reading, writing, and the most importantly the study of religion” and encouraged the provision of free education (Dodge, 1962 p.1). This education provision was, according to (Kinany, 1957), characterized by the following factors: - first, education and religious knowledge were declared compulsory in the Muslim world; second, there was an insistence on free education; and third, education and Muslim teaching were conducted in a spirit which stimulated original thinking and personal investigation. However, according to (Kinany, 1957), the educational advancement not only concentrated on religious studies and political application of religious values in everyday life, but also on prose literature, art, poetry, history, geography, mathematics, natural science, and medicine.

In this tradition of emphasizing both religious and secular education, education in the Arabian Peninsula, specifically, has developed along two lines: traditional and formal. Learning of the former type is considered a pre-school stage. It is also religiously oriented and conducted at home or the mosque. The curriculum of the Qur’anic school is based on the Qur’an as the basic text and on the *Hadith* (Prophet Mohammed saying).

In contrast, formal education was organized into two types of schooling: The *kuttab* (primary school) and *madrassa* (school of higher learning) (see Fig 1). In the *kuttab*, instruction was limited to subject matter such as religions, Arabic language and basic arithmetic (Elyas & Picard, 2010). Although the *kuttab* has given way to the modern elementary school in the twentieth century, it is interesting to note that there are still a number of characteristics of the modern elementary such as the nature the curriculum, the instruction method and the image of the teacher as the ultimate power in class (Elyas & Picard, 2010).

The Wahhabi Period (1740-1900):

The Wahhabi movement began in the Middle of the Eighteenth Century in the central part of the Arabian Peninsula (*Najed*). This movement was led by Ibn Abdul-Wahhab which bears his name. This movement was a puritanical, reformist Muslim movement that basically originated in Syria and is described as.

One of the earliest and strongest notes of protest against innovation was struck by a Syrian theologian in the fourteenth century. His battle cry was “back to the Qur’an and tradition” he waged a relentless war against the

speculative individualism of philosophers and mystic as well as against the compromises of the theologian in a supreme effort to re-establish formalism. His cause was ultimately taken up in the eighteenth century by the preacher Muhammad Ibn Abdul-Wahhab who hailed from Najed-the central province in Saudi Arabia (Tibawi, 1962, p.60).

What was interesting in the central part of the Arabian Peninsula-Najed, at that time, from a strictly religious point of view, was a battleground for sectarian animosities and feuds, which were one and all in opposition to the true spirit of Islam. This reform movement did not end with the death of its founder in 1772 but has been echoed by supporters and sympathizers such as the House of Ibn Saud-The Royal family of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The influence and the impact of this movement with its rigidity, strictness and simplicity are in evidence in past and present life of Saudi Arabia.

The status of education in this period was very uninviting. The founder instructed his followers not to send their children to any school other than the Qur'anic school. He was prone to repeat, "We, praise be to God, are followers, not innovators" in the school of Imam Ahmed B. Hanbal.

As a result, the *kuttabs* when existing were reduced or restricted, where they were not, abolished altogether. Moreover, the curriculum of the remaining *kuttabs* were screened to meet the basic principle of the movement's ideology. Therefore, instruction in the primary school was limited to the memorization and recitation of the Qur'an, *Hadith*, *Figh* (Islamic law), and the performance of prayers and other religious rituals (Elyas & Picard, 2010).

The Unification Period (1900-1953)

Although prior to the twentieth century, people on the Arabian Peninsula generally followed similar lifestyles, prior to unification in 1926, the distinctive features of the tribal and nomadic groups in the central and eastern provinces (Najed, Al-Ahsa) and the multicultural society in the Western province (Hejaz), drawn from nearly all Muslim countries can clearly be discerned. The latter group lived primarily in the two Holy cities of Makkah and Madinah where they came into contact with Muslims from around the world. Both societies exhibited similar characteristics and both followed the teaching of the Islamic faith. However, the former was more rigid and strict in beliefs than the latter, due to the influence of the Wahhabi movement in those regions (Al-Ghamdi & Abdul-Jawad, 2002).

The existence of these schools in the Western Province not only contributed a great deal to the overall education but also inspired widespread imitation throughout the Kingdom. This was the turning point from solely religious instruction to a secular- religious education.

The Saudi Era

This influence of the schools described above, the new secular-religion system of education was firmly established in 1926 with the establishment of the General Directorate of Education in the Western Province. The General Directorate was solely responsible for opening schools, setting up a suitable curriculum, and supervising these schools as stated in Article 23 of the 1926 Constitution of the Kingdom. Affairs of public instruction mean the diffusion of learning, skills, and arts; the opening of schools (primary and secondary); the promotion of scientific (religious) institutions; and the special emphasis on the principles of 'true religion' throughout the Kingdom.

The job of the Director General, at that point in time, was to establish new schools and attempt to incorporate changes into the predominantly religion- orientated curriculum. Also, the Directorate had to deal with a number of obstacles that had arisen since its establishment. The first was opposition from the conservative clergy, who viewed the Director General's effort to develop the curriculum not only as a threat in the form of transplanted Western ideas, values and techniques within their own traditional Islamic social milieu, but also in their belief that modern science and its branches was against the teaching of Islam and should be resisted (Assah, 1969, p.178). This matter divided the educational leaders and they took their case to the King for resolution.

After the unification of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a more systematic form of primary and secondary education was implemented under the auspices of the Directorate of Education as a way to modernize Saudi society in harmony with international trends at the beginning of the 20th century. Since both the government and private institutions were permitted to establish institutions of higher education, a separate Ministry of Higher Education was created in 1975. In the 1970s, public education at all levels was provided free of charge, and in KSA students are provided with a monthly allowance, uniforms, books, transportation, and sometimes free lunch meals (Bahgat, 1999). All the education is founded by the government, controlled by it, and run by it. Education in KSA can be divided into four stages according to the major changes in the Saudi era:- (1)The First Stage- Religious Stage; (2) The Second Stage- Systematic Education; (3)The Third Stage- Expansion Stage; and (4) The Fourth Stage- New/Current Stage.

The First Stage: Religious Education (1901-1924)

This period heralds the first step towards a formalized education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In 1901, After Riyadh was captured by its first monarch King Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud; the King quickly realized the importance of education to erase any misleading ideologies in the previous life of the citizens of KSA. For example, some of these misleading ideologies were going back to the pre-Islam era where the people of Arabian peninsula used to worship Idols. Therefore, he believed that education can foster and enlighten the Saudi people and lead them back to the glory and peace provided by the Islam.

The education system of the Arabian Peninsula in the Pre-Saudi era can be described as lacking a broader vision of Islam since the emphasis of education was mainly on the teaching and learning of the basic elements and principles of Islam and the Arabic language. Therefore, following in the steps of the glorious legacy of earlier Islamic civilizations, the aim of the education at the early stages of establishing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was to unite its people by creating a broader education system based on Islamic principles, which in turn, are based on the Islamic doctrine *Tawhid* (Cook, 1999) claims that this so-called holistic 'Islamization' of education is one of the keys to the revitalization of Islam in the region. A comprehensive Islamic teaching approach was put into action in order to achieve "a balanced growth of the total personality. ...through training (infusing) Mohammed's spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and bodily sense (into the curriculum). ...such that faith is infused into the whole of (each student's) personality" (Al-Attas, 1979, p. 158)

Most of the teaching at that time occurred in the called *Kuttab* (religious classrooms held at the mosque) where a group of boys and girls were taught to recite the Qur'an and some sometimes learned basic writing and arithmetical skills (Husen, 1994), as in the pre-Saudi era. This kind of education has no formal organization, but education is an intrinsic part of the religious life

of the community. Additionally the sons of the ruling elites received specialized religious education from the *Ulama* (Muslim scholars). There was no such thing as a public education before 1925. All of the education took place inside the mosques; a tradition which still continues in a few numbers of the remote villages, especially in terms of the teaching of the principles of Islam (See Fig. 1). In his relatively recent report, Rugh (2002) showed how Islamic instruction still infused the curriculum in KSA and that a large proportion of time was given to Islamic instruction. He stated, it “consumes 32% of class time for grades 1-3, 30% in grades 4-6, 24% in grades 7-9, and then 15% or more for grades 10-12” (p.404).

General education, excluding Qu’ranic studies and Islamic instruction, thus, was (and still in some cases is) thought of as fundamentally a matter in the earliest years, of teaching reading, writing, mathematics, with the addition of sciences at the higher levels (see Table 1., Table 2. and Table 3.)

Table 1: Curriculum design at the Saudi Public Primary Schools. *English was not taught in Public Primary schools.*

Subjects	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Religious courses	9	9	9	9	9	9
Arabic course	12	12	12	12	12	12
Social Sciences	1	1	1	1	1	1
General Sciences	1	2	2	2	3	3
Math	4	4	4	5	5	5
Art Classes	1	1	1	1	1	1
Physical Sciences	2	2	2	2	2	2
Patriotic courses	0	0	0	1	1	1
Total	30	30	30	32	33	33

Source: Ministry of Education. KSA. Annual Review Report. 1990/1991

Table 2: Curriculum design at the Saudi Public Middle Schools. *English was not taught in Public Primary schools.*

Subjects	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
Religious courses	8	8	8
Arabic course	6	6	6
Social Sciences Courses	4	4	4
Public health courses	4	4	4
Math	4	4	4
English Courses	4	4	4
Art Classes	2	2	2
Physical Sciences	1	1	1
Total	33	33	33

Source: Ministry of Education. KSA. Annual Review Report. 1986

Table 3: Curriculum design at the Saudi Public High Schools (Arts & Humanities). *English is taught in this level.*

Subjects	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Religious courses	5	6	6
Arabic course	6	4	4
Social Sciences Courses	2	5	4
English Courses	4	4	4
Art Classes	0	0	0
Science Courses	6	0	0
Public health courses	0	0	0
Math	5	3	3
IT Courses	1	1	1
Extra Curricula	1	1	1
Physical Sciences	1	1	1
Total	31	25	24

Source: Ministry of Education. KSA. Annual Review Report. 1985/1986

The Second Stage (1924-1953)

This stage can be called the beginning of systemic education in KSA. In this period King Abdul Aziz held the first educational meeting in the history of the Kingdom after occupying Makkah in 1924. King Abdul Aziz invited all the Imams of Al-Haram Al-Maki and also some of the best scholars from Middle East including Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan to this meeting. In 1926, two years later, King Abdul commenced building the Makkah Scientific Institute in Makkah with the help of the most prominent scholars, imams, and scientists from the around the Middle East. In this stage, secular subjects with the emphasis on Science and Mathematics gained more prominence, although the emphasis remained on Islamic studies.

In 1928, the Ministry of education decided to divide the educational system into five stages instead of three as in the previous period. These were: 1) Kindergarten; 2) Elementary School;

3) Middle School; 4) High School; and 5) Higher Education. Since this was a giant step in the education system, KSA immediately needed teachers to cater to the influx of the students in these different sectors. The need for qualified teachers became particularly urgent in the 1960's (see Table 4). In order to fill this need, the government invited and recruited most of the teachers at that time from neighboring countries such as Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan (see Table 5).

Table 4.

Year	Number of Pupils, schools and Teachers. From 1960-1983					
	Intermediate level			Secondary Level		
	Pupils	Schools	Teachers	Pupils	Schools	Teachers
1960-61	7,042	57	686	2,412	19	105
1962-63	11,217	75	902	3,437	18	157
1964-65	20,275	128	1,095	4,930	26	162
1966-67	34,829	205	1,923	7,953	52	215
1968-69	54,415	282	2,949	13,042	75	463
1970-71	68,967	397	3,343	19,759	87	650
1972-73	98,804	559	5,272	26,776	152	1,337
1974-75	136,883	647	7,418	41,539	182	2,132
1976-77	177,921	824	10,595	59,933	257	3,257
1978-79	220,342	1,210	14,684	83,716	407	4,836
1980-81	256,724	1,539	16,768	100,023	513	5,962
1982-83	301,498	1,922	20,027	100,281	717	7,876

Source: *Educational Statistics in the Kingdom of KSA. Progress of Education in the KSA and the Statistical Indicator. 1999.*

Table 5.

Saudi And Non-Saudi teachers from 1964-1965 to 1982-1983						
Year	Intermediate Level			Secondary level		
	Total	Saudi	Non-Saudi	Total	Saudi	Non-Saudi
1964-65	1,095	401	694	162	39	123
1969-70	3,308	1,096	2,212	512	70	442
1974-75	7,418	2,340	5,078	2,132	415	1,717
1979-80	16,442	4,153	12,615	5,592	935	4,657
1980-81	16,768	4,153	12,615	5,962	1,181	4,781
1981-82	18,261	5,153	13,108	6,902	1,455	5,447
1982-83	20,027	6,324	13,703	7,876	1,817	6,059

Source: *Educational Statistics in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Progress of Education in the KSA and the Statistical Indicator. 1998/1999.*

The Third Stage (1953-1970)

The stage is considered to be the expansion stage of education in KSA. In the 1950s the Gulf States and especially KSA “accumulated huge wealth from oil revenues” (Abir, 1988). This wealth resulted in investment in the development of the country’s infrastructure; one aspect of this is, of course, education. For instance, in 1957, the Ministry Of Education called for the first educational conference to study the problems of the education in KSA; and to attempt to devise some solutions. Furthermore, in 1957 the government opened King Saud University- the first University in the history of the Kingdom. In addition, in 1960, a royal mandate was given to establish a female section for the Ministry of Education. This was considered the stepping point for the girl’s education in Saudi. In 1963 the Higher Committee for Educational Policy in the Kingdom was established.

Unlike many other countries, Abir (1988) suggested that “the expansion of the educational system was not part of the a slow and gradual process of social and economic development, but it was part of the newly-created welfare state where most of the social services, including schools, were offered for the indigenous population for free” (p.194). This abrupt change in wealth and education does not necessary mean a change of life style, culture values, and mentality. KSA was and still strongly an Islamic country. As Abir(1988) puts it: “modernization and economic growth raced far ahead of social and political development,” (p., 116) which created far more problems than it KSA had beforehand. The number of schools was rising as part of stepping up to the new 20th century; however, “the quality of the education ‘the students’ receive (did) not correspond to the need of its society” (Bahgat, 1999, p.129).

Nevertheless, it can be argued that dramatic strides forward were made. Saudi Arabia is a very new country, literally, arising from the sand dunes in 1902 and developing into a Kingdom by 1926. It had no previous infrastructure and no academics or scientific scholars, apart from the Islamic scholars teaching at the mosques. What KSA has achieved with its rapidly acquired wealth, is remarkable. However, without the revenue from oil, it is likely that the education system would not have moved beyond the first stage with only a few schools mostly based on the *Kuttab*.

The Fourth Stage (1970-till now)

This stage heralds the birth of the modern educational era in KSA (see Fig.2). Large numbers of schools have been opened and student numbers, particularly female students, have dramatically increased, (See Table. 4). In 1970, many mandates and policy reform were introduced. It is notably though that the very first policy introduced stated that education in Saudi is based mainly on the teaching of Islam. This is, however, a broader vision of Islam in education than in earlier stages and includes a stronger emphasis on secular subjects alongside and infused with Islamic teaching. Under the rule of King Fahad (1982-2006), major changes occurred within the educational system. For instance, standards for teachers’ certification were made more rigorous and programs of study were upgraded at the 17 teachers’ colleges. Also, more importantly the principles of education formulated by the Higher Committee of Educational Policy were promulgated throughout the Kingdom. These include the responsibility to : 1) strengthen faith in Allah and Islam; 2) foster a holistic concept of the universe; 3) emphasize that life is a stage of work and production to invest full understanding of faith in internal life; 4) proclaim the message of Mohammed; 5) instill Islamic ideals; 6) engender faith in human dignity; 7) reinforce the duty of each Muslim to see the duty of the state to provide education in its various stages within the state’s capacity and resources; 8)

incorporate religious education and maintain Islamic culture at all educational levels; 9) integrate Islamic orientation in sciences and knowledge in the curricula and teaching; 10) stimulate human knowledge through Islam to raise the nation's standard of living; 11) foster fundamental beliefs; and 12) to teach the importance of Saudi history and the preservation of the Islamic religion.

With the systematization of education and greater access to public education came greater participation along with a greater demand for teachers. Nevertheless, illiteracy levels remained high. In 1952, the United Nations reported that KSA had 306 elementary schools, but illiteracy remained between 92% and 95%. Despite great strides forward, a recent report by the UNESCO reports that the same issue is still apparent till today. KSA ranks the fifth among other Gulf Monarchies (see Table 6a, 6b). In order to compact such dramatic statistics, a Ministry of Education was established in 1953 with Prince (later King) Fahad as the first minister of education entrusted with the task of expanding and modernizing educational resources.

Table 6a. Illiteracy percentage in the Gulf Monarchies 15 years and over (1995)

Country	Male	Female	Total
Bahrain	10.9	20.6	14.8
Kuwait	17.8	25.1	21.4
Oman	65.0	NA	NA
Qatar	20.8	20.1	20.6
Saudi Arabia	28.5	49.8	37.2
UAE	21.1	20.2	20.8

Source: UNESCO, *Statistical Yearbook, 1997* (Lanham, MD: Brenan Press, 1997) pp. 1-23 to 1-32.

Table 6b. Illiteracy percentage in the Gulf Monarchies 15 years and over (2010)

Country	Male	Female	Total
Saudi Arabia	11.7	21.4	16.0
Bahrain	6.0	11.0	8.1
Kuwait	12.9	14.8	13.8
Qatar	16.3	11.4	14.6
Oman	11.3	22.7	16.6
UAE	21.5	14.4	19.0

UNESCO, *Statistical Yearbook, 2002*.

From the education policies above which are still the basis of KSA policy today, we can deduce that education in KSA emphasizes the teaching of Islam, unification of the Arabic identity, and the nationalism of KSA (Al-Haq & Smadi, 1999; Ruqh, 2002). In fact, at least 5 to 8 hours a week from primary through to higher education are devoted to the study of the Qur'an, Islamic

tradition, jurisprudence, and the theology And what is interesting and unique to the Saudi Arabian education system is the fact that religion is not separated from but is a part of the disciplines of education, economics, sociology, medicine, and law (Al-Zaid, 1981). Al-Salloom (1995) stressed this fact again by showing how “other parts of the curriculum, such as history, social studies, and Arabic have a fair amount of Islamic content” (p.33).

Al-Haq & Smadi (1999) claimed that “due to their cultural and Islamic teaching, Saudi citizens resist radical change; because Islam continues to be a strong and vital force for the Saudis collectively and individually.” Religion as we can expect is a strong motivating force that governs their behaviors; most phases and aspects of culture, and practically every act and movement of life, are colored by religion. After all, the Kingdom of the Saudi Arabia is the cradle of Islam. Kershaw (1973) demonstrated how religion permeates every aspect of Saudi life by referring to Saudi television. He stated: “in recent years the government has permitted the establishments of several television stations. Programming is strictly censored so that all programs conform to strict Muslim standards which prohibit showing people drinking alcoholic beverages, ‘improperly’ clad women and any intimacy between the sexes in the West. A number of religious programs are included in the schedule and no discussion of religion other than Islam is allowed” (p. 6-7). The rejection of other religions is demonstrated throughout the KSA curriculum. For instance, in Monotheism, grade 7 (2001, p. 91), the *Hadith* is quoted admonishing students to be aware of “the prohibition of emulating the infidels, even if it is done with good intention”.

On the other hand; however, the emphasis on this style of education has led to the fact that “many Arab university graduates were unable to find adequate jobs because they were not properly educated” (Kidar, 2002, p. 415). Kidar explained that he did not mean the number of the schools or the amount of money governments were spending to expand educational facilities, but “rather the quality of education, in which he found “the most alarming discrepancies” (p. 414).

Also, recently, some influential bodies have raised questions about the adequacy of the Saudi Education system. For instance, a World Bank report on Arab education puts it this way: “Education will need to impart skills enabling workers to be flexible, to analyze problems, and to synthesize information gained in different contexts which requires that the students need to focus on learning how to learn” (p. 18). One Saudi observer echoed this, describing Arab University graduates in this way: “typically they have high technical knowledge. ...but they are very weak in communication skills, they cannot write not only in English but in Arabic too” (Sugair, 2002). In his study, (Rugh, 2002) stated that “pedagogy in most Arab schools and university is typically based more on rote learning than it is on critical thinking, problem solving skills, analysis of information, and learning how to learn” (p. 415). Another Harvard study of Arab higher education also found that “widespread practices of rote learning and memorization exercises are incapable of developing capacities in students for problem solving and application of theory to practical concepts” (Cassidy *et al*, 2002).

CONCLUSION

Due to the above issues in teacher training and the quality of learning mentioned above, some influential bodies have raised questions about the adequacy of the KSA Education system. For instance, a World Bank report on Arab education puts it this way: “Education will need to

impart skills enabling workers to be flexible, to analyse problems, and to synthesize information gained in different contexts which requires that the students need to focus on learning how to learn” (p. 18). One KSA observer echoed this, describing Arab University graduates in this way: “typically they have high technical knowledge. ...but they are very weak in communication skills, they cannot write, not only in English, but in Arabic too” (Sugair, 2002). In his study, (Rugh, 2002) stated that “pedagogy in most Arab schools and universities is typically based more on rote learning than it is on critical thinking, problem solving skills, analysis of information, and learning how to learn” (p. 415).

Along with general calls to reform education, there have also been specific criticisms/ concerns voiced regarding higher education in KSA.

As shown above, there are strong pressures on the KSA education system to amend its philosophy and policy in order to take advantage of, and benefit from global developments, comply with workforce needs, promote cultural harmony and good relationships with trading partners, and raise the level of scientific research and development as well as the level of professionalism in all spheres of education. As have been argued previously, in order to accomplish and complement these objectives, the teaching of critical thinking and problem solving is viewed as a vital aspect of education reforms in KSA; especially if the subject is a foreign language that is totally alien to society’s ideologies and culture.

REFERENCES

- Abir, M. (1988). *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Al-Attas, S. M. (1979). *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*. Jeddah: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Al-Ghamdi, A., & Al-Saddat, I. (2002). The development of the educational system in Saudi Arabia. Riyadh: Tarbiat Al Ghad.
- Al-Haq, F., & Smadi, O. (1999). Spread of English and Westernization in Saudi Arabia. *World Englishes*, 15(3), 307-317.
- Al-Salloom, H. (1991). *Tareekh ALharakah Ata'lemmiyah fi AlMalakah AlArabiyah Assoodiyah [History of Education in Saudi Arabia]* (2nd ed.). Riyadh: Ministry of Higher Education.
- Al-Zaid, A. (1981). *Education in Saudi Arabia*, Jeddah: Tihama.
- Assah, A. (1969). *Miracle of the Desert Kingdom*. London: Johnson Publication Ltd.
- Bahgat, G. (1999). Education in the Gulf Monarchies. *International Review of Education*, 45(2), 127-136.
- Cassidy, T., & Miller, M. (2002). *Higher Education in the Arab States: Responding to the Challenges of Globalization*. Harvard University, Cambridge.
- Cook, J. B. (1999). Islamic Versus Western Conception of Education: Reflections on Egypt. *International Review of Education*, 45(3/4), 339-357.
- Dodge, B. (1962). *Muslim Education in Medieval Times*. Washington D.C.: The Middle East Institute.
- Elyas, T., & Picard, M. (2010). Saudi Arabian educational history: impacts on English language teaching. *Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues*, 3, 136-145.
- Kershaw, R. M. (1973). *Attitudes toward religion of Saudi Arabian students in the United States*. Unpublished Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Southern California.

Kidar, N. (2002, March 13). *Chariman of INDEVCO, speech on Arab Education*. Paper presented at the AMIDEAST, Marrakech, Morocco.

Kinany, A. (1957). Some aspects of Arabian culture. *Orient Review*, 3, 19-24.

Rugh, W. (2002). Arab education: Tradition, growth and reform. *The Middle East Journal*, 56(3), 396-414.

Tibawi, A. (1962). Origin and Character of Al-Madrasah. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 25(1/3), 225-238.

APPENDIX

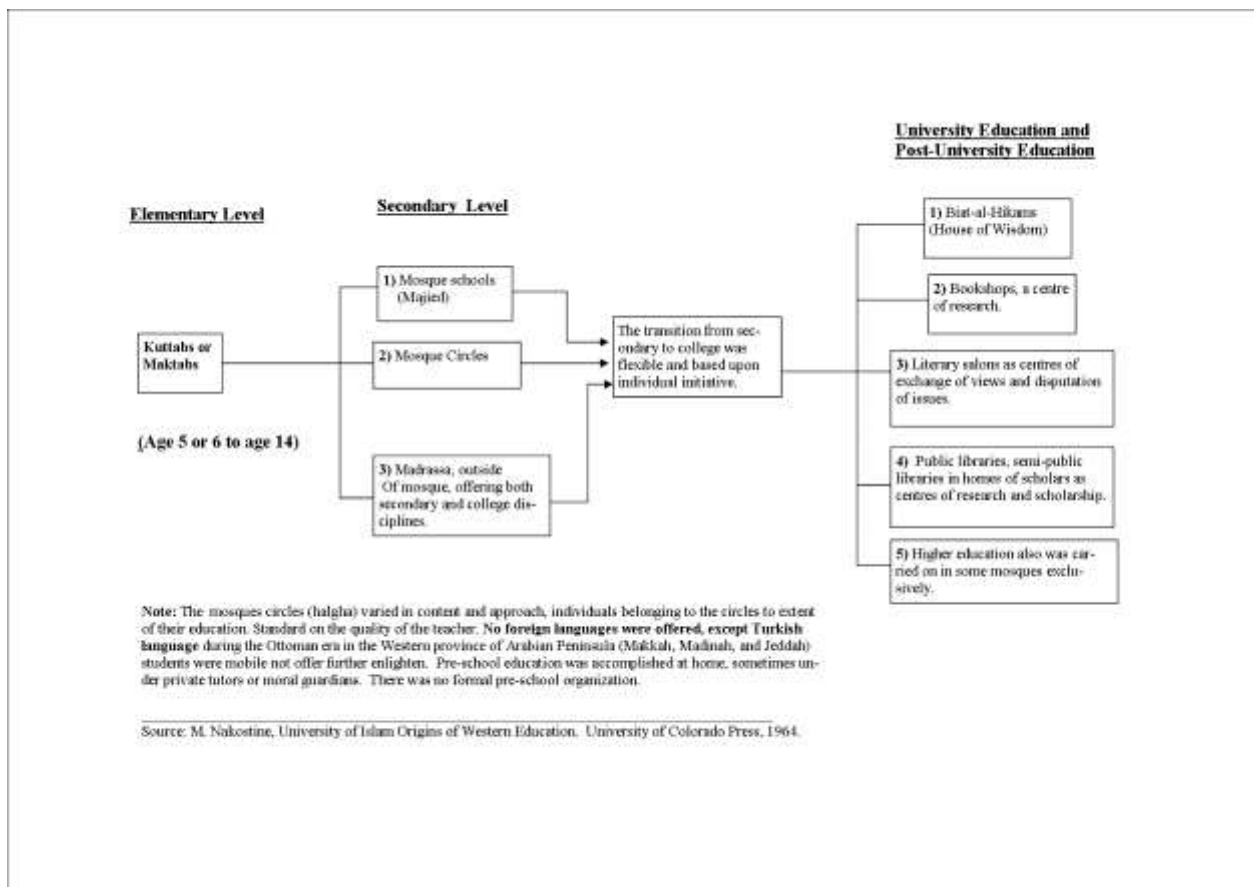


Figure 1. The Educational System in Early Saudi Arabian Era

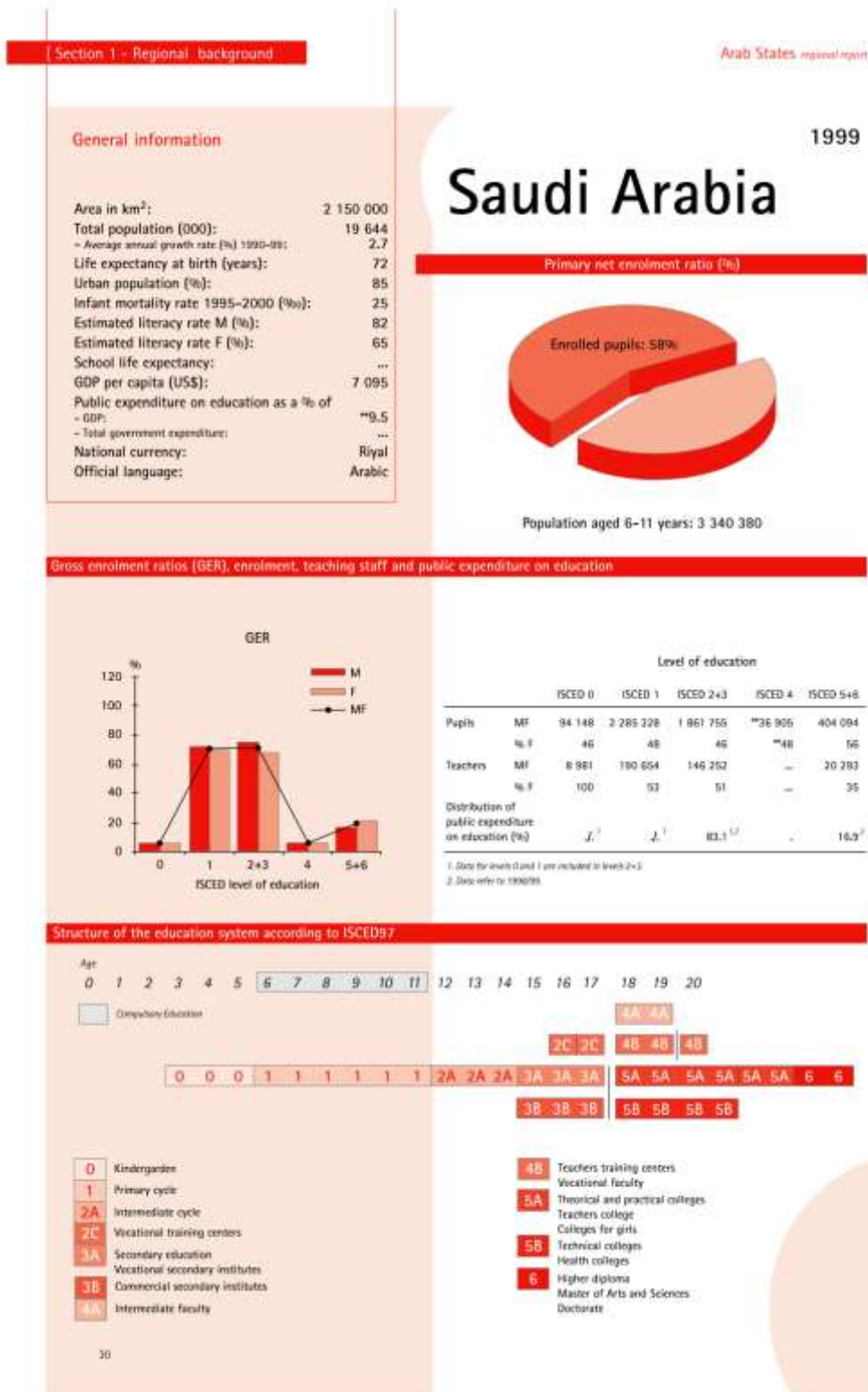


Figure 2 Saudi Arabia and its Education System.