

# Compulsory education in saudi arabia

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Education is very important as it greatly influences people's behavior, interpersonal relationships, leadership and the general economy. When people are educated, they become more open minded to new ideas and it is this change in attitudes that enhances innovation and intelligence in society to make people skilled in certain areas such that they positively impact on the society (World Education Forum, 2000). Saudi Arabia is one of the countries in the Middle East whose economy is growing rapidly. The country therefore needs skilled people to work in the industries who will continue propelling the economy to greater heights.

For this reason, education in Saudi Arabia is something that the government considers as a necessity and that is why it has dedicated itself to improve the literacy levels especially among people in the rural areas. Saudi Arabia being an Islamic state it is ensuring that the citizens follow the culture and traditions as stated in the holy Quran. To enhance this, the school curriculum follows the Islamic principles and belief system. This research will look at the various ways in which education in Saudi Arabia is enhanced in several ways so as to ensure that the children of Saudi Arabia have access to good education.

**Compulsory Education** Compulsory education generally means that children are allowed to go to school without being asked to pay any fees. This is because the government will cater for the expenses that the public schools will incur which are mainly related to school tuition. Compulsory education in Saudi Arabia was initiated during the reign of the two Kings; Faisal and Khalid (1964- 1982). It was then that the education system was changed

from the former Egyptian model and a five year plan was formulated so as to enhance human capital development via education and training.

Initially, 50% of the best children after finishing primary education went to secondary and the rest were enrolled in the training institutions. Nowadays, compulsory education in Saudi Arabia generally includes primary and secondary education and partly higher education which is funded by the government. Compulsory education has been beneficial to the government as well as the people because the poor and marginalized children can now go to school, more people are becoming educated and skilled and the government now has learnt to budget it so well so that all sectors of the economy get enough funding.

This initiative has helped in reducing the cases of unequal distribution of resources (OECD Staff, 230). For easy monitoring of academic progress, the kingdom is divided into school districts (Saudi Arabia, 2009). The Ministry of Education is responsible for formulating educational policies that are used by all schools in the different districts. We will now look at how compulsory education works in the different levels of education.

**Primary Education.** Primary education was made free by the government so that everyone in the country could be educated such that when they become of age and are left on their own, they have high chances of finding a job so that they can meet their daily needs. " Since Saudi Arabia follows the Sharia Law even in the school system, boys and girls are separated and that is why there are separate schools for both genders but all follow the same education system as the exams set are the same (State University, 2009). "

The system therefore includes traditional education for boys, general education for the boys and girls education system.

Primary education constitutes the elementary school where upon successfully completing this stage, a child is awarded the general elementary schools certificate and the intermediate schools where after finishing at around the age of 15, one is awarded the intermediate schools certificate. The subjects that are learnt at the primary level are those that are meant to create a strong foundation so that the children can develop an interest on the areas that they would like to specialize (Sedgwick, 2001). The subjects studied include, mathematics, Arabic, English, science, art, history and religious studies.

The boys on top of this, they study physical education. o Secondary Education Secondary education is supposed to shape the growing children's behavior and build on the areas where they can specialize so that by the time they finish high school and get the general secondary education certificate, technical secondary school or the religious Institute Secondary Education certificate, they can choose either to further their studies if they have passed or to engage in other economic activities if they do not join training institutions. Under the secondary education, there is the general secondary education and the religious secondary school which mainly focuses on the social sciences and religious studies (Rothbard, 2006). " Subjects taught in the general secondary education may be optional but there are those that everyone has to learn which include scientific and literary subjects. The technical secondary school offers vocational,

commercial and agricultural training programs as specified by the General Organization for Technical Education.

This system is good as it makes people define at an early age the areas they would like to specialize on. After completion, there is further vocational and training that seeks to emphasize on the skills acquired.

o Higher Education

There are 7 public universities, teacher training colleges and colleges for women. The universities follow two systems, the modern system that is influenced by the western ways of doing things and the traditional Islamic system which mainly teaches students on Islamic laws and social studies. When students pass their secondary education specifically the Tawjihi or the General Secondary Education Certificate examinations, they will be admitted to the universities (Sedgwick, 2001). " University education is supposed to take four years but there are exceptions in disciplines like medicine, engineering and Pharmacy which can last for up to eight years. The women colleges mostly offer bachelor and masters degrees but there is also a doctorate in education following the provisions made by the General Presidency for Girls Education.

The government has also established higher technical institutions and those that deal in financial and commercial sciences. The courses take about two to three years and after completion, certificates and diplomas are awarded. These non-university higher education institutions are governed by the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training (GOTEVT). The students who are admitted to these schools have to have undergone secondary education and specialized in the science subjects or gone to the vocational and commercial schools.

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Teacher training. The government of Saudi Arabia in wanting to offer the best teachers for the schools they have funded and built, they have invested in teacher training colleges. There are about 18 teacher training colleges and the Ministry of Education ensures that the colleges are well supported so that they produce competent and skilled teachers who will be recruited by the government after the completion of their studies to each in the public schools around the country. The teachers are trained for all the levels which include primary, secondary and higher education.

King Abdul Aziz University usually trains the teachers who will concentrate in higher education (Sedgwick, 2001). o Special Education Specialized education include taking care of the disabled in society, adult education, offering public administration services and educating and training the military personnel in various fields. ? Physically challenged educational initiatives The Saudi government in its quest of equitable distribution of resources has not forgotten the physically challenged people and children in society.

Schools have been established within the kingdom to cater for disabilities like blindness, mental cases and the deafness. These schools generally create a safe haven for the pupils who would otherwise be shunned away by society by ensuring that there are facilities that will cater for the physical therapy sessions they sometimes undergo through and proper training sessions. King Saud University teaches teachers so that they can take care of special children. The College of Applied Medicine also teaches educators on how they can deal with deaf children. Adult education Research has shown that the illiteracy levels are more in women than they are in men. That that <https://assignbuster.com/compulsory-education-in-saudi-arabia/>

is why adult education programs have been developed to deal with such cases.

The Ministry of Education in conjunction with the General Presidency of Girls Education has opened up institutions that help the elderly in society to read and write. In addition to this, they undergo various vocational training classes so that they can gain skills which they can use to earn income. For example, women are taught about weaving and pottery. Public Administration To enhance the skills that people gain in school, the government offers special training to people who work in hospitals so that they can offer the best healthcare to patients, people in the banking sector so that they can manage people's finances well and also the government's resources as they will be more observant on the changes in the domestic, regional and global market trends. Special training is also given to the people who handle electronic data and secretaries.

The goal of building on the skills of the public administrators is to ensure that they serve the public well, manage the country's resources and perform their duties without any form of biasness (Abir, 1988). ? Military Training and Education The government in its commitment to protecting people's lives and safeguarding their lives and property from any form of internal and external danger, it has set up military training camps for all the different divisions within the military.

Where upon completion of the course, a military science degree is awarded. Health training centers are also in place which train doctors in various fields, nurses, laboratory assistants, pharmacists and intuitionists who can

therefore offer better health treatment to people all over the country. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also working with other institutions in conducting research on various things so that they can continue enhancing various sectors of the economy.

**Funding.** The Provision of quality education is something that the government is working on and that is why the government allocates funds to schools in order to buy things like stationery, reading and writing books and also building of classrooms. In building schools, the Ministry of Education emphasizes on the rural development first because a lot of people are now living in the cities and many people are migrating to the urban areas leaving them underdeveloped. “ That is why they need to make sure that there are good schools in the regions and better facilities so that people stay and develop the areas (UNESCO, 2007). The ministry also offers scholarships to the children who have performed well and they would like to further their education in overseas countries. The ministry thus relies on the budget allocation set aside for educational purposes and several charities got from donors. “ The state is developing ways that will make the private sector more involved in the provision of extra funding for educational programs (Raheed, 2008). ” The ministry of Education has therefore come up with ways that aim at increasing the support of the community for this initiative.

Since some private institutions fund schools, they are being given a duty of monitoring and evaluating the activities that occur in such schools so that they can perform better and continue giving the funds. Challenges and Solutions Though the compulsory educational system is meant to make the citizens more knowledgeable, it is faced with various setbacks that need to be

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addressed if the Ministry of Education objectives are to be fulfilled. One of the challenges is that the number of the children going to school is increasing and this has made the public schools especially the primary schools become congested.

This situation is straining the learning process as the teachers have to cope with the large number of children and therefore they cannot address the individual needs of the children. Moreover, performance of the pupils in such schools is diminishing. That is why the private schools are starting to gain popularity because they are offering quality services hence their better performance. If policies are poorly designed, parents will keep their children at home and neither party will gain in the process (Field et al, 2007).

For the state to be able to cope with this problem, they have to redefine their policies so that they can build more schools or hire more teachers. Another challenge is that the teachers or educators salaries have not been increased therefore they are not motivated enough to teach students. The ministry needs to adjust the teachers pay packages because if the problem persists, the people who are largely going to suffer will be the students as they will be caught in a tag of war between the teachers and the state.

Women education is largely governed by Islamic principles and that is why it is difficult for the women to further their education. “ The women especially those who want to pursue higher education in other countries are not easily allowed to travel to other countries and this restricts them from finding pleasure in careers they want to do (Arabic News, 2003). ” On top of this,

priority is always given to the boys therefore women have a limited chance again of enhancing their careers.

The state as much as it is Islamic, it can allow exceptions and even provide guidelines that will help the women who would like to further their studies. Funding is a major issue and this can be attributed to mismanagement of some of the funds allocated to educational ventures and the leaders both of schools and the state not being accountable for the funds. There are cases where schools do not have records of the money they have spent and this makes it difficult to properly allocate funds (Ghonemy, 1998).

The leaders therefore need to guide the people in proper ways and ensure that they positively then to follow in their footsteps. Moreover, they need to properly plan and budget for their activities. In conclusion, compulsory education has helped the state increase its human resource capabilities by supporting education and training programs in almost all sectors of the economy. If they implement the solutions to the various problems mentioned and continually monitor and evaluate the progress of schools, then they have a high chance of improving the education sector and likewise the lives of the people of Saudi Arabia.