Leading Educational Organization

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Abstract

We look at the education system in Saudi Arabia and how it is affected by the culture of the society. Also, before the formal educational system that we know today, education was confined to the mosques and some houses of wealthy families. The effect of the culture on any education system should be considered in the context of the educational discussion. As the formal educational system replaced the formal one, it also assumed the role of being the custodian of the religion and culture. We also discuss the impact of employing female Saudi teachers in the education system. The employment system and how its focus on quantitative over qualitative affected the teaching quality.

Furthermore, the political nature of the country impacts the managerial frame of the ministry of education, which can be characterised as a formal bureaucratic managerial form. However, some unsatisfactory findings from the PEEC have encouraged the organisation to seek improvement in its management and leadership authorisation and decision-making.

The expectation is that the urgent need for change will impose both a direct and indirect impact on the managerial system of education within the comprehension of the social cultures.

How Does the Bureaucratic Educational System Affect Teaching Creativity? An Internal View in the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education

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Introduction

Serious discussion of an issue in any educational system requires a brief historical overview. The educational system of Saudi Arabia in its shape as a formal and organised authority might be considered as a relatively recent development. The first step towards its formal educational shape was to establish the Directorate of Knowledge in 1926, which was running just four schools. Two years later, it was transformed into the Bureau of Knowledge, tasked with running 323 schools and creating an organised authority for education. The first launch of the Saudi Education Ministry was in 1952. This short history of development is understandable considering that the Saudi Arabian Kingdom was formed between 1919 and 1932 (MOE, 2016).

For a coherent discussion on Saudi education, it is valuable to show some factors that contribute to shaping Saudi culture and society. Culture may dictate the general frame of the educational system or even the content of the curricula. Each society has its own shape, meanings and purposes, and transmits all of these perspectives in institutions, art and learning (Szeman & Kaposy, 2011). Therefore, a discussion about the Saudi educational system should not be isolated from the nature of its society's culture. However, what is culture?

Culture is a very wide term with many interpretations. Banks, (1997) considers culture as the ideology, symbols, behaviours, values and beliefs that are shared by a human group. In Saudi Arabia, which is a large state in the south-west of Asia, the first language is Arabic, and the official religion is Islam. Saudi has the two Holy Mosques, which are in Meccah and Medinah, visited by many pilgrims every year from all around the world.

This religious position may explain the deep and conservative Islamic culture in Saudi Arabia. Socially, Saudi Arabian society was formed by many original Arab tribes along with Muslim immigrants. Economically, Saudi had no real resources until oil was discovered in 1938, three years after its foundation. Oil discovery led to an economic boom in the 1970s and eventually a recognised movement in constructing houses, schools and universities.

Consequently, tribal power became weakened since the demand for labour in cities had increased, and many people had to leave their traditional places, joining cities to become part of governmental organisations. Besides, the strong economy attracted foreign workers to Saudi, and they had their influence on many social aspects in Saudi (AlMunajjed, 1997). As I am a Saudi citizen, I may say that recent issues regarding women's rights and contributions in the national development processes have been debated between both parties of conservatives and progressives in Saudi society. Also, from my experience as an employee in the Saudi Ministry of Education, it is very important for me to identify the impact of the culture on our organisation and the creativity of teachers. Furthermore, the rapid economic changes need a highly educational response to engage young people in the developmental process and assist them to compete in the labour market. The critical issue arises when we consider that even today the Saudi Ministry of Education is committed to employing every graduate of state schools without any real competition, which may affect the quality of teaching. This negative impact would be counteracted by a more democratic system, which is suited to allow many changes in demand.

From my position as a teacher for the past six years, I locate myself at the base of the hierarchy of the educational organisation. In this paper, I will discuss the managerial form

of the Ministry of Education and its impact on schools and its staff. In addition, explanations or recommendations could guide those talented and ambitious school principals and teachers to have a greater contribution and enhance their self-actualisation.

The Impact of the Rational Decision to Employ Saudi Girls

As has been shown in the previous section, the formal Saudi education system is a nascent sector. According to AlMunajjed, (1997), females and males are physically segregated in the Saudi education system.

Saudi Arabia is a young country in itself and has a high-value natural energy resource (oil). This commodity was the catalyst for the government and society to go through rapid social, demographic and economic changes. Consequently, the government applied a policy known as Rapid Expansion. That policy was focusing on recruiting Saudi girls in the education sector, which represents quantitative employment rather than qualitative (Abd-el Wassie, 1970). Though the condition to obtain a teaching job was to have a two-year diploma, recruiting Saudi teachers did not cover the needs of the education market as the expansion of this sector was accelerated. This shortage of female teachers forced the government to import them from neighbouring Arab countries such as Egypt and Syria. After a while, a policy known as Saudization was implemented in many sectors in the period between the 60s and 70s, and strongly in the education sector. According to Abd-el Wassie, (1970) those Saudi women who started their career in that period played a very significant role in developing Saudi education today. The real question, which comes from discussing the social culture of Saudi Arabia and its connection to the culture of its educational organisation, is how did a quantitative

expansion produce women as developing key players?

The development of the Saudi girls' education system, concurrent with its compliance with Saudi Arabian social culture, shows motivational factors behind some types of decision-making. Hartwig, (1978) points out five types of rationality in decision-making; they are:

1. Economic
2. Technical
3. Social
4. Legal
5. Political

In the Saudi case, I would exclude technical and legal decision making, as the technology investment is a more recent development. For example, in 2007 the Saudi Arabian government invested almost 2 billion pounds in improving and reforming the education sector using technology (Albugami, and Ahmed, 2015). In addition, there was neither legalisation nor any legal authority to support or prevent women's education. Politically, the Saudi government considered the consequences and the advantages of educated women and their contribution to the country. Indeed, in a Saudi education policy document, Saudi Arabia supports girls' education and their contribution to education (Alharbi, 2010). Economically, it might be considered that the need to enhance the national economy and decrease exporting liquidity, which is the issue of importing workers, encouraged the government to attract Saudi women to replace non-Saudi teachers. Socially, the decision to nationalise Saudi girls' education was a demand made even by educated men themselves. Hamdan, (2005) claimed that Saudi women and men

who received their education in western countries came with different visions for Saudi. They supported women's rights not just to be educated but also to manage and lead. However, the conservative society showed resistance to what they claimed to be a western philosophy. Meanwhile, the Saudi government was trying to play a balanced role between the two main views. That stance led the government to concentrate mainly on the education sector, to make it agreeable and suitable for society. Female education became compulsory in 1960, at the same time that the government committed to make girls' education a segregated sector. According to Fakhro, (1996), the segregation made for a very attractive and very tolerant work environment for women and left other sectors in the country with little contribution from women. It might be argued that encouraging girls' education and making it an attractive workplace compared with other high competition places came at the expense of the quality of Saudi female teachers. The quality of teaching is one of the most critical debates in the Saudi education community. That leads to a discussion in the following section regarding the hierarchy of Saudi educational organisations and their delegation processes, in order to evaluate the leaders' response to changing claims.

The Model of Management in the Ministry of Education

Alkhazim, (2003) have described the political scene of Saudi Arabia as being a monarchy where the King is both the head of state and the Prime Minister. The first authority in the country is the Ministers' Council, containing the Crown Prince, who is the deputy of the King, and all of its members are appointed directly by the King. Rather than having a parliament, there is the second authority, which is the Consultative Council of 120 members. These members are appointed either by the King himself or by some national

faculty nomination. Based on the political description, it is noticeable that the governmental organisations in their shape and policy are an extension to the government itself.

Knowing that 26% of the world oil reserve is in Saudi Arabia, national income naturally depends on oil, which represents 90% of it in the centralised government financial and planning system. Indeed, the low contribution of human capital in the national economy has a negative impact on its political representation. This centralised political scene is applied to many governmental organisations, and the Ministry of Education and its sectors, universities, institutes and schools are not isolated from this impact. Knowing that the King appoints the minister himself and that he is authorised to appoint his deputies, may indicate to what model this organisation belongs.

Though Bush, (1995) claims that educational organisations are too complex to be analysed through a single theoretical dimension, some organisations have very precise features which locate them in a specific model. Knowing that appointing is the employment procedure, starting from the minister himself down to the teachers' level, represents one of the famous characteristics of formal models. This context corresponds with the concept of centralised authority which many formal models share. This centralisation comes as a result of the power that has been delivered to the leaders by appointing them. This power is regarded as positional; indeed, staff consider their leaders to be practising with legitimate authority (Ferguson, 1980, p. 535, cited in Bush, 1995, p. 30).

These formal models shape the frame of the Saudi Ministry of Education and its sectors.
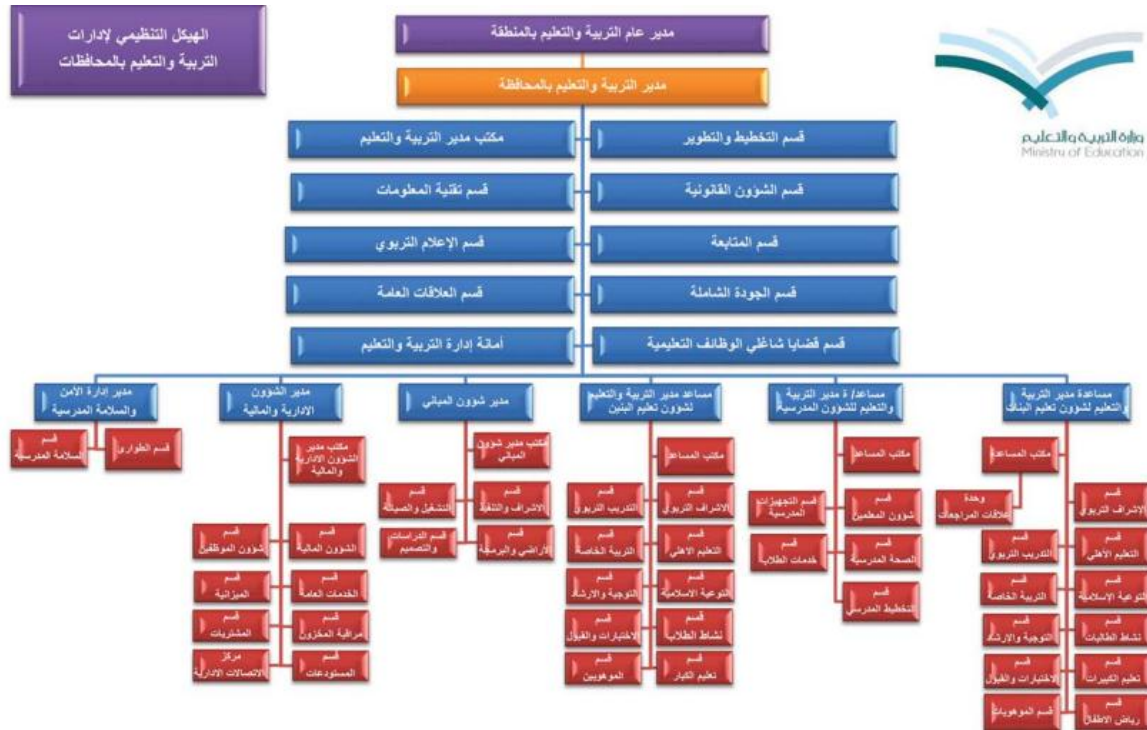
The educational ministry is sponsored by the Saudi government, which explains its accountability to the government. The impact of this accountability is that it determines the goals and objectives of the learning system, which explains how formal models consider schools and colleges as goal-seeking organisations. It might be valid here to consider the opinion of AlMunajjed, (1997); whose book claims that there is a social comprehension in Saudi that the Ministry of Education plays the role of guarding religious and cultural values since Mosques no longer play a role in education. Her judgment is in accordance with O'Neill's, (1994) perspective where he connects culture and values with schools' management efficacy. He justifies the increased use of cultural descriptors in the literature on educational management since it is expected that schools should be more effective and respond to uncertain demands by being able to articulate cultural values and beliefs.

By taking a glance at the hierarchy of the ministry, it can be noticed that the shape has a very clear pyramid feature.

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(MOE, 2016)

This official organisational chart represents the official formal structure, which clarifies the power track from the top of the pyramid to the bottom of it. However, according to Bush, (1994) this hierarchical model accentuates a vertical communication pattern. He illustrates the role of information in the hierarchical model, where the decision and information have initiated at the top of the pyramid and pass down the hierarchy to the subordinate levels. Actually, what is expected from the subordinates is to implement the delivered information and decision, and they may raise issues upwards to senior levels where they need to be solved. In this particular point, it highlights the poor contribution of the wide base of the hierarchy in the decision-making area. Consequently, the teachers' shallow representation in decision-making and goal determining may affect their self-actualisation within this organization.

How Does It Work Inside Schools?

School is the place where many educational and managerial theories are followed in order to achieve national, local and individual goals. By investigating the Saudi educational ministry as an organisation, it is noticeable that its schools' culture, values and management are affected by the mother organisation. That leads to the debate of accountability in formal management models in education. Knowing that education in Saudi, including higher education in universities, is free and fully sponsored by the ministry (government), explains Bush's (1994) argument about how the formal model emphasises the accountability of educational organisations to their sponsoring body. Thus, accountability affects schools' culture and management by adopting precise managerial features from the sponsoring organisation. However, in small entities such as schools, those features may appear in very strong forms.

The chart of the Ministry of Education hierarchy shows that the location of the school staff, whether principals or teachers, is at the bottom. Also, by what has been explained about accountability and how the government sponsors schools, we may ask, did accountability replace responsibility, as Moller, (2013) claims?

Previously, it has been described how gender segregation in the educational field has made it a very attractive and comfortable place according to religious and cultural perspectives. Additionally, the recruitment procedure, which lacks quality differentiation among candidates, has an impact on the quality of teaching. Consequently, there is a responsibility on school principals to improve teaching quality. Though schools might be characterised as bureaucratic or hierarchical organisations, some privileges have been

given to school principals to improve teaching and learning. The first step forward has been taken recently, in October 2015, when the minister followed the recommendations by the first School Leadership Conference in Saudi. The first announcement after that conference was to change the title of the school principal to 'school leader' (Al-Dhibyani, 2015). This step provides an opportunity to discuss how motivated teachers can improve teaching and learning.

An Opportunity

Many educational research and theories discuss the importance of educational organisations' staff and consider them the most important asset of the organisation. The most important 'resource' to lead and manage in education is the organisation's staff or employees (Bush, and Middlewood, 2005). Though the Saudi government took what might be considered as belated steps to improve its educational system, they can be considered as an opportunity for those who are looking for self-actualisation and should not be overlooked. The major step was taken in September 2013, when the Saudi Ministers' Council approved the establishment of the Public Education Evaluation Commission as an independent organisation (PEEC, 2013). The second important step, as mentioned earlier, by introducing the title of the school's leader with the power of leadership.

PEEC is responsible for regulations, licences, and to standardise evaluation processes at all stages of learning. Actually, PEEC has assigned 14 specific objectives, but most significantly in this discussion:

- Setting professional standards and proficiency tests for those working in general education.

- Building a system for teacher licensing requirements.

- Conducting and supporting researches and studies in the field of evaluation,

and issuing scientific journals, periodicals, books, handbooks and brochures

in its field of speciality.

Remarkably, teaching will not be a convenient place for those who are just looking for a secure job. To become a teacher, there is an evaluation test that must be passed, following which a teaching license would be obtained and the first two years of teaching would be under probation. Nonetheless, those new regulations will take effect in 2017, but the differentiation between qualified and non-qualified teachers will be considered in the teachers' evaluation. Equality between qualified and non-qualified employees is not just and it might negatively affect an individual's motivation (Coleman, and Glover, 2010). In order to explain how people can be motivated, they discuss Maslow's (1943) self-need hierarchy. This hierarchy starts with the basic need of being physically secure with food and shelter and then moves to a higher level where the individual looks to satisfy his/her needs for safety and security. Then the third level covers social needs: to have a sense of belonging where a person can be involved in social activities and relationships, to affect and be affected. The two higher levels might be the most significant in motivating an employee: the self-esteem level, where individuals are looking for confidence and the feeling of being respected, and at the top of this hierarchy, the level of self-actualisation, where individuals meet their full potential.

By trying to apply this to teaching as a career, Maslow's literature gives full attention to the top level of the hierarchy, and it does not provide any specific path for people to progress to higher levels (Dye et al., 2005). In addition, Corning, (2000) argues that Maslow's theory is non-testable and, claiming a lack of experimental validation, he considers it to be pseudo-scientific. However, passionate teachers will find their way to

use these new regulations to actualise themselves. On the other hand, this might not be the case for those who are seeking teaching solely as a secure job according to many cultural and religious considerations.

Instead of just recognising needs according to what Maslow suggests, McGregor, (1960) explains how motivation is partly dependent on the attitude of the person. He claims that there are two contrasting assumptions about people and work, X People and Y People.

Regarding X People, he assumes that:
- They do not have the desire to work
- They have to be coerced, and they consume much effort to be directed, controlled and managed
- They avoid responsibility

Regarding Y People, he assumes that:
- They are, by their nature, mentally and physically energetic
- They do not need to be externally controlled or directed as they have their own commitment
- They accept responsibility and are looking for it
- They have the ability to practise many aspects of creativity, imagination, management and teamwork

Knowing that every organisation has these two types of employees offers an opportunity for the school leaders, for example, to practise and show a variety of leadership perspectives. From this point, the new title and role for school leaders should be further analysed to explore their ability to motivate X people and encourage Y people. The new title provides 60 privileges which allow school leaders to practise with more autonomy

and power, in order to improve learning and develop and motivate teachers (Muhammed, 2016). Although this step was taken just a few months ago in that conference, it might be considered as a transitional step from an inherited bureaucratic managerial school system to a system with more autonomy in leadership practice.

Based on the new regulations of appointing and assessing teachers, and the new leadership power for school principals, schools, may potentially be transformed into places of self-actualisation. These new regulations should be fully utilised to create a free learning system and allow more autonomy in our schools.

Conclusion

The connection between any education system and the culture of its society should be acknowledged in its educational discussion. Moreover, the developmental process of an education system offers a general concept about the culture and the managerial frame of the organisation. Walker, (2010) discusses the culture of an organisation as something that cannot be observed, yet exists in the minds and behaviour of those who are part of it. Unsurprisingly, from what has been shown, formal education in Saudi Arabia is connected with the foundation of the state itself. Before that education was confined to the mosques and some houses of wealthy families. The replacement of education in mosques with school education suggests that Saudi education is intended to guard religion and culture. Furthermore, the political nature of the country impacts the managerial frame of the ministry of education, which can be characterised as a formal bureaucratic managerial form. However, some unsatisfactory findings from the PEEC have encouraged the organisation to seek improvement in its management and leadership

authorisation and decision-making.

The expectation is that the urgent need for change will impose both a direct and indirect impact on the managerial system of education within the comprehension of the social cultures.

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