

# Development of Saudi public education in relation to the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019: An analytical study

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to address the development of Saudi public education in relation to the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019, the main changes associated with the plan, and their impacts on educational development. It includes an analysis of previous academic studies and national statistics and discusses the major influences and outcomes of the associated changes. A descriptive approach was used in this study, especially when analyzing the related educational literature, as well as systematic interpretation based on an understanding of societal, pedagogical, and educational relationships and interactions. In addition, philosophical analysis was utilized to separate the complex interrelated concepts and develop an approach that could be used to avoid conceptual overlap and entanglement. Vision 2030 is deemed the natural successor to the previous development plans, and this triad of pillars could be considered to represent the Kingdom's 2030 vision, which has been under development since the First Development Plan was devised for the period of 1970–1975. From 2015 to 2019, there was continuous growth in the number of public education schools throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which exceeded the expectations of the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019. The increase in the number of schools was almost constant between 2015 and 2018, exceeding the expected number (107–109%). The actual number of schools exceeded the expectations of the Ministry of Education in 2019, reaching 115% of the expected number. A main outcome of this study is the recommendation to utilize the increased number of schools for extracurricular and after-school activities. Moreover, the importance of unifying the classification of educational levels and specializations is highlighted as a contributing factor for achieving the goals of planning and developing the labour market. Also, it is important to equip teachers with the skills and abilities they need to manage the responsibilities, consequences, and challenges associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

**Keywords:** Development. Public Education, Tenth Development Plan 2015-19 OF Saudi Arabi

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## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between education and development is one of the most important issues in human society in general, and specifically in pedagogical and educational research. However, the relationship is complex: the role and impact of education and development depend on each other. Thus, in light of this complexity, the relationship must be considered in its proper context when being studied to allow other connected elements that are associated with human and social status that form through it to be addressed (Badran 2001). The aim of development, in all its different forms, is to achieve a balanced relationship between human activities and practices and the world in which we live. This balanced relationship should not threaten the ambitions, hopes about the future and quality of life of future generations, as their desires are equally as important as those of the current generations. Farag (2018) noted that the purpose of development is to achieve a balance between environmental sustainability, economics, politics and sociology. The relationship between education and development has been a topic of interest for several years. According to Suryawanshi and Narkhede. (2015), educational institutions serve many functions in the community by educating employees, leaders, decision-makers, academics and entrepreneurs. Within the last 10 years, the Nagoya Declaration on Education for Development has been adopted, reaffirming the responsibility of education in the follow-up to development and the commitment of universities to further advance development through education (UNESCO 2014). According to Morad et al. (2015), the type of education that has led us to the current unsustainable forms of living is clearly inappropriate if we want to develop communities, locally and globally. Others have noted that studying the relationship between education and community development is extremely complex, as it requires one to always look forward, is dynamic (i.e., constantly changing) and is an educational issue in the first place and difficult to promote development or achieve it outside the educational context (Watfa 2013). This perspective suggests that,

in all communities, the educational system is primarily responsible for promoting lifestyle and generating human capital for production in all its forms.

Education is an important strategic component of the capital balance in any system. The main role of education manifests in the productive use of knowledge gained from the educational system. For these reasons and others, in this study, we aimed to identify the extent to which the efficiency of the educational system matches its ability to achieve the educational objectives of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019 related to the structure of public education as represented by the number of schools, teachers, students and classrooms.

Reviewing each of the Kingdom's five-year development plans shows that since the launch of the first plan in 1970, significant developmental leaps have been pursued and achieved. By the end of the Ninth Development Plan in 2014, stability had been achieved after investing heavily in a development plan that responded to the requirements of a different, more ambitious and challenging reality. In contrast, the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019 focuses on creating wider horizons for development, the economy and the general community that align with the Kingdom's position at all levels. The plan has 24 objectives—with policies, methods, aims and participating segments and sectors explained—and includes pedagogical and educational objectives (Ministry of Economy and Planning 2015).

Therefore, to improve the overall well-being of its citizens, the Kingdom has engaged all of its human, financial and other resources to achieve the desired development via plans that are realistic, inclusive and flexible and include investment and integration. Education is a productive process that plays a crucial and effective role in the building of the Saudi community; hence, educational development is included in the plans. Accordingly, work has been initiated to assess all the elements of the educational system, from the number of teachers, schools, classes and students to the environment and the strategies and methods used in classes. This work signifies that the development process covers most aspects of the educational system, from the broad and global to the specific and local.

The eleventh objective of the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019 involves developing human resources, raising their production and expanding their choices in gaining knowledge, skills and experiences. This will be achieved via the educational system by: developing the educational environment to make it more attractive to and exciting for the younger generations; motivating self-learning and critical reading; allowing students to gain knowledge and different skills; providing educational and technical infrastructure in schools and universities; expanding the use of modern methods and developing scientific curricula to cope with the knowledge of this era; expanding nursery and kindergarten programmes; encouraging the private sector to invest in this field; and expanding teaching of elderly people (Ministry of Economy and Planning 2015). The eleventh objective is also concerned with achieving these aims in accordance with the aspirations of the plan. Thus, the existing differences between the current and desired situations must be identified, including differences in school and classroom infrastructure and the number of students and teachers during the target period of 2015–2019.

This research therefore focused on the relationship between education and development and on the structure of the Saudi public educational system in relation to the objectives of the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019.

#### **An analytical study:**

An analytical study is a rigorous research approach that systematically dissects a subject or problem into its fundamental components, aiming to thoroughly examine and understand it. This process begins with the collection of relevant data through diverse methods such as surveys, interviews, observations, or document analysis. Subsequently, the collected data undergoes meticulous analysis, employing both quantitative techniques like statistical analysis and qualitative methods such as thematic analysis to discern patterns, trends, relationships, or disparities. The interpretation phase follows, where researchers contextualize their findings within the scope of the research question or objectives, discerning implications and drawing evidence-based conclusions. Through synthesis, researchers integrate their findings to construct a comprehensive understanding of the topic, often by reconciling diverse perspectives or data sources. Ultimately, analytical studies culminate in informed conclusions and may offer recommendations for future action, policy development, or further research. This methodology is particularly prevalent in the social sciences, facilitating exploration of intricate phenomena, investigation of variable relationships, and generation of novel insights or theories.

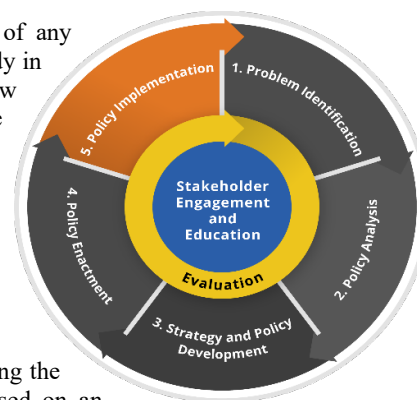
#### **Significance of an analytical approach for this study:**

The significance of employing an analytical approach for the study "Development of Saudi Public Education in Relation to the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019" lies in its ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play within the Saudi public education system during the specified timeframe. Through an analytical lens, researchers can systematically dissect various aspects of the education system, including policy implementation, governance structures, cultural influences, and socioeconomic impacts. This

approach enables researchers to identify patterns, trends, and disparities within the data, facilitating nuanced interpretations and evidence-based conclusions. Moreover, by synthesizing findings from multiple sources and perspectives, an analytical approach fosters a holistic understanding of the interactions between education policies, socioeconomic development goals, and cultural contexts in Saudi Arabia. Ultimately, the analytical study can offer valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders, informing future initiatives, reforms, and investments in Saudi public education to align with national development objectives effectively.

### Theoretical Base of the Current study:

Theoretical base of the study plays vital role in proper completion of any research study that is why the researcher has conducted the current study in light of “Policy Implementation Theory”. This theory focuses on how policies are put into practice, examining the factors that influence successful implementation. In the context of the study, researcher has analysed how the goals and objectives outlined in the Tenth Development Plan were translated into actions within the Saudi public education system, considering factors such as institutional capacity, stakeholder engagement, and resource allocation.



### Methodology and limitations of the study

A descriptive approach was used in this study, especially when analysing the related educational literature, as well as systematic interpretation based on an understanding of societal, pedagogical and educational relationships and interactions (Anderson and Arsenault 2000). In addition, philosophical analysis was utilised to separate the complex interrelated concepts and develop an approach that could be used to avoid conceptual overlap and entanglement (Al-Aroui 1983). Regarding the limitations in this study, only quantitative indicators of public education development were utilised. The target numbers outlined in the Tenth Development Plan 2015-2019 were compared with actual numbers of schools, classrooms, students and teachers.

### Education and development plans

Social and economic literature shows that the development issue is still a controversial one in concept and vision. There have been various opinions expressed about how to interpret development, and criticism of development has resulted in the emergence of new thoughts about development. Some have called for sustainable development, and others have refused to consider the opinions of experts and politicians, seeing them as isolated from reality. That is, they are perceived as devising solutions to boost economic development that may actually harm the environment and the human condition, waste resources and not satisfy basic human needs, rather than as devising solutions to human problems through so-called sustainable human development. The objective of human development is to expand the range of options available to people in all fields, the most important of which is the type of education and work (El-Sayed 2017). This can be achieved through teaching and learning, which can enable an understanding of science and the ability to use the scientific method in one's life and when assessing the opinions of others. Together, these elements affect each person's productivity, and therefore the overall social and economic productivity, making them an economic tool central to sustainable development (Al-Sabri 2015). Several indicators can be assessed to determine the level of development in a society, and the most important indicators are economic and social indicators, well-being and quality of life (Al-Nasibiya 2018).

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the government is responsible for developing the educational policy and providing the educational system. The policy has been developed over time by referencing various sources of Islamic legislation in the Qur'an and Sunnah and the jurisprudence of educators. The system is designed to help achieve the objectives outlined in the educational policy across all educational stages: pre-school, primary school, middle school and high school. The system and pedagogical approaches are also designed to connect learners with the scientific developments of our modern world. In terms of the system's organisation, the educational stages are stated in the policy. Formal education began when the Directorate of Knowledge was established, and subsequent changes have been made over the years, particularly when the Ministry of Education formed from two divisions that managed boys' and girls' education. Although there has been considerable growth in all aspects of public education (i.e. students, teachers and schools), there are some problems and obstacles encountered at every stage. Thus, various efforts are needed to update and develop the system so that it can cope with technological developments and the Fourth Industrial Revolution and its implications for

education in the twenty-first century. Notably, each national development plan, including the most recent Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019, has paid great attention to education, the backbone of development and implementing modern educational concepts. The development plan also lists eight national priorities, which focus on addressing the economic and social issues and challenges that the Kingdom currently faces.

The Kingdom's educational policy specifies the interim objectives of each stage of the pre-university educational system. The objectives of the nursery school and kindergarten stage have been determined in light of the phases of childhood growth. The main aims are to support the holistic development of each child's personality and prepare each child for the primary stage of Islamic education. This involves developing and preparing the child's manner, body, mind, language and affiliation with the Nation of Islam. These objectives are also met by helping each child develop key skills, especially language, numerical and motor skills. Regarding the middle stage, the aim is to strengthen each child's Islamic faith (as appropriate for their age), develop their abilities and skills and prepare them for the secondary stage. At this stage, the aim is to support each child's Islamic faith that reinforces their view of the universe, humans and life in the worldly life and hereafter. There is also an effort made to improve the students' abilities and preparations (as appropriate for their age), especially in terms of developing scientific thinking and systematic tracking skills, deepening the spirit of research and experimentation and developing and practicing proper study methods (Al-Hogail 2011).

Naturally, these objectives vary across the educational stages and the grades in each stage. The objectives of each grade are formulated to describe the educational outcomes that the learner reaches upon successful completion of his or her studies in this grade (Al-Hamid et al. 2007).

Education is the backbone of development and is typically a key indicator of growth and hope in social development. Development within the education sector itself is influenced by various factors: educational policy and programmes are required, so too is the implementation of developmental plans, which enables the entire community to advance. Therefore, development of the education sector is the first test for any developmental programme, and it often predicts the extent of success of development in other sectors. Thus, the Kingdom's plans for upgrading the education sector are at the core of its developmental vision, and any advancement in educational policy and structures achieves dual profitability; when there is an advancement in the education sector, other sectors can take steps towards development. While these are all valid reasons for developing the education sector, it is important to remember that people and well-being are at the core of development plans and the affected industries. Hence, any disruption to curricula, policies and the status and format of education will be reflected in people. Development cannot be achieved without a developing person, and the education sector is the first sector to impact the destiny of each developing person. As such, this notion has become one of the postulates of developmental thought and educational policies (Hani 2021).

### **The evolution of the general objectives of the development plans from 1970 to 2015**

In recent times, educational policy has been adapted to respond to change and advancement. It covers all aspects of the educational and pedagogical process, and hence guides a comprehensive and heterogeneous system. Through implementation of this educational policy, the processes of learning and teaching can be achieved and improved at all educational stages and an educational system can be developed that prepares graduates who have high educational efficiency (Tarawneh 2017).

In addition, education has improved significantly in the Kingdom, especially after the discovery of oil and the consequent social and economic transformations this brought in all aspects of life. The formal education system began developing in earnest with the establishment of the Directorate of Knowledge in 1927 and continued when the Directorate was transformed into the Ministry of Education in 1952. The Ministry was responsible for planning and supervising public education for boys across the different educational stages. In 1960, the General Presidency for Girls was established, and the Ministry of Higher Education was launched in 1975, coinciding with the end of the first development plan. In 2003, the Ministry of Education merged with the General Presidency for Girls to form the Ministry of Education. Finally, in 2016, all these institutions merged under the name of the Ministry of Education (Al-Hamid et al. 2007). The revamped Ministry focused on core competencies, expanding and building schools throughout the Kingdom and making education free across all stages and types. As a result, illiteracy rates decreased because of the increase in enrolment in primary education, and equality in access to education for males and females was achieved (Solomon 2021).

The development of education and the education sector are central in the Kingdom's most recent future-looking plan: Vision Saudi Arabia 2030. In fact, the development of education is mentioned in each of the plan's three pillars: a vibrant society, an ambitious nation and a thriving economy. Vision 2030 is deemed the natural successor to the previous development plans, and this triad of pillars could be considered to represent the Kingdom's 2030 vision, which has been under development since the First Development Plan was devised for the period of 1970–1975.

One of the most important objectives of the First Development Plan 1970–1975 was to construct basic equipment for services, such as telephone, water, electricity and health services. In the Second Development Plan 1975–1980, the objectives centred on completing the projects outlined in the first plan, conducting numerous studies on the country's needs and updating the Ministry of Public Works and Housing, the Development Funds and the Supreme Royal Commission in Jubail and Yanbu, which is a fundamental body of the Saudi petrochemical industry.

Then, the Third Development Plan 1980–1985 was prepared. It focused on infrastructure equipment and on changing the structure of the national economy, with moves towards non-petroleum productivity development, increasing the contribution of citizens in development and increasing economic and administrative efficiency. The plan also included developing the educational and social services and the municipality and saltwater desalination facilities, as well as constructing dams, roads and civil aviation facilities. Achievements included expanding petroleum refineries, grain silos, national industries and the activities of various development funds.

New objectives were included in the Fourth Development Plan, such as developing human resources, reducing dependence on production and exporting crude oil as a major source of national income. The plan also continued to bring about real development in the economic environment by shifting towards diversifying the production base and focusing on agricultural and industrial activity, in addition to completing the infrastructure projects initiated during the previous plan period.

The Fifth Development Plan 1990–1995 was devised in extraordinary international circumstances. Among its objectives and strategic foundations was a response to societal changes, such as political, social and economic, while focusing on raising the efficiency of government performance, reducing spending without affecting the level of services, increasing the private sector's role in the national economy, achieving balanced development between the Kingdom's 13 regions, linking development with the population's needs, providing job opportunities for citizens and replacing the non-Saudi workforce with the Saudi workforce.

The Gulf War and its repercussions may have affected the objectives of the Sixth Development Plan 1995-2000, as it created political and security conditions that directly affected all states in the region, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The first decline in oil revenues since the mid-1980s created a new economic situation for the region. This led to the general objectives of the Sixth Development Plan being focused on raising the economic and administrative efficiency of various governmental and private sectors by taking advantage of material and human capabilities and emphasising revenues other than oil revenues.

The Seventh Development Plan complemented the previous plans and defined the directions of national development within three axes: supporting services, improving efficiency and cooperation in national development issues. The Seventh Development Plan also contained three objectives for preparing a national information plan. Within the axis of human competencies, these objectives centred on the importance of employing communications and information technology to support economic development, supporting science and technology, preparing the infrastructure for communications and information technology (including communication networks and information content), disseminating communication and information technology services and making them available to all.

In terms of prioritising issues of importance, the Eighth Development Plan 2005–2010 focused on the following: raising the standard of living; improving the quality of life; providing job opportunities for citizens; quantitative and qualitative expansion of educational, training, health and social services; expanding the applied and technical sciences; encouraging initiatives and innovation; and improving the productivity of the economy. It also focused on the development of systems, rules and regulations related to investment, the continuation of the efficient performance of financial services and the intensification of technological development to support the competitive capabilities of national products. In addition, the plan prioritised developing science, technology and informatics systems, supporting and encouraging scientific research and moving towards a knowledge economy as a key factor for increasing production and productivity and expanding investment horizons. The plan also gave attention to increasing the participation of Saudi women in society and the removal of obstacles to the expansion of their participation in economic and development activities.

The Ninth Development Plan 2010–2015 also supported the implementation of investments, development programmes and strategic projects, and adaptation to global economic developments. It focused on keeping pace with the current rapid technological and economic developments to improve productivity, production and efficiency across various industrial and economic sectors. It also emphasised the continued expansion of the



development of natural resources (Al Alani 2016).

### **Obstacles to social development plans**

Although education plays an important role in the development process, the educational literature indicates that there are some obstacles that may hinder education from supporting development. Some of these obstacles, which can differ among countries, depending on the availability of human and material capabilities (Alawi 1979), are as follows:

- The increasing demand for education. In many countries, there is a noticeable increase in the demand for schools, institutes and universities. However, some educational systems and institutions do not adequately prepare young people for the requirements of society.
- The existing gaps between the different stages of education and the lack of coordination or equal provision of educational requirements in different schools, institutes and universities.
- Wasting of educational opportunities. In some countries, there is a lack of understanding of the benefits of formal education, and it is believed that the child can derive all the education they need through the family. Thus, some children prefer to drop out of school.
- The importing of various technological means from developed countries and the absence of specialised technical staff to use or maintain them in developing countries.
- Complaints about teachers in public schools, the methods used to prepare and train them and their desire to teach large numbers of students.
- Forcing students to do a certain type of study that does not fit with their tendencies, desires, interests and abilities, which reduces their creativity and their motivation to achieve (Qasim et al. 2013).
- Some consider the use of added-value measures to evaluate schools as immoral, as this practice can result in depriving schools with the lowest scores of incentives and appreciation, even though they provide services to disadvantaged communities. Such schools are not expected to return high scores on such evaluations, as the performance assessment depends on the quality of competencies and of the environment in which the school is located (Eddie and Dillon 2017).
- The objectives of sustainable development have not been definitively determined and the main concepts related to it are still under discussion. There are differing ideas about sustainable development and its implications for education, improving the quality of life, existing development and interactions and communication between generations (Faraj 2018).

Therefore, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has attempted to address these obstacles through a series of development plans and Vision 2030, for example, by investing in and developing programmes for teachers. (Ministry of Education 2022).

### **Public education objectives outlined in the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019**

The cumulative objectives of the previous development plans can be considered a prelude to the objectives of the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019. The Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019 focused on several objectives, including preserving Islamic values and teachings, strengthening national unity, consolidating the identity of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, deepening economic diversification in its various dimensions and shifting towards a knowledge-based economy and knowledge society. It was also designed to expand the absorptive capacity of the national economy, enhance its growth, stability and capabilities, achieve balanced development between the regions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, activate the government agencies' performance measurement centre to improve the level of services provided and expand and develop technical and vocational training. Public education received special attention under the objective of developing the nation's human resources. The aim was to raise productivity and expand the knowledge, skills and experience acquired through public education. Specifically, the plans for public education included the following (Ministry of Economy and Planning 2015):

- Raising the educational and pedagogical efficiency of teachers, especially by developing their skills and cognitive abilities.

- Developing the educational environment to make it more attractive and interesting to young people, motivating them to self-learn, read critically and acquire various knowledge and skills.

- Providing educational and technical infrastructure in schools and universities, expanding the use of technology and developing scientific curricula to keep pace with modern knowledge.

- Expanding nursery and kindergarten programmes, and encouraging the private sector to invest in this field.

- Expansion of adult education programmes.

- Upgrading of science, mathematics, engineering and technology curricula.

Developing teaching and learning processes related to Arabic language skills.

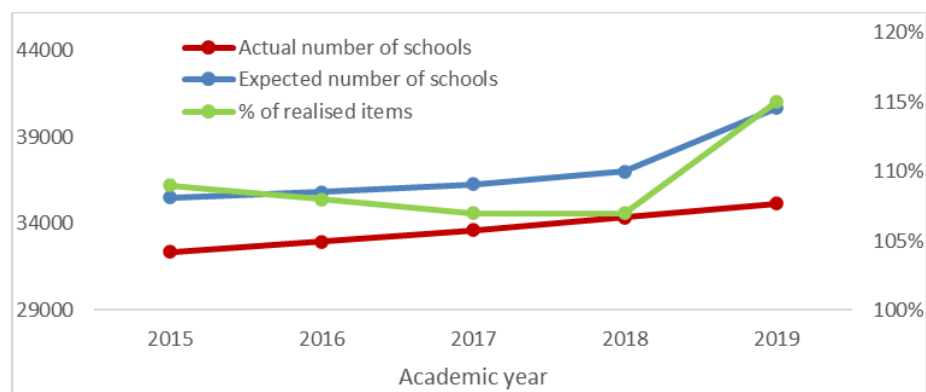
Developing school systems and regulations to achieve the principles of justice, competitiveness and activation of internal control.

It is noted that all stages and levels of education have been an important part of all ten development plans in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, demonstrating the importance the Kingdom places on education in development. Educational development is an important variable in national development and an indicator of its progress. It also represents the basic skills that drive all development processes. When people participate in the educational system, they acquire more than just reading skills; they also acquire multiple skills that enable them to participate effectively in various aspects of life. Thus, education supports the social hub, which depends on skills and social and psychological transformations (Abdul Rahman 2008). It is from here that development begins and grows in all directions, and to which its fruits return. Hence, the process of modern development depends to a large extent on the preparation and development of human resources, and not only on the acquisition and sharing of skills (Al-Araimi 2006). Development is no longer dependent on physical capital only; the presence of a trained and qualified workforce is now more important. This workforce is the human capital that is accumulated through education, and statistics confirm this: the gap between human development indicators in developing states and advanced industrial states is increasing in favour of developed states. This confirms the close relationship between the development of human resources and standards of living, hence the relationship between education and development (Al-Saidi 2006).

## Results and analysis

Taking the above information into consideration, in this study, several quantitative factors that are indicators of progress have been examined. Specifically, the number of schools, classes, students and teachers over the five-year period of the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019 has been analysed. The results are presented below.

### Indicators of school development



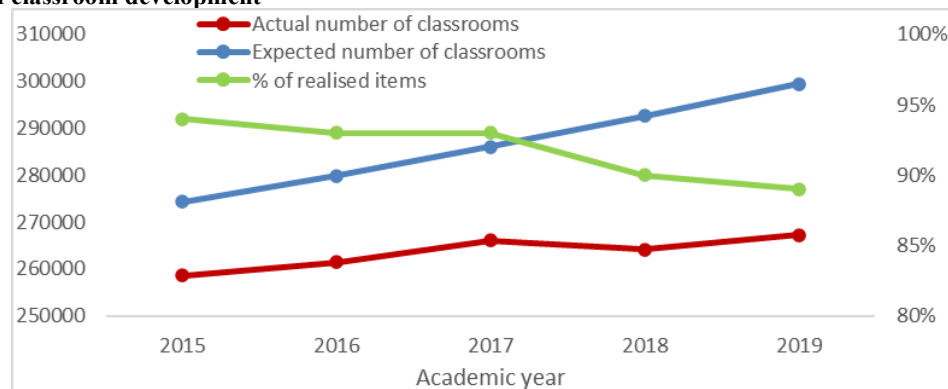
As shown in Figure 1, from 2015 to 2019, there was a continuous increase in the number of public education schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which exceeded the expectations of the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019. From 2015 to 2018, the actual number of schools exceeded the expectation at a constant rate (107–109%), and this rate increased in 2019 to reach 115%. This may be attributed to several factors and strengths, the most important being that the Kingdom’s political leadership believed that education in general is a matter of national security and that public schools are needed to ensure the delivery of recognised and approved formal education (Ministry of Education 2020). In addition, the private education sector was developed, with the Kingdom providing many scholarships and material and moral aid for pre-university education.

Expansion of the higher and university education sector requires expansion of the educational system as a whole, and this contributed to the increase in the number of schools. In addition, social pressure was a factor. The community’s enthusiasm for the public education system grew, and people began enrolling their children in school. The increase in the number of schools may have also been a result of the ambitious goals of the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019, especially the goals of reducing the knowledge and digital gaps found between the Kingdom’s regions, and of creating appropriate institutional and organisational environments for a knowledge society. This necessarily relied on creating infrastructure that supported the closing of the digital and

knowledge gaps, and this goal was best achieved by establishing public and private schools, as outlined in the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019.

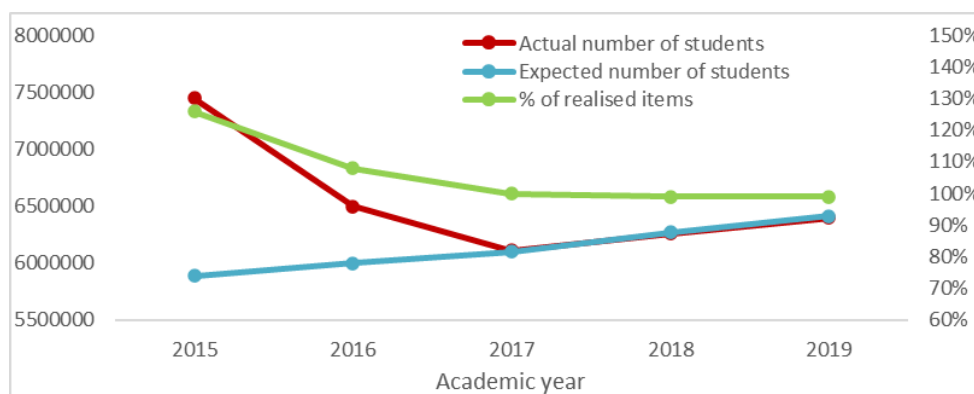
Moreover, an increase in the funding allocated to education gave the government the opportunity to fund public education, which supports the ‘Sauditisation’ of jobs. This could only be achieved through education, with primary education acting as the sturdy root system that supports the various higher and university education specialisations or branches. The aim was to strengthen and expand the public education system so that it could produce a Saudi workforce that could meet the requirements of the growing Saudi market and reduce the reliance on foreign workers. Hence, increasing educational infrastructure was the first step towards achieving the goals of the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019 and Vision 2030.

#### Indicators of classroom development



While the actual number of schools exceeded the expected number between 2015 and 2019, Figure 2 shows that the actual number of classrooms did not reach the expected number. In 2015, 94% of the expected number of classrooms were actually available (the highest percentage during the studied period), while in 2019, 89% of the expected number of classrooms were actually available. These figures indicate that the number of classrooms in a school depends on the capacity for classroom space, as well as the class size, which are determined by executive decisions made within the Ministry.

#### Indicators of student development



According to Figure 3, the overall number of students reached the planned target. However, there was a remarkable increase in 2015, when there was an increase of about 26%. The percentage increase in the following year was 8%. From 2017 to 2019, the expected and actual numbers of students were very close, indicating that the target number was achieved, and this may be attributed to the commitment of the Saudi officials to improve education and its outputs. According to the General Authority for Statistics, the net enrolment rate in primary education reached 98% among Saudi students, while the primary education completion rate was 92% in 2017 and 2018. In addition, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia rose in the basic education enrolment index from 52nd in 2016 to 42nd in 2017, and in the quality of the educational system index from 48th in 2016 to 41st in 2017. General Authority for Statistics (2017)



### Indicators of teacher development

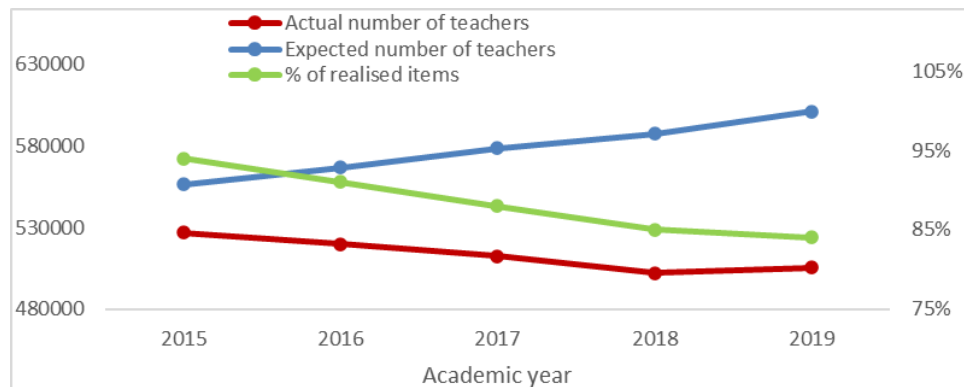


Figure 4 reflects the reality of teacher development during the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019. The data shows that in 2015, there was a 7.6% difference between the expected and actual number of teachers, with the actual number of teachers falling below the expected number. The gap grew over the five-year period, and in 2019, the actual number of teachers was 84% of the expected number. This may have been due to certain variables in the Kingdom’s public education structure and system. In particular, admission to the faculties of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was frozen. The Saudi Ministry of Education ceased admission to the existing bachelor programmes in certain disciplines as pre-service teacher preparation programmes underwent revision and renewal (Ministerial Decree No. 73570 on 10/5/2017). In addition, new teacher requirements needed to be created that were consistent with new roles that had been shaped by recent developments and challenges faced by the Kingdom. In this respect, certain studies have indicated that the role of the teacher in the information community is still unclear and not precisely defined, ‘as digital technology would work on increasingly changing our daily lives, and these uses showed the need for new skills in the educational field: since we enter the Fourth Industrial Revolution, many employees would need to rehabilitate and add new skills and plans for professional development for those who are on-the-job (Al-Shubaili 2019).

Consequently, yesterday’s teachers are not fully equipped to manage the challenges existing in today’s digital and rapidly changing educational institutions. The new circumstances and variables have led to a situation in which teachers require a new set of competencies, and there is a growing gap between the work requirements for teachers and the skills of current teachers. This means that it is not productive to continue preparing teachers in the same old ways and having them teach in the same old ways. Therefore, it is incumbent to restore the balance between the needed and actual competencies of teachers by identifying new opportunities to qualify teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in a manner that is commensurate with current circumstances and changes.

The Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019 and its educational requirements took into account the social dimension of development. As a result, it has achieved a kind of balance in the social dimensions, especially in terms of public education, as one of its general objectives was to build, rehabilitate and train people through education in a way that enables them to participate effectively in building the Saudi community. The following paragraphs discuss some of the outcomes related to the efficiency of public education.

The target for the overall number of students was reached. There was a noticeable increase in the number in 2015, with the number of actual students exceeding the expected number by about 26%. In 2016, the number of actual students exceeded the expected number by 8%. The target was hit from 2017 to 2019.

There was reasonable agreement between the numbers of expected and actual classrooms between 2015 and 2019. In 2015, 94% of the expected number of classrooms was actually available (the highest number), while in 2019, 89% of the expected number of classrooms was actually available (the lowest number).

From 2015 to 2019, there was continuous growth in the number of public education schools throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which exceeded the expectations of the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019. The increase in the number of schools was almost constant between 2015 and 2018, exceeding the expected number (107–109%). The actual number of schools exceeded the expectations of the Ministry of Education in 2019, reaching 115% of the expected number.

Thus, from a quantitative perspective, there was considerable development in the educational system during the period of the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019. Specifically, the number of schools, students, classrooms and teachers generally met or exceeded the planned numbers over the five-year period. However, as a result of the rapid development brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the educational system—especially the public education components—must be strengthened. In particular, teacher preparation must be revised. In addition, new means of teaching and learning must be developed, including those that can be utilised during crises and emergencies (e.g. pandemics). Also, for a nation to be competitive on the regional and global stages, an educational system is required that drives development, fills workforce gaps and meets the requirements of the labour market.

## CONCLUSIONS

In light of the findings of the study the following conclusions were made:

- A strategic plan for developing human resources that is part of a broader development plan must consider many interrelated factors and define appropriate priorities. This requires the decision-makers to possess more than just knowledge of economics or educational theories. It requires, above all, expertise about and the ability to perceive the complicated relationships among social, political and economic factors. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 elegantly combines the nation's ambitions and three pillars (a vibrant society, an ambitious homeland and a prosperous economy) with critical community issues, including education as a national security issue.
- Benefiting from the recent increase in the number of schools, attention should be paid to extracurricular and after-school activities and the integration of school services into the educational directorates.
- Effort should be made to unify the classification of educational levels and specialisations, recognising that this classification contributes to achieving the goals of workforce planning, developing the labour market, meeting the market's needs and regulating employment processes in the public and private sectors. This classification also constitutes an essential step in linking professions, specialisations and educational levels (Ministry of Education, 2020).
- It is important to establish new programmes within the investment framework for education that will be added to existing and proposed programmes, especially for preparing teachers. This is in compliance with the objectives of Vision 2030, especially establishing programmes that will aid the completion of the ten previous development plans.
- It is important to emphasise practical education in teacher preparation programmes, given that it is an integral part of the professional, academic and educational preparation of the teacher.
- Schools, and particularly teachers, should support the development of and achieve change in the behaviour of young people in light of the current and future goals of the Saudi community and the transformations expected to occur in the future.
- Paying attention to teacher training is also important. Given the nature of the challenges that the community will face in the future, it is important to equip teachers with the skills and abilities they need to manage the responsibilities, consequences and challenges associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
- Linking the content of the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019 and its future implications to Vision 2030 is important. So too, is recognising the realities of educational policy decisions in the Kingdom at the various stages of education, especially the postgraduate stage.

## Suggestions for future Researchers:

The current study was conducted using an analytical method; however, it is suggested that for future researchers, that the same study may be conducted qualitatively in order to explore it in depth.

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Figure 1. The expected and actual number of schools during the period of the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019.

Sources: Ministry of Economy and Planning (2015) Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019, Ministry of Economy and Planning, Riyadh; General Authority for Statistics (2017) Statistical Yearbook, 52nd edition, Riyadh; General Authority for Statistics (2018) Statistical Yearbook, 54th edition, Riyadh; General Authority for Statistics (2019) Statistical Yearbook, 55th edition, Riyadh.

Figure 2. The expected and actual number of classrooms during the period of the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019.

Sources: Ministry of Economy and Planning (2015) Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019, Ministry of Economy and Planning, Riyadh; General Authority for Statistics (2017) Statistical Yearbook, 52nd edition, Riyadh; General Authority for Statistics (2018) Statistical Yearbook, 54th edition, Riyadh; General Authority for Statistics (2019) Statistical Yearbook, 55th edition, Riyadh.

Figure 3. The expected and actual number of students during the period of the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019.

Sources: Ministry of Economy and Planning (2015) Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019, Ministry of Economy and Planning, Riyadh; General Authority for Statistics (2017) Statistical Yearbook, 52nd edition, Riyadh; General Authority for Statistics (2018) Statistical Yearbook, 54th edition, Riyadh; General Authority for Statistics (2019) Statistical Yearbook, 55th edition, Riyadh.

Figure 4. The expected and actual number of teachers during the period of the Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019.

Sources: Ministry of Economy and Planning (2015) Tenth Development Plan 2015–2019, Ministry of Economy and Planning, Riyadh; General Authority for Statistics (2017) Statistical Yearbook, 52nd edition, Riyadh; General Authority for Statistics (2018) Statistical Yearbook, 54th edition, Riyadh; General Authority for Statistics (2019) Statistical Yearbook, 55th edition, Riyadh.