2016

# Applying distributed and transformational leadership theories to increase opportunities for women in senior educational leadership in Saudi Arabia

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Applying Distributed and Transformational Leadership Theories to Increase Opportunities for

Women in Senior Educational Leadership in Saudi Arabia

by

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Thesis


Submitted to the Department of Leadership and Counseling

Eastern Michigan University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

K-12 Administration

Thesis Committee:

James Berry, Ph.D.


December 21, 2016

Ypsilanti, Michigan

## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this paper to my mother, who has helped me every step of the way. I would not have accomplished anything without her prayers and support. She did not receive a formal education but made sure I did. We, like any other mother and daughter, have our differences, but those differences were never an obstacle to achieving my goals. What I am today is only because of her. Women are not encouraged to pursue their dreams in my hometown, but my mother made sure that I could by sending me abroad to complete my education and become a better person. I do not have the right words to express how thankful I am for having a mother like her. Thank you, Mom; this paper is for you and because of you.

**Acknowledgments**

There are many people I am thankful to have met on my journey. On top of this list would be my extremely helpful and dedicated advisor, Dr. James Berry. Dr. Berry exposed me to different learning opportunities that helped me to build up my academic as well as professional knowledge in my field. He introduced me to the educational world, which I would not have been able to explore without his encouragement. He has been a pillar of support and encouragement in a foreign land.

Furthermore, my siblings and friends have helped me throughout this journey in their different ways. I would like to acknowledge those who played a part in helping me complete this paper, no matter how small their part was.

**Abstract**

In Saudi Arabia, the lack of representation of women in senior educational leadership is a problem that continues to plague the quality of K–12 educations in girls' schools in the nation. In this paper, I will address the likely causes and outcomes of this issue and will suggest strategies for change that focus on the implementation of distributed and transformational theories of leadership to encourage renovation in Saudi girls' school curricula. This paper also analyzes and compares some aspects of the Saudi boys' and girls' K–12 curriculum and conducts a survey that will present current opinions of the roles women play in the Saudi Arabian educational environment. The most surprising and important finding of my survey was that the percentage of men who would accept women as leaders was higher than the percentage of men who would not accept women as leaders. This is contrary to what seen on a society and community level in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: education, educational leadership, women, Saudi Arabia, transformational leadership, distributed, leadership.

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**Chapter 1: Introduction:**

**Global Examples of Female Leadership Versus Male Leadership in History**

Traditionally, the study of leadership was conducted without concern for gender, because leadership roles were considered altogether masculine. However, the growing trend of large numbers of women in leadership positions in organizations worldwide, along with the rapid increase of their share of the workplace in a relatively short time, have attracted the attention of researchers. Beginning in the early 1980s and late 1990s, some of the first research studies on the gender psychology of leadership were conducted under the influence of feminist psychologists such as Laurie Clark Walters and Anna Lynn Eblen. More and more, the belief that women can play the role of leaders began to spread across the globe.

Globally, according to Goldring, Growe, and Montgomery (2013), there is a gender gap between women and men in leadership positions in various domains of the workplace, including the educational field (1999). In the US, according to the National Centre for Educational Statistics, in 2011 and 2012, female public school teachers accounted for approximately 76 percent of the demographic (Fast Facts, 2016). However, if we look at leadership positions, the picture is quite different. Concerning a survey conducted in 2011–12 on schools and staffing, Goldring, Gray, and Bitterman (2013) concluded that the percentage of public school principals who were female was 52% overall, 64% in primary schools, 42% in middle schools, 30% in high schools, and 40% in combined schools. The percentage of private school principals who were female was 55% overall, 75% in Catholic schools, 41% in other religious schools, and 62% in nonsectarian schools. These statistics are representative of about 13,000 schools.

The question remains: How can gender factors affect entry and advancement in leadership? Hoff and Mitchell (2008), in a qualitative study including 682 participants in the US,

determined three broad factors that prevent women from advancing in educational leadership: their lack of insider status, fewer support structures, and an image of leadership that is still associated with masculinity. In Europe, it is possible to observe a similar situation in the school system. In his study on the presence of female European principals and teachers, Ruijs (1990) inferred that "there is a large gap between the percentages of male teachers and principals" (p. 1). Ruijs continued, "…in the average European country, with the exception of Greece, the percentage of female principals should be almost doubled to reflect the percentage of female teachers" (p. 2).

The lack of female leaders in various vocations, be it education or otherwise, has been a common issue around the world. The factor that best explains the resistance to women in positions of power in leadership is the worldwide devaluation of women.

Shakeshaft (2006) confirmed this devaluation as a consequence of sex discrimination:

Sex discrimination in educational leadership is primarily rooted in the devaluation of women in society or the socialization of members of society into patterns and beliefs that support unequal expectations and rewards for women and men…. However, although gender varies across cultures, there is no culture that values women and men the same. (p. 500)

Shakeshaft (2006) mentioned that this devaluation goes so far as to detain women from reaching positions of leadership in education: "Most of why women do not become school administrators can be explained by understanding that women are not valued as much as men and that this bias results in negative attitudes and practices toward women aspiring to be school administrators" (p. 501). Culturally, women have been, and in many ways still are, valued as less than men and different from them. Fitzgerald (2003) has attributed this to a "colonising

assumption that rests on the predication that leadership is exercised by an individual and that the individual is 'naturally' male" (p. 15). While equity gains have been made, different expectations and attitudes toward women and men still exist. For example, in studies done by Al-Ahmadi (2011), Brinia (2012), Growe and Montgomery (1999), Hamdan (2005), and Taleb (2010), a majority of people identified women as being teachers because women prefer working with children. This stereotype about women is still one of the major barriers to female advancement in administration and leadership. The reason most women do not become administrators can be explained by understanding that they are not valued as much as men and that this bias results in negative attitudes and practices toward women aspiring to be administrators. Across the globe, the status of women in education administration is very similar, though there are cultural and national idiosyncrasies. For example, in Europe, education is considered a feminine discipline, though women do not typically reach positions of leadership in educational administration.

As Brinia (2012) confirmed,

Education has traditionally been a "feminine" job/profession (similar to mother role, caring role, etc.) in Europe. However the percentage of women pursuing and holding positions of leadership is extremely low and also declines at higher level of education. There is a variety of issues to be considered under the perspectives of the new challenges in education. Some of them are not new ones, such as gender equity in educational leadership have relatively recently emerged. (p. 176)

Another phenomenon that prevents women from entering leadership positions is the concept of tokenism. Tokenism, as proposed by Rosabeth Kanter (1977), postulates that group dynamics have an impact on the proportion of representatives of different cultural categories in the group (in particular, gender and race). In an asymmetric group, some members, composing

the majority, are identified as dominate, and those who are only symbolically represented while having no contingency or power in the group are called *tokens* or *symbols*. Tokens, because of their small numbers, are more visible and more stereotyped; their characteristics are exaggerated when compared to those of the dominant group members. Internationally, tokens in a group composed of male and female members are almost unequivocally female. For example, in 2013, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia appointed 30 women to the *Majlis as-Shura*, a council with the power to create but not effect or enforce legislation, but these women are mainly tokens, especially due to their inability to effect change amongst a male-driven body. The women in the *Majlis as-Shura* have attempted, to no effect, to secure even a basic right for females in Saudi Arabia to drive freely or to divorce their spouses; any sort of law proposed by the women in the council is vetted only when it accords with the broader culture. For example, a decision to require women who work in public television to wear traditional garments on set, one proposed by a certain councilwoman, was approved within three days.

The theory of gender selection of leaders is yet another factor impeding women from securing positions of leadership and is based on the assumption that people in general and organizations in particular have different requirements for leaders of different genders (Bowan, Swim, & Jacobs, 2000; Washington & Sutton, 2006). For women, especially in corporate or professional environments, these requirements are higher: To get the same leadership position as a man, a woman must demonstrate much higher competence than a man. This prejudice makes it far more difficult for a woman to advance in her chosen field and thus creates a gender imbalance among the leaders in organizations.

Certainly, female leaders worldwide encounter structural, social, and moralistic barriers to advancement. But to further confound the issue, some recent studies suggest that there are also

differences in leadership implementation and process based upon gender. Some data suggest that females approach and view ethical challenges differently than their male counterparts. While there are more studies that suggest the existence of these differences, others have argued the sameness in the leadership styles, at least in their effectiveness, of men and women. Various publications on gender leadership, such as those of Andersen and Hansson (2011), Brinia (2012), Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001), and Growe and Montgomery (1999), suggested that there are no fundamental differences between men and women in terms of leadership efficiency. However, as seen in a study conducted by Devore and Martin (2008), in some cases men are more effective, and in others, women are.

The traditional view is that women choose leadership positions focused on relationships, while men often emphasize perseverance and determination. Eagly and Johnson (1990) discovered that the most salient gender difference in leadership style is in the tendency for women to adopt a more participative style and for men to adopt a more directive style. In contrast to male leaders who try to consolidate power in the form of a pyramid, with a clear demarcation between leader and constituent, women seem to prefer more subtle leadership tools built on attention to the individual. Women employ tools of influence, based on communication, persuasion, and motivation, whereas men manage on the basis of power: coercion and hierarchy. As Taleb (2010) stated, "Female leaders tend to be democratic, interpersonally oriented and transformational, while male leaders are likely to adopt more autocratic and task-oriented styles of leadership" (p. 293). This is further evidenced in a publication by Pines and colleagues (2001) who have, by way of survey conducted on 71 Israeli managers employed in high, middle, and low management, established that women adopt a more egalitarian, democratic approach to leadership with a strong feminist undercurrent of empowerment.

A woman in a position of leadership rarely resorts to authoritarian methods. Instead of using direct coercive persuasion, she aims to motivate rather than force staff to perform tasks. Women rarely desire conflict but rather seek a compromise. They try not to resort to unwarranted decisions that are contrary to the opinions of others; instead they prefer balanced, informed decisions with reasonable risk. This research has been supported by other authors, including Coronel, Moreno, and Carrasco (2010), who argued that female leaders "promote a somewhat kinder, more socially compassionate version of organizational goals and social policies, and place more emphasis on democratic relationships, participatory decision-making, delegation, and team-based leadership skills" (p. 154).

Current male leadership, however, is often influenced by biases against female leaders for their more democratic leadership. Female executives are often unable to effectively build relationships with male subordinates. Men who are accustomed to hierarchical power relationships see a woman's attempt to network between leaders and constituents and to democratize the workplace as a sign of weakness. On the other hand, when a woman leader exhibits the rigidity and insistence required to perform any work on time, subordinates may perceive that as a manifestation of "unfeminine qualities" because women (including female managers) historically are expected to portray softness and compliance. In response to this quandary, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) stated: "Some feminists thus fear that the perception of sex differences in leadership style or other attributes can provide a rationale for excluding women from opportunities and especially from male-dominated leadership roles" (p. 782). However, appropriate qualities are not mutually exclusive, and the attribution of a particular orientation in strategy for only one gender is inappropriate. Appropriate qualities are determined by personal characteristics or situational requests and not gender characteristics.

**Women in Leadership in Middle Eastern Culture and Society**

In the Middle East, women are still a minority in leadership roles, especially in the middle and senior levels of leadership. The issues for women in leadership in Saudi Arabia go deeper than the familiar stereotype and workplace obstacles. Gender inequality in leadership in Saudi Arabia appears especially in the educational sphere. Ten years ago, there was a common thought in Saudi Arabian society, especially in rural areas and counties, that women's education was not a priority. Urban and rural women alike could pursue higher education, but for the latter, a woman's family would discourage her from pursuing positions in leadership even while in possession of a university degree. In rural cities such as *Al-Gryaat Al A-fallaj*, *Aldoadmmy*, and *Tathlith*, a woman's primary role was to take care of the children and keep the house in order. This is in opposition to the edicts of the prevailing religion of the region, Islam, which encourages women and men to seek education equally and impartially, without withholding knowledge from each other. In Islam, it is believed that everyone is equal, and they reap the same rewards for gaining knowledge. Thus, contrary to popular belief, the idea to suppress female education is based more on regional or cultural tradition and less on religion.

Despite this fact, a woman's role as bearer and caregiver is still encouraged by the majority of Saudi society and ingrained into the system from an educational standpoint. As Hamdan (2005) noted, "Women's issues in Saudi society and the gender inequalities that are obvious in its education system are [institutionalized] and difficult to dislodge through individual action… women's inequality is traditionally structured in the society" (p. 45). Boys are encouraged to develop competition and leadership, and the girls to develop cooperation and empathy. These are the outlines drawn by society and ingrained within education, and they predict the role of men and women professionally.

**Statement of the Problem**

That women are kept from positions of leadership in Saudi Arabia, especially in the educational domain, is a direct consequence of the poor quality of female primary and secondary education throughout the country, and the reverse is also true. Applying a union of distributed and transformational theories of education will contribute to increasing numbers of women in senior positions of educational leadership in the nation.

Recently, there has been an evolution in Saudi social thought about girls' education. Families are caring more and more about giving their girls the right to enroll in and complete K–12 educations. Despite different views on certain social topics and the still-prevailing thought of women's roles in the household, educating girls from K–12 is now becoming a primary objective of the majority of Saudi culture. Girls are almost equal with boys in school enrollment. According to Ridge (2014), in 2005, the percentage of Saudi Arabian girls who enrolled in school was equivalent to that of boys at 76%, whereas in 2010, girls' enrollment was 78% while boys were enrolled at a slightly higher 79.1%. This shows that girls' education in the last decade has become a more valued part of Saudi Arabian society and an important goal for families.

With more females now completing K–12 educations and a number now also receiving university degrees, traditional Saudi society has diverted more effort into excluding women from certain jobs and leadership positions in the workplace. Moreover, this exclusion implies a segregation drawn between men and women in the workplace. For example, if a woman were to secure a job within a ministry, particularly that of education, she would be expected to work in an exclusive department for women.

Despite the fact that more girls are entering and completing K–12 schooling, they are not given the same quality of education or opportunities as boys. In college, access to enroll in

certain majors and studies, such as government and political leadership or within the realms of engineering, are still restricted for girls. This causes a disparity in the employment of females and males between areas that are more traditionally male-dominant and those traditionally female-dominant. An example of this disparity can be seen in fuller force in the Saudi Arabian government. All senior level government sectors and departments, called ministries in Saudi Arabia, employ only men by law.

In the last decade, Saudi women have become more vocal about their right to have the same access and opportunity as men. Women have been, and still are in many respects, "outsiders" in educational leadership. The dominant culture of Saudi educational leadership is androcentric, meaning controlled by male norms. The Ministry of Education is led and driven by male administration. Even for girls' schools, which are segregated by gender at the operational level, there is masculine dominance in administrative leadership. Women, with little chance for employment after primary and secondary education, find themselves in school longer than males, as Roy (1992) noted: "Denied working opportunities, save in teaching and certain other areas deemed appropriate, a higher proportion of women remain in school and for a longer time (that is, progress to higher levels in education) than do Saudi males" (p. 479). This system limits women's power to transform roles or help drive change in the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia or any other ministries or government sections. The system emphasizes the principal's works in transactional leadership and is more critical of female leadership, excluding women from change and decision-making. Women leaders in Saudi Arabia would like to see more empowerment: to expand their opportunities in society and their career advancement opportunities and to effect change. Altering the image of leadership and boosting women's empowerment are two important demands that women seek in Saudi Arabia.

Despite these issues, Saudi women have begun a campaign to abolish the stricture preventing females from entering higher ministerial positions and to study the same college majors as men. These and other successes regarding women in leadership have been documented, aided by the globalization and organic spread of the Internet and technology. Rashwan (2015) wrote, "The internet is a medium through which Saudi Arabia has become part of the global world, which expands knowledge of other cultures and ways of life" (p. 3). Recently, a woman's skill in leadership has become a more prevalent object of study for researchers in order to document the skills and abilities of women in leadership positions. The successes notwithstanding, there is still more to be done to establish a pluralistic leadership and administration unobstructed by gender or traditional beliefs.

**Purpose and Significance of the Study**

In this paper, I hope to suggest changes to the Saudi educational system and the organization of leadership within and around governmental ministries in order to increase opportunities for women to serve in educational leadership positions. Implementation of such changes should improve the quality of Saudi female education and bolster altogether the number of women in leadership positions in all fields.

The purpose of this study is to address the current aspects of educational administration as they relate to women in Saudi Arabia. In order to discuss this issue, having a clear understanding of this culture and the traditional roles of women in Saudi Arabia is necessary. This paper attempts to address and explore possibilities and methods to increase female representation in Saudi Arabian leadership, and to introduce theories of leadership novel to the Saudi Arabian educational system. The paper will illustrate how the transactional and instructional leadership theories in education tend to be more oppressive toward women, thus

demonstrating the need to introduce distributed and transformational structures in Saudi education.

In order to do this, I will attempt to analyze portions of the Saudi male and female curriculum and how they demonstrate the lack of female voice in educational leadership for women. Also, I constructed a short survey to examine how and to what extent stakeholders in Saudi education view women in education and educational leadership. I will conclude by presenting suggestions that encourage the use of distributed and transformational structures to encourage better representation of women in educational leadership positions as a bridge to improve the quality of female education in Saudi K–12 schools.

**Chapter 2: Present State of Educational Leadership for Women in Saudi Arabia and**

**Abroad: Review of Literature**

Authors such as Eagly and Carli (2003) have called attention to the broad changes that have occurred in various arenas: leadership roles, organizational practices, and culture. They suggest reasons for this change and argue that organizations can become more progressive and modern by appointing women to key positions. The authors provide meta-analytic evidence that women are more likely to choose a more effective style of leadership. Given the findings that were presented on prejudice, it would be reasonable to expect that the relative success of women and men in leadership roles depend on context. In masculine contexts, prejudicial reactions not only restrict women's access to leadership roles but also can reduce the effectiveness of women who attain these roles.

Many studies focus on women who have achieved success in leadership. For example, in her doctoral dissertation, Penelope Gillian Farley (2014) investigated factors that affect the success of senior level women leaders in higher education to determine how they attained their positions, their motivations for continuing in leadership, and how they developed their leadership potential. This study sought to garner information from successful women currently holding higher-level leadership positions at universities in order to develop a theory that might aid women who would like to attain higher postings.

The career path of women consists of three phases: anticipation, acquisition, and performance. These factors manifest in social practices within and outside schools and affect women across the three phases of the career route. The analysis of this research by Moorosi (2010) is based on the experiences of 28 women principals in South Africa. The main findings of this study are that social norms and beliefs support the male domination in leadership of the

secondary school; women still have to fight against the cultural traditions of their community and school environment rather than focus on the real work in education.

**The Case of Saudi Arabia: Women in Educational Leadership**

According to Hamdan (2005),

In recent years, no sector of Saudi society has been subject to more debates and discussions than the women's sector and their role in the development process. Moreover, issues regarding women's rights and responsibilities in that development have been equally controversial among both conservatives and progressives in Saudi society. (pp. 42–43)

It is well documented that women have begun to seek more leadership positions in government sectors in Saudi Arabia. Women who seek to make a change in leadership in Saudi Arabia can rarely do so without intellectual endeavor on certain internal axes, such as values, beliefs, culture, religion, and customs, and external axes, such as societal values, global economy, social networking, information communication technologies, and national curriculum at various levels of social life.

According to United Nations Development Programme (UNPD) in Saudi Arabia,"While progress remains slow, the truth is that Saudi women are achieving an incredible amount of success despite all the challenges in the country. Remarkable progress has been achieved in the Kingdom in the status of women in education, employment, and health as well" ("Saudi Women Challenges and Success," 2014). The government of Saudi Arabia has clearly shifted toward empowering women in the last decade as a result of globalization and economic and social development in Saudi Arabia (Metcalfe & Rees, 2010, as cited in Al-Ahmadi, 2011). There has been a huge change in girls' education since the last decade of the twentieth century. Hamdan

(2005) noted, "The government has become aware of the need to improve the education system and, [sic] increase women's participation in order to ensure economic survival" (p. 58). In 2005, Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud became the King of Saudi Arabia, and he made many efforts to support the role of women in society and in education. Yusuf et al. (2015) found that, under his reign, "it [was] worth being optimistic. Under the patronage of King Abdullah, women's education [had] boomed" (p. 356). Women made historic leaps in society under his rule; for example, women were at last allowed to enter ministerial and other high government positions.

Women leadership in Saudi Arabia has changed its shape and place. Women are now holding various leadership roles in ministries where they had been previously banned. In 2009, Norah Al Fayez became Vice Dean for Female Students Affairs in the Ministry of Education, an election that was indicative of a larger trend as Al-Ahmadi (2011) confirmed, "Saudi Arabia has witnessed major changes during the past few decades, with women taking more responsibility in public spheres and occupying higher positions in organizations" (p. 150). The trouble is that it can be argued that Al Fayez was a tool of tokenism and did not effect change while in her position or bring benefits to other women or girls' education. Her residence as vice dean was not permanent, either; in 2015, six years after her appointment, Norah Al Fayez was removed from her position during a government shake-up.

In addition to the above, King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud passed a group of resolutions that were intended to help women become more active in society as a whole. As previously mentioned, one of the most influential resolutions he made was when he awarded 30 seats in the *Majlis as-Shura*, allowing women to participate in municipal elections. He enabled them to be a part of decision-making within the executive sectors of the ministries and government institutions, which has helped to create a culture, that respects women and is aware

of their potential. However, this decision sparked a huge protest among traditional leaders who held to the customs and traditions of society and were opposed to a women's revolution.

These developments have given Saudi women the opportunity to be leaders in the private and public sectors. At the same time, women leadership and empowerment have been widely rejected by many educational leaders in the governmental and corporate domains. However, the number of women who have earned a high degree in education is increasing, and that reflects the demand for the empowerment of women in society and the work environment in Saudi Arabia. Although Saudi Arabian government and corporate authorities limit women's equal say and opportunity within the system, Hamdan (2005) noted, "Many Saudi [citizens] support women's rights and seek to support progress. Others who support women's rights seek to implement change and feel that the restrictions on women have been reaffirmed instead of diminished" (p. 55). According to Tallerico, Poole, and Bursytyn (as cited in Gardiner, 2000, p. 1), the number of women in leadership roles may have increased in some respects; however, they are still newcomers and have not affected the overall hierarchical structure that favors male leaders. As Hamdan (2005) noted, "Women's education did not change the patriarchal nature of Saudi society" (p. 48).

As Zuhur (2003) mentioned in his article, "Elite women acquired more power so long as they did not challenge the basic patriarchal structures of state and society" (p. 19). When women today hold administrative positions, they are monitored and restricted more than their male counterparts. Administrative experiences for women are too often debilitating instead of empowering. For instance, being a female principal in Saudi Arabia is more challenging than being a male principal in Saudi Arabia. The reason stems from the disparity between men and women's leadership experiences. Zuhur (2003) thereby concluded that "empowerment by means

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of education, literacy or modest income-generating projects is clearly insufficient to ameliorate the prospects for a higher quality of life for women of the Arab world" (p. 34). Principals of girls' schools also do not receive the same training as their counterparts in boys' schools, and thus, as Hamdan (2005) mentioned, "Women do not receive the same quality of education as men because teachers for men are better trained" (p. 53). According to Smith (as cited in Hamdan, 2005, p. 45), "Having grown up in Saudi society, it is clear that women's training and education ensure that at every level of competence and leadership there will be a place for them that is inferior and subordinate to the positions of men."

Furthermore, according to a recent study done of boys' schools in Saudi Arabia, male principals experience many hindrances as well. Some issues mentioned were the absence of a rewards and incentive system, lack of administrative staff support, lack of decision-making power within the school, lack of equipment in school buildings, and poor maintenance. The biggest reasons for their reluctance to work as a principal were related to support. These include the great amount of pressure put on the principal by officials and the local community, the large amount of favoritism on the administrative level, the low level of community support and community partnership for the school, and deficiencies in highlighting the role of the school principal (Alsulami & Al-Ghamdi, 2007). Considering that male principals face these obstacles, female principals, who experience the same issues and have even less efficacy than males in their department, are thereby doubly affected. The aforementioned obstacles do not align with the promises of equality in education that the school gives to its students and staff, nor do these obstacles align with what the principal is expected to accomplish.

This, along with the lack of female presence in the educational leadership system, has been a means of excluding women as potential leaders from this system. Nicolson argued that

"the system cannot work for women in the same way because there is not the long term continuity or the number of women to make this possible, and neither is there a tradition of such practice" (as cited in Gardiner et al., 2000, p. 106). Pence stated, "Women administration have additional difficulty learning their administrative role because there are conflicting attitudes about the stereotype of what it means to be female and what it means to be administrator" (as cited in Gardiner et al., 2000, p. 8). Hall and Sandler suggested that for women seeking leadership positions, "Success often depends not only on what you know but whom you know— not only on hard work, but also encouragement, guidance, support and advocacy from those who are already established in the system" (as cited in Gardiner et al., 2000 p. 5). Women in Saudi Arabia need a new method to enter and work within positions of leadership.

Identifying problems is a first step to empower women in the leadership workforce of Saudi Arabia. Al Osaimi (2015) noticed "… a lack of strategic 'vision' behind ongoing government activities for empowering women. There appears to be a lack of long-term goals, which are driving the current decisions and initiatives, and it is not wholly clear where these decisions are heading." Thus, there is a need to examine policy. Zuhur (2003) stated: "Policy-makers must also take note of the backlash women have faced in their entry into public space, and coordinate vigorous efforts to continue legal reform, and enhance women's political participation" (p. 22). Women in Saudi Arabia have been gaining more equity in the public sphere. However, women stagnate in the area of equality. Although women enjoy greater representation, they are still subordinate to men and not given equal rights. They have equity in education and some occupations, but they still need to continue to fight for equality. Challenging society and the overall notions of leadership is necessary for women to make any real progress in the leadership field. Hamdan (2005) noted that "since Saudi women, as all women in any given

society, differ in their class, race, and cultural background, for them to challenge gender inequalities there is an urgent need to cross borders and ignore their cultural and class differences" (p. 45).

**Leadership Theories in Saudi Arabia: A Comparative Analysis**

According to Alameen et al. (2015), the theory of leadership in education is touchy. Practitioners who are in official leadership positions are restricted in their decision-making by a number of factors. Palaiologou, Alameen, and Male (2015) stated, "In most instances, practitioners who are in formal leadership positions are confined in their range of potential actions by national policies and the local context, including the culture of the educational setting for which they are accountable" (p. 121). All these apply to educational leadership in Saudi Arabia.

Currently, Saudi Arabian leadership is defined by instructional and transactional leadership theories and marked by male dominance in administration. These theories depend on leaders giving orders and followers translating the orders into actions. In a pedagogical system under transactional leadership, a principal would receive orders from the department of education, while teachers would receive orders from the principal to translate them in their daily work in the classroom. This means that teachers do not collaborate or share the responsibility of making decisions. This tendency is not unique to education; generally, under transactional leadership, change and reform rarely occur because one individual or a few, rather than the entire body, are capable of decision-making. In his critique of transactional leadership, Bass (1990) stated: "Such transactional leadership is a prescription for mediocrity. This is particularly true if the leader relies heavily on passive management-by-exception, intervening with his or her group only when procedures and standards for accomplishing tasks are not being met" (p. 20).

Similarly, the instructional leadership model focuses on the topmost leaders as the center of capability, power, and authority. Within the educational sphere, school principals, male or female, cannot easily act as instructional leaders.

As Bush (2014) discussed in greater detail,

Centralized education systems remain widespread … the first article in this issue shows how difficult it is for principals to operate as instructional leaders in such contexts. This is partly because they are civil servants, 'who function as line managers within the hierarchy of a highly centralized, national system of education' (p. 3).

In most instances, major change is invisible on the operational level, and it is rare to see a large range of reform in the level of policy or decision-making. Wright (2007) stated, "Transactional and instructional leadership target only first-order variables in the change process" (p. 17). In instructional leadership, the objective is to narrow decision-making power to only one person or a few people. Giving everyone the chance to share in a decision and spread the vision is rare. There is no real consensus of mission within this leadership model. The biggest concern of instructional leadership is student achievement and performance. However, too much focus on these aspects can create a dysfunctional environment for the leaders and students. For instance, a principal can spend a significant amount of time in the classroom working on curriculum effectively in a small school; however, this is impractical in a large school. Because of the overarching reach of instructional leadership in Saudi Arabia, leaders usually create their mission and vision by themselves without input from their colleagues or staff. This reduces the capacity for decision-making at the local or institutional level, which has a negative reflection on school environment and students' achievement. Palaiologou et al. (2015) stated, "The central directive leadership and policy-making seen within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia could lead to

the situation where formal leaders in educational settings do not see a decision-making role for themselves and revert, instead, to managerial activity" (p. 123). In effect, instructional leadership makes it harder for women to integrate into leadership in Saudi Arabia's education system because it contributes to the silencing of their voices in the leadership field. In turn, women are unable to bring change and improve the educational leadership field. Reassessing educational leadership theories is necessary to improve the educational leadership system and empower women in authority.

In the educational leadership field, women are already at a disadvantage and have less authority, even when carrying out the same tasks. For female principals at the school level, administrative leadership and instruction comes from one ministry for both the education of girls and boys. However, women principals have to conduct themselves differently than men, even when receiving the same instructions. For example, if a woman wants to speak to anybody from the ministry department, she is not allowed to communicate personally, whereas a man can have an in-person meeting. A woman is expected to convey her message via a third party or tools like emails or text messages.

Having flexibility in leadership enables new theories to form and reforms to occur that can catalyze women's empowerment and advancement in leadership. This would allow women to have power at the level of administration and policy-making in educational leadership and other sectors, such as government. An immense volume of leadership theory has been produced over the past twenty years. However, it is still uncertain which approaches are best for driving educational leadership and exploring new opportunities for women to become leaders. There is, thus, a need for research into educational institutions to delineate the existing theories of leadership and practices in Saudi Arabia in wake of what Palaiologou et al. (2015) observed:

"Saudi Arabian education is now going through large-scale reform where leadership roles and responsibilities are a key issue" (p. 125). Awareness of alternative approaches is essential to providing a set of models from which a theory can be chosen when facing challenges dealing with the empowerment of women.

There are two theories in particular that ought to be considered in an effort to reform the condition of women leadership in Saudi Arabia: distributed and transformational leadership. The first theory that could lead to the exchange of power in leadership positions between women and men in Saudi Arabia is distributed leadership theory. To date, the definition of distributed leadership has not been made precise. According to Mayrowetz (2008), the term itself signifies four separate tendencies: the theoretical distribution of authority among leaders, the democratization of schools, organizational efficiency and effectiveness, and advancing human capacity. To further confound this issue of terms, Timperley (2005) claimed, "One point on which different authors appear to agree is that distributed leadership is not the same as dividing task responsibilities among individuals who perform defined and separate organizational roles" (p. 5).

Nonetheless, it is important to clarify that distributed leadership is not diametric to transactional leadership; as Harris (2009) warned, "Distributed leadership is much more than shared leadership practice … To position distributed leadership as the antithesis of top-down, hierarchical leadership is also to misinterpret the term" (p. 5). What could be deduced about distributed leadership is that everyone, male or female, shares, and distributes power; leadership is altogether lateralized among the constituents.

Harris (2008) supported this when he stated,

This model acknowledges both the reality and the virtues, in most organizations, of distributed leadership based on multiple forms of lateral (e.g., teacher to teacher) influence. The model also highlights that there are the "inevitable" sources of vertical or hierarchical leadership in any successful organization. (p. 181)

Presently, two dimensions represent Saudi Arabian leadership hierarchically: vertical and lateral. Men represent the vertical dimension, which emphasizes decision-making. The lateral dimension—which acts to implement rather than make decisions—is represented mostly by women, who thereby cannot influence the structure of the environment they lead. In practice, the incorporation of a distributed leadership theory would eliminate this dichotomy between vertical and lateral hierarchy. For example, were the Saudi classroom to adopt a more distributed leadership, if an event or extracurricular activity were posed, the principal would share information with the teachers to allow them to come up with ideas for this event and control the organization of it. Similarly, the teachers may pass decision-making power on to the students as well.

Harris (2009) stated, "Distributed leadership is concerned with the co-performance of leadership practice and the nature of the interactions that contribute to co-performance" (p. 5). In distributed leadership, female and male leaders share the practical tasks of leadership as well as the power. Culturally, male leaders may hesitate or reject receiving orders or instruction from women. The implementation of distributed leadership will increase women's chances of moving into higher positions, without fully departing from traditional values; men will maintain the power they possess already but will share this power with women. Distributed leadership implies that everything depends on everyone participating in leadership, as Harris (2008) noted:

Distributed cognition implies that learning takes place through interactions within and across various teams. Distributed leadership similarly implies that the practice of leadership is one that is shared and realized within extended groupings and networks, some of these groupings will be formal while others will be informal, and in some cases, randomly formed. (p. 175)

Distributed leadership would allow women to take control and make improvements to their education system autonomously. Harris (2008) stated, "The effects and impact of distributed leadership on organizational outcomes depends upon the pattern of leadership distribution" (p. 181). Thus, according to this theory, power will be distributed to those who have, or could develop, the knowledge or decision-making expertise to carry out the leadership tasks expected of them, despite hierarchy or gender. Gender, as a social criterion, would be made fluid, as Harris (2009) implied: "Distributed cognition suggests that capacities are distributed throughout the social and material conditions of the organization and that they are fluid rather than fixed" (p. 4). Harris (2008) further stated:

Distributed leadership, it is claimed, also may allow members to better anticipate and respond to the demands of the organization's environment. Solutions to organizational challenges may develop through distributed leadership that would be unlikely to emerge from individual sources. Finally, overlapping actions that occur in some patterns of distributed leadership may further reinforce and extend leaders' influence. (pp. 177-178)

According to Harris (2008), "Taking a distributed perspective on leadership means that it is grounded in activity rather than position or role and in practical terms will require some facilitation and the creation of the internal conditions where it might thrive" (p. 183). As the leadership field grows, the knowledge of different theories through various partnerships and

collaborations is still a challenge to the current system in Saudi Arabia. There is no issue when it comes to knowing and studying these theories; the problem arises in their implementation. Distributed leadership theory can present a considerable challenge to new practices and ways of working. Recently, Saudi Arabia has emphasized collective and distributive approaches to leadership in educational settings in Saudi Arabia. However, the practice of these approaches still differs between women and men as leaders. Al-Osaimi (2015) noted:

> The status of women in Saudi Arabia has been advanced by a number of policies and initiatives aimed at empowering them. These have been critical in creating a transformational societal change to the role of women, but they have not entirely created a shift in the situation of women. (Al-Osaimi, 2015)

The second theory that could affect Saudi leadership is that of transformational leadership. In this theory, change, reforms, and collective working act to engender a common vision and mission developed by all members of a given institution. Transformational leadership also provides an environment that enlivens constituents, contrary to transactional leadership. Transformational leadership seeks to generate and increase the leadership capacity, or authority, of other leaders in the school to produce positive effects on learning. This method also involves the whole school community in building the mission and vision for the school. Transformational leadership models may openly design leadership as an organizational object rather than the property of a single individual or entity.

Hallinger (2003) clarified transformational leadership further:

> Transformational leadership focuses on developing the organization's capacity to innovate. Rather than focusing specifically on direct coordination, control, and supervision of curriculum and instruction, transformational leadership seeks to build the

organization's capacity to select its purposes and to support the development of changes to practices of teaching and learning. (p. 330)

In transformational leadership, members will be more encouraged to share their goals because their goals are given value and worth. The power of this theory is that it recognizes everyone's role and efforts. For example, the teachers, staff, students, and community are included in the decision-making process and congratulated for it. Hallinger (2003) stated, "These observations again focus on two characteristics of transformational leadership: its distributed nature and its targeting of capacity development across a broader spectrum of the school community members" (p. 339). Bass (1990) also noted: "Transformational leaders have better relationships with their supervisors and make more of a contribution to the organization than do those who are only transactional" (p. 22). In a more transactional atmosphere, followers are merely given directives, whereas in transformational leadership, there is a greater collaboration between leader and constituent, which entails a more thorough examination of the latter. Koh, Steers, and Terborg (1995) elucidated this further: "In particular, advocates of transformational approaches to leadership have attempted to improve on earlier theories by emphasizing both the rational and emotional bases of subordinate motivation and behavior" (p. 319).

Transformational leadership can function alongside distributed leadership, a fact that will be discussed in further detail below. Wright (2007) highlighted how these two work together when he noted, "…transformational leadership is devolved/distributed and not focused upon one person" (p. 14). Palaiologou et al. (2015) stated, "… in transformational leadership, a common goal is supported by engaging one person with another in a relationship that raises their level of motivation and morality" (p. 122). Generally, the fact that distributed and transformational leadership are decentralized systems guarantees their compatibility with one another.

Specifically, within the educational example aforementioned, distributed and transformational leadership can function simultaneously when principals, students, and teachers alike are afforded the opportunity of decision-making regarding the proposed extracurricular activity or event and can do so in a way that effects change or reform within the educational body as a whole. The specific contribution of each member, in the spirit of transformational leadership, will be celebrated.

**Chapter 3: Comparative Analysis of Boys' and Girls' Curriculum in Saudi Arabia**

Education in Saudi Arabia, as Saleh (1986) stated, is "free of charge to all students" (p. 21). This, as Yusuf, Al-sharqi, and Durrani (2015) claimed, is "meant to ensure that the Kingdom's education is much more efficient in a manner that it is able to meet the socio-economic needs of learners and the country in general" (p. 355). However, the educational system was established with the aim of preparing boys for a career and citizenship and preparing girls to be good mothers, in accordance with Saudi gender roles.

Smith, as cited in Hamdan (2005), sees this patriarchal tendency as a point of comparison between the women of the western world and those of Saudi Arabia:

> A western feminist suggests that gender inequality appeared to be rooted in women's traditional absence and silencing in public life. There is a similar case with Saudi women. As Doumato stated, "…girls were taught enough to buy into an assigned role, a role in which they were subordinate to men, but not enough to challenge it." (p. 45)

Furthermore, based on Saudi Arabia's archetype of education, the opportunities, access, resources, and utilities available to girls and boys in K–12, colleges, higher education, and the workforce, are not the same.

Hamdan (2005) also mentioned the following:

> Women's schooling at all levels—elementary, secondary, high school and university—remained under the Department of Religious Guidance until 2002, while the education of boys was overseen by the Ministry of Education. This was to ensure that women's education did not deviate from the original purpose of female education, which was to make women good wives and mothers, and to prepare them for "acceptable" jobs such as teaching and nursing that were believed to suit their nature. (p. 44)

The educational system, in essence, stymied and continues to stymie women from pursuing the same opportunities as males. As a result, women have been struggling to receive the same quality of education in order to prepare themselves for leadership, particularly in public life.

Historically, three events came to affect girls' education and the effort to equalize girls' education with boys' education, as Alharbi discussed. During King Faisal's reign, girls were allowed to go to public schools but under different directors and curricula than boys' institutions. Alharbi (2014) stated, "The head and director for girl's education institution was 'The Mufti of the Country,' who was also the head of religion of the country. Therefore, these groups made the decisions regarding how girls' education should look" (p. 2023). Therefore, the organization of women's education, including job opportunities, was not included when the main educational system was implemented. Women's education was a separate system. In the second event, in 2002, Saudi Arabia integrated the girls' educational system into the Ministry of Education. However, the curricula were still based on gender, societal, and religious rules. The last event was King Abdullah's project for improving education, whereupon girls received the same equity of education as boys, but not the same quality nor curriculum. As Hamdan (2005) mentioned, the main goal of a girls' school was to raise good mothers in accordance with Islam and modern educational theories. Alharbi (2014) also noted, "The structure of the Saudi family would be threatened by women's education." Regarding K–12 education, girls and boys segregate into separated schools, as Saleh (1986) confirmed: "In Saudi Arabia educational facilities, staff, teachers and students are separated along gender lines" (p. 22). Boys' schools and girls' schools have the same teacher salaries and funding per student, but they do not receive the same quality of services, recourses, and utilities in order to educate the students as equals. For example,

starting from the school's construction to the day-to-day operations, K–12 education between girls and boys is fundamentally different. From the physical environment, which includes utilities and the equipment, to the type of activities they are allowed to participate in, boys are allowed more. Boys' schools are larger and have more spacious landscapes. They are afforded many different extracurricular activities as well as after-school options. The community and government are careful to monitor and oversee these schools. For girls, no provisions are given to establish extracurricular activities at school. Girls' schools close as soon as formal instruction is done for the day; there is no time for activities afterward.

Another example is the fact that girls from elementary school until high school have a special required curriculum called Family Education and Health. This class is not offered to boys, nor are they allowed to enroll. The class teaches girls to knit, cook, and care for children and the health of family. For older girls, it even teaches them how to dress fashionably and wear makeup. Similarly, some classes are required for boys that are restricted from girls, such as fitness and sports classes. Hamdan (2005) confirmed this: "To date Physical Education and fitness facilities are not available for women." Allowing girls to enroll in these classes is a huge controversy in Saudi Arabia. Girls are not even allowed to go on some optional extra activities such as school trips. Alharbi (2014), when commenting on the causes for such discrepancy, stated, "Society was the main impediment, as it was used to refuse any change and fight that change" (p. 2021).

The government and the community have a responsibility to help create a new education standard for women that includes them in their vision for a bright future for Saudi Arabia. Tanner and Tanner, as cited in Alharbi (2014) said, "Even though society, knowledge, and students can be a source of curriculum, girls in Saudi Arabia were ignored and were not asked

about their needs or their interests" (p. 2013).

As it stands, the Saudi Arabian government and community does not see any value in reforming school buildings and physical environments for girls. However, research has shown that there is much value in considering the school environment as well as the curriculum. McGuffey's (1982) work, touted by scholars as the first publication to do so, demonstrated a direct relationship between the school's physical environment and student performance. McGuffey further stressed a relationship between student achievement and the quality of the building, better infrastructure, comfortable chairs, laboratories, and libraries. The study also stated that evidence is increasing for a connection between the physical environment and students' attitudes, behaviors, and educational outcomes.

Another aspect affecting the development of girls' and boys' school curricula is that the Arabic language has specific gender distinctions. In Arabic, there is a morphological feature that helps distinguish gender, which cannot be found in English or many other languages. This can be shown in the following sentences.[1]

1. daras-a            Ɂal-tulab-u            Ɂal-darsa

   studied-3Masculan Singular     the-students 3Masculan plural   the-lesson

   "The students studied the lesson."

2. Daras-at            Ɂal-talibat-u          Ɂal-darsa

   studied-3Feminine Singular     the-students-3Feminine plural   the-lesson-ACC

   "The students studied the lesson."

---

[1]  In Arabic each personal pronoun has a specific affix, which is added to the noun to show its gender. In this paper, I will not discuss the gender distinction in detail, but for more information see Aoun, Benmamoun, & Choueiri, 2010.

From these sentences, it is implied that there should be a specific suffix attached to the verb and the noun as in 1, if a male student is presented a text. In this example, the verb has the suffix (-a) and the noun has the suffix (-u), indicating masculinity, while in 2, the verb has the suffix (-at) and the noun has the suffix (-tu), indicating femininity. It should be noted that the noun in both sentences is in the plural form. This tendency prevails in Saudi textbooks, which are given to both male and female students:

3. <u>uktub</u> takhimyna likull qimat 'aw ealaqat handasiat mimma yali <u>waeit</u> 'amthilat

    Write (m)                                                give (m)

    eadadiatan 'aw <u>arsum</u> shukla yadeam hdha alttakhamin.

               draw (m)

   "Write the estimated value or the geometric relationship for the following and give a numeral example or draw a figure supporting this guess."

For females, the question should be formed as the following:

    <u>uktub</u>-**i** takhimyna likull qimat 'aw ealaqat handasiat mimma yali <u>waeit</u>-**i** 'amthilat

    Write (f)                                                give (f)

    eadadiatan 'aw <u>arsum</u>-**i** shukla yadeam hdha alttakhamin.

               draw (f)

"Write as you estimate the value or the geometric relationship of the following and give numeral examples or draw a figure supports this guessing."

When the curriculum is created, a neuter form of the verb, noun, and adjective should be employed when addressing the students, whether they are male or female; this can be done by simply adding an extra gender distinction to the end of some words. For example, sentence 1 would look like this:

daras-a/at           ʔal-tulab-u/at-u                    ʔal-darsa

From Example 3, we notice that the question, which female students are reading as well, only uses the male form (i.e., the suffixes that attached to the verb, nouns, and the adjectives refer to the male students, not the female students). The language of all textbooks is aimed towards boys because of Arabic's use of gendered verbs and nouns. Examining the curricula from iEN National Education Portal (2016) in Saudi Arabia, we see that the content of the textbooks is also biased toward boys. The textbooks regularly feature a variety of historical figures, but these figures are also almost always male, regardless of the textbook subject or edition. The editors of these textbooks are also mostly men, or in the case of both the 2012 math textbook for tenth grade and the 2016 math textbook for third grade, all of the editors are male. This creates a situation in which all of the questions (and other content) are aimed towards male readers only.

In a small study of four textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education on the topics of math, science, and the Arabic and English languages for the third, eighth, and tenth grades, I discovered a large gap in representation between genders. The curricula for these four subjects are the same nationally for boys and girls. For tenth grade textbooks in math, English, and Arabic, I compare the number of pictures of faces, pictures of other body parts, and instances of names for girls and boys in these curricula in the years 2012 and 2016. I also subjected third and eighth grade textbooks in math, science, and Arabic for the 2016 curriculum to the same analysis. Table 1 compares the amount of pictures of boys' and girls' body parts and female and male name occurrences in tenth grade Math, English, and Arabic textbooks in 2016, demonstrating a far greater preference to portray male over female forms. This trend is also seen in Table 2, which considers eighth grade math, science, and Arabic textbooks in 2016, although

there are more female name occurrences in science textbooks. Table 3 considers third grade

math, science, and Arabic textbooks in 2016, and like Table 2, demonstrates a greater amount of

female name occurrences math textbooks, though there is still an overwhelming bias for male

representation. Unlike the others, Table 4 considers a course only available to girls in the tenth

grade, entitled 'Family Education and Health', and this is the only instance where female name

and body part representation is greater by a large margin.

Table 1

*Comparison of the Number of Pictures of Boys' and Girls' Body Parts and Instances of Female*

*and Male Names in Math, English, and Arabic Textbooks for the Tenth Grade in 2012 and 2016.*

| **Book** | **Type of Representation** | **Instances of Male Representation** | **Instances of Female Representation** | **Instances of Mixed Representation** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Math (2012) | *Photograph of face* | 35 | 0 | n/a |
| | *Photograph of other body parts* | 31 | 0 | n/a |
| | *Names* | 107 | 9 | n/a |
| Math (2016) | *Photograph of face* | 35 | 0 | n/a |
| | *Photograph of other body parts* | 34 | 0 | n/a |
| | *Names* | 126 | 10 | n/a |
| English (2012) | *Photograph of face* | 99 | 0 | 2 |
| | *Photograph of other body parts* | 33 | 0 | n/a |
| | *Names* | 312 | 4 | n/a |
| English (2016) | *Photograph of face* | 152 | 8 | n/a |
| | *Photograph of other body parts* | 28 | 0 | n/a |
| | *Names* | 726 | 101 | n/a |
| Arabic (2012) | *Photograph of face* | 73 | 0 | n/a |
| | *Photograph of other body parts* | 6 | 1 | n/a |
| | *Names* | 11 | 1 | n/a |
| Arabic (2016) | *Photograph of face* | 19 | 0 | 1 |
| | *Photograph of other body parts* | 0 | 0 | n/a |
| | *Names* | 12 | 4 | n/a |

This trend is also seen in Table 2, which considers eighth grade math, science, and Arabic textbooks in 2016, although there are more female name occurrences in science textbooks.

Table 2

*Comparison of the Number of Pictures of Boys' and Girls' Body Parts and Instances of Female and Male Names in Math, Science, and Arabic Textbooks for the Eighth Grade in 2016.*

| **Book** | **Types of Representation** | **Instances of Male Representation** | **Instances of Female Representation** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Math (2016) | *Photograph of face* | 30 | 0 |
| | *Photograph of other body parts* | 1 | 0 |
| | *Names* | 150 | 38 |
| Arabic (2016) | *Photograph of face* | 23 | 0 |
| | *Photograph of other body parts* | 4 | 0 |
| | *Names* | 239 | 10 |
| Science (2016) | *Photograph of face* | 65 | 1 |
| | *Photograph of other body parts* | 10 | 0 |
| | *Names* | 4 | 7 |

Table 3 considers third grade math, science, and Arabic textbooks in 2016, and like Table 2, demonstrates a greater amount of female name occurrences math textbooks, though there is still an overwhelming bias for male representation.

Table 3

*Comparison of the Number of Pictures of Boys' and Girls' Body Parts and Instances of Female and Male Names in Math, Science, and Arabic Textbooks for the Third Grade in 2016.*

| Book | Types of Representation | Instances of Male Representation | Instances of Female Representation | Instances of Mixed Representation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Math (2016) | *Photograph of face* | 31 | 6 | n/a |
| | *Photograph of other body parts* | 0 | 0 | n/a |
| | *Names* | 95 | 187 | n/a |
| Science (2016) | *Photograph of face* | 30 | 8 | 1 |
| | *Photograph of other body parts* | 34 | 2 | n/a |
| | *Names* | 90 | 0 | n/a |
| Arabic (2016) | *Photograph of face* | 74 | 26 | n/a |
| | *Photograph of other body parts* | 0 | 0 | n/a |
| | *Names* | 138 | 55 | n/a |

Unlike the others, Table 4 considers a course only available to girls in the tenth grade, entitled 'Family Education and Health', and this is the only instance where female name and body part representation is greater by a large margin.

Table 4

*Comparison of the Number of Pictures of Boys' and Girls' Body Parts and Instances of Female and Male Names in the Family Education and Health Textbook for the Tenth Grade in 2016.*

| Book | Types of Representation | Instances of Male Representation | Instances of Female Representation | Instances of Mixed Representation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Family Education and Health for girls (2016) | *Photograph of face* | 3 | 45 | n/a |
| | *Photograph of other body parts* | 0 | 59 | n/a |
| | *Names* | 0 | 0 | n/a |

These curricula are established by the central government, particularly the Ministry of Education, in response to King Abdullah's policy within the development plan for education (Tatweer, 2010), which was confirmed in 2014 (Ministry of Education, 2014). To understand the development of these curricula, one must examine the administrative setup for education in Saudi Arabia. According to the organizational structure of the Deanship of Admission and Registration (2016), the Ministry of Education is composed of only men, excepting the vice dean for female students and affairs. Figure 1 below delineates the hierarchy seen in the Ministry of Education, including positions and titles held unequivocally by men except for the Vice Dean for Female Students.

```
┌─────────────────┐
│     Rector      │
└────────┬────────┘
┌────────┴────────┐
│  Vice Rector for │
│ Educatioinal and │
│ Academic Affairs │
└────────┬────────┘
┌────────┴────────┐
│    Dean of      │
│ Admissions and  │
│  Registration   │
└────────┬────────┘
┌──────────────┐  │
│   Advisors   ├──┤
└──────────────┘  │
┌────────┴────────┐
│    Vice Dean    │
└────────┬────────┘
┌────────┴────────┐
│  Vice Dean for  │
│ Technical Affairs│
└────────┬────────┘
┌────────┴────────┐
│  Vice Dean for  │
│   Preparatory   │
│     Affairs     │
└────────┬────────┘
┌────────┴────────┐
│  Vice Dean for  │
│ Development and │
│     Quality     │
└───────┬─────────┘
    ┌───┴──────────┐
    │ Vice Dean for│
    │Female Students│
    └──────────────┘
```
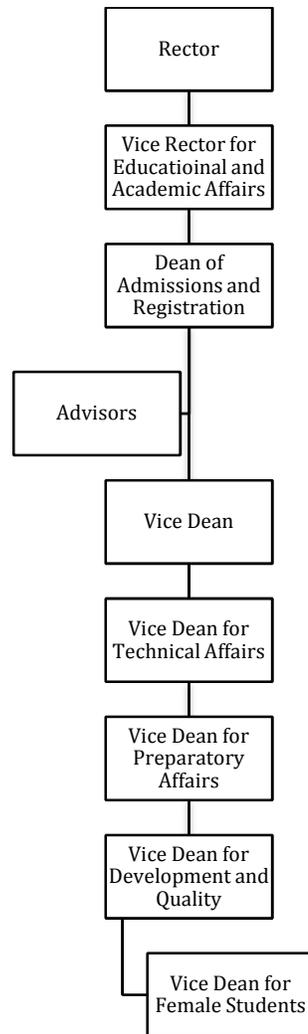
*Figure 1.* Hierarchy of the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia ("Organizational Structure |

Deanship of Admission and Registration", 2016)

This can be seen in universities as well. There are more than 30 universities, and all of

them are led and directed by men, except for the Princess Nora bint Abdul Rahman University.

Additionally, the public government sectors of Saudi Arabia have more than 24 ministries, all of

them led by men. The vice ministers are also men. Hamdan (2005) mentioned, "Women's

education did not change the patriarchal nature of Saudi society. Women in every field are

subordinate to men" (p. 48). In government institutions and most private institutions, female

voices are rarely heard and thus do not contribute to most rules, regulations, and policies. The

consequences of this system are reflected in the girls' education policy and curriculum.

Alharbi (2014) stated:

In fact, when I analyzed the language curriculum from that time, I found that I was confused when I tried to find the objective or the goals of curriculum. It appears that society was afraid to give anyone a chance to lead girls' education. (p. 2023)

Support is given to any program that can equip and empower men, even in higher education. For an example at the collegiate level, the King Saud University offers more options to male students than to female students in the amount of colleges and specialties to which they can apply after completing a preparatory year ("KSU Majors Available for Admissions | Deanship of Admission and Registration", 2016). Saleh (1986) noticed that "university enrollment is determined by three main factors: the demand for higher education; the need for qualified manpower; and the capacity of the universities" (p. 21). In universities, there are no classes offered to women in regard to leadership, unless it is in a field that is traditionally viewed as appropriate for women, like education, nursing, and certain small business ventures. According to Admission and Registration in King Saud University (2015), females do not have the same access as men to science and engineering. For example, reputed institutions such as the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals devoted to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields do not allow women to enroll. This area in particular, STEM, is where girls are struggling for equality. From K–12 and up, boys have more chances than girls to learn STEM subjects and receive a better quality education in those subjects. Thus, women cannot increase their opportunities for advancement in leadership through higher education alone, especially in fields such as politics, government, aerospace, or engineering. In this way, education is used to prevent women from having the same knowledge and opportunity

as men while building and empowering men as the future leaders in society.

## Chapter 4: Survey Research Method and Design

**Participants**

A total of 84 Saudi undergraduates, graduates, principals, superintendents, teachers, and other stakeholders in educational leadership (49 women and 35 men), aged 19–50, volunteered to participate in a nationwide survey.

**Materials**

A survey was constructed with the aid of Google Forms to be administered to participants in English and Arabic.

**Procedure**

The survey was sent to superintendents across southwestern and central Saudi Arabia, who then passed on the survey to other departments of education across the country as well as to university students.

Volunteers were presented with a list of questions to be answered at their convenience. The questions broadly concerned decision-making as well as leadership effectiveness and style to test the overall perceptions Saudi scholars had on how fit males and females are to lead compared to one another. In addition, the survey tested how participants felt about qualities characteristically "male" and "female" and how beneficial they were to successful leadership. Last, the survey asked participants to articulate their leadership platform and their opinion on the leadership theories discussed above (transactional, instructional, distributed, and transformational).

**Chapter 5: Presentation and Analysis of Data**

When asked who they thought was better at learning concepts and skills, 51.2% of the participants responded that women and men are the same at learning concepts and skill, while 7.3% of them responded that men are better, and another 7.3% responded that they do not know who is better; the remaining 34.1% responded that women learn better than men. When asked who they thought was better at decision-making, 64.6% answered that men are better than women, 3.7% selected women, 26.8% said they believe they are the same, and about 4% answered that they did not know. Three questions were asked concerning educational leadership and preference of leadership style. First, when asked what type of leader they are, 9.2% responded that they were transactional leaders, 23.7% answered instructional, 31.6% saw themselves as transformational leaders, and 35.5% selected distributed leadership. Second, when asked which type of leadership model they prefer, 42.5% of participants said they preferred a distributed leadership model, 32.5% selected a transformational model, 13.8% selected transactional, and 11.3% selected instructional leadership. Third, when asked their opinion about which type of leadership is most prominent in Saudi Arabia, 33.8% believed it to be distributed leadership, 13.8% selected transformational leadership, 28.7% thought it was instructional, and 23.8% percent believed it to be transactional leadership. Furthermore, when asked who should be involved in rule-making and policies in the country, 82.7% of participants said both sexes should be involved, 8.6% said women only, and 7.4% said men only, leaving 1.2% who said they did not know. However, when asked if women in leadership should defer to men in the same level of leadership, 41.3% answered yes, 40% said no, and 18.8% were unsure. When asked if they would support a woman as the head of the Ministry of Education, 66.7% of participants said they would, 27.2% they would not, and 6.2% said that they did not know. Finally, when asked if a

woman should become head of the Ministry of Education, 51.2% of participants responded in the affirmative, while 26.2% responded to preserve male exclusivity of the position, and 22.5% responded that they did not know.

There was consensus between men and women for having equal involvement in decision-making processes. Females were considered more reliable for making decisions in the educational leadership spectrum. Females also scored high on the survey when asked if they should hold senior level jobs; however, when asked if women should have the same jobs as men, the majority of participants disagreed. What this reveals is a prevalent cultural bias against women. Saudi scholars are in a position to embrace more liberal views on women in leadership and may hold to them by volition or simply through university policy, but they still maintain older traditional values on the roles of men and women in general. Figure 2 below considers the percentages of participant responses on the effect of curricula segregation on women in educational leadership, with a majority of participants responding neutrally.
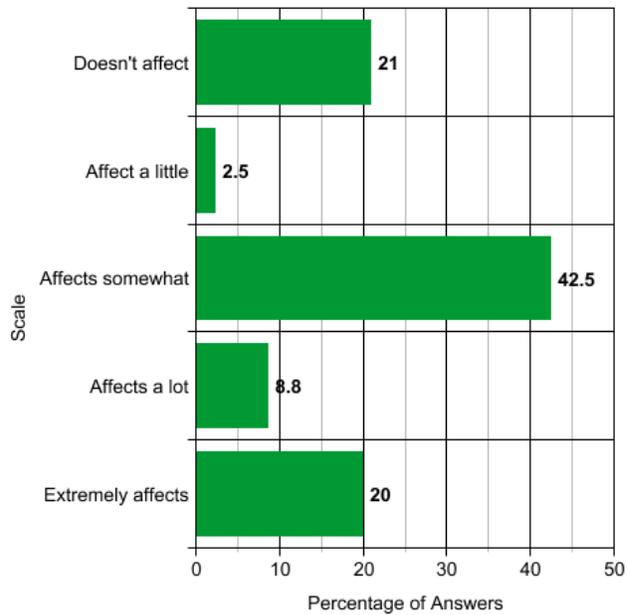
*Figure 2.* The Effect of Segregation on Women in Educational Leadership.

Figure 3 below measures participant responses on the difference between boys' and girls' schools, with the majority responding that there is somewhat of a difference, though a sizable portion of participants did hold that there is an extreme difference.
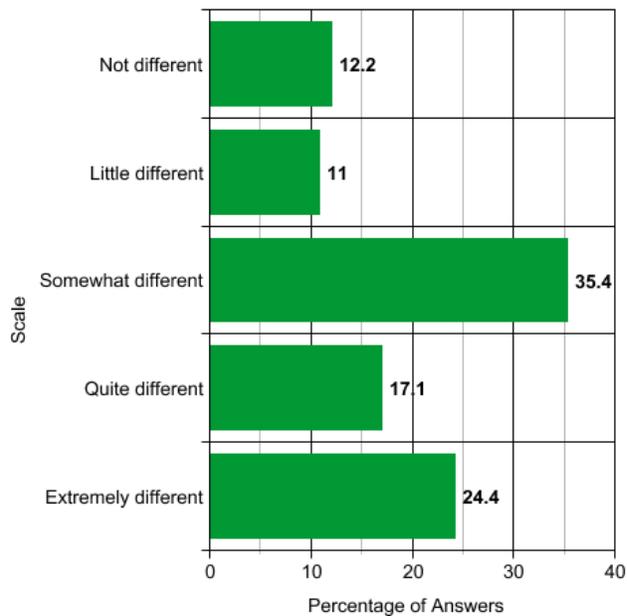


*Figure 3.* Difference Between Boys' and Girls' Schools.

Figure 4 below measures participant responses on the importance of dominance in leadership, with a majority responding that dominance is essential with leadership, followed closely by the 'somewhat important' and 'very important' responses.
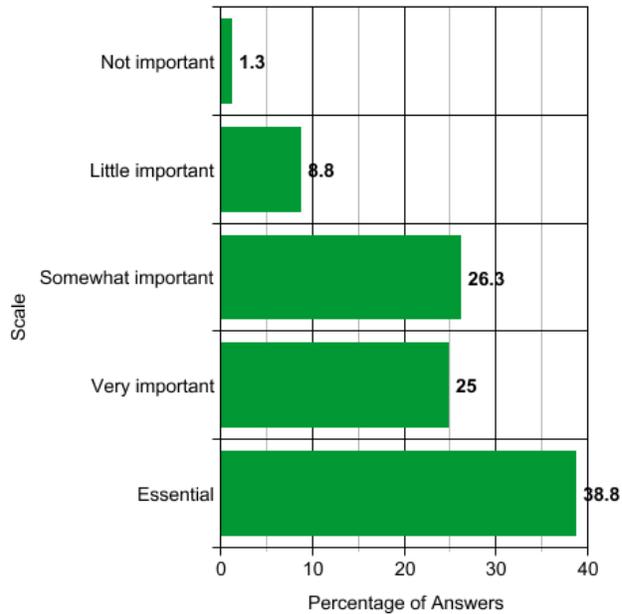


*Figure 4.* Importance of Dominance in Leadership.

Figure 5 below measures participant responses on the importance of assertiveness in goal accomplishment, with the majority affirming that assertiveness is essential.
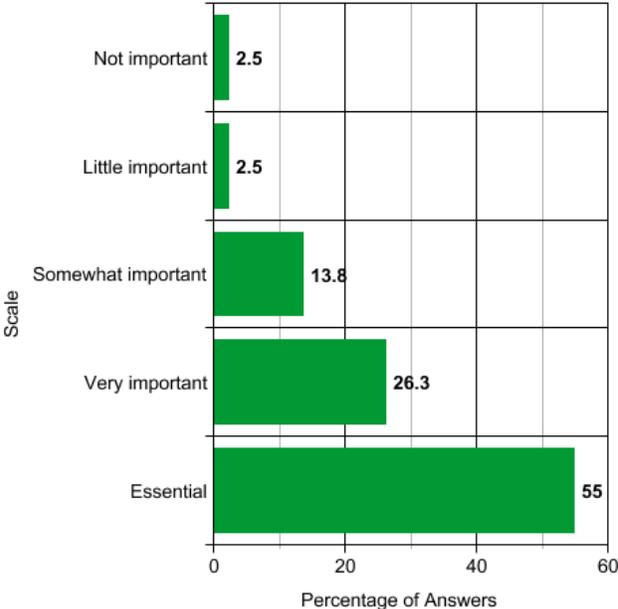
*Figure 5.* Importance of Assertiveness in Goal Accomplishment.

Figure 6 below measures how participants felt a consideration of others should affect leadership decisions, with the majority responding that it should somewhat, followed closely by a response that it should completely.
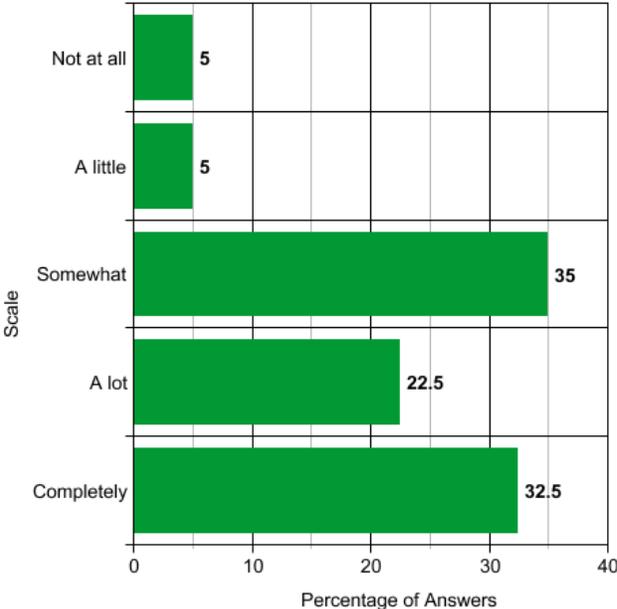
*Figure 6.* How Consideration of Others Should Affect Leadership Decisions.

**Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations for Further Action**

**Challenges to Leadership Theory Reform and Implementation**

Superior leadership performance occurs when leaders are open to accepting new reforms and beneficial changes, even if those reforms and changes oppose the current system. By having knowledge about how to improve and develop their leadership and being willing to accept it, leaders show that they value sharing the mission with the group, and they look beyond their own self-interest. However, suggesting new theories of leadership and proposing changes will likely bring about misjudgment, misinterpretation, and misunderstanding from many people. These are potential barriers that could stand in the way of changing leadership instruction and are a common theme in the human experience. In Saudi Arabia's case, it would appear that there are two main barriers that make implementing these new theories difficult to achieve: culture and structure.

**Culture**

Ultimately, culture has a big influence on the way life and leadership is carried out within a community. Normally, community cultures are incredibly resistant to change, especially within leadership culture. Distributed leadership and transformational leadership would mean an increasing departure of leadership culture from a view that sees one person or group of people, particularly men, as holding all authority, to a more equalizing view of leadership as a distributed property. Unless communities and those involved in leadership reform work together, exploration and innovation will stagnate, as they are always limited by the culture in which they occur.

**Structure**

The way leadership is currently structured presents a set of barriers to distributing leadership. The structure of leadership is still dominated by two main aspects—male leadership and the current leadership theories, transactional and instructional leadership—that underlie Saudi culture.

The issue is therefore to implement either transformational or distributed leadership through the reorganization of leadership structure to mitigate the deleterious effects of transactional and instructional leadership while minimizing the effect this will have on traditional and cultural values. This will lead to a reformation of girls' school curricula in Saudi Arabia and, in the long run, more support for women leaders in other areas such as educational leadership. In order to apply distributed or transformational leadership to the educational leadership system in Saudi Arabia, the appropriate culture would need to be created and the structural opportunities established. To date, Saudi Arabia has not seriously addressed the potential consequences or the benefits of leadership reform in the education field. There are still questions left unanswered: what benefits can be expected for leaders in which leadership is distributed and transformational? How can it help change and improve leadership?

Clearly, there is a need to explore how the discourse of women in leadership has shifted and for what purposes. It is also important to critically analyze the lack of conceptual underpinning for that discourse, evident both nationally and internationally, and to identify key issues that the leadership profession has been left to try to solve. This will help to involve women in leadership positions by integrating several leadership theories into the sectors of government at administration levels in Saudi Arabia that could work effectively and would align women with desired leadership positions. Communities and traditional society need more preparation to

accept the new idea of placing women in leadership positions. This way, women will not have the same strong obstacles that they had in the early 1980s, and that is because this era of technological revolution is rapidly changing the world.

Women in Saudi Arabia are discussing their issues in public and letting their voices be heard more now than ever before. This is a new opportunity for women, who are better situated to demand more empowerment in educational leadership. To empower women at the administrative level, we would need to reform the current theories that Saudi Arabia already has. Applying different kinds of theories beside the transactional and instructional leadership theories could help improve women's chances to be in leadership positions. The role of women in education is still to receive and act upon orders as defined by her school, and even within the department of education, the role of women is very similar. Increasing emphasis has been placed on the need for leadership in educational theory, policy, and practice in general in Saudi Arabia, but on the contrary, women are still excluded from this discussion.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

It is evident that girls' curricula in Saudi Arabia do not offer the same access or opportunities as boys' curricula. To equalize the two, they must function and develop in an integrative rather than separated manner. Smith (1987) mentions, "The curriculum, a production plan, must be implemented in the school under various conditions created by various population of children" (p. 186). As mentioned previously in this paper, the current student curricula for boys and girls in Saudi Arabia, in their segregation and the fact that boys' schools receive more funding and provide more opportunities than girls' schools, hinders a woman's education, future, choice, and opportunity. The Department of Education has a plan for dealing with these issues and trying to improve the education system in Saudi Arabia. A lot of time and finances are

spent on improving education each year. However, the solutions to the problems only address the surface of the issues. They do not hit the root of the problem or address the core of the issues.

The goal of implementing the aforementioned changes is to improve the way the Department of Education reforms and makes changes to the educational system. In recent years, the main focus of the government of Saudi Arabia has been developing the K–12 educational program and trying to transform various systems for students and their families such as daycare, kindergarten, and preschool (all of which are free for students). The high school systems of education and their curricula are more different than ever before, including more educational pathways and methods of measuring student progress. However, most of these changes do not do very much to serve the female student population. If we focused more on the needs of female students, we would empower future generations of female leaders. Starting with the top level of leadership will greatly influence the schools and principals and help improve equality between boys' and girls' schools.

**Applying Transformational and Distributed Theories Through Leadership Reorganization**

Philip Hallinger (2003), in *Leading Educational Change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership*, came up with three conclusions about how transformational leadership, which he denotes as a collaborative "enquiry" between school leaders, can empower schools. The first is an imperative; Hallinger maintained that in order to sustain classroom improvement, individual school leaders such as teachers and principals should expand upon their platform of leadership. Furthermore, Hallinger assured that this improvement will lead inevitably to newer, more elaborate leadership styles and understandings, both of which will compound the improvement itself. Last, Hallinger claimed that the enactment of the

previous two conditions would offer a unique opportunity to teachers: the ability to understand more about leadership and more effectively enact it.

Hallinger's (2003) first conclusion could serve to link broadly the transformational and distributed leadership styles. As school leaders broaden their leadership repertoires and engage in collaborative dialog, by necessity, school leaders would distribute power among faculty and staff to articulate a shared vision, a concept important to the renovation of Saudi school curricula as discussed below. It would be counterproductive to maintain a singular leader who holds a greater amount of power than others in such an environment. Hallinger himself anticipated this connection: "Transformational leadership may be viewed as distributed in that it focuses on developing a shared vision and shared commitment to school change" (p. 331). That distributed and transformational leadership are necessarily entangled simplifies the incorporation of these styles, as one can focus solely on implementing either transformational or distributed leadership and have the other follow.

In order for reform to happen in girls' schools, Hallinger's (2003) second conclusion needs to be taken seriously in the Saudi Arabian education system. The gaining of new leadership understandings is a foundational step in the development of the school environment and, thus, the development of the school curriculum and materials. Textbooks in mathematics, science, English, and Arabic, as evidenced previously, are still oriented more toward male students on a linguistic level, and the male form enjoys greater representation. This bias is one that can be emended through revising the image of the Saudi female as primarily a homemaker into one that considers her as capable and as socially mobile as a man, one that can be done only by these newer understandings.

The outcome of the first two conclusions is the third conclusion. If the Saudi Arabian education system implements these two elements, opportunities for women will increase and they will gain more access. At the same time, traditional and cultural values will not be greatly threatened.

**Selecting Leaders for Change**

The careful selection process of those put in place to manage or handle potential changes in educational leadership in Saudi Arabia is the first step to bringing about effective change. Again, since culture and rigid societal structure are real factors that are not easily surmountable, I suggest that an outside, non-governmental body be at the heart of the project. This professional body or board may have the leverage to hold constructive dialogues with the ministry, educators, and other stakeholders in Saudi Arabian education. As transformational leadership practices diverge from the leadership style in Saudi Arabia, the implementation will require sensitive cultural understanding and evidence and the ability to competently negotiate potential changes from different angles. A body separate from the Ministry of Education that possesses effective leadership characteristics can work to integrate this kind of leadership. This may be, for example, a consulting body made up of Saudi male and female doctoral students in education, who know their country and its complexities, but also analyzed effective international models and theories in educational leadership. This type of professional consulting body could be semi-private and encourage the Saudi Ministry of Education in a non-threatening way. This would be the first step, because cultural sensitivity in Middle Eastern countries is absolutely fundamental to even the thought of suggesting change.

It is also important to consider where to find the individuals that may form a constructive group of educational consultants. In order for change to occur in education and in educational

leadership, I believe there should be expanded scholarship programs to involve leaders, teachers, and students who plan to work in the education field. One example of where this is already the case is in the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Health. It houses a particularly strong training program that mandatorily includes sending their graduates and residents to study abroad in order for them to become familiar with best practices in their field. The Ministry of Health is careful to support and take cues from the individuals it sends abroad, always making improvements because of the international connections, experience, and interactions which are respected in this domain. It seems fitting that by making a similar commitment to education, graduates could also lead to changes driven by respect for Saudi students who study abroad and gain international experience and perspective. Certainly, the combination of knowledgeable and culturally competent male and female graduates from the country could lead to meaningful collaboration between stakeholders. If the Ministry of Education could invest more into these individuals, they may also be more open to hearing back from them in order to improve conditions and standards for reform.

Furthermore, in order to alter the structure of leadership, leaders must focus on the beneficial qualities of distributed and transformational theories. This will help current leadership begin to move away from a leader-follower mentality to more networked structures and patterns of interaction. This will inevitably open new professional relationships between men and women based upon collaboration and mutual work, rather than power or "top down" instruction.

**From Leadership to the Schools: Employing Senge's Models of Systems Thinking, Mental Modeling, Vision Sharing, and Team Learning to Renovate Saudi Curriculums**

In a keystone study *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, author Peter Senge (1990) defines and discusses systems thinking, mental models, vision sharing, and team learning as patterns of thought that can bolster the productivity of a

business. Regardless of the corporate context in which Senge (1990) writes, these elements are applicable socially and, if incorporated, may have the greatest effect on Saudi education. I suggest that in Saudi Arabia, systems thinking could be initiated in the early education curriculum in order to gradually yet effectively encourage a more gender-balanced atmosphere. This atmosphere would be one that changes the demographic from primarily male leaders to male and female leaders and phases out the existing theories of transactional and instructional leadership. This is the purpose for the comparative analyses in Chapter 3, which discusses how deep-seated the bias is in the boys' and girls' Saudi curriculum.

The patriarchal tendency described by Smith (2000) tells how "gender inequality appeared to be rooted in women's traditional absence and silencing in public life" (p. 45). This means that, to begin with, a shift in mental models must be incurred to institute effective change in Saudi Arabian female education. The educational system must, over time, cease to stymie women pursuing the same opportunities as males. Moreover, in accordance with Senge's (1990) discussion, the current mental models in Saudi Arabian leadership reinforce the idea that women should be excluded from senior levels of leadership. These models must be reformed and integrated within a framework encouraging systems thinking and emphasizing the needed structural changes, which is hardly possible through transactional and instructional leadership styles.

In this way, vision sharing, a practice prevalent in western models, can find its way into Saudi Arabia. This cannot be taken for granted in the socio-cultural environment of the Saudi nation. For in vision sharing, the individuals of any enterprise, leader or constituent, work together to envisage an ultimate goal and work to achieve it. However, in Saudi Arabia, a singular leader usually does the conceptualizing, and rarely does any other member collaborate

with this person to create a shared vision in most government sectors. This is why I suggest that such a commitment to change should start with a carefully selected group of individuals made up of notable Saudi Arabian scholars and other stakeholders in education who may liaise with existing ministry members.

This is supported by another aspect of the Senge (1990) model that discusses effective strategies of team learning. Motivated and encouraged teams work based on the skills they have, and despite the gender of their members, they are helping create the appropriate atmosphere for suitable people to be part of the reforms. Currently, the Ministry of Education houses a joint committee of educational legislature that is made up of entirely men. That is, programming and curricular decisions for both boys' and girls' schools are made of the same group of male leaders. I suggest one of two solutions to address the problematic curricular differences that are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3: (1) Divide this decision-making committee into one for boys and one for girls, at least *including* women in curricular decisions made for girls' schools, or (2) Maintain the current group but establish a more equitable representation of women in this body. For example, policy- and decision-makers at the head of administration should welcome more women and collaborate with them. In this system, women would have more power, which will help them have more influence and create more space for them to develop the system of leadership alongside men. For that to occur in our leadership system and culture, we need techniques that can be promoted by providing training sessions and designing organizational cultures to accommodate transformational techniques. As a result, we can encourage the selection and retention of women who demonstrate the capacity to develop into transformational leaders: "If we want to have any positive change in the educational system, we must start by

improving the standards of education. This will lead to good principles and values that will better serve our students" (Anonymous, Survey Response, July 12, 2016).

Moreover, the application of these theories will not lead to a uniform effect on the students, teachers, subordinates, underlying staff, and so on. Thus, having knowledge of different theories in the leadership field will help to reform the systems of most institutions. That will raise the important values of subordinate's outcomes as well as motivate the followers to transcend their own self-interests and expand the energy between the group and organization instead of limiting that to one person. Also, that will lead to more focus on the skill and ability the leader has, rather than gender, to reach a significant achievement by understanding the value of theories for the group.

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**Appendix**

Questionnaire/Survey

1. Are you a male or a female?

2. What is your occupation?

3. Who do you think is better at learning concepts and skills?

4. Who do you think is better at decision-making?

5. On a scale of 1 to 5, how does the segregation of the sexes affect women in Saudi Arabian educational leadership?

6. On a scale of 1 to 5, how different are boys' and girls' schools from each other?

7. Who should be involved in making the rules and policies in the Saudi educational system?

8. Should women in leadership defer to men in the same level of leadership?

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, how important is being dominant in leadership?

10. On a scale of 1 to 5, how important is being assertive in accomplishing goals?

11. On a scale of 1 to 5, how should the consideration of others affect leadership decisions?

12. What kind of leader are you?

13. Which type of leadership do you prefer?

14. In your opinion, what kind of leadership is most prominent in Saudi Arabia?

15. On a scale of 1 to 5, how trustworthy are female decisions, in regards to educational leadership roles?

16. Would you support a woman in the position of the head of the Ministry Education?

17. Currently, there has never been a woman as head of any ministry. Do you think this should be changed?

18 If you have any suggestion to help improve the educational system in Saudi Arabia please feel

free to share…