EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: A DESCRIPTION OF

SAUDI FEMALE PRINCIPALS IN THE EASTERN

PROVINCE OF SAUDI ARABIA

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Oklahoma State University, 2010

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Saudi Arabia's educational system has been strongly criticized in the Western press since the events of September 2001. Because of the nature of the society, most outsiders are given only a precursory glance inside the structure and management of Saudi Arabia's education system. The new Head of State King Abdullah has made educational reform a focus of his reign. King Abdullah's educational reform initiative, *Tatweer*, includes issues such as teaching and curriculum; however, little attention has been focused on the individuals who will be responsible to oversee the educational reforms at the local levels - school principals.

The purpose of this study was to describe the leadership role of Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and their perspectives of that role. Twelve female principals who lead elementary, intermediate, and secondary government

Schools in the Eastern Province of the country were interviewed and asked to describe their role as educational leaders. The 12 principals spoke of visions for their schools that included providing a physical environment that promoted learning and excellence. They described their leadership and their visions, focusing on elements of the national religion, Islam. Their descriptions of the influence of the Ministry of Education on their leadership indicated that they were not given enough authority to act or be decision makers. Their descriptions indicated that their role was that of a school manager more than that of an educational leader. The role of societal culture on the leadership of these 12 women was evident in this study. Although the study permitted a glimpse into the leadership of Saudi female principals, there is much more to explore.

Dedicated to

Hussain

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Events at the beginning of the 21st Century focused the world's attention upon

the Muslim-Arab nation of Saudi Arabia. Once it was known that 15 of the 19

hijackers who perpetrated the events of September 11, 2001, were from Saudi Arabia

(Kaplan, 2003), that attention was directed at Saudi Arabia's educational system (del

Castillo, 2006). Freedom House, the non-partisan American research group that

monitors civil rights worldwide, accused Saudi schoolbooks of promoting hatred.

"When it emerged that 15 of the 19 hijackers that day were Saudi, many blamed the

Kingdom's education system for breeding hate," (De Quetteville, 2006, p. 27).

> According to then-U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Robert W. Jordan, the
>
> Saudis were taken by surprise, appalled and embarrassed that their sons and
>
> members of their tribes could be involved in such a horrific act. This caused
>
> them to go into a period of self-reflection and introspection. (Gannon and
>
> Pillai, 2010, p. 59)

As the international community attempted to understand the motives for the

attacks, a greater problem with the educational system, not only in Saudi Arabia but in

the Arab world, was uncovered. "Since September 11, 2001, the Arab world has been

exposed to greater scrutiny. Education has become a critical issue in defining a state of decline that exists in many Arab countries" (Yamani, 2006, p. 1).Western media and American journalists portrayed the Saudi educational system at the center of a controversy that included suggestions that the system produces terrorists (Bronson and Coleman, 2005). Criticism of the Saudi education system by the United States led to responses by His Royal Highness Prince Turki Al-Faisal, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United States, and by His Royal Highness Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal:

> First, Saudi Arabia is upgrading its own educational system. The Kingdom has reviewed all of its education practices and materials, and has removed any element that is inconsistent with modern education . . . Second, Saudi Arabia is heavily investing in its own educational system to prepare its citizens for life and work in a modern, global economy. (T. Al-Faisal, 2006, p. 415) The education reforms in Saudi Arabia go beyond textbook rewriting. And they go into teacher training directions . . . And so the whole system of education is being transformed from top to bottom. Textbooks are only one of the steps that have been taken by Saudi Arabia. (T. Al-Faisal, 2006, p. 2)

His Highness Prince Saud Al-Faisal was not the first Saudi to suggest that the system needs transformation. According to Bronson and Coleman (2005) the call for educational reform came from the Saudis themselves including parents, policymakers, journalists, and religious and business leaders.

According to the English language daily newspaper, *The Arab News*, the Saudi deputy minister of education said, "King Abdullah wants to introduce drastic reforms in the country's education system, matching with advanced countries" (Abdul

Ghafour, January, 2009). These reforms are a part of the *King Abdullah Project for Educational Development,* or *Tatweer* as it is known in Arabic.

Tatweer is intended to improve Saudi Arabia's education standard to match that of other nations. Budgets have been allocated for constructing new schools, for improving the educational environment, for extra-curricular activities, and for the training and development of teachers as well as a curriculum development plan. According to the Ministry of Education (Abdul Ghafour, 2009), "Academics and other experts are working on the project's executive plan, which will be ready shortly" (*The Arab News).*

Educational reform, like any other form of change, is heavily dependent on the leadership charged with instigating, implementing, and stewarding that change (Bennis, 1989; Bridges, 1991; Kotter, 1996). According to Burke (2008), leadership is the vital link that will sustain or destroy any organization undergoing change, including an educational one. Simply put, "Leadership matters" (p. 247). If educational reform is to be achieved, reformists in Saudi Arabia will need to understand the leadership role of Saudi female principals and perspectives of that role. Chance and Chance (2002) suggested that there is a need for understanding the motivation of leaders responsible for organizational change. As Saudi Arabia looks to reform its educational system, educators need to examine the leadership role and the perspective of that role of those individuals who will be responsible for leading the changes - the school principals.

Statement of the Problem

National attention is focused on educational reform in Saudi Arabia. However, reforms will be actualized at the local level and will be greatly impacted by the educational leaders of public schools. According to the Saudi Ministry of Education,

school principals receive little or no leadership education before assuming their posts as educational leaders. Alderweesh (2003), who conducted a leadership study in the Al Ahsa region of the Eastern Province, found that only 32% of the 28 female principals who participated in her study held a bachelor's degree or higher. According to Alderweesh, "In Saudi Arabia, any teacher could apply to be a principal or principal's assistant after a few years of teaching experience" (p. 1). School principals are the educational leaders who will be charged with leading the reforms at the local level.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the leadership role of Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and their perspectives of that role. Describing the leadership role and participants' perspectives of that role included identifying their educational visions and motivations.

Research Questions

"Everyone knows that a leader's most important role is to lead change" (Bridges, 2003, p. 154). If Saudi Arabia intends to reform its educational system as His Highness King Abdullah has declared (Morgan, 2004), describing the leadership role of Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and the perspectives of that role will benefit and help inform the process. In this study, describing the leadership role and the perspectives of that role was accomplished through examination of the following central questions:

1. How do Saudi female principals define their educational roles?

2. How do Saudi female principals describe their educational visions for their schools?

3. What motivates Saudi female principals in meeting their responsibilities?

4. How do Saudi female principals describe the impact they have on their schools?

5. What theoretical framework(s) describes the leadership role of Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province?

Significance of the Study

As Saudi Arabia implements educational reforms "to prepare its citizens for life and work in a modern, global economy" (Al-Faisal, 2006, p. 415), understanding the leadership role of those responsible for implementing change and perspectives of that role is an important aspect of the reforms for several reasons.

First, Saudi Arabia must be sure that their educational leaders are prepared to face the challenges the reforms will present. "Leadership defines what the future should look like, aligns people with that vision, and inspires them to make it happen despite the obstacles" (Kotter, 1996, p. 25). Secondly, leaders need to share a similar vision of education in the future for the reforms to be successful. "Vision is increasingly regarded as an essential component of effective leadership" (Bush, 2003, p. 6). Finally, actualization of the reforms will depend on the leaders charged with facilitating change at the local level. Useful change cannot be effective unless it is driven by high-quality leadership (Bush, 2003).

Possible outcomes from the study may prompt the Ministry of Education to provide additional, mandatory leadership education for school principals as well as to develop standards and certification for those assuming leadership roles. Outcomes might also prompt the Ministry of Higher Education to develop undergraduate as well as graduate programs in Educational Leadership and School Administration programs at universities throughout the Kingdom. In addition, describing the leadership role of Saudi female principals of public girls' schools and their perspectives of the role may

be a starting point for implementing educational reforms that, for many, are long overdue in a country that wishes to see its citizens better prepared to compete in a global economy.

Limitations

1. This study was confined to interviewing a limited number of Saudi female principals in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia. I have resided in the Eastern province for more than 25 years, and limited the study to this area due to greater familiarity with members of the Ministry of Education in the Eastern province to help facilitate interviews and make this study possible.

2. A second limitation that occurred during participant selection was that of accessibility. Some of the schools located in the Eastern Province are in extremely remote areas of the desert. Substitutions had to be drawn to replace participants in these remote areas considered too difficult to safely access.

3. Because of cultural and religious norms, restrictions exist concerning the mixing of the sexes in Saudi Arabia. As a female, I focused this study on Saudi female principals to ensure access to the participants.

4. Qualitative research practices and case study description, in particular, might include rich description of the participants in a study. However, I deviate from this practice due to my respect for and understanding of the cultural and religious sensitivities of the participants in this study and do not include any physical description of the participants.

5. Saudi female principals were asked by the Ministry of Education to participate in this study. The Ministry contacted each participant to ascertain her participation. This could have resulted in pressure on the individuals to participate and may have impacted their responses. Because of the MOE's assistance in setting up the

interviews with the participants, and the MOE's role as employer of these individuals, I have kept information such as dates of interviews and specific locations of the schools of the participants intentionally vague.

6. All interviews were conducted in English with an Arabic translator, and all responses were translated from Arabic to English. Because of differences in languages, some meanings might have been lost in translation.

Definitions

Government schools – public, free access schools open to all Saudi students beginning at the age of five until completion of a high school certificate

Eastern Province – one of five geographical areas comprising the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Situated to the East of the country, the province is bordered by the Arabian Gulf; several of its major cities include Al-Khobar, Dammam, Al-Ahsa, Abqaiq, Ras Tanura, Al Khufji and Jubail

Shariah – religious jurisprudence

Assumptions

Despite the involvement of the Ministry of Education in selection of participants, it is assumed that all participants were forthright during the interviews.

Summary

Because of both internal and external pressure and international and national criticism of the educational system soon after the events of September 11, 2001, Saudi Arabia began to evaluate educational practices within the Muslim-Arab nation. The head of this Arabian Gulf Monarchy, His Royal Highness King Abdullah Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques made educational reform in this Middle Eastern country a

priority of his reign through implementation of *Tatweer*, a project that encompasses major educational issues affecting the government school system.

      The purpose of this descriptive case study was to describe the leadership role of female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and their perspectives of that role. Twelve Saudi female principals who head public girls' schools in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia were interviewed. Transcripts of the interviews were coded and analyzed to identify the principals' definitions of their roles, their educational visions, and motivations for leading their respective schools.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Saudi Arabia was placed under a microscope once the world learned that 15 of the 19 hijackers on September 11, 2001, were from Saudi Arabia. Attention was soon focused upon a declining system of education in this Arab/Muslim country. Calls for education reform were heard from both within and outside of the Gulf Kingdom. The Western media and American journalists, as well as the Saudis themselves, began to scrutinize the Saudi system of education (Bronson and Coleman, 2005). King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, made educational reform a priority of his reign (Abdul Ghafour, 2009) when he ascended the throne in 2005.

Educational reform in Saudi Arabia will be greatly impacted by the educational leaders of government schools—the school principals. Yet, according to the Saudi Ministry of Education, school principals receive little or no leadership education before assuming their posts as educational leaders (Aldarweesh, 2003). Effective educational reform will require principals who are prepared to lead change. Understanding the individuals responsible for leading that change will be vital to the success of the reforms. The purpose of this study was to describe the leadership role

of Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and their perspectives of that role.

Change theory, leadership, and leadership theory were the conceptual frameworks that guided this study. Literature relevant to this study included a discussion of organizational change theory and how it relates to leadership. Equally of value in the literature review was theories of leadership that looked specifically at differentiating between leaders and managers, and transformational versus transactional leadership. Also included was a brief review of the role of societal culture on leadership. Finally, previous studies of Saudi educational leaders were reviewed. First, however, was a brief introduction to the educational system of Saudi Arabia and the procedures and requirements for Saudi principals.

Education in Saudi Arabia

Vision

The Saudi system of education is deeply rooted in the national religion, Islam (Al-Sadan, 2000). In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Education's document, *A Brief Introduction*, the Ministry states the vision of education:

> Engendering of a new generation of male and female youth who embody the Islamic values in their persons, both theoretical as well as practical, are equipped with necessary knowledge, skills, and endowed with ease and comfort. They should be able to face international competition both at the scientific as well as technological levels to be able to meaningfully participate in overall growth and development.
>
> This is to be achieved through an effective and practical system of education which is capable of discovering the potentials and predispositions, and, create

the spirit of action. All this, in an environment of education and training, charged with the spirit of instruction and edification (*Our Vision*).

History

Education, like the founding of the nation itself, is relatively young in Saudi Arabia. "Saudi Arabia became a nation in 1932, when Ibn Saud united disparate tribes into one nation and named himself king" (Gannon & Pillai, 2010, p. 61). According to the Saudi Ministry of Education formal education in Saudi Arabia began in the 1930s, the Ministry of Education was established in 1954, and the Kingdom's first university was founded in 1957.

The Saudi Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is the government appointed body that oversees K-12 education in Saudi Arabia. According to Neil Partrick, a lecturer at the University of Westminster in England, and a consultant on Middle Eastern politics and economics, King Abdullah and his appointees in the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education will face "enormous constraints" in implementing the changes to education they feel are necessary due to the bureaucracy and religious conservatism within Saudi Arabia (Lindsey, 2010).

> According to the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission to the United States:
> The objectives of the Saudi educational policy are to ensure that education becomes more efficient, to meet the religious, economic and social needs of the country and to eradicate illiteracy among Saudi adults. There are several government agencies involved with planning, administrating and implementing the overall governmental educational policy in Saudi Arabia. The Ministry of Education sets overall standards for the country's educational system (public and private) and also oversees special education for the

handicapped. Early in 2003 the General Presidency for Girls' Education was dissolved and its functions taken over by the Ministry, to administer the girls' schools and colleges, supervise kindergartens and nursery schools and sponsor literacy programs for females (Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission).

However, the administration and oversight of boys and girls schools remains segregated; male MOE administrators oversee boys' schools; and female MOE administrators oversee girls' schools. This system has provided a detailed and highly structured ministry that oversees all aspects of Saudi K-12 education. The system is highly bureaucratic with decision-making power structured from the top down.

Organization of Education

According to the Saudi Ministry of Education, "General education in the Kingdom consists of kindergarten, six years of primary school and three years each of intermediate and high school" (*Education in the Kingdom*).

Secondary school students study a general curriculum the first year and the remaining two years may choose to specialize in 1 of 3 major areas: Administration and Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, or Shariah and Arabic Studies. Vocational and technical education and training are alternatives for intermediate school graduates. The choices available are: 1. industrial, 2. commercial, or 3. agriculture. Post secondary public or government education is free to all students who obtain admission. Admission is based on both secondary school results and college and university exams. Private university education is also available. The Ministry of Education's Summary Statistics' projections for 2006/2007 included 4,909,047 total number of students, 416,362 number of teaching staff, and 30,841 the total number of schools in Saudi Arabia.

Educational Leadership in Saudi Arabia

Each province of Saudi Arabia has a separate General Director of Education for Girls under the Ministry of Education (MOE). In the Eastern Province there are four deputy directors heading four separate departments of education. Dr. Malika Al Tayar is the single female deputy director in the Eastern Province. She is the Deputy Director of Educational Affairs in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

According to Dr. Al Tayar (personal communication, March 17, 2010) the minimum requirements for a school principal include having a bachelor's degree, eight years experience either as a teacher or administrator, and a performance evaluation of excellent for the two years proceeding application for the position. The candidate must demonstrate ability for leadership as perceived by the committee charged with interviewing the candidates. According to Dr. Al Tayar most people prefer the position of assistant principal to that of principal because it is less responsibility. If candidates are both available and willing, the committee prefers to nominate assistant principals for the position of principal because of prior training.

Dr. Al Tayar (personal communication, March 17, 2010) explained that once a candidate is placed in the position as school principal, she receives ongoing training; but the training is not a pre-requisite for securing the position of school principal. In addition, a newly appointed school principal will visit other more experienced principals for mentoring. All government school principals are rotated out of their positions every four years. According to Dr. Al Tayar, "Training and experience are better than education."

Organizational Change and Educational Reform

With a student population of nearly five million students (Sakr, 2008), educational reform in Saudi Arabia will be a major undertaking. The educational

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reforms King Abdullah is implementing will involve change within the Saudi educational organization as well as within individual schools. According to Chance and Chance (2002), "Organizational change is inextricably tied to the beliefs, values, and norms that define the organizational culture" (p. 217). Burke (2008) suggested that reforms of this magnitude are customarily planned, and although unusual, usually involve revolutionary change that may include changes in strategy, leadership and culture. Revolutionary change normally involves a sudden event that precipitates the need for change as opposed to evolutionary change which is a more gradual process. Revolutionary change, also known as transformation, requires the immediate attention of all organizational members (Burke).

The events that occurred on September 11, 2001, could be construed as such an event. Saudi Arabia might have undergone educational reform in a more evolutionary manner had not those events unfolded; however, because they did happen, the events of 911 seem to have been a catalyst that called the governing parties to action in reforming what many Saudis consider an outdated educational system. Change is a difficult scenario regardless the circumstance, but with international pressure being applied, educational reform has appeared as a major topic at the forefront of Saudi public policy. Change theory is one part of the conceptual framework that guides this study.

Conceptual Framework

According to Merriam (1998), "Qualitative research is designed to inductively build rather than to test concepts, hypothesis, and theories" and a theoretical or conceptual framework "is the structure, the scaffolding, and frame of your study" (p. 45). Framing a study intended to describe the leadership role and the perspectives of that role of school principals charged with leading educational reform

required a conceptual framework that included change theory, leadership, and leadership theories. I intended to use these conceptual frameworks to analyze and interpret the data collected from the interviews I conducted, however, once I began analysis I found that these theories did not adequately frame the leadership of the principals I was describing.

Change Theory

Understanding change theory was beneficial to understanding the process that Saudi schools must undertake. Burke (2008) summarized Van de Ven and Poole's four theoretical frameworks for organizational change: life-cycle theory, teleological theory, dialectical theory, and evolutionary theory. Life-cycle theory is described as a linear and irreversible sequence of prescribed stages; teleological is recurrent, discontinuous sequence of goal setting, implementation and adaptation; dialectic is a recurrent, discontinuous sequence of confrontation, conflict and synthesis; and evolutionary is the recurrent, cumulative and probabilistic sequence of variation, selection, and retention, (p. 140).

The theoretical framework for organizational change that best described the educational reforms set forth in *Tatweer* was not clear. With a starting date of mid-2007, this project was reported to consist of general principles without operational plans and a $2.3 billion dollar budget for the first six years   According to Sakr's (2008) analysis of educational reform in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, Saudi Arabia's educational problem is more complicated than the other Gulf countries due to many factors. First Saudi Arabia has a much larger population than the other Gulf Countries; attempting to evaluate teachers and eliminate unqualified ones could have great economic repercussions. Secondly, Saudi Arabia's

attempts at curriculum reform might be met with greater resistance due to stronger religious undercurrents.

Based on Sakr's analysis, I wanted to use Burke's (2008) definition of Van de Ven and Poole's dialectic *chang*e theory to describe the organizational change necessary for successful educational reforms in Saudi Arabia. Considering the underlying confrontation and conflict that may have to occur within society between the general population and the strong religious undercurrent, the process of reform could be described as dialectic, a discontinuous sequence of confrontation, conflict and synthesis. On the other hand, teleological change theory may have a strong place in Saudi educational reforms with its discontinuous sequence of goal setting, implementation and adaptation. Educational reform could be a start-and-stop process as society coalesces itself for transformation and revolution in education.

Demers (2007) described "real" change as "a period of discontinuity, of disruption; it is talked about in terms of transformation and revolution" (p. 43). Saudi principals will be required to sustain these periods of disruption and discontinuity in order for the reforms to be realized as change. Will the current educational leaders have the knowledge and skills to sustain these periods of disruption; will they know how to begin the process, and what will they need to know and do to ensure success? Describing the leadership role of current Saudi female principals and their perspectives of that role provided insight of their knowledge and skills. However, during the interviews only two of these twelve principals addressed the reform initiative, this indicated to me that the principals did not know how to begin the change process or what to do to ensure its success because they did not acknowledge that the reforms are underway.

John P. Kotter (1996) in *Leading Change* describes an eight-stage process for creating change: 1) establishing a sense of urgency, 2) creating the guiding coalition, 3) developing a vision and strategy 4) communicating the change vision, 5) empowering broad-based action, 6) generating short-term wins, 7) consolidating gains and producing more change, and 8) anchoring new approaches in the culture.

How do Saudi female principals understand their own vision for education and are they able to communicate their vision in order to create change within their own schools? According to Sakr (2008), Saudi Arabia's educational history includes a bureaucratic legacy that may impede educational initiatives while ideological disputes hamper educational innovation. Educational leaders of reform, school principals, need to understand their role as change agents.

Burke (2008) described four phases of organizational change and the leader's role at each phase. Phase I, the prelaunch phase, involves embodying the vision of where the organization needs to go. The leader should reflect on her self-awareness, motives, and values. High performers generally see themselves as others see them. Leading successful change requires that leaders be aware of themselves in personal domains. Motives are part of self-awareness and include three major areas: need for achievement, power, and affiliation. The third area for self-reflection, values, involves aligning the leader's individual needs with the values of the organization's culture. If the organization's culture is part of the change, then the values must be modified or a new set of values must be formed. Were the Saudi female principals' values representative of the values of the educational reforms or do they need to be modified or new ones need to be formed? In this phase, Burke (2008) also included the need to examine the external environment and gather information about the needs of the clients, establishing the need for change which may also involve changing the culture

of the organization, and providing clarity of vision and direction by drafting a clear vision statement that can provide direction for the organization.

Burke's (2008) Phase II is the launch phase. It begins with communicating the need for change to members of the organization, creating activities that convey the reality of the change, and dealing with the resistance that will emerge as individual members struggle against the change for various reasons. Phase III is the post-launch phase. Here Burke (2008) emphasizes that the change leaders

> ….need to use multiple levers for the transformation, take the heat from followers from time to time, provide consistency in terms of words and deeds, persevere even to the point of risking being called stubborn, and repeat the message again and again. (p. 264)

Finally, Phase IV of organizational change is sustaining the change. Burke (2008) advised the change leader to be aware of unanticipated consequences, maintain the momentum created by the changes, begin to choose successors to continually infuse new ideas into the organization through new members, and finally be prepared to launch new initiatives to continually renew the organization. Understanding organizational change theory and the processes that instigate change are necessary in order to relate change theory to leadership. Burke (2008) stated, "Change can emanate from any unit, function, or level within an organization. Regardless of its origin; leadership is required" (p. 25).

Leadership

"The need for educational leaders is urgent and worldwide," (Bainbridge and Thomas, 2006, p. 1). Leaders do make a difference in organizations, but the extent of leadership's impact on change is not clear. According to Hallinger and Leithwood

(1998), the principal's leadership role has evolved from manager to bureaucrat, to instructional manager, to transformational leader.

Attempting to define leadership becomes a process in itself, and the definitions are as varied as the leaders. According to Bush (2003) there is no agreed upon definition of leadership. He suggested, rather, that there are three dimensions that form the basis of a definition. They are leadership as influence, leadership and values, and leadership and vision. The purpose of this research was to describe the leadership role of Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province and their perspectives of that role by examining their definitions of their role, their educational visions, their motivations, and the impact Saudi female principals believed that role has on their individual schools.

Definitions for leadership include Kotter's definition (1996): "Leadership is a set of processes that creates organizations in the first place or adapts them to significantly changing circumstances"(p. 25). Burke (2008) differentiated between leadership and power: "Power is the capacity to influence others; leadership is the exercise of that capacity" (p. 228). He suggested that leadership means to make something happen that might not otherwise have occurred. Northhouse (2007) suggested that "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a goal" (p. 3). He explained that there are four central components to conceptualizing leadership: (a) leadership is a process, (b) involves influence, (c) occurs in a group context, and (d) involves goal attainment.

Leadership Theories

Just as numerous definitions of leadership abound, so do theories of leadership. Leadership theories concern themselves with explaining the role of leaders and how leadership influences the effectiveness of organizations (Chance & Chance,

2002, p. 85). According to Sakr (2008) educational reform in Saudi Arabia will be a major undertaking. Much of the burden of changing the culture of individual schools will fall upon the educational leaders of the schools— the school principals. Determining the ability and capability of these individuals involves resolving issues such as their ability to lead these transformations. Therefore, leadership theories provide a framework for understanding the current leadership of Saudi girls' schools in the Eastern Province.

Trait theory.

Trait theory of leadership attempts to identify specific characteristics or traits that differentiate leaders from non-leaders. Chance and Chance (2002) described Yukl's leadership traits and skills and applied them to positions of school leadership:

1. High energy level and stress tolerance are needed to cope with the hectic pace associated with school leadership

2. Internal locus of control refers to the belief that events in one's life are determined by one's own actions rather than by outside events

3. Emotional maturity is defined as being well adjusted and aware of one's own strengths and weaknesses

4. Integrity denotes honesty, ethical behavior, and trustworthiness

5. Power motivation refers to one's need for power to influence others

6. Achievement orientation is a desire to excel and a drive to succeed

7. Need for affiliation is the need to be liked and accepted by others (p. 87)

According to Northhouse (2007), the trait approach to leadership was perhaps the earliest leadership theory. Trait theorists suggest some people were born leaders and those great leaders possessed innate qualities. Although research and results varied about which traits are most desirable for leaders, five traits central to most lists

of traits and characteristics of effective leaders are intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability (p. 19).

Transactional versus transformational leadership.

Bush (2003) distinguished between transactional and transformational leadership, suggesting that transactional leadership involves influencing followers by an exchange of something they both value while transformational leadership is concerned with engaging leaders with followers through a common purpose (p. 95). Northhouse (2007) stated, "As its name implies, transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people" (p. 175). Northhouse also differentiated between the two concepts by describing transactional leadership as focused on the exchanges between leaders and followers and transformational leadership as the process that occurs when people engage with other people and create a connection that elevates the motivation and morality of both leader and follower (p. 176).

Miller and Miller (2001) define transformational and transactional leadership by contrasting the two:

> Transactional leadership is leadership in which relationships with teachers are based upon an exchange for some valued resource. To the teacher, interaction between administrators and teachers is usually episodic, short-lived and limited to the exchange transaction. Transformational leadership is more potent and complex and occurs when one or more teachers engage with others in such a way that administrators and teachers raise one another to higher levels of commitment and dedication, motivation and morality. Through the transforming process, the motives of the leader and follower merge. (p. 182)

Motivation theory.

Chance and Chance (2002) suggested, "The essence of leadership is motivating others to follow and achieve" (p. 127). Motivation explains why people do the things they do. Motivation can involve either internal conditions or external stimuli. External stimuli suggest that individuals respond to reinforcement and punishment to shape behavior. Internal conditions are the needs that drive behavior (Chance & Chance, 2002). According to Bush (2003), "Recognition of the different values and motivations of the people who work in organizations is an essential element if they are to be managed successfully" (p. 130).

Leaders versus managers.

Bush (2003) suggested, "Lead, not manage: there is an important difference" (p. 17). In Saudi Arabia the words *modeara* (female) or *modear* (male) are the titles used to address the individual(s) responsible for leading a school. These titles also denote any person who leads any organization, or operation for that matter; someone who is in charge. However, the rough translation of the Arabic word for principal, modeara or modear, is *manager*.

Not all educators would agree that there are significant differences between the definitions of a leader versus the definition of a manager. Northhouse (2007) suggested that leadership and management have similarities and differences, and that there are many areas where the two overlap. Kotter (1996) argued that the two are entirely different concepts. He differentiated between the two by describing management as a process for keeping a system running smoothly and leadership as a set of processes that creates systems or adapts them for change. Kotter lamented the problems that were created by how little people were taught about leadership whereas management training became the thrust of many organizations and universities.

Chance and Chance (2002) distinguished between the philosophies of leadership and management, "It is true that leaders sometimes manage, but managers don't lead," (p. 99).

As Saudi Arabia prepares for educational reform, school principals will need to be assigned the role of change agents. According to Kotter (1996), "Managing change is important. Without competent management, the transformation process can get out of control. But for most organizations, the much bigger challenge is leading change" (p. 30).

According to an interview with one member of the Ministry of Education's Research and Planning Department, "The Saudi education system trains principals to be managers, not leaders" (Interview, March 6, 2010). Alsufyan (2002) also attributed the management role of Saudi school principals to the Saudi education system except he implicated the Ministry of Education (MOE): "Their [principals] relegation by the Ministry to the status of managers denies them use of their abilities to make and implement leadership decisions within their schools" (p. 2).

The Role of Culture and Leadership

As a "Westerner" I was concerned that my biases and background might have led me to analyze and view the data collected through a Western lens. Examining how leadership is viewed in the Saudi culture and acknowledging that differences in leadership are not right or wrong, good or bad—just different — was important. What is considered effective leadership in the Western sense can be viewed differently in the Saudi (Eastern) sense. The leadership traits valued by each culture can be directly attributed to the values of that culture.

For the most part, educational leadership has been written about and described through a "Western" lens. Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) questioned the validity of

applying Western methods and theories of school administration and educational leadership to non-Western societies. They suggested that most leadership theory and practice are based on Western values and culture and may not "fit" or apply to other cultures. "Understanding culture's influence requires us to focus on a subtle interplay of foreground and background" (p. 129).

According to Hallinger and Leithwood (1998), "Culture is the source of values that people share in a society,"(p. 132). They warn of trying to apply Western culture contexts to Eastern cultures. Cultural values differ across nations and a reasonable expectation is that the nature of interaction between leaders and followers differs. Understanding school context is vital to understanding leadership behavior. This is particularly important in understanding institutional context and leadership behavior across cultures.

Wong (1998) pointed out that the omission of societal culture as a variable in leadership reveals an assumption that developed theories have universal application. Moreover, he suggested that applying global leadership initiatives, such as strong leadership, places an overreliance on structure and control in leading schools and advocates a more value-based leadership. This suggests and supports the view that leadership behavior should be grounded in societal culture, for example, values varies from culture to culture.

Dimmock and Walker (2000) described the role of societal culture in defining the role of leadership. "The inclusion of societal culture as a factor in investigations covering such themes as curriculum, teaching and learning, leadership and school-based management is an imperative for the future development of the field" (p. 304). Dimmock and Walker also argued that most development of theory in educational management and leadership is largely Anglo-American and a substantive part of this

theory derives from business management practices. They suggest that these concepts may not be applicable to non-Anglo cultures:

> Theories, ideas, and practices derived in one social setting should not be assumed valid in other social-political-cultural contexts. Societal cultures, along with local economic, political and religious conditions act as mediators and fillers to policies and practices imported from overseas (p. 307).

Dimmock and Walker (2000), Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) and Wong (1998) all strongly suggested that leadership theory is not always applicable to all situations and cautioned those reviewing leadership theories. Educators must be aware of significant culture variations to understand leadership from society to society. This point was of particular interest in this study as it looked at leadership in Saudi Arabia with its very strong religious culture.

Bush (2003) suggested that in today's literature the term culture in connection with leadership usually refers to school culture. However, for the purpose of this study, the literature of interest concerned societal culture and its influence upon educational leadership. According to Bush, "Given the globalization of education, issues of societal culture are increasingly significant" (p. 157). "Societal culture is one important aspect of the context within which leaders must operate" (p. 159).

According to Northhouse (2007), culture can be defined as the "learned beliefs, values, rules, norms, symbols, and traditions that are common to a group of people" (p. 302). Although there are no established theories of cultural leadership, several studies have identified and classified dimensions of culture. The GLOBE Studies are one study that established a strong relationship between societal culture and leadership (Northhouse).

The GLOBE Studies identified clusters of world cultures and analyzed similarities and differences between these clusters. These studies were of particular interest to me because I recognized that many of the traits ascribed to the Middle Eastern cluster could also be used to describe the Saudi educational leaders I have known. The Middle Eastern cluster included two members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Kuwait and Qatar. The Gulf Cooperation Council countries are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Qatar. These six countries share many cultural traits. The Middle Eastern cluster's countries scored high on in-group collectivism, and low on future orientation, gender egalitarianism, and uncertainty avoidance. These characteristics suggest that individuals from these countries treat people differently dependent on their gender; orderliness and consistency are not stressed, and people do not place heavy reliance on policies and procedures (Northhouse, 2007, p. 312).

The purpose of the GLOBE Studies was to ascertain how people from different countries view leadership. According to the study results, the leadership profile of Middle Eastern countries is very different from the leadership profiles of other clusters. Face saving and status are important characteristics of effective leadership, while charisma, collaboration and participative decision making are not as important for effective leadership (Northhouse, 2007, p. 321). These subtleties may demonstrate and help explain how leadership is viewed in Saudi Arabia as opposed to Western standards of leadership.

Previous Studies of Saudi Educational Leadership

Several studies (Aldarweesh 2003; Alsufyan 2002; Badawood, 2003) examined educational leadership in Saudi schools. The Badawood and Aldarweesh studies were concerned with the perceptions of leadership behavior. A third recent

study of Saudi educational leaders by Alsufyan illuminated the problems faced by educational leaders as identified by Saudi principals involved in the study.

Jeddah Private Boys' Schools Study

Badawood (2003) examined leadership perceptions among private boys' schools in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. His study investigated whether there was a relationship between the principals' understanding of the concept of leadership and the principals' behaviors as an initiating structure (people oriented), or a consideration structure (task oriented). His study examined teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership behavior by administering the LBDQ (Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire) to the principal and five core teachers in 31 private boys' high schools in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia during the 2003 school year (p. 58). He collected data first with the principals by using a questionnaire designed by the researcher and the LBDQ. The second data was collected through the sample teachers using the LBDQ.

The principals in the Badawood (2003) study believed that leadership is an important concept worth learning. Principals see themselves as both people and task oriented. The teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership behaviors correlated with the principals' perceptions of their own behaviors; the perceptions were high in both initiating structure and consideration structure. Although his study focused on educational leaders in Saudi Arabia, it was limited to leadership style through perceptions of leadership behavior. The study was also limited to principals of boys' school, male principals, and to private schools; public schools were not included. Badawood's study was limited to the Western province city of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. His recommendations included that the Saudi Ministry of Education understand the need for leadership programs to increase the principals' leadership skills, and suggested that teachers be involved in evaluating principals' performances. Secondly,

Badawood recommended that colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia offer programs that teach leadership theories, concepts, and skills to help school principals understand and utilize effective leadership styles (p. 103).

Al Ahsa Region Public Girls' Elementary Schools

In 2003, Aldarweesh examined perceptions of leadership behavior of elementary female principals by the principals and teachers in the Eastern Province region of Al Ahsa, Saudi Arabia. Aldarweesh, like Badawood, collected data using the LBDQ (Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire) (form XII). However, the Aldarweesh study was limited to female principals of elementary girls' schools in the Al Ahsa region in Eastern Saudi Arabia. The instrument was completed by 28 principals and 248 teachers. Aldarweesh attempted to understand the similarities and differences between the principals' perceptions of their leadership and their teachers' perceptions of their leadership behavior. She presented valuable statistics on the demographics of her sample that included education and years of experience. Her results indicated that perception of principals' leadership did not differ between teachers and principals. She also reported that there was no correlation between educational level, age, and total years of experience and leadership behavior (p. 51).

Similar to my study, Aldarweesh (2003) examined the leadership of Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province. Unlike my study, Aldarweesh included elementary principals in the Al Ahsa region only. Furthermore Aldarweesh examined the principal's perceptions of their leadership as well as each principal's teachers' perceptions of their principal's leadership.

Neither the Badawood (2003) nor Aldarweesh (2003) studies examined the principals' roles as educational leaders responsible for leading the educational reform initiatives set forth through Tatweer nor did either study attempt to describe the

leaders' values, attitudes, motivation or educational vision. Both studies did, however, examine leaders' perceptions of their own leadership. This was accomplished through completion of a questionnaire that described leadership habits and traits. Principals were not interviewed or asked to explain or elaborate upon their responses.

Leaders rated themselves high in ability to define their own role and to communicate expectations to followers. They rated themselves as actively exercising their leadership roles "occasionally" to "often" (Aldarweesh, 2003, p. 55). Aldarweesh also reported that principals viewed their leadership from a managerial role because of their limited responsibilities and role as defined and limited by the Saudi education system (p. 56). She recommended that the Ministry of Education should provide training on leadership behavior and theory by sending principals to school for updating their education. She also recommended greater communication between principals. The demographics reported in the Aldarweesh study showed that fewer than 1/3 of the principals in her study held a bachelor's degree or higher. She recommended that the leadership positions of principals should be given to more highly educated individuals. She also recommended other studies be conducted and that a more standard system of selection of school principals be developed.

What Prevents Saudi Principals from being Effective Leaders?

Alsufyan (2002) studied Saudi male secondary principals' perceptions of the major problems they faced as educational leaders, how problems were addressed, and the barriers to overcoming these problems. Alsufyan looked specifically at what Saudi male secondary school principals identified as the primary educational problems in their schools, what initiatives were needed to resolve these problems, and what prevented them from initiating solutions. He believed that Saudi school principals could have a greater impact on leading their schools and improving education, but

because of the limitations placed on them by the Ministry of Education (MOE), they are not permitted to act on their ideas for school improvement.

Alsufyan (2002) interviewed 50 male principals in the 7 regions of the Saudi capital of Riyadh. All principals included in this study were leaders of public secondary boys' schools. The principals rated four problem areas as identified by the MOE; Alsufyan's results indicated that in these four areas, there were major differences in ranking between the principal and the ministry. The principals identified other major problems, one of which was the centralized bureaucratic operation of the Ministry and the resulting lack of authority and decision-making power by the principals. Alsufyan's recommendations included developing a committee headed by him to train and educate the participants in the study. He also recommended further study of the issue with female principals.

Summary

This chapter reviewed literature relevant to framing a study that described the leadership role of female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and their perspectives of that role. The review began with an overview of the Saudi educational system and policies for the selection process of Saudi principals.

As Saudi Arabia attempts to reform its educational system, principals must be prepared to lead change if that reform is to be successful. Therefore organizational change theory and leadership theory focused specifically on transformational and transactional leadership as well as literature differentiating between leaders and managers were included in the literature review. Change theory, leadership, and leadership theories formed the basis of the conceptual framework of the study. The issue of societal cultural theory was also addressed in the review of literature.

Therefore, as a "Western" researcher of the leadership roles in an Eastern culture, I had to be aware that societal culture might be a variable in this study.

Finally, I concluded this chapter with a review of three recent studies that examined Saudi school leadership. Two of the studies (Aldarweesh, 2003; Badawood, 2003) examined principals' leadership perceptions and teacher perceptions of their principal's leadership using the LBDQ instrument in a quantitative design methodology. However, both studies used an existing instrument for defining those roles, whereas in my study the principals describe their leadership role and perspectives of that role in their own words. The third study (Alsufyan, 2002) examined problems faced by Saudi male principals as defined by those principals. The Alsufyan (2002) study did not involve asking Saudi male principals to define their role or perspectives of that role in relation to leadership. He did, however, address the impact their leadership could have on school improvement if given more freedom for decision-making by the MOE. All three studies provided background for exploring the concept of the leadership role and the perspectives of that role by female Saudi principals in the Eastern Province.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to describe the leadership role of Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and their perspectives of that role. In this chapter, I outline the methodology used to conduct the study, beginning with a description of how I received permission to conduct educational research in Saudi Arabia. Next, the research design and procedures, descriptions of the participants and the research instrument are explained. Finally, I address researcher bias and summarize the main points of this chapter.

Permission to Conduct Research

I have lived in Saudi Arabia for more than 25 years, working more than 15 years in private education. I wanted to conduct a study that would examine educational leadership in Saudi Arabia. However, being a U.S. citizen, I was concerned I might not be granted permission to conduct research in Saudi public schools. Therefore, in November 2009, I wrote a letter (Appendix A) to Dr. Sameer AlOmran, the General Director of Girls Education in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. I outlined my request to conduct research in Saudi Arabia and asked permission to interview members of the Ministry of Education (MOE) to discuss research topics.

In January, 2010, upon returning to the United States, I received a text message from a member of the Saudi Ministry of Education's Research and Training

Department. I was informed that Dr. AlOmran not only had given me permission to conduct research in Saudi public schools, the MOE's Research and Training Department would assist me if needed. I returned to Saudi Arabia in February and began meeting with members of the MOE to discuss possible research topics. Finally, through long-distance consultation with my dissertation committee chairperson, Dr. Bernita Krumm, I finalized my research topic and began writing my research proposal.

Research Design

Once my research study topic had been finalized, I had to decide on the method of inquiry and a research design that would best help me to accomplish the purpose of my study: describing the leadership role of Saudi female principals and their perspectives of that role. I chose a qualitative method of inquiry for this study because it allowed for the issue under investigation to be examined in greater depth and detail. According to Patton (2002), "Qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases. This increases the depth of understanding of the cases and situations studied but reduces generalizability" (p. 14). "A qualitative design needs to remain sufficiently open and flexible to permit exploration of whatever the phenomenon under study offers for inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 255).

Descriptive case study best fit my topic as a method of research because it allowed me to fulfill the intention of my study: describing the leadership of Saudi female principals. Merriam (1998) explained, "A descriptive case study in education is one that presents a detailed account of the phenomenon under study" (p. 38). Creswell (2003) defined case studies as research "in which the researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals" (p. 15). I

chose purposeful sampling as the design strategy. Patton explained purposeful

sampling, "Cases for study … are selected because they are 'information rich' and

illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest;

sampling then is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalization

from a sample to a population" (p. 40). I wanted to gain insight into the leadership

role and the perspectives of that role of female principals in the Eastern Province of

Saudi Arabia. For that purpose, I informed the Saudi Ministry of Education I wanted

to interview female principals in the Eastern Province.

I returned to the U.S. in March of 2010 to prepare for proposal defense and to

begin the application procedures for the Institutional Review Board (IRB). I requested

a formal letter of permission from the Saudi Ministry of Education to conduct

research in Saudi Arabia to include in my IRB application. The MOE, in turn,

requested a letter from Oklahoma State University verifying my research. Dr. Krumm

wrote a letter on my behalf to Dr. AlOmran (Appendix B), and I received formal

written permission from the MOE to conduct research in Saudi public girls' schools

(Appendix C).

Procedures

After being admitted to candidacy and completing and receiving IRB

approval, I returned to Saudi Arabia in May of 2010. Before starting my interviews, I

decided to complete practice interviews to test the interview questions (Appendix D).

Two Saudi female co-principals of a private K-12 girls' school in the Eastern Province

of Saudi Arabia where I previously worked were interviewed using the interview

questions developed for this study (Appendix D). The initial interviews were

conducted and the transcripts were reviewed to make any necessary adjustments to the

questions or phrasing. Next, I met with the Ministry of Education's Research and Training Department to begin the process of selecting participants for the study.

Participants

Twelve female principals of girls' schools in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia were chosen through random selection to be participants in this study. Participation was voluntary, and all participants' identities were and will continue to be protected. The Eastern Province is one of the five geographical locations of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is bordered by both the Arabian Gulf and the tiny Gulf country of Qatar on the east coast, and Kuwait to the north.

The number of principals included in this study was kept small in order to make the interview process manageable. "There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 244). The purpose of limiting the number of participants was to generate information-rich cases. According to Patton, "The validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than the sample size" (p. 245).

Four principals from each of the three school divisions: elementary, intermediate, and secondary, participated in the study. The principals' ages, length of service, years of teaching experience, educational background, and marital status varied. The demographic information was not a prerequisite for participation, but is reported in Chapter 4. The demographic questions (Appendix E) illustrate the information asked and reported about each participant. To facilitate accessibility of participants, the location of the school for each principal was confined to the Eastern Province of the country excluding the southernmost portion of the province, known as the Al Ahsa region. According to the MOE, the Al Ahsa region is overseen by a

separate department of the Ministry of Education, and permission to conduct research was granted for only the central and northern regions of the Eastern Province.

Selection method.

Participants in this study were selected through the cooperation of the Research and Training Department under the General Directorate of Girls Education Eastern Province Ministry of Education Saudi Arabia. At my request, the Research and Training Department sent a memo to Eastern Province (excluding the Al Ahsa region) Saudi female principals describing the proposed study and asking for their cooperation in the study. If any principal had objected to participating in the study her name would not have been included in the random selection process. She could have declined if contacted as a possible participant, or she could have declined at any point; one principal did decline to participate.

Using a printed Arabic copy of the names of all of the schools in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia (with the exception of the Al Ahsa area) given to me by the Research and Training Department, the translator and I meticulously cut apart the names of each of these schools so that each was on a separate slip of paper. There were a total of 242 elementary schools, 98 intermediate schools and 94 secondary schools. We then grouped the names of the schools by level - elementary, intermediate, or high school - into three separate paper bags. Four names were pulled from each group.

The name of each school selected was recorded and given to a MOE secretary to arrange the appointments. The secretary set up the first three appointments; she was later transferred to a different position, so the first individual assisting me at the MOE completed contacting and arranging the appointment schedule for the interviews. She then emailed this information to me.

The schedule included the name of the principal, the school name, the school's telephone number, the principal's cell phone number, and the date of the appointment with the principal, and once it was received, the translator who attended the interviews with me contacted each principal to confirm the appointment and to set a time for the interview. Of the original 12 names randomly selected, the MOE discovered that one school was no longer operating, one principal was ill and could not sit for an interview, and one school was considered too remote to access. Three additional names of schools, from the same level as the original, were drawn, and appointments were made and confirmed.

After I set the appointment for what was to have been the 8th interview, confirmed the time, and arrived for the interview, the principal declined to be interviewed. Two other school names were drawn but were both too remote to readily locate, so a third school name was drawn as a replacement for the original Interview #8 and given to the MOE individual assisting with the study to contact the principal. This school principal eventually became the 11th interview.

After arriving at the school for what was originally scheduled to be the 11th interview, the principal of that school apologized, saying that she was very busy and might be interrupted during the interview as it was "report card day." An offer to reschedule was extended, and she happily obliged; the interview was conducted a week later as the final interview. Otherwise, all interviews proceeded as scheduled.

Instrumentation

The 12 female Saudi school principals randomly selected to participate in this study were individually interviewed. The time needed to conduct the interviews varied; the shortest interview lasted only forty-five minutes; the longest interview took nearly three hours. Variations in the length of the interviews depended on

whether the interview was audio taped or handwritten, the length of the principal's responses, and what kind of follow up questions her answers elicited from me. Nine of the interviews were audio taped; responses to three of the interviews were handwritten. I also took notes during each interview that included narratives of the setting and other details of the interviews. Using the research questions (Appendix F), I developed the interview questions (Appendix D) to allow enough flexibility so that the participants might openly discuss their leadership role and perspectives of that role as a school principal. This allowed me to maintain consistency of questions with each participant.

Data Collection

The standardized open-ended interview was used for data collection. According to Merriam (1998), "Interviewing is a common means of collecting qualitative data, and the most common form of interview is the person-to-person encounter in which one person elicits information from another" (p. 71). Patton (2002) described the standardized open-ended interview, "The standardized open-ended interview consists of a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words" (p. 342). He explained that the standardized open-ended interview is better at ensuring consistency for inexperienced researchers.

Consistency was emphasized so that each participant was asked the same questions in the same manner and order. In order to maintain consistency, I conducted the interviews in English, using an English to Arabic translator. The interview translator was bi-lingual and fluently speaks both English and Arabic. This same

individual served as the translator for each interview to eliminate any discrepancies in translation from principal to principal.

Personal experience and engagement were used as a means of data collection and fieldwork strategies. Patton (2002) described this method of data collection: "The researcher has direct contact with and gets close to the people, situation, and phenomenon under study; the researcher's personal experiences and insights are an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the phenomenon" (p. 40). I have lived and worked in Saudi Arabia for more than 25 years. My basic knowledge of Arabic, although limited, and my understanding of cultural norms, including religious etiquette, made possible by being married to a Saudi, support Patton's suggestion that my personal experiences and insights were important to the inquiry and understanding of the study.

An interview protocol form (Appendix G) was followed as closely as possible with each principal. After arriving at each school and locating the principal and/or her office, making introductions and being invited into the principal's office, I checked off the items one by one on the protocol form as completed. First I described the study, and then I gave the principal a copy of the memo from the Ministry of Education stating the permission to conduct research. This memo had been faxed to the principals, but only one principal acknowledged having received the fax. Next, I explained the consent form (Appendix H) and then it was translated to the principal. An Arabic version of the consent form (Appendix I) was given to each principal. Finally, we discussed the need to audio tape the interview. At first, several principals were hesitant about being audio taped; however, the majority were comfortable with the idea and readily agreed. Three principals requested not to be recorded; therefore, their responses to the interview questions were all handwritten. I followed IRB

protocol for interviewing participants, including obtaining a signed consent form (Appendix H) from each participant. After assigning pseudonyms to the principals, I conducted the interviews.

Each of the questions and the probes were asked in English and then translated to the principal in Arabic. Some principals appeared to understand the questions in English but preferred to respond in Arabic. Others seemed quite oblivious to what was said in English and patiently waited for the translation. Many times one or more words and sometimes the entire question as translated to Arabic were not understood by the principal. I clarified the questions in English for each of the principals in the same manner without suggesting what was thought or expected as an answer, and then the questions were translated to Arabic. After a few of the interviews, the translator began to anticipate that the question might not be understood and was readily prepared with the same clarifications used in previous interviews.

Once each interview was completed, I wrote my observations of the interview and then either transcribed the handwritten notes or the translated taped interview. I transcribed each audiotape or handwritten set of notes as soon as possible after completing each interview. As I completed the transcriptions, I gave them to a second translator who listened to the audio taped interviews including translations and compared those to the transcripts to ensure authenticity of the translations. I usually gave several of the audio tapes and transcriptions to the second translator at one time. The second translator was a native Arabic-speaker with English language fluency in both oral and written skills. She made corrections to the transcription after comparing them to the recorded tapes and I made these changes to the typed transcripts. Finally the interview translator reviewed the audiotapes against the checked and corrected

transcriptions to ensure accuracy of the changes I made to the transcriptions. I used these checked and corrected transcriptions to code and report the data.

With the interviews that were not audio taped, as soon as I had completed the interview, I asked the principal to allow me to review the questions and her answers for accuracy. She was given the chance to make any changes, additions, or subtractions to the notes that I had taken. These interview notes were also typed and turned into transcripts.

Data Storage

Audiotapes of the interviews conducted during data collection and the transcriptions of the audiotapes were stored separately. Audiotapes are stored in a locked file in my home. The transcriptions were typed onto my personal computer, a non-networked computer, and saved to a portable USB device. Printed copies of the transcribed interviews, the USB device, and printed copies of my interview observations are kept in a locked briefcase.

I safeguarded and will continue to safeguard the identity and confidentiality of the participants of this study, the principals interviewed as well as the translators. The two translators who assisted me with this study were also required to sign a consent and confidentiality form (Appendix J). I continue to ensure that the interview audiotapes, USB device and transcriptions are protected during the completion of this study. I will destroy the audio tapes and transcripts according to Institutional Review Board guidelines. I will use the same guidelines to erase the documents on the USB device.

Analysis of Data

According to Patton (2002), "Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. No formula exists for that transformation. Guidance, yes. But no recipe. Directions can … be offered, but the final destination remains unique for each inquirer, known only when–and if–arrived at"(p. 432). I prepared transcripts of both the taped and handwritten interviews. I gave the audio cassettes of the nine taped interviews and the transcripts to the bilingual translator (who attended the interview) for transcript verification. This study relied on translation authenticity rather than member checks to ensure interview accuracy. A second translator reviewed the taped interviews and typewritten transcripts to ensure authenticity of translations. The original interview translator then listened to the tapes a second time and checked the revised transcripts against the audio tapes. This was an ongoing process. For the three interviews that were not audio taped, my notes of the conversations were read back and translated to Arabic to the respective principals. Those three principals were given the opportunity to make corrections, additions or modifications to what I had written.

Data analysis was an ongoing process that began at the end of each interview. According to Merriam (1998), "Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed. Data that has been analyzed while being collected is both parsimonious and illuminating" (p. 162). Inductive analysis and creative synthesis were chosen as the analysis strategies. Patton (2002) defined inductive analysis and creative synthesis as, "Immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important patterns, themes, and interrelationships and begins by exploring, then confirming, guided by analytical principles rather than rules; and ends with a creative synthesis" (p. 41).

After transcribing the interviews, I reviewed the transcripts to examine specific details as they emerged in the interviews. These details formed the basis of the analysis as these 12 female Saudi principals individually defined their roles as leaders, described their educational visions for their schools, explained their motivation as educational leaders, and spoke about the impact their leadership has on their individual schools. The next step in analyzing the data involved reflectively re-reading each transcript and making notations in the margins of the transcripts of ideas, topics, and general subject matter. The same procedure was completed for the transcript of each interview.

I then summarized the main points of each of the 12 principals' responses to each question. Each principal's summarized responses to the six questions and the follow-up questions were printed out individually for reference. Then I cross-referenced the summarized responses of all 12 principals to each question and printed these. Using a portable bulletin board, I listed each of the six questions and then cut apart and attached the 12 responses to each question.

Next I used a small white board, approximately 18 inches by 24 inches, and colored markers to list topics that emerged from re-reading the summarized responses to each question, one by one. I listed the emergent topics by color, coding the responses that appeared to be similar in theme with the same colored marker. These became what Merriam (1998) described as a "master list" (p. 181). "This master list constitutes a primitive outline or classification system reflecting the recurring regularities or patterns in your study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 181). Reflection of the master list resulted in the development of categories for the emerging themes. Merriam (1998) suggested guidelines for determining categories: 1) categories should reflect the purpose of the research, 2) categories should be exhaustive, 3) categories

should be mutually exclusive, 4) categories should be sensitizing, and 5) categories should be conceptually congruent (p. 184).

After reading and cross-analyzing participants' responses to interview questions, I labeled emergent themes. The names or labels given to these themes or categories became the index of the topics for each interview question. Additional readings of the interviews allowed the full, relevant passages to be labeled according to the category index. I cut, pasted, and grouped these passages according to the question, and then I color coded each passage by principal. "Once all the cards have been coded, cards relevant to a certain category can be retrieved by the code on the card" (Merriam, 1998, p. 186). These categories with supporting documentation are described and reported in Chapter 5 as the findings of the study. The participants' responses to the interview questions and the themes that emerged from their responses were the basis for the analysis of the description of participants' leadership role and their perspectives of that role.

Researcher bias

I am an American citizen who has lived in Saudi Arabia since December of 1984. I am married to a Saudi and have raised four children who attended private Saudi national curriculum schools. I have worked with three private Saudi girls' schools in the Eastern Province beginning in 1993, first as an elementary school teacher, then as an English as a Second Language Department Supervisor, and most recently was as a general supervisor of a private girls' school, pre-school through intermediate levels. Once I complete my dissertation, I hope to return to Saudi Arabia and contribute to the national educational reform movement taking place.

While it is important to note my background as an aspect of researcher bias, it is equally important to appreciate the unique position the exposure to Saudi culture in

both my professional and private life has given me. Having worked in Saudi private schools, I have been able to witness firsthand the leadership behavior of female school principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. I also have first-hand knowledge of the workings of the Saudi Ministry of Education.

Summary

In this chapter, I narrated the process undertaken to receive permission to conduct educational research in Saudi public schools. I gave a detailed description of the research design and the research procedures as well as a description of the participants and the selection process. I also explained the instrumentation, the data collection and storage procedures followed in completing this study. I specified how I analyzed the data collected, and concluded the chapter by revealing my researcher bias.

CHAPTER IV

PARTICIPANTS: THE PRINCIPALS

The purpose of this study was to describe the leadership role of Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and their perspectives of that role. Describing the leadership role and participants' perspectives of that role included identifying their educational visions and motivations. This chapter includes a description of the interview process, the demographics of the twelve principals who participated in the interviews, a description of each of the twelve interviews, and finally, a short summary of the interview experience.

The Interview Experience

With the assistance of a translator, I interviewed twelve Saudi female principals in a period of five weeks during the summer months of June and July 2010. These interviews took place in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia in cities and areas ranging from Al Khobar in the middle of the Eastern Province to Al Khufji in the northernmost part of the Eastern Province. As the principal researcher in this study, I presented and asked the participants six interview questions and the translator repeated my words in Arabic.

The principals who participated in this study were chosen through a random selection process with the help of a member of the Ministry of Education's (MOE) Female Research and Training Department. This individual contacted and arranged the appointment schedule for the interviews. She then emailed the information to me, and the translator called and confirmed the appointments and acquired directions to each of the schools.

The first three interviews were conducted during the weeks preceding the national exams in Saudi Arabia. Six of the interviews were conducted during the two weeks of finals, and the last three interviews were conducted during a two week period after the exams were completed. The last interview was conducted on July 14, 2010.

All principals welcomed the translator and me to their schools and were very hospitable. At the very least the translator and I were treated to the generosity of Saudi hospitality by being offered refreshments of Arabic coffee, served in very small round ornate cups, and dates, a staple of the Saudi diet. In several of the schools we were served a light breakfast, and in one school we were served both breakfast and lunch, not because we overstayed our appointment time, but because we had traveled so far and had a long return journey. Saudi hospitality for visitors, and especially for the traveler, is a very strong part of the culture. Some principals seemed to welcome us as guests of the MOE; others were curious why an American from a foreign university was conducting research in Saudi schools.

<center>**The Principals' Demographics**</center>

Ages

The average age of the principals was 45. One principal did not reveal her age; she explained that there was some discrepancy between her real age and the age that

the Ministry of Education listed. In the Saudi Arabian government sector the

mandatory retirement age is sixty. However, records of birth were not and still may

not be recorded or reported in a timely manner. Often an individual's government

identification does not match what a person believes to be her real date of birth and/or

age. In the case of principal #5 and perhaps also principal #10 their recorded dates of

birth and their actual birth dates may differ and perhaps they did not want to go on

record to give this information as it could affect their retirement dates.

Marital Status

The marital status and the number of children for each principal were also

included in the principals' demographics. Working in the private school sector, I was

aware of a favorable bias in some administrations concerning single teachers.

Administrators viewed single employees as harder working with fewer

responsibilities and thus able to do more extra-curricular activities. Using this bias as

a point of reference, I included these demographics. The table below illustrates each

principal's age, marital status and number of children.

Table 1: Age, Marital Status, and Number of Children

Principal	Age	Marital Status	Number of Children
1	40	Married	4 children
2	52	Married	7 children
3	43	Married	2 children
4	39	Married	4 children
5	Undisclosed	Married	4 children
6	45	Married	5 children
7	43	Married	5 children
8	47	Married	4 children
9	48	Married	No children
10	50+	Married	4 children
11	38	Single	No children
12	50	Married	4 children

Work Experience

Work experience for each principal includes how long she has served as a principal, and how many years she has served as a vice-principal. According to Dr. Al Tayar at the Ministry of Education, this is the normal channel for becoming a principal of a school. Also included in this section of the demographic information are the subjects taught and the number of years of teaching experience for each principal. All principals interviewed for this study had some experience teaching; the least length of time was two years, and the greatest length of time was 31 years. One principal stated, however, that she had served previously as a principal in a different school before ever teaching; when she transferred to a different school, she taught before becoming principal of her current school.

Table 2: Principals' Professional Experience

	Principal	Vice Principal	Teacher	Subject
1	3 mos.	3 years	17 years	Math
2	12 years	0	20 years	Elementary Arabic and Science
3	2 years	6 years	15 years	Religion
4	3 years *	1 years	15 years	Religion
5	5 years**	5 years	6 years	Elementary
6	1 semester	8 years	14 years	Arabic
7	9 years	5 years	9 years	Math
8	15 years	0	9 years	Math
9	2 years	6 years	15 years	History
10	3 years	1 1/2 years	31 years	Science
11	10 years	0	2 years	Religion
12	5 years	13 years	8 years	Geography

Principal #4 has held the position of principal for five years, but according to her, her official title is still that of vice-principal because the MOE does not allow her the title of principal because she does not hold a bachelor or higher degree.

**Principal #5 currently is acting principal of her school as the official principal is out on an extended personal leave. Her current position is that of vice-principal although she previously served as a principal for five years.

Level of Education

According to Dr. Al Tayar, an issue that the Ministry of Education is facing is the shortage of qualified individuals who are willing to take the position as a school

principal. One of the questions raised in this study was whether school principals in Saudi Arabia are capable of implementing the educational reforms that are being called for by Saudi society as well as through the reform initiatives of King Abdullah's national educational reform, Tatweer. The concern was that Saudi principals may not have the advanced professional development and education required to initiate an educational reform program because of their lack of higher education and/or professional development. The table below indicates that although 9 of the 12 have bachelor's degrees, 3 of the 12 have only diplomas. A teaching (or education) diploma in Saudi Arabia can reflect a two year program after high school, but it can also be used to denote an alternative high school program that follows intermediate or elementary school completion, the standard requirement for teachers in Saudi Arabia in decades past. This was not clear, and based on my understanding of Saudi culture; I decided not to pursue this clarification.

According to Dr. Al Tayar, today's principals are required to hold the minimum of a bachelor's degree. She did concede that if there is a shortage of principals for a school, exceptions are made, and that principals who were already a part of the system were not penalized because they do not hold a bachelor's degree. However in the case of principal #4, who serves as the school principal with all rights and authority but does not enjoy the title of school principal (according to her because she only holds a diploma), the minimum requirement factor appears to have made a difference.

The following table lists the level of education and the major field of study for each of the twelve principals who participated in this study.

Table 3: Principals' Level of Education

Principal	Education Level
1	BS Math
2	Diploma in Education
3	Diploma in Education + BA Religion
4	Diploma in Quran and Religion
5	BA Religion
6	BA Arabic
7	BA Arabic
8	Diploma Education
9	BA History
10	BA School Administration
11	BA Religion
12	BA Geography

The Principals: Twelve Veiled Voices

This section includes descriptions of the principals and the twelve interviews I conducted with the assistance of a translator during five weeks beginning in June and ending in July 2010.

1st Interview: Um Mohammad I

The interview with the first of three Um Mohammads was on June 14, 2010. *Um* is the Arabic word that means "mother of," and is a term used to address a woman by the name of her first born son; if she has no sons, she is addressed by the name of her eldest daughter. To clarify a point, men are also addressed in a similar fashion; they are known as *Abu* which means "father of." Interestingly, the first principal of the twelve interviewed had the least experience, just three months.

Fortunately for me, the school for Um Mohammad I was in the city where I live. My husband was helpful during the interview process by helping me locate all of the schools I was scheduled to visit. Because women cannot drive in Saudi Arabia, I was driven to each of my interviews, except one, by my family's Bangladeshi driver. He speaks neither English nor Arabic with any fluency. This coupled with the lack of

street addresses in most of the smaller towns and villages, made locating the schools difficult. I was given a map to the first school by the Ministry of Education. Unfortunately, the map was either outdated or just completely wrong because my husband and I went in circles for about an hour before finally asking for help from some local residents and locating the school.

The driver, my translator and I arrived at the first school early on the morning of my appointment. The school facility was relatively new; the building had been open for only two years, according to the principal. It was a two-story structure painted crème, which helped it to blend into the desert landscape. The aqua trim was perhaps a nod to the nearby Arabian Gulf that radiates from emerald to aqua to teal in color. The school was situated between two empty lots less than a quarter of a mile from the beach road that runs along the Arabian Gulf Coast near the Bahrain Bridge more formally known as the King Fahd Causeway. The top floor of the school is for secondary students, and the ground floor is occupied by the intermediate school. Um Mohammad I is the principal of the intermediate school.

As the translator and I approached from the outside of the building, I noticed that the area was littered and not very inviting. A guard sat in a little room near the double entrances to the building. All schools for females have a male guard at the entrance to the school. His main responsibility is to keep males from entering the building; he also oversees the coming and goings of all students and teachers by announcing over a public address system when buses and individual drivers have arrived.

Inside the gates, the courtyard was well-kempt compared to most of the schools we would later visit, but there was no playground equipment-- not even tables or benches. The area was also devoid of any plant life. The area between the front

gates and the main doors of the school was covered by a canvas awning to protect the entrance from the relentless heat of the Saudi sun.

Once inside the building, I saw a great number of young girls in dark brown uniforms crowding the entrance. There were offices immediately to my right and an open, indoor courtyard was on the left. Without saying a word, one young girl pointed us towards an open office. It was probably obvious to the students that we were visitors; the translator and I were both wearing traditional *abayas* (the long, black cloak worn in the Arabian Gulf countries), but our *abayas* had colorful embroidery not allowed on the *abayas* of students or teachers in government schools. Our hair was covered, but our faces were not. In Saudi Arabia all faculty and staff of girls' schools must cover their faces, or **veil**, when entering and leaving the schools. This is also true of all female students who have reached the age of puberty.

The translator knocked softly on the door we had been directed to and walked in. A woman stood and greeted us; the translator informed her that we had an appointment with the principal. She greeted us, shook hands, and led us into the office right next door. The office was small, approximately 12 feet by 12 feet in size, the furniture was grouped comfortably around the room, and two arm chairs were on adjacent walls; a couch faced the principal's desk. One large window was situated high on the wall behind the desk; the window was covered with brightly colored curtains.

Of the twelve schools we visited, I noted that in almost all of the newly built schools the windows were placed above eye level. I wondered was this to prevent those inside from looking out, or to prevent others from looking in? The only schools that had windows at eye level were the Aramco and Royal Commission built schools that I visited. Were these distinctions made because those schools adhered to a more

"Western" style architecture? I wondered if windows in all schools were placed up at this level, or was it just in girls' schools. Was this to better protect the modesty of the females who occupied these rooms? I wondered what role culture played in the design of these schools.

Tables in the middle of the room were heavily laden with food, tea, and Arabic coffee. We were immediately offered sweets and coffee. Several times throughout our visit, we were offered juice and the principal directed the vice-principal to bring us drinks.

The principal sitting behind the desk appeared to be a very young woman, but was in fact 40 years old. She immediately greeted us by shaking hands as she came around from her desk. The desk had very little on it. To the left of the desk was a credenza with a fax machine, but no computer. Two or three tall enclosed book cases sat in the right corner next to her desk. Inside the book cases were rows of three ringed binders, each labeled and attractively decorated in red.

The principal was very humble; she was modestly dressed, and from her family name, I knew that she was from one of the larger Saudi tribes. She welcomed us, but was somewhat apologetic, explaining that she had only been the principal for three months. She was worried about us recording the interview because she was afraid that her formal spoken Arabic was not perfect. Most Saudis, even those in education, speak a colloquial Arabic. There has been a recent push in Saudi private schools to implement programs to encourage formal spoken Arabic. Arabic speakers are able to identify one another's country and region of origin from both a person's colloquial language as well as his/her accent, much as native English speakers can distinguish an American accent from a British one, or a southern American from a Northerner.

The translator tried to reassure her that the tapes would not be made public; only four individuals, including the translator and me, would listen to these tapes and the tapes would be destroyed once we had transcribed them and completed the study. We assured her that if she was concerned about what she would say being on record, we would not conduct the interview. We wanted her to be comfortable. She read the copy of the letter I carried from the ministry and realized they had given permission for the interview. She seemed to be more relaxed with this knowledge and agreed for the interview to be recorded.

2nd Interview: Bint Al Watani

My second interview was with the principal of an elementary girls school located in a small village near the city of Qateef in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. The city is located off of the major highway linking the cities and villages of the Eastern Province along the Arabian Gulf. The city of Qateef is recognized as a predominantly Shiite city. However, as is an unwritten rule, all principals of public schools (and perhaps private as well) are from the majority Sunni sect. This principal is Sunni Muslim; her family name attests this fact. Just as Saudis can distinguish a person's origin from their language and accent, a family name is an indicator of a Saudi person's tribe or religious sect.

The school was located between two empty lots of land across from a government housing addition. Entering the school's front gate, I saw an outdoor bird enclosure and a garden that, although somewhat overgrown, must have been very beautiful during the desert spring a few months earlier. The building was a two story structure, similar to the one we had visited for our first interview. However, this building looked, both indoors and outdoors, much more "lived in". There were decorations everywhere. Once we entered the actual school building, I saw a few

young girls milling about in the open courtyard. The translator located a sign that had "School Administration" written in Arabic across the front of a door. The door was closed, but through the glass I could see several inner offices. Just as we started to look for someone to ask for assistance, a lady who had been watching as we entered called out "hello" in English. We introduced ourselves and were led into the inner offices of the administration. We were introduced to the principal of the school and welcomed into her office.

The principal appeared younger than her 52 years. She was a very pleasant woman; a smile was on her face during most of our visit. Her office, while modest, was tastefully arranged. She had a couch and four chairs similar to the ones we had seen at the previous day's interview, although they were a different color. There were two air conditioning units on opposite sides of the office. There were also two windows placed high on these same two walls. There were a couple of bookshelves similar to those that we had seen in the office yesterday, and tables were centered between the guests' seating. The principal invited us to sit. She apologized that the chairs had no pillows as normally the couches and chairs are well decorated. She told us someone had asked to use the pillows and they were missing.

Bint Al Watani, which means *daughter of her country*, was the pseudonym we were asked to call the principal. The vice-principal had suggested this name once we had discussed the need for the pseudonym. The vice-principal remained with us throughout the course of the interview; however, unlike in some of the interviews conducted later, this vice-principal interjected very little into the conversation.

Bint Al Watani was extremely friendly and very open. She explained that she was just months away from retirement, and she appeared to be very proud of her service and work in the school. At the end of our interview, she invited a third

individual to join us and show slides of activities they had orchestrated in the school for the students and parents. We were also taken on a short tour of the school. As we started to leave after completing the interview, the principal followed us outside into the garden, continuing to speak about the grounds and the school. Her pride in her accomplishments was obvious. She was very gracious and accompanied us to the front gate, joking with us, inviting us back, and thanking us for coming.

3rd Interview: Um Mohammad II

During the twelve interviews I conducted, I developed a true admiration and affection for many of these women. Um Mohammad II was my favorite interview for several reasons. She was the most hospitable and made me feel as if she had been privileged by my visit, not that it was I who was indebted to her for her time.

We arrived in Al Khufji at around 9:15 a.m., having left Al Akrabeah (the suburb of Al Khobar where I live) at around 6:45 a.m. The last 100 kilometers of the trip was through a light sandstorm. Because Al Khufji is nearly 350 kilometers (about 220 miles) from where I live and the roads can be hazardous, my husband insisted on driving the translator and me to the interview.

The roads were mainly clear and not heavy with traffic once we left the more heavily populated area of Dammam and Al Khobar; however throughout different points in the journey, herds of camel drifted dangerously close to the roads. Most of the highway had fences running parallel to the road to keep these huge beasts from wandering in front of the traffic. But the further we drove into the remoteness leading to the Kuwaiti border, the animals were free to wander in the open range. At one point, we found it necessary to exercise extreme caution as several animals decided it was time to cross the highway just as we drew near.

The visibility continued to deteriorate as we arrived at the outskirts of the city. Al Khufji sits quietly on the coast of the Arabian Gulf just a few kilometers from the Kuwaiti border, about an hours' drive from Kuwait City. The translator contacted Um Mohammad II as soon as we arrived. Um Mohammad II dispatched the school's guard to meet us.

We followed him quickly through the small city to the school located in an older residential area. Khufji looked tired and dusty. During the first Gulf War, a major battle was fought there when Saddam Hussein's army invaded Saudi Arabia. During my first visit there after Gulf War I, bullet scarred buildings could be seen in many areas. I noticed none during this visit; perhaps I was too focused on the task ahead.

Once we arrived at the school, the guard, a large burly-looking man with a long bushy black beard, quickly got down from his supersized SUV and pointed toward the entrance to the school, indicating for us to enter. The school appeared very similar to the ones we had visited for the two previous interviews, except it was a three story building. It looked older and not very well maintained. We found our way inside the school and proceeded to climb to the third floor not knowing exactly where to go. At the top of the stairs, we were met by a woman who greeted us warmly; as it turned out she was the principal, Um Mohammad II. She was extremely hospitable. It was unusual, in my experience, for the head of the school to come out to meet visitors.

This school was being used similarly to the first school we had visited; the building was shared with a secondary school. As Um Mohammad II led us to her office, we turned a corner to find her faculty and staff lined up to meet us. I had not expected this; I also thought it was unusual. We were greeted very politely and

hospitably by the faculty and staff; they seemed curious about us, but also very happy to meet us and extremely congenial.

We were shown in to a very large office; the largest of the three so far, it had the same set-up of desk and office furniture. The tables here were laid out even more heavily with food than had been in the first school. I make note of these differences because Saudi culture, society, and customs rate individuals on the generosity that individuals pay to their visitors. This is especially true concerning visitors who have traveled far to visit. Um-Mohammad II, whether it was because we had come so far, because of her more rural origin, or just her own personality, was the greatest of hostesses. One of her staff served us juices, coffee, water, sweets, and dates, and later after we had completed the interview, a lunch was served to us that included several local delicacies.

Before the interview started, we were introduced to the vice-principal who asked if we wanted to interview her also. We explained the purpose of our visit, and later she quietly slipped out of the room. Um Mohammad explained that the secondary school principal regretted that she could not be there to meet us; she was very busy preparing for the exams that were scheduled to start after a few days. Near the end of the interview, a member of the local office of the Ministry of Education joined us. She brought greetings from a higher ranking official of the local office of the MOE. This member of the MOE told us she had come to support her principal just in case she might be nervous during the interview. In some ways, I really felt like we were celebrities; in other ways, I felt like we were honored guests.

Um Mohammad III wanted to share her knowledge of her school with me, and she wanted to learn from me as well. When I arrived, she told me that she had been planning to travel to America during the upcoming summer holiday; however, she

noted that "America" had come to her instead, referring, quite warmly, to the fact that I am American. As we left the school, we were given gifts of dates and a Quran, the Muslim Holy Book. Although Um Mohammad III had not agreed to be audio taped, she was very forthcoming and helpful. Her desire to be helpful made a great impression on me.

4th Interview: Um Osama

Throughout the five weeks that I conducted the interviews for this study, I traveled the only major highway that connected the cities, villages, and towns located along the Arabian Gulf from Al Khobar to Al Khufji. It is not so jokingly referred to as the "highway of death." Ras Tanura is approximately 45 minutes north of Al Khobar, where I live in Saudi Arabia, along the "highway of death." Ras Tanura is home to a huge oil refinery and port located on the Arabian Gulf. The Arabic word, *Ras,* means *head* - a term used to indicate a port. As the driver exited the main highway and we turned east toward Ras Tanura and the coast, the landscape started to shift from sand to salt. The Arabian Gulf's high tides had left their crystal white marks on the sand.

I was surprised to note that Ras Tanura looked much cleaner and nicer than Al Khobar and the surrounding areas where I live. The streets were not crowded with traffic the morning we arrived at 8:30 a.m., ahead of our 9:00 a.m. appointment. The directions the principal had given the translator were good, and she was able to direct the driver to the location of the school quite easily once we located the McDonald's that was our first landmark.

We drove up to the front gate of the school where the guardroom's door was ajar. We entered through the school gates and found the building typical of the other schools we had visited; a three-story structure. A wall had been built just inside the

gates to obstruct the view of the main door entrance into the actual school building. These obstructing walls are placed to prevent men standing near the guard's office from seeing inside the grounds when the main gates are open during students' arrival and departure. The walls were cheerfully painted to attract the attention of the young students who inhabit the premises - elementary girls. The school seemed barren of human habitation, especially of young children. I realized it was the first week of the national exams, and elementary students were exempt from these exams.

We walked up two steps into the main area of the school. There was a large courtyard similar to the other schools. It was open to the three stories and ended with a covered roof. Originally all of these schools had been designed to be open, but most principals seemed to have found the means (perhaps the ministry provided the budget) to have the open courtyard covered. This allowed light and air to circulate but kept out birds, pigeons and other flying creatures.

The translator looked for the administration area, and luckily we had made the right turn where we found a middle-aged woman who quickly directed us to the room on our right. She opened the door and revealed a large office and a woman, obviously the principal, sitting behind a desk. The principal was very simply dressed in the uniform of all school faculty and staff - the required long black skirt, and a long-sleeved blouse. Um Osama quickly rose and walked over to greet us; she invited us to sit and quickly took charge of the meeting.

She told us we would have coffee first before anything else, in the simple, generous Saudi fashion of hospitality to their guests. She offered us semi-dried dates and then poured us coffee as she invited us to sit on a couch along the back wall of her office. I noted that her office was meticulously arranged and decorated with

curtains and upholstered pillows made of a matching fabric, dark aqua lace material. The color reminded me of the port waters surrounding the city.

She apologized and informed us that we might be interrupted by parents or teachers, although as the interview started, progressed and ended, we were only interrupted by the housekeeper. I asked her if we might move closer to her desk where two chairs sat opposing the other. She invited us to do so. On her desk was a copy of the memo the MOE had faxed to the principals describing my research study and asking for their participation. She was the first principal we interviewed that confirmed receiving the memo.

She asked me if she might ask me one question before we began the interview, after assuring us that she had no objection to me audio taping the conversation. She was the first principal who so quickly agreed to the process. She asked me why I had chosen to do my study in Saudi Arabia. I quickly explained my situation, and she seemed satisfied with my response.

We went through the usual protocol and then began the interview process. Later, she served us refreshments. During the course of the interview, she informed us that although she was indeed the "principal" of the school, officially her title was that of vice-principal. I asked her if she was an "acting principal"; she told me no, that officially she could not be given the title of principal because she did not hold a bachelor's degree. I was impressed by her candor. She was a very articulate, precise participant. We left the school approximately an hour and a half after we had arrived. She, like all of the previous principals, continued to be warm and hospitable as she saw us to the door.

5th Interview: Um Mohammad III

The day before our fifth interview, my husband and I scouted the location for the small rural village named Hazm Um As Sahik. It is located just off of the coastal highway, highway of death, in the opposite direction of the Ras Tanura exit we had traveled on for our 4th interview. My husband and I located a secondary school, and I assumed it was the one and only secondary school in such a small village.

The next day, the translator and I were driven to the area, and I quickly guided the driver to the same school my husband and I had located the previous day. The appointment was for 10 a.m. and we arrived approximately a half of an hour early. The translator and I quickly went inside the school, and she located the principal's office, introduced us, and stated the purpose of our visit. The principal and a colleague came out to greet us and then informed us that we were not at the right school. They were aware of the study I was conducting because they had received the preliminary fax from the MOE. The principal's colleague quickly pointed out to me that the other lady was the principal of this school, and asked why I did not interview her. I assured them that we would have enjoyed interviewing her, however, that I could only interview those principals who had been contacted by the MOE.

My translator asked the principal for directions to the other school, and the principal told us that the principal of that school was on leave and there was only an "acting" principal, but she quickly gave us very detailed directions and we were on our way.

We directed the driver away from the school further into the little village. After making several turns, we soon found ourselves in a very old, quaint village. The roads were narrow and passed quite closely between the walls of the old villas; in some places, the road was a single lane. We passed into a newer looking area, where

there was a large, modern supermarket and a park that had been described to us as landmarks to note. However, we suddenly found ourselves lost and seemed to be going in circles. We stopped to ask for directions at a small pastry shop. A young Saudi male dressed in white *thobe* (long white traditional Saudi male dress) and red *ghuttra* (traditional head covering) wearing mirrored sunglasses stood in the doorway of the shop. I accompanied the translator from the car as I was concerned that the town might be a little unreceptive to a lone female without a veil.

I was right to be concerned. As we made our way in our high-heeled shoes across the rocky and sand swept paved road with the hot desert wind whipping our *abayas* around our trousers covered legs, some passing men called out at us. The young man in the pastry shop was not too polite, but offered some marginal directions that my translator barely understood as he seemed none too pleased to be talking to us. We got back in the car and started off again, and tried to recall his reticent directions. We made little progress, so we returned to the principal's quickly drawn map and tried to discern where we might have made our mistake. We retraced our steps and soon we found ourselves outside of the school. By that time, we were about 5 or 10 minutes late.

We hurried inside and found the principal's office only to learn that we were in the intermediate school section; we were directed to the third floor of the school. On the second floor landing, we found a locked door that prevented us from ascending any further. Some students on the opposite side of the door looked at us, but offered no assistance. Finally, the translator tried to stick her head around the door and ask for the principal; someone came to us, unlocked the door, and we were led to the principal's office.

We were really feeling a little uneasy. Things just seemed different here, from the reaction of the men in the village to the locked doors. I realized that we were in a different part of Saudi Arabia, one that perhaps outsiders do not often visit.

The room was the smallest, most cramped of the offices we had so far encountered. There were three women and the principal sitting inside; previously used tea and coffee cups sat on a tray on a small table. The principal rose to warmly greet us and asked us to sit. She returned to her desk, which was covered with papers. She wore her *hijab*, head covering, even though we were indoors and there were only women present. She was dressed in dark clothing that was wrinkled perhaps because she had been sitting; her clothing appearance was very humble.

The students of the 10, 11, and 12th grades were sitting for the second of two exams scheduled for the day. The atmosphere in the room seemed busy, but at the same time the other women seemed to be lounging. We were introduced to the women in the room, and others soon joined us; one claimed to be a journalist, and asked us if we were from a newspaper. The translator explained about the research we were conducting. The journalist asked us if she could help us with anything. I told her I really needed some maps of the Eastern Province and some statistics. She suggested the Chamber of Commerce and offered to contact them for me. I assured her that this was a great idea and that I would contact them so as not to bother her. She offered further assistance, and then excused herself by telling me where she could be found should I need anything from her.

The principal appeared very busy signing off on papers and taking calls on the cell phone she kept in her hand. She apologized for ignoring us, after offering us dates and Arabic coffee. She assured me of how willing she was to cooperate and how she would be free to begin the interview shortly.

She continued for several minutes more with paperwork and phone calls, and then informed us that we would be moving to a quieter location to conduct the interview. We sat sipping our coffee as she finished her paperwork. The room looked rather untidy; the cabinet that took up one corner of the room had a door leaning off of one hinge. There was a picture of the current King, the Crown Prince and their father, the Kingdom's founder, hanging over some chairs along one wall.

After about 10 or 15 minutes the principal announced that we would move downstairs; we rose and started for the door. She was stopped outside her office by a group of students. We were escorted by other members of her staff. We arrived on the second floor and were taken to a large room that had been divided by a wall that reached only three fourths of the way to the ceiling. Originally the room must have been larger and must have been divided into two offices. One young woman sat at a desk; she left soon after we were seated. The room was much larger and airier than the first office, but the floors were covered in cheap-looking linoleum and were worn bare in places. A rug covered the middle of the sitting area.

People kept coming in and out and each time someone opened the door it made a terrible thud. The principal continually apologized for the delays and we could see that she was bombarded. Soon things seemed to quiet down and she appeared ready to begin. A young teacher came in, and introduced herself to us speaking in English. She told us that she taught computer classes, and it appeared that she was going to attend the meeting, perhaps to act as a translator for the principal.

We went through the beginning procedures of explaining our research and having the principal read the consent form. We completed all of the formalities, and the principal agreed to be audio taped, although she was somewhat reluctant when we first discussed the issue with her. We were about to begin the taping when she

suddenly became very quiet. I looked at her and she seemed to be looking down at her hands, her eyes opened; I turned to the translator for an explanation, but she looked back at me and did not say anything. I started to ask the translator what was happening, and then I realized the principal, Um Mohammad III (the pseudonym she chose) had been praying or making *du'aa*, asking for God's guidance. It was apparent she was nervous about the interview; earlier she had told me that she feared she might not be much help with my research.

We began the interview. We were interrupted a few times, but we completed the process quickly. At the end of the interview, we stood to leave, but Um Mohammad III insisted that refreshments were being brought and we should stay and eat something. We were served a modest breakfast of pastry, stuffed grape leaves, juice, and tea. We politely took something to eat and drink, and made small talk. We finished eating, and thanked the principal. Then we left the school to begin our drive home.

6th Interview: Um Kumsa

The school for our sixth interview was easily located using the directions the translator received the morning of the interview. It is located in Dammam, the capital city of the Eastern Province. Dammam is a large city with which I am somewhat familiar; I worked in the city for nearly eight years and some of my husband's family lives there. Upon arriving at the school, we noted the three story building similar to the others we had recently visited. The school guard kindly greeted us as we entered the front gate, calling out to us in Arabic, *Asalamu alaikum*.

Once I was inside the actual school, the noise and hum of an active school caught my attention. Students were on break between tests, and many young girls were standing and walking about reading notes and books in a scene reminiscent of

my own days as a teacher and department supervisor during finals weeks in Saudi Arabia.

We were directed to sit, once the translator informed the administration that we were there to see the principal. The principal was out of her office, but was quickly located and proceeded to meet us. She was polite and firm as she invited us in. We were seated near her desk, and we began the process of introducing ourselves and our purpose. There were several teachers moving about the large office, much like the others we had visited. This one was not decorated, nor did it seem that any particular attention seemed to have been given to trying to make it more individualized. Perhaps this was because the principal had only been in the position for one semester.

The principal was actually acting principal of both the intermediate and the secondary schools in this building. Both schools were surprisingly small in comparison to the schools we had visited so far; there were only ninety-one students in the secondary school and one hundred fifty-six intermediate students. The principal explained that the schools would be divided next year with the secondary school students being relocated to a different building.

Throughout the interview, people came and went; there were some periods of quiet, but we were almost never left alone. We were offered refreshments, but we declined; cold water was served to us as we began the interview that the principal had requested not be audio-taped. We waited until the second test of the day began so that the noise from outside that penetrated the office might be less obtrusive once the students were sent into the classrooms to sit for their final exam of the day.

The principal answered each question without a lot of hesitation, but her answers were usually short, and she only expanded upon her replies if I pressed her

for more information. We completed the interview in about 1 hour. I felt that the interview should have taken longer because I had to handwrite everything, but because her responses were short and to the point it had not. At a couple of junctures during the interview, we stopped, and the principal asked me and my translator personal questions which we politely answered.

At the end of the interview, we reviewed all of the questions and the replies she had given; the translator translated the notes I had taken, allowing the principal to make changes or corrections, or add anything I had deleted from her answers. We left with the feeling that the principal was very busy, and although she was polite and congenial, we had interrupted her day. She saw us to the door with great politeness, and we thanked her for her time. Because we had not audio taped the interview, we assigned this principal a pseudonym; we decided to call her Um Kumsa, which means mother of five, as she is the mother of five children.

7th Interview: Madera Subha

The translator and I arrived 10 minutes late for this interview. I had not timed our travels well, and it took us longer to get through the morning traffic than I had anticipated. My husband and I had located the school the day before with the help of some local residents. As we drove into the large parking lot, in itself an anomaly from most of the schools we had visited, we saw a large group of students standing near the front door of the school. These girls must have finished their tests and were waiting to be picked up. I thought it was unusual for the students to be allowed to wait outside of the school. Normally, female students are kept inside the school until the guard announces either that the buses have arrived, or in the case of girls who went with family members or private drivers, the guard announces the family name of the student over a loud speaker. Several cars were lined up in the parking lot at the front

of the school waiting to pick up students. The outside of the school was covered in graffiti. Some of the schools we had visited and would visit were not well kept, but this was the first and only school we saw that had graffiti and, in my opinion, a lot of it.

We made our way through the throng of students to the front door and down a short corridor into the main outdoor area of the school. The courtyard was scattered with papers from students who had obviously been cramming before that days' exams. Sand had drifted across the courtyard; it was a windy day. Empty boxes for bottled water were stacked near the school in what should have been flower beds. We went to the front door of the school, and found it locked; we retried the handle, not understanding why an inside school door would be locked. The translator looked around the side of the building and found another set of doors. She tried them; they were locked. We knocked on the door; nothing happened. We walked away, trying to look around the building again. Suddenly, a door opened, and a very pregnant teacher walked out holding a cell phone to her ear.

We caught a break. We walked into the entrance she had just exited. Once inside, the translator asked for the principal's office. A large woman wearing a *jalabeah*, a traditional Arab dress, and *hijab* directed us to the principal's office right next to her. She must have been the female school guard or perhaps a housekeeper. She sat behind some type of podium and appeared to be the first line of defense before anyone could enter the principal's office. Most schools have housekeepers or a female janitor; sometimes there is just one employee who sits at the front of the school near the entrance. This individual is responsible to take things to the male guard or bring things inside from the door. Sometimes this person acts as a female guard at the entrance to the school, other times she acts as a personal assistant to the principal in

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running errands, and serving her and her guests. This was the first and only time that I saw a female guard with her own station set up outside the principal's office.

The female guard told us to go in. We entered and there were two women sitting inside at a laptop computer; the principal was not inside. The women directed us to sit down; we started to sit and in walked the principal. She greeted us and mentioned something about the time, making reference to the fact that we were late; in a way this set the tone for the meeting. I felt really, really bad. Normally Saudis are known for their irreverence for time and Americans are known for their punctuality, and here I reversed that trend.

She invited us to sit again. We did so as she said first she must serve us some refreshments. She brought out a box of nice, expensive chocolates; I recognized the box and label as being from one of the finer chocolatiers found in the malls and nicer shopping galleries in Al Khobar and Dammam. She offered us chocolate and then pulled up a chair from in front of her desk to sit and face us.

The female guard entered the room, walked behind the principal to where she had placed the box of chocolates and started to get it down. The principal informed her that she had already offered us chocolate and told her to bring coffee. The woman left and returned with the Arabic coffee cups and a thermos of coffee. She served us coffee and we thanked her. This was not the first time, nor would it be the last time during the course of the interviews that we were served by the housekeeper or guard, but this was the only time I felt the air of a hierarchical relationship between the principal and the server.

The office was large, but not the largest we had visited. The principal's desk, however, was the nicest and largest we had seen so far; it obviously was not standard issue; I guessed that she bought it on her own, it was that large. She had the

prerequisite leather arm chairs and couches we had seen in every other school thus far. There was a nice rug in the middle of the room, and a matching mat at the entrance to the door. The principal was neatly, but modestly, dressed.

We began the interview after some preliminary questions about the study and a discussion of whether or not she would be audio taped. She declined by offering to try the interview with note taking and see how it proceeded. She mentioned that this was a busy time for her, but that she did not want to decline the interview. We offered to leave and come again at a better time. She did not acknowledge this offer but made reference to the translator having told her that the interview might take two hours. I explained this was an estimate of how long the interviews might be if they were audio taped. I informed her that by taking notes, it might take longer. Once we began the interview, there were few interruptions, and the principal seemed very confident in her answers. Although the principal was courteous and helpful, I left feeling that she had not really wanted to take the time for us, and that we had intruded upon her day.

8th Interview: Um Saeed

The translator and I arrived on time, if not a little bit early, the morning of our 8th interview. The translator had called and gotten the directions to the school, and we were able to find the school very easily. The school was the first that we visited in what is called a "villa." I believe this term was taken from the Spanish to describe homes in Saudi Arabia that are free-standing houses. This includes any home that is not an apartment or duplex. These houses have private entrances and gardens regardless how small that garden may actually be.

When there is a shortage of schools, the government rents private homes or villas and turns them into schools. There are fewer and fewer of these villa-type schools than in the past because the government is trying to build new schools as part

of the expansion project of *Tatweer*. At the same time, the Saudi population continues to explode, making it hard to keep up with the demand.

The street near the entrance to the school was crowded with automobiles, in part because we are in the middle of a residential area not intended to house a public school. Young girls dressed in street clothes, not in uniform, were coming in and out of the school; many were accompanied by younger siblings including little brothers. As it turned out it was "report card" day. The students were coming to collect their final report card for the year. Like in the West, it is sort of a day of celebration; here it is a day when students are allowed to come to school out of uniform, and many families allow the students to dress in their finest as if it is a holiday. Students also like to bring younger siblings to introduce to their teachers and friends. Socializing outside of school is uncommon between classmates, so students rarely meet each other's families unless through the school.

The entrance to the school was concealed behind a standing wall like most schools we had visited; it had a narrow entrance that opened into a small hallway. This would be a fire marshal's worst nightmare. The translator turned to the first office on our left. There was someone behind one desk, and the translator asked for the principal; we were directed to the office directly adjacent. In the villa this probably would have been the visitors' sitting room, a long wide room. There was someone with the principal, and we hesitated before stepping in. The translator announced us, and the principal quickly stepped around from behind her desk and greeted us. She was a petite woman, probably a little older than the principals I had interviewed thus far. She smiled widely and often.

She invited us to sit and pulled a second chair over near her desk to accommodate both the translator and me. The principal quickly moved to offer us

Arabic coffee, and seeing that the cups had been used, went out to bring clean ones. She offered us candy, a jellied like sweet somewhat like what many people know as Turkish Delight. We both accepted a piece while the principal poured us coffee and asked if she might adjust the AC that was blowing cool air from across the room. We assured her that we were comfortable.

We made small talk, and the principal explained how welcome we were and how she had made it clear to her staff that she was expecting visitors and had made sure that someone else would cover her responsibilities during the interview. Unlike the previous interview, it was obvious that this principal was very relaxed and pleased to assist us. The translator explained the procedure and the purpose of our interview. When it came time to discuss the possibility of audio recording the interview, the principal quickly agreed, telling us she was "free." She seemed to imply that she was not tied to some religious belief or cultural norm that would forbid us audio taping her, or perhaps she meant that she was free in the sense that she was not worried about what she said on or off the record.

During the course of conversation, I learned that we had a mutual acquaintance, but I made it clear to the principal that I would not reveal to this acquaintance that she had participated in this study. But if she wished to do so that was her right. It was apparent that this principal was truly "free." From her family name I realized that the tribe she is from is one of the largest, if not the largest, in Saudi Arabia.

The principal appeared very confident in herself and her ability; perhaps her years of experience made her self-assured in her position. She was humble, but self-reliant and comfortable with herself. She was truly one of the friendliest of principals and a delight to interview.

She kept her office door open during the entire interview. We were interrupted a few times by her young students wanting to come in to say hello or introduce their younger siblings to her. She was polite and friendly with her students, but also made sure we were not kept waiting. The interview proceeded quickly and efficiently and we finished the visit in record time, approximately 1 hour.

9th Interview: Ma'Sama (Rain)

The school for Interview #9 was the most difficult to find. We left Al Khobar at 7:30 a.m. We arrived at the city of Jubail where the school is located around 8:30 a.m. We then spent the next hour and a half driving around and calling the school trying to find the location.

Jubail is known as the Industrial City of the Eastern Province. It sits on the Arabian Sea and is a port city. Many of Saudi Arabia's industries, those related to the oil and gas business as well as other business lines, are located here. As it turned out, this school was located in Jubail 2. Unknown to either the translator or me, the city of Jubail is divided into two parts. The industrial city is called Jubail 2 and was developed by the Royal Commission in the late 70's.

The school we visited was the most similar to American style architecture of any of the schools we visited. From both inside and outside appearances it seemed to be the best maintained and it was the largest of the twelve schools we visited. It hosts 990 secondary students with a faculty of 58 and a staff of 12.

The principal stepped out to meet us just as we opened the wide glass doors that opened into the school. It seemed she must have seen us approaching from her office windows. Accompanying the principal was one of her English language teachers. We were greeted and then guided to the principal's office. Once inside, we were offered refreshments and served by the principal. The English teacher stayed

throughout the interview and added comments on a regular basis, often adding to what the principal was saying and sometimes adding something different.

The principal appeared not to speak any English, or if she did or if she understood us, she gave no indication. Perhaps this is why she had included an English teacher in the interview session. Or maybe she did not realize that a translator would accompany me, although the principal and the translator had spoken over the phone. The principal was a very quiet woman, young, and although married, she had no children. Once the principal had agreed to be tape recorded, we asked her to give us a pseudonym; the English teacher quickly suggested Ma'Asama, the Arabic word meaning "Rain." No explanation was given for this choice, and we were happy to move on to the interview.

When the translator had set the appointment time, the principal asked, as many principals had, what type of questions we would be asking. Usually the translator gave the principals a general idea of the scope and sequence of the interview questions, but in the case of Ma'Asama, she had asked for the specific questions. It was obvious, once we began the interview, that she had written down the questions and had made notes of her answers.

Ma'Asama was a quiet woman. Her answers were very direct, and attempts to get her to draw out her answers or elaborate were not very successful. She clarified any point I asked, but would not give much detail. Many times throughout the interview, the English teacher attending the interview interrupted to interject with responses to my questions. The principal seemed to welcome these additions; I was polite and listened to her, but I never followed-up with her responses.

The interview was also the shortest of any I conducted. Most of the time the principal spoke very low, and her answers were extremely short. We were treated warmly and hospitably, but I left feeling like my interview had yielded very little data.

10th Interview: Um Mishal

The interview with Um Mishal proceeded very smoothly. The principal appeared to be an older woman, she told me her age was 50 plus when I asked. She was kind and calm and collected. She greeted us warmly and welcomed us to her school. She served us coffee and dates, and she was the first principal to offer the traditional incense, *bukrr*, that Saudis have for their guests. At one point she asked us if it bothered us and offered to remove it. The principal spoke English fairly well and did address me in English, although the interview was conducted entirely in Arabic.

We were in Al Khobar; I live in a section of Al Khobar called Al Akrabeah. The different sections of the city have developed quickly to accommodate the steady growth of the Eastern Province. This school was clean and well maintained, although it appeared to be quite old. In fact during the interview I learned the school was what is commonly known as an "Aramco-built school." Saudi Aramco is the national oil company of Saudi Arabia. It has been responsible in the past to build and maintain schools in the Eastern Province, perhaps throughout the Kingdom. This school was approximately 30 years old. The model and design of Aramco-built schools has been updated since this school was built, and newer facilities are quite different. The color of these schools is distinct; they are all painted bright blue and white. They are designed in an open court manner with the school structure enclosing the courtyard. Also unique to these Aramco-built schools is the size of the land on which they are built. The main guarded gates opened into a generous sized garden approximately half the length and width of a football field. The garden was clean and maintained; it had

both grass and trees which is unusual in most government schools. Due to the harsh climate, lawns and grass are a luxury in most homes, and this is especially true in schools. Inside the open garden was a large vacant sand lot to the right. It was most likely intended as a soccer or activity field in a boys' school, but appears unused in the girls' schools. Physical Education is not allowed in girls' schools in Saudi Arabia. Some private schools do offer P.E. classes, but the MOE does not give approval to do so.

To the left, we saw the opening into the main classroom section of the school. We entered and quickly found the principal's office as it was distinctly marked. She had been expecting us and invited us in to begin the interview. The principal seemed at ease in discussing some of the issues she faced as an administrator and also briefly discussed the educational reforms known as *Tatweer*. I was struck by her sense of what needed to be developed in both her students and her teachers. She was probably the eldest of the principals we interviewed, and by far, she had the most teaching experience: thirty-one years.

I noted quite a contrast between her and some of the principals we had interviewed in the smaller villages and towns. I think Al Khobar is considered by many to be a modern city. People are a little bit more educated, not necessarily in a formal sense, but perhaps in the sense of being better exposed to outside ideas and to being more open-minded. This was something that I would note again in my last interview.

11th Interview: Abla

We arrived in the city of Qateef a little before our scheduled appointment of 9:00 a.m. We were somewhat familiar with the location of the school because we had been to the area approximately ten days earlier to a school where the principal

declined to be interviewed once we had arrived. We had returned home that day and drawn a replacement school, and strangely enough, we had ended up at this school just a few blocks from the original one we had drawn. This time, we also had an aerial map of the area that made finding the school much easier.

There were several cars parked outside the building as we made our way to the entrance. The high school shared a city block with an intermediate school. As we made our way out of the car, the first thing that met our nostrils was the pungent smell of the garbage dumpster taking center stage in front of the school. The school looked a little run down and not too clean. We went inside, and observed that the entrance was similar to some of the other schools we had visited.

As the translator looked around and spotted a sign printed "administration," someone walked up behind me and put her hand on my arm as if to excuse herself to walk past. The translator took the opportunity to ask if we were in the right place to find the principal. The lady replied, "Are you the ***doctora***, the Arabic word for a female doctor?" The translator replied affirmatively as I said, "Not yet."

The lady led us to a room filled with women and introduced the principal who sat behind a desk. The principal walked around from the desk smiling and laughing and greeted the translator and me the traditional Saudi way by kissing us each on both sides of the face. I was surprised, but responded warmly to this respectful and kind greeting. Meanwhile, the lady who had shown us in took the principal's place behind the desk; she then began to introduce us to the other women in the room. I asked her if she was the principal or vice principal; I thought perhaps she was the principal of the other school that shared this facility. She gave the translator an explanation that we were not clear about, she said she was "over everything."

The principal brought a chair and sat down next to our guide. For the next 5 to 10 minutes the other woman practiced her English with us, telling us her life's history including her husband's marriage to an American as a second wife. Our "guide" seemed to think this gave her some affinity to me. She told us that she was going to the United States the next day and wanted to practice her English, and our visit had provided the opportunity for her. At two or more points throughout the practice that followed, the principal very politely told her that perhaps we had a schedule to keep and we might not have the time for her to practice on us. I found this relationship between the principal and the school's unofficial leader interesting and was happy for the conversation to continue.

Finally, after some time, it seemed as though the principal was ready to begin or had grown tired of her companion's talk, so we discussed the paperwork of the interview. We went over everything including the fact that we would be tape recording the conversation with her permission. The principal asked whether it was necessary; we assured her it was up to her and gave the reasons for wanting to conduct the interview through audio taping. She consented, and we started the interview. First, she cleared the room, explaining to the teachers we would be tape recording the interview. The roomful of women slowly made their way from the office.

The principal is not married and does not have children; and she couldn't come up with a pseudonym, so we decided to call her Abla, which is an Arabic slang, but a respectful term for teacher. The unofficial leader who had brought us to the office remained with us throughout the interview. She finally relinquished the principal's chair behind her desk, but she remained at the principal's side during the entire interview, often playing with her cell phone. The principal was cordial and answered

each of our questions; sometimes the other woman gave input but the principal never added it to her own comments. I acknowledged her comments, but did not ask her to elaborate or include her at any time. We were served coffee and tea and dates. At one point in the interview, teachers started to wander back in, but the principal sent them out again. The interview was fun and very relaxed. Abla gave direct answers to each question, and remained very cordial throughout the process. We finished in just about an hour, and were back on our way home an hour and twenty minutes after we had arrived.

12th Interview: Um Ibrahim

Our interview with Um Ibrahim originally had been scheduled for the previous week. However, when we had arrived the previous week, she had politely informed us that she might have to interrupt the interview at some point. It seems that she was principal of the intermediate school as well as acting principal for the adjacent elementary school that shared the city block. It was report card day and she was afraid at some point during the interview she might have to go to the other school. I was happy to oblige Um Ibrahim's request to postpone, not cancel, the interview, and she suggested an alternative date exactly one week later.

I was happy to be able to conduct the final of the twelve interviews for my study back on my home turf, Al Khobar. This was specifically true because we already knew the location of the school and had met Um Ibrahim. The Saudi summer had been in full swing since May, and although each of our interviews had been scheduled early in the day, sunup in Saudi Arabia is at approximately 4 a.m. so by 7 a.m. it is already scorching hot. The interview experience had been great, but I was grateful to be about to complete the process.

When the translator and I returned to the school, Um Ibrahim was cordial and welcomed us back. We arrived and found her in the office next to her own. The school was much quieter than it had been the week before. Her staff was present, and so were the majority of the teachers according to Um Ibrahim, but they were nowhere to be seen. Most likely, they were sitting inside the air conditioned classrooms because, although it was early morning, the sun was quickly bringing the temperatures back into the 100s. This school had the same set up and design as the one we had visited previously in Al Khobar with Um Mishal. It was also an Aramco-built school, and according to Um Ibrahim it was the first intermediate school built in Al Khobar; it was located only a block from the Arabian Gulf.

Um Ibrahim invited us into her office where coffee, tea, water, dates, and candy had been laid out on a table. She sat across from us in her brightly colored office, choosing to sit on a couch, not at her desk. She was an older principal. She seemed to speak and understand a little bit of English, but did not try to respond to my questions in anything other than Arabic. She was dressed in the same manner of every principal we had met, a dark skirt and a long-sleeved blouse.

Several teachers popped in and out to greet us once we settled in her office, and she introduced us. After reading the letter from the MOE and the consent form, she asked if it mandatory to be audio taped; I told her it was not. I explained that audio recording the interview was an option that would help facilitate the interview process, but she was free to decline. She preferred not to be recorded, so we conducted the interview and I handwrote all of her answers.

The interview lasted nearly two hours. Near the end of the interview, Um Ibrahim seemed to open up more and wanted to discuss some of the issues she faced as a principal. This had happened in some of the other interviews, and I had the

perception that perhaps some of the principals thought I might be reporting back to the MOE and I would relay some of their school's needs to the Ministry.

I was both impressed and amazed when I asked Um Ibrahim the question about her vision for her school. She jokingly asked me if "she could cheat." I was unclear what she meant and then she pointed to a very large, brightly-painted sign board displayed at the entrance to the main section of the school. We had passed by it on our way into this section of the school; because I cannot read Arabic, I had not noticed it. The translator had probably been too busy relocating Um Ibrahim's office to pay the huge sign any attention, because it is hard not to notice it.

Um Ibrahim quickly explained that she had the sign made to display both the MOE's vision for education in Saudi Arabia and the vision that she and her faculty and staff collaborated on and wrote. We discussed the school's vision, and we told her that we would copy it before we left.

By the time we got to the last question of the interview, most of her staff and faculty had left, and her husband had called asking what time to pick her up. Once the final exams are finished and report cards are distributed, the MOE requires that faculty and administration remain in the school for an additional week to complete paperwork. Other than paperwork for the staff, there is usually little to be done, and teachers basically sit for the three hours a day they are required to be in attendance. However, they are still required to attend the school from approximately 7:00 a.m. or 7:30 a.m. until 10 a.m. or 10:30 a.m. daily.

Um Ibrahim pointed out that her staff was very devoted to their work and to her, which was why several staff members were still sitting in their offices, although the prescribed departure time had come and gone. We realized that we were keeping Um Ibrahim, and once we completed the interview, we quickly prepared to leave. We

stopped near the entrance to the school to copy the school's vision from the large board on display. Then we said our goodbyes and left the school. I was happy and excited to have completed the interview process. I was also happy and excited that my last interview had gone smoothly and that the principal had appeared so open and happy to participate. Probably the most noteworthy, and in my opinion extraordinary, thing about this interview and this principal was that she had a specific vision for her school that was so proudly displayed at the entrance to the school so that all stakeholders were aware of it.

Summary

Meeting and interviewing twelve different principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia to understand their leadership role and their perspectives of that role was an enlightening experience. I have lived in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia since 1984 and worked there since 1991. I have met many principals during that time, but this was my first opportunity to interview and try to understand their leadership role and their perspectives of that role. I found twelve extraordinary women, different in many ways, but they all had similar traits, they were proud of their country and they wanted the best for their schools.

In the next chapter, I discuss what these 12 women told me about their leadership role and their perspectives of that role. The themes that emerged from their answers gave me insight into their leadership. Their answers also gave an indication of what kind of leaders will be responsible for initiating the reforms outlined in King Abdullah's reform initiative, *Tatweer*.

CHAPTER V

THE INTERVIEWS

For five weeks during June and July, 2010, with the help of an Arabic translator, I interviewed twelve Saudi female principals who lead either an elementary, intermediate, or secondary school in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia in cities, towns and small villages from Al Khobar in the center of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia to Al Khufji near the Eastern Province northern border with Kuwait. These interviews were conducted before, during, and after the two-week bi-annual student national exams. I traveled to schools that were a mere 3 or 4 miles from my home to a school more than 220 miles away. Because women are not allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia, I relied on my family's driver or my husband to take me to these schools. For each interview, I was accompanied by a translator of dual nationality, Saudi and American. The translator completed her K-12 education in Saudi Arabia and her undergraduate and graduate studies in the United States; she fluently speaks both Arabic and English.

Nine of the 12 interviews conducted were tape recorded; but for three of the interviews, I handwrote all of the principals' responses to my questions. The taped interviews were reviewed for authenticity by a second translator who listened to the tapes and compared them to my typed transcriptions. Corrections were made according to her notes, and then the original translator listened to the tapes for a final time to check for accuracy of the changes. The handwritten notes taken during the three unrecorded interviews were translated back in Arabic to the principals at the end of each interview so that the principal could make changes or corrections to what I had written.

The purpose of conducting these 12 interviews was to describe the leadership role of Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and the principals' perspectives of that role. Describing the leadership roles and participants' perspectives of those roles included identifying their educational visions and motivations. Descriptions of the leadership role and the principal's perspective of that role were achieved by focusing on the emergent themes relevant to the six different interview questions used during each principal's interview. This chapter presents the questions used to conduct the interviews and reports the analysis of the answers and responses that the principals gave to each question. The chapter concludes with a short summary of the findings.

The Questions and Responses

Question 1: Describe your Role as a School Principal

Asking 12 individuals to describe their roles as school principals inevitably leads to 12 different responses as each woman describes how she interprets her role. However, the descriptions these principals gave had shared similarities. Five central themes or topics emerged as they each described their role as a school principal.

Those five themes were: providing the right environment, the role as a responsibility, comparing the role to that of motherhood, describing the role as one of leadership, and describing the role as fulfilling the goals of the Ministry of Education (MOE).

Providing the Right Environment.

Three of the 12 principals discussed providing a specific environment as part of their role as a school principal. Um-Mohammad I, one of the least experienced principals, told me that her role, in part, was to "…provide a comfortable, pleasant environment that makes the students want to come to school." She explained the importance of the environment to students' education, "I want the student to be comfortable to an extent where she [the student] wants to spend more time in it [the school environment] learning and doesn't want to go home."

The principal with the second longest tenure as a school principal, Bint Al Watani, also described her role as a school principal as one of "…providing a positive working and educational environment." She said that her role was to "bring her ideas [be innovative] and improvements to the school and to motivate the students to want to study."

The third principal who spoke about the environment when describing her role as a school principal was Madeara Subha. She described the role as being aware of the environment one is in, and she expressed that one of her many roles was to "provide a good environment for the students to learn."

The Role as a Responsibility.

Um Osama described the role of principal as a responsibility. She explained,

"It's a huge responsibility, it has 3 layers: parents, teachers, and students. With students, it's not just to stuff them with information, I want to teach them (the students) principles and values and skills…and

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responsibility…instill in them good values and talent and with teachers it is to improve their work performance, and with parents…it's to receive them and talk to them…."

Um Saeed also discussed her role as a principal as a responsibility. She described the role thus: "It's a responsibility, because …it's a responsibility for me in this position to run the school and also a responsibility--that was the main reason to assign a principal for each school, and it's a responsibility given to me from the Ministry…and the goals that they put are part of my responsibility to complete."

When Um Mishal was first asked to describe her role as a school principal, she said,

> Responsible for everyone in the school from the students to the employees….I am responsible for administrative planning and revising and following up…responsible for the students' levels…you know and checking on the ones that have weaknesses and making plans to improve students, weaknesses and to make them better and also the extra-curricular activities for the students; I am responsible for that.

Comparing the Role to Motherhood.

A third response shared by two of the principals in describing their role as school principals was that they compared the role to that of being a mother. Um Mohammad II made the analogy between the role of a principal and that of a mother by saying, "I'm like a mother in charge of her family. I feel like a principal is a mother, she has to see what is missing from her people and fill it in. Every individual needs improvement. Be happy, don't expect something or wait."

The second principal who compared being a principal to being a mother is herself not a mother. Abla used the analogy to describe the role as well as referring to the

responsibility. She said, "It's a leadership role, a responsibility, the role of a leader is someone who guides…a mother for everyone." Abla's description of the role as one of leadership leads me to the fourth theme that emerged from the principals' description of their role as principals - leadership.

Describing the Role as One of Leadership.

Two principals, Um Mohammad III and Ma'Asama, described their roles as principals as being a leader or concerned with leadership. Um Mohammad III said, "I see myself as the leader for the school, I execute the goals of the MOE and I implement the goals, and I implement the Ministry's directions in all areas…educational, academics, and behavioral…"

Ma'Asama explained when asked about her role, "The principal is the leadership." When I asked her to elaborate she said,

> It's the ability to convince everyone, the people around you, with the ideas and it is not--the leadership is through conviction, not force, and the goals of wanting to accomplish these goals with the opinion of others. A leader is someone that moves people to do better…to the leader is to like the community, and the people that are with the school to choose the right or better direction.

Fulfilling the Goals of the MOE.

Finally, three of the principals described their role as a principal as someone who implements the goals of the Ministry of Education. I refer again to the response of Um Mohammad III, the acting principal of a girls' intermediate school in a small rural village, "I see myself as the leader for the school, I execute the goals of the Ministry and I implement the goals…I implement the Ministry's directions in all areas; educational, academics, and behavioral."

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Madera Subha also referred to the Ministry of Education when she described her role as principal. She stated,

The role of a principal you can't say is just one role because it is many roles. And the first thing as a principal is that you must achieve the goals of the Ministry…if you are firm you can achieve these goals…each principal will achieve these goals in a different way because they all have different abilities.

Um Saeed also linked her role as a school principal to the Ministry of Education when she discussed the role as a responsibility, "….and a responsibility given to me from the Ministry…and the goals that they put are a part of my responsibility to complete……and I am a link between the school and the Ministry if there is a problem with the teachers or with money…."

Twelve women gave twelve different responses to my request to describe their role as a principal. What stood out from the answers were not so much the differences, but what they held in common in their beliefs about their roles. Some described their role as one of leadership; others compared it to motherhood. The role of principal was described as a responsibility that included providing the right environment; others underscored the relationship between their leadership and the goals of the Ministry of Education. Each of these twelve women defined how they perceived their role as a principal of a Saudi girls' school.

Question 2: What personal qualities do you most value in a principal? What professional qualities do you value most? What qualities are needed to fulfill your role as a principal?

In Question 2, the principals were asked to give the personal and professional qualities they valued most and then to name which qualities were needed to fulfill their roles. In many cases the professional and personal qualities overlapped with each principal and fortunately there were overlaps as well between principals, signaling the

emergent themes.

Trait theory of leadership suggests that some people may be born leaders and that there are certain characteristics inherent in great leaders. Northhouse (2007) reported five traits central to most lists of traits and characteristics of effective leaders: intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability (p. 19). I used this interview question to provide insight into what characteristics or qualities these principals perceived to be important in fulfilling their roles as school principals.

Personal qualities.

Half of the principals interviewed for this study named patience or being patient as a personal quality they valued in a principal. Six of the 12 principals also cited fairness and/or equality as valued qualities. Three principals said that having an open heart was a valued personal quality. Three principals referred to knowledge or wisdom as desirable qualities while five others mentioned being lenient and being flexible as important.

Several principals named having a vision as an important personal quality for a principal. Bint Al Watani said,

> A principal has to be patient, wise….she must take time to make a decision and think about the consequences, she has to have future vision, she must feel for the students, she must have humanity, appreciation, sympathy, be flexible with teachers and loveable. She gives love to receive love and it is reflected – someone who loves her job and the people...and a lot other…so that's the most important thing because it will reflect on the teachers, students and everyone around her…

When asked what personal qualities she most valued in a principal, Um Mohammad II responded,

To be patient, if a principal doesn't have that, then she can't handle problems, she must be precise in dealing with problems, be fair, have a work plan and follow steps and procedures. The Ministry of Education gives rules, principals try to follow them in the school, people are from diverse backgrounds and have different personalities, and a principal must be able to deal with everyone. You can't be team oriented unless everyone is; school isn't successful without everyone using teamwork. If the principal is absent, it shouldn't interfere with the running of the school, the school should still run smoothly with or without her being there.

Finally, Abla also spoke of vision when she listed personal qualities for a principal, "From my point of view the person [principal] has to be patient…she has to have leadership skills, be able to see at a distance….like further looking you know….able to handle responsibility, be flexible and to have excellence in specific performance."

Professional qualities.

When asked to name professional qualities that they deemed valuable for a principal, three principals; Um Mohammad I, Bint Al Watani, and Madeara Subha all felt that the personal qualities and professional qualities overlapped. According to Madeara Subha,

The professional and personal qualities are close; if the principal doesn't have these qualities, the school will not run well. As a principal you go through so many different steps, you teach…and you have to prepare yourself to run the qualities you need; personal qualities; being observant, taking courses, but not just MOE courses, courses from outside for example; the art of communicating. Principals must have professional growth, she must improve

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herself. A principal must be herself, she has to do things for herself; you always have to see what's new in education, especially in the last few years; there are many changes going on around her, like in technology; a good leader has to be aware of changes as they are the role model. She can't just act traditionally.

Um Osama also spoke of the need for self improvement to address change, "The principal has to be a pioneer, she has to initiate, she must start things, she is the first to change and fix; she must be ambitious for her to be able to develop and have self improvement." Others mentioned desirable professional qualities of being tough or strict but flexible. Still other principals spoke of planning and implementing plans including the goals, rules, and guidelines of the MOE.

Finally, I asked the principals to tell me which qualities were needed the most to fulfill their role as a school principal. Their answers included:

- Handle responsibility

- Handle order with flexibility

- Planning and working with people with different personalities

- Taking responsibility and planning and setting goals

- Pedagogy and raising students to have good manners, being a good role model, and not discriminating

- Having a big heart

- To be fair, have self awareness, be a role model, be fair in giving out assignments, and understanding the goals of the school and implementing them

- Implementing the rules and being honest and straight forward

- To have a strong personality because that is what leadership is

- Strict and flexible for the future outlook or plan

- Be aware of the rules and guidelines and the changes and

- Be fair and equal

Question 3: Please explain the educational vision you hold for your school. What are some of the specific things you would like to accomplish in your school? Why is it important for you to accomplish these things?

The purpose of this research was to describe the leadership role of Saudi female principals and their perceptions of that role. Understanding the leadership role of a school principal involves examining the vision they hold for their school. According to Bush (2003), "Vision is increasingly regarded as an essential component of effective leadership" (p. 6). The interview question I asked the principals had three parts, first I asked them to explain their visions.

Vision.

Having worked in the private sector of Saudi education since the early 1990s, I admit that I did not have high expectations as far as each principal having a formal vision for her school, but I was pleasantly surprised to find one principal who not only could verbalize her school's vision, she also had it proudly displayed at the entrance of the school. Um Ibrahim's vision statement was written in collaboration with her faculty.

However the majority of the principals interviewed did not explain the educational vision for their school in such formal terms as Um Ibrahim. Most of the principals' visions involved graduating well prepared students:

- a generation that is excellent in creativity, committed to Islamic values, focused on Islam and religion..

- students great in all aspects; personality, religion, and education…

- students who can help their society and to help teachers to become good administrators…

- to give every single student in the school her right of a good education, the best quality; to gain all the values…

- I want to graduate a generation that has good Islamic values….

- First I want to leave my mark on the school, my vision is the quality of the education; I want to make students want to learn and be self-confident and talented and prepared for life…

- …to have good outcomes that graduate students with a high standard of education…

- To have a good administration as well as an excellent educational outcome graduating outstanding students…

- …for the students to be at the highest level education wise, emotionally and behaviorally…

Specific goals.

One underlying theme that emerged as I asked principals to tell me some of the specific goals they held for their schools was that many were concerned with the physical environment of the school and the need for technology."My goals include technology in the classrooms, smart boards, computers; to have a garden and playground for the students, to decorate the bulletin boards, these are specific goals," Um Mohammad I told me. "Why are these important?" I asked as the final follow-up to the question about her educational vision. She responded, "These are important to help students to be innovative."

Um Osama and Um Mohammad II were also concerned with the physical aspects of the school and/or technology. They told me respectively, "I want every student to have her own computer and a plan to develop specific skills and talents." "Classrooms should have the latest technology, and I wish we were on the ground

floor, also I want more space, and more money for cleaning and maintenance." When asked why these specific goals were important, Um Osama told me that having personal computers and plans for developing skills and talents will, "Help in the learning process, something that is missing from students and we want them to be confident in themselves and to communicate with the rest of the world." While Um Mohammad II told me that her goals were necessary, "To make things easier for the teachers and students, and this will encourage the students to learn."

Yet other principals cited goals that were more specific to the students. "I want to accomplish a higher level of education and improve students' manners," Um Ibrahim stated and then explained why these specific goals were important, "Because in the end we are developing students' personalities and when you have education and manners that is when students succeed."

Um Mishal told me her specific goals, "First is for the students to succeed, if they are weak, then to find ways to improve the weak areas, provide extracurricular activities so that they will be excited about coming to school and learning, also to raise the level of the teachers and keep the training going, also to implement the goals of the MOE." She also told us why these goals were important, "Because if the students are weak and the teachers don't follow up they might fail, and teachers because the teacher should give the subject in a way to make the students love education."

Ma'Asama's goals included, "To enhance and improve the learning of all students, to discover the students' skills and talents." This was important to her because, "How else will students function or succeed if they don't get a good education this is the point of learning, when they leave they are going to continue their education and they are going to benefit the country, I want to have a generation

that creates."

Question 4: Please discuss some areas that you feel have improved in your school since you've been principal. What difficulties have you encountered in reaching your goals?

One of the central questions this study hoped to answer was, "How do Saudi principals describe the impact they have on their schools?" Principals described their individual impact through their responses to interview question four. According to Bridges (2003), "Everyone knows that a leader's most important role is to lead change," (p. 154). How had these principals impacted their schools? Had their leadership brought positive change to the school? Were they able to implement their vision? All three questions were relevant to understanding their leadership role as principals. In the beginning, several teachers were humble, stating that they did not like to discuss their accomplishments; but in the end, most were able to overcome their modesty to give me an account of how the school had improved under their tutelage.

Improvements.

Um Mohammad I, the least experienced principal, spoke once again about the physical condition of her school, "The school is cleaner and the bulletin boards are decorated." She spoke about her preoccupation with trying to hire a cleaning company for the school when I had asked her about her role as a principal. She also had been concerned about getting the outdoor bulletin boards decorated. It seems that she viewed her impact on the school through this same lens. Um Mohammad, an acting principal of a school in a small rural village, described her impact as it pertained to providing new technology, "Since the school was established it is the same, except the school is now a government building before it was a rental. The teachers and students are basically the same except now they have computers."

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Bint Al Watani, the principal with the second longest experience as a principal and soon to retire, told me,

> I made many building improvements. I made a more positive work environment that won prizes; I improved the physical environment of the school including bulletin boards and other decorations. I made improvements with the teachers' personalities and the way they treated each other. I introduced weekly planning and worksheets for the students.

Um Mohammad II, an intermediate school principal said, "The teachers' behavior has improved. I got to know my teachers well and their background and personality." Um Osama, the principal with the official title of vice principal also focused on teachers, "Teachers had a lot of skills but they didn't use them; I have helped them to be confident and develop their performance and the way they teach. I also helped create the proper environment and got things for the teachers like lap tops and projectors." Um-Kumsa, the recently appointed principal of an urban intermediate school and acting principal of the adjoining secondary school, described school improvements related to both her teachers and students, "The environment, the students, the teacher, the students language, teachers are cooperating with me. The environment has improved and the students' faces reflect the happiness for this, renovation and newness reflects positively on students, teachers, and staff."

Madeara Subha gave me the details of her impact on the secondary school she heads,

> The first thing that I saw (when she first became principal of the school) was that there was something missing as far as human relations, the atmosphere between teachers was charged, I improved this by spending time with the

teachers. A person can improve on talents and be against change. I told teachers that they had the right to take time off for personal leave; this improved the human relations by making things easier for people. Secondly, I put computers in for the administration, the school environment improved; communication with the community improved. I added lectures for the mothers.

Um Saeed, the principal with the longest experience as a school principal (fifteen years), spoke about the impact of her tenure in her current school,

The teachers are more responsive; they are now accepting of each other as sisters and they have good relationships and they want to reach the same goals. Also the parents, when we ask their opinion about whether their children are benefitting from the services and education we provide. We also try to communicate with the supervisors of the MOE about our teachers' performances."

Ma'Asama spoke about her impact,

We have students that did very well and got certificates from the Ministry of Education, and our students have participated in research at SciTech [a private educational center in the city of Al Khobar] and KFUPM (King Fahd University for Petroleum and Minerals). They participated in a lot of activities in the Eastern Province and they won both math and physics contests. The faculty of the school is currently involved in a project to improve the national curriculum.

Um Mishal, principal of an elementary school in a large urban city, explained the impact she has had on her school, "I fixed and cleaned the school, and organized the way it looks, and I raised the level of the students to the point where only three

failed this year [out of a population of 540 students]. Also the teachers are very comfortable with me."

Abla, principal of a large (700 students) predominantly Shiite secondary girls school, gave her response to my request to discuss some improvements in her school since she had become principal.

First thing is that I changed the learning environment using what little we have. I tried to fix up the school. Because the MOE won't let me change the curriculum, I motivate the teachers by changing the environment; the buildings and where the students hang out. And I provide training for the teachers and give courses to help the weak students. Human relations have also improved, as a principal, I am a role model and my job is to fix problems between the parents or teachers, and to give trust.

Finally, my last interviewee, Um Ibrahim, who is currently the principal of the oldest intermediate school in a large urban city and acting principal of the nearby elementary school described her impact on her school. "The school had a good reputation before, but I improved upon it even more. I improved the relationship between the teachers; they are like one family. My relationship with the students was good but it's even better now." After asking each principal to discuss some improvements in her school since she became principal, I followed-up by asking each one what were some of the difficulties they had faced.

Difficulties.

The impetus for conducting this study was the call for national educational reform, known in Saudi Arabia as Tatweer, and to try to understand how reform will be actualized at the local level and impacted by the educational leaders of public schools. The purpose of the study was to understand the role of Saudi female

principals and their perspectives of that role. The conceptual frameworks guiding this study were change theory, leadership and leadership theory. One leadership theory focused on involves differentiating between leaders and managers. In responses cited in the previous section, the principals discussed their impact on their respective schools. Some of the principals described their role as one of a manager, not as an educational leader. In the follow up question, as the principals described the difficulties they faced in making improvements, I looked for evidence that defined the principals' roles as that of managers versus that as leaders. This was important because the literature suggested that leadership is needed to implement educational reform. Reiterating Kotter's (1998), view "Managing change is important…..But for most organizations, the much bigger challenge is leading change" (p. 30).

In responding to the follow up questions, the principals spoke of budget and money as being central obstacles to making school improvements. Principals Um Mohammad I, Bint Al Watani, Um Osama, Um Kumsa, Um Saeed, and Abla all reported that budget or money had hindered improvements.

On the other hand, principals also cited human resource and human relation problems they faced in implementing changes and improvements in their schools. Um Osama spoke of the hardships she faced in helping to improve her teachers' skills and develop their performance, the way they taught. She said, "There were a lot of hardships and obstacles; a lot of teachers thought I was too young to be the principal. Plus they used a specific way for handling everything, they were stuck on one way of teaching, I had to deal with each teacher's personality."

Abla also addressed the issue of human relations as a difficulty after initially focusing on the financial obstacles,

...the other thing, you know, is the human relations, sometimes it is difficult

because people are different; they have different personalities, they come from

different places, and also the age can be a factor because there are teachers

that are older than me and you know you have to be a way where they can

accept you….

Perhaps, Um Ibrahim addressed the issue of the obstacles that principals face

in making improvements most succinctly,

When I became a principal, no one told me the bullet points of how to be a

principal…not just me, but all principals; we are put in this position and not

told what the role is. I researched what my role is, I looked online on how to

be a principal and set up a plan to run the school and I asked other principals

and then I looked at everything and then I improved upon it.

These two themes, money and budget, and human resources and relations

seemed at opposite ends of the spectrum. Concerns about money and budget seemed

to indicate the role of management; however, facing problems with human resources

and relations seemed to be more related to issues that deal with leadership. Just as the

principals had addressed the issues of improving the work environment both through

physical means and social means; here they addressed the issue of budget as a

difficulty that kept them from impacting the physical environment of the school.

The principals also described the improvements that had occurred with teachers'

professional behavior while at the same time they specified behavior and personality

of teachers and staff as one of the difficulties they had overcome.

Question 5: What motivates you as a leader to initiate changes in your school? What kind of support do you receive that keeps you motivated to improve your school?

"The essence of leadership is motivating others to follow and achieve"(Chance

and Chance, 2002, p. 127). If leaders must motivate others to follow and achieve,

what motivates these 12 leaders to initiate change in their schools and what kind of support do they receive that keeps them motivated? Are these principals self motivated by internal stimuli, or does their motivation require external stimulus?

Motivation.

These principals spoke of both external and internal motivation that kept them wanting to initiate change in their schools. Several were quick to explain that their motivation was internal or linked to an internal desire to please God and to serve their country. However, at some point, many of the principals described the satisfaction they received through acknowledgement of the community and the Ministry of Education for their efforts as a school principal.

Um Mohammad I told me how her motivation was external, "Certificates of appreciation from the MOE. When the MOE see my effort that makes me want to do more." While Bint Al Watani explained that her motivation was much more internal, "I'm motivated by my work ethic; I was raised to be self-motivated."

Um Mohammad II explained her motivation in somewhat loftier terms,

My love for my country motivates me. God gave me the ability to work for my country and for people. People should have a positive impact on humanity. Islam says to be good to people and society and fear God and take care of people and be responsible for them.

Other principals described their motivation in terms related to their impact on students and on the education system. Um Osama described her motivation,

I feel that I am responsible for my students and when I see them reach the highest grades in life, and I want my students to be the best and I'm never pleased with my success because I am ambitious and I always want more. Also I want to change the view the world has of Saudi education. Statistics rank us

at very low around the world; I know that we have the abilities and the potential.

Um Mohammad III's answer alluded to her religious beliefs and her desire to help her students, "Getting rewards from God. If I improve anything and there is a positive impact on students that motivates me."

Um Kumsa's response to the question about what motivated her was the most practical, "Acceptance and positive reaction from the employees…..the convenience of having the school so close to my home was a motivation so that I don't have a problem staying late when I need to."

Madeara Subha and Um Saeed were both motivated by results. "First, is getting results from what I have done. Support from the MOE has an influence through thanks and appreciation and I have learned to appreciate others" (Madeara Subha).Um Saeed explained, "Positivity; positive results from doing a good job, teachers and parents saying that we are making a difference, students having fewer absences because they are enjoying coming to school."

Ma'Asama and Um Mishal had simple motivations. "I love my school; it's my second home" (Ma'Asama). "Because I want the school to be better, but some things I can't accomplish," Um Mishal explained her motivation with a caveat.

Abla and Um Ibrahim were equally as cautious as Um Mishal. Abla told me, "I am motivated by the changes I see and the reaction and the good that comes out of it and the impact that I have on students, teachers, and employees. It is more important than getting appreciation from the MOE." Um Ibrahim explained,

> It's a hard question, I love change and improvement, but because there are so many guidelines [from the MOE] they limit what improvements we can make. Having students who are well educated and having good manners that

motivates me. The main point is that a person wants to do for their country, building good Muslim students. Because your country gives to you; you want to give back. It's a responsibility, if one fears Allah (God), this is motivation.

Finally, in attempting to better understand their motivation, I wanted to understand what kind of support they received that keeps them motivated. With he second and final question about what motivates these individuals, I asked what kind of support they receive.

Support.

The principals described the support they receive to stay motivated to make changes in their schools in mainly one of two ways. Either they described the support as an internal motivation, or once again, they spoke of support as external stimuli. Responses such as, "The support is the certificates," and "Encouragement from the MOE, letters of appreciation, the parents thank us, the teachers feel good at work and relaxed and you don't receive a lot of complaints about them doing their work," indicated that these principals relied upon external notice and support. Two other principals remarked similarly about the support of the MOE, "The employees reaction and cooperation, and positive reaction from the MOE," and "Appreciation and thanks from the parents, the good reputation of the school, happiness and acceptance of the teachers and being noticed by the MOE because this means that I have made improvements."

Yet the majority of principals spoke of support in terms related to personal satisfaction achieved through personal fulfillment. Those included remarks such as:

- When others notice the improvements in my school that motivates me.
  When I see the teachers, students and parents are happy that motivates me.

- I receive support from the administration and faculty, the smiling students, when everyone is happy, I'm happy.

- I am pleased that I've done my responsibility, when I see my students happy and my teachers being successful.

- Satisfying everyone is an unreachable goal, I'd rather please God.

- Moral support from the employees…When people work and accept ideas and changes this is the biggest support.

- The administration gives me all that a person could want to continue.

- The cooperation keeps me motivated; the teamwork involved.

Finally, one principal took a different direction when she told me, "I don't get the support I need, the MOE gives me rules to follow but I can't implement them." She and all of the principals were given the opportunity in the next question to address the role of the MOE in their leadership and their expectations of support.

Question 6: How do the goals of the Ministry of Education in the Eastern Province influence the goals of your school? What expectations of support do you have of the MOE?

In his study, Alsufyan (2002) believed Saudi school principals could have a greater impact on leading their schools and making improvements in education. However, because of the limitations placed on principals by the MOE, Alsufyan wrote that principals are not allowed to act on their ideas for school improvement., Before conducting my research, like Alsufyan, I was concerned about limitations placed on principals by the Ministry. Question six was designed to elicit principals' perceptions of the influence that the MOE had on their leadership.

Goals.

Almost every principal stated in one fashion or another that the goals of the MOE and the goals she held for her school were synonymous. The difference lay in

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how they approached these goals. For example, Um Mohammad I said, "We do what the MOE tells us. We try to do it and more; we try to develop the goals more." While Bint Al Watani said, "I accomplish the goals of the MOE, but I add to them and I do them my way." Along this same vein, Um Kumsa elaborated, "The MOE has some things you have to follow, but in your own leadership you can balance things and do them your way. You give them (MOE) suggestions and sometimes they accept them." Madeara Subha's take on the MOE's goals appeared to follow the same line of thinking, "The goals of the school came from the goals of the MOE. We can change some, but the main part is from the MOE; even the mission, vision, and goals are from the MOE."

Other principals such as Um Saeed clearly expressed her views somewhat defiantly, "The goals are the same as the goals of the MOE, we take them and want to achieve with the students and make it easier, we react actively to the goals that we see directly benefitting the students, but when we don't agree with it (the goals of the MOE) we decrease out action, and when we see that the goals from the MOE don't have much purpose then we don't give as much effort." Um Mishal seemed to express the same sentiment, "The goals of the MOE and goals of the school walk together, but implementing them is not the same because of the problems we face."

However, Um Mohammad II described the goals and her approach to them a little differently, "We have one goal, it's the same goal, it's one country, one people, and they should work together. The MOE has educated goals, ones that they made after much study. They [the goals] work for the Saudi society." Abla's response seemed to parallel Um Mohammad II's answer, "Their goals are one goal they are interlocking because you can't go with two separate goals." Ma'Asama was the most adamant about the influence of the goals of the MOE on her goals for her school, "We

adopt the goals and implement them. We go one way because we have the same goals: to produce great successful students, graduating students, special students, great students. The goals are the same."

Finally, my last question was a follow up to asking how the goals of the MOE influenced the goals each principal had for her school. I asked what expectations of support they had of the MOE.

Support.

Summarizing what these principals told me were their expectations for support from the Ministry of Education left me with three clear impressions; financial support, moral support through recognition, and a need for more authority. Receiving financial support and a budget as well as receiving support in the form of maintenance and materials and supplies was a leading theme that was addressed by the majority of these principals. Um Mohammad I told me, "I expect support in the form of money or getting the things I request." Um Kumsa also thought financial support was the most important, "Financial support is number one, and we receive it. Second is the maintenance, you keep calling and finally you get what you need."

Others addressed the need for financial support but, also included issues of moral support. Bint Al Watani said, "Certificates of appreciation are support, money or budget would be another kind of support." Um Mohammad II was equally concerned with these two issues, "I expect both financial support and psychological support. I need more teachers. They [MOE] provide everything, we don't lack much. Appreciation, I want you to have a good impression of Saudi women, and how they are able to lead with things they do and don't have." Ma'Asama also addressed both issues, "Financial support, moral support….providing more managerial staff, about teachers I'd like for them to have less teaching responsibilities so that they can devote

more time to the students developing their talents and following up with the weak students."

Madeara Subha succinctly addressed the expectation of support from the MOE, "Moral support, certificates of appreciation, attending private courses, that is the limit of support, they [expectations] don't exceed this." Um Mohammad III also clearly was concerned with appreciation as an expectation, "If there is something that our administration is doing that is good, I want the MOE to know it; appreciation from the MOE. The most support that we receive comes from the students and teachers; if they are happy that's my reward and the best reward for me." Um Saeed's response was more of a suggestion, "I wish to see that the MOE reward teachers differently for their performance; now they get the same rewards regardless of their performance." She wanted to be able to encourage teachers based on an evaluation of their performance.

Abla took a little different approach to the question,

There is support, they [the MOE] can't provide everything, but they are supposed to provide the basics; furniture, books, equipment for the curriculum and books, teachers; financial stuff, and moral support; they have contests for both best teacher and best principal. Support comes from the school, not the MOE. The MOE gives you guidelines, rules, general policy, but the support comes from the school.

Um Mishal had a somewhat similar response, "I expect the MOE to provide me with all of the things I need for education especially for the new curriculums being introduced through *Tatweer*, and with specialized teachers for subjects and the resources and aids, but I'm not getting what I need."

The third theme that emerged from the principals' responses to this last

question was the expectations of support in the form of authority. Um Mishal continued her initial response, after describing the financial support she needed, "I also wish that the MOE would give me more authority to deal with some of the problems that we face." Um Ibrahim spoke about support in the form of appreciation, but she too addressed the issue of authority,

> The certificates of appreciation and these things are not given when they should be. A way of support is when I am chosen to participate on special committees for principals in the Eastern Province and also when I am chosen to participate on special committees for the Kingdom, but nothing more, we request a lot (of support) but we don't receive it. A principal gets respect, but not authority.

Um Osama, the unofficial principal, spoke of the need for authority as a form of support from the MOE, "The first one [expectation] is the right of choice, to empower me with a lot of authority, to give me my rights; I also expect intense courses especially with the curriculum changes."

Summary

My purpose for conducting this study was to understand how Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia view their role as educational leaders and their perspectives of those roles. I wanted to examine their individual educational visions for their schools, and I wanted to understand the impact the principals felt they have had as school leaders. Equally important to this task, I wanted to understand what motivated these individuals to make changes and improvements for their schools. Finally I wanted to understand the role of the Ministry of Education as it affects the leadership of these principals.

I interviewed 12 female principals who lead schools in the Eastern Province,

one principal was serving as "acting" principal, and another held the position of a principal although her official title was that of vice-principal. All principals were proud of their schools, their country and their work. Most were proud of the achievements they had made; others were not satisfied and spoke of the need for continued success and improvements. One of the principals addressed the reform project known locally as Tatweer, and she spoke only about the changes in curriculum.

My concern in approaching this study was that the success of the national reform initiatives would be actualized at the local level and would be greatly impacted by the educational leaders of public schools. Believing that educational reform at the national level could not succeed without the impact of leaders at the local level, I attempted to understand the leadership of Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. What I found was, although many of the school principals spoke about their leadership and how they formed relationships with their teachers, few addressed ways that they were prepared to lead educational reform in their schools. Some addressed this issue by explaining how little authority they had to make changes. This issue was clearly demonstrated in the last question when three separate principals brought up the issue of authority and their lack of any decisive authority in their respective schools.

This issue was further compounded by the agreement among all twelve principals that their goals and the goals of the MOE were the same. They made it clear, rather through design or through their own choice, that the goals of the MOE were the most important. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I report and discuss the conclusions I made concerning the role of leadership and the perspectives of that role of these 12 Saudi female principals, my reflections on the process, and what I

learned.

CHAPTER VI

FINAL ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Proposing, conducting, and writing about a study of female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia was, in some ways, an analogy for lifting a veil to reveal the leadership role and the perspectives of that leadership role of a population of principals rarely described and a culture of education not well understood by many Western educators. "Leadership studies in the Middle East are almost nonexistent due to the inherent difficulty of conducting organizational research there," (House, et al, 2004, p. 64). Although national attention in Saudi Arabia is focused on the educational reforms underway through *Tatweer*, attention of the media and educational reformists has been focused on issues of curriculum and teacher development. The problem still remains that the actualization of educational reform will take place at the local level and will be impacted by the educational leaders of the public schools - the principals.

The 12 women who participated in this study do not necessarily represent the views on educational leadership of all female Saudi principals. However, as they described their role as principals, listed professional and personal qualities valued in a principal, explained their educational visions, discussed the impact they had on their

schools, and described their motivation to improve their schools, themes and similarities in their responses connected these women. These connections allowed me to draw conclusions about their leadership and fulfill the purpose of this study.

The purpose of this study was to describe the leadership role of Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and their perspectives of that role. After interviewing and recording the responses of these 12 Saudi female principals to the interview questions, revising the transcripts for accuracy and authenticity, and coding and analyzing the data, in this final chapter I report the conclusions from the findings of this descriptive case study.

Describing the leadership role of Saudi female principals and their perspectives of that role can inform the reform process, resulting in a greater understanding of the individuals responsible to implement the national reform initiatives. Conclusions regarding the leadership role and perspectives of that role of Saudi female principals interviewed for this study include the impact of religion and the influence of the Ministry of Education on their leadership. In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework and the conclusions of my study; my reflections on the study and recommendations for further research. However, the final chapter begins with a summary description of the principals. Reviewing the education and professional backgrounds of the participants in this study is relevant to understanding the leadership of these Saudi principals.

The Principals

The 12 principals who participated in this study were unique individuals, women of different ages and backgrounds. They were a diverse group of educators leading schools even more diverse. All of the principals were Sunni Muslim; several of the principals were leading predominantly Shiite majority schools, an aspect worth

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exploring in future research. Some of the principals came from backgrounds of large distinguished Saudi tribes; others were from less well-affiliated families. Their ages and years of experience varied, as did their major field of study. The average age of these participants was forty-four. Two of the principals had recently been appointed to lead their schools; one principal was just a month away from retirement. None of the principals held an advanced degree, and only one principal had her undergraduate degree in school administration.

Education and Training

Before beginning the interviews, I met with the highest ranking female member of the Ministry of Education in the Eastern Province to learn about the educational requirements and standards for principals. Dr. Al Tayar told me, during a personal interview, the MOE had standards in place for incoming school principals, but that exceptions were made when there was a shortage of qualified candidates for a position. She said that candidates were required to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and that once they held the position of principal they received ongoing training. An exception was those principals who had held the position of vice-principal before becoming principal; they receive on the job training alongside their respective school principal. According to Dr. Al Tayar, "Training and experience are better than education," (Personal Communication, 2010).

Alderweesh (2003) conducted a study in the southernmost part of the Eastern Province, the Al Ahsa region and found that only 32% of the principals who participated in her study held a bachelor's degree or higher. According to Alderweesh, "In Saudi Arabia, any teacher could apply to be a principal or principal's assistant after a few years of teaching" (p. 1). Dr Al Tayar confirmed this statement, explaining that an individual needed eight years of teaching or administrative experience to apply

for a position as a school principal. Of the 12 principals participating in this study, nine held a bachelor's degree, and three held a diploma.

Um Ibrahim, the final principal interviewed for this study, summed up the lack of prior education and professional development for Saudi female principals.

When I became a principal, no one told me the bullet points of how to be a principal-not just me, but all-we are put in this position and not told what the role is. I researched what my role was. I looked online about how to be a principal and I set up a plan to run the school and I asked other principals then I looked at everything and then I improved upon it.

Dr. Al Tayar described a process similar to what Um Ibrahim had. Dr. Al Tayar explained that newly appointed school principals visit other more experienced principals for mentoring. This is part of the ongoing training given to principals once they are appointed to their position. Saudi female principals do not receive formal educational leadership training, nor is an advanced degree or an undergraduate degree a required prerequisite for the position, although it is preferred. This lack of formal training and education may impact the influence of the MOE on these principals' role and perspectives of their role as educational leaders.

Theoretical Framework

Identifying theory that would frame a study to describe the leadership role and perspectives of that role of Saudi female principals responsible for leading educational reform was an exercise in reviewing theory related to the problem under investigation. Change theory, leadership, and leadership theory were conceptual frameworks I considered relevant for examining leadership during a time of organizational transformation. Leadership theory, particularly managers versus leaders, was useful for defining the leadership role of these principals. However, as I

reviewed the data in the framework of change and leadership theory, known theories did not fit. During data analysis, culture and leadership became intertwined and what emerged equally of value was the role of societal culture on leadership.

Culture and Leadership

Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) questioned the validity of applying Western methods and theories of school administration and educational leadership to non-Western societies, and suggested that Western values and culture may not fit or apply to other cultures. I firmly believe that the leadership of Saudi female principals is shaped by their religion and a myriad of other cultural aspects. The influence of the Ministry of Education on a leader's role and her perspective of that role are tied to a belief of respect for authority that Westerners, who have been taught to challenge authority if felt that authority was misguided, may have a difficult time comprehending. Many of these principals had ideas and beliefs on how to better lead their schools, but they remained respectful of the directives of the MOE, and this kept them from making changes they thought were necessary. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education demonstrates a lack of confidence in individual ability by not giving principals decision-making authority. This lack of confidence may also be encrusted in cultural beliefs or perhaps it stems from the fact that many Saudi principals lack formal educational and professional development.

Cultural values such as tribalism are extremely strong in Saudi Arabia. Knowledge of an individual's religious sect, geographic origin, and family tribal affiliation can be discerned from a person's family name. Some distinctions are valued as a way of noting everything from leadership ability to terms for matchmaking. In Saudi Arabia these tribal affiliations can get you everywhere and nowhere. Tribal traditions influence all aspects of life and, as a consequence, managers are expected to

act as fathers - viewing their role in a highly personalized manner characterized by

providing and caring for employees and favoring individuals within the family and

tribe over outsiders. The legacy of a highly structured bureaucracy left by the ruling

Ottoman Empire and European nations is superimposed on these Islamic family-tribal

traditions. (House, et al, 2004, p. 63)

The GLOBE Studies established a relationship between culture and leadership

(Northhouse, 2007). The relationship between culture and leadership is evident

through the impact of religion on the leadership role and perspectives of the role of

the 12 Saudi female principals who participated in this study. I also found the

leadership theory of managers versus leaders a useful concept for defining the

leadership role of Saudi female principals and their perception of that role. It was

ironic to me that the Arabic word for principal has a literal translation of " manager".

Managers vs. Leaders

"Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of

individuals to achieve a goal," (Northhouse, 2007, p. 3). Much of the description of

the Ministry of Education's influence on the perception of the principals of their role

as educational leaders made these principals appear to be managers responsible for

implementing the instructions and goals of the MOE.

However, if leadership is indeed about individual influence, then several of

these principals view themselves accordingly. Three of the 12 principals directly

described their role as one of a leader or as a leadership role. Three other principals

described their role in accordance with what Northhouse (2007) defined as a leader;

they said their role was to influence, encourage, or convince others. One principal said

her role was to encourage teachers and people around her for the changes and

developments. Another principal said she has to influence the goals and see how they

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are suitable for her school. The third said that her leadership was the ability to convince everyone around her with the ideas through conviction, not force, to accomplish the goals.

Other principals described their role as a school principal in terms that were more in line with the role as a manager than a leader. Kotter (1996) described management as a process for keeping a system running smoothly. Several principals described their role in these terms. One principal told me her role was to supervise. Another told me that her role was to see what people need and provide that. "The role is to check on everything; big and small," a third principal told me. Still three other principals described their role as one of achieving, implementing or executing the goals of the MOE.

Three of the 12 principals described their role as a school principal in terms associated with the role of a leader while six of the 12 principals described their role in more managerial terms. The demographics of the principals who described themselves as educational leaders reveal that all three were younger than the average age of the principals. The six principals who described themselves in terms more closely related to the description of a manager were mainly above the average age of the participants. Years of experience, education, and major field of study seemed to have no influence on how the principals described their role.

Not only does the title given to a Saudi female principal, *madeara*, translate in English as "manager", the words and phrases these principals used to describe their role as principal more closely reflect the role of a manager. Whether this is due to the authority and influence of the Ministry of Education as Alsufyan (2002) suggested, "Their [principals] relegation by the Ministry to the status of managers denies them

use of their abilities to make and implement leadership decisions within their schools"
(p.2), or to the actions of the principals, is not clear.

Trait Theory of Leadership

During the interviews, each principal was asked to name the personal and
professional qualities she valued most in a principal and which qualities she needed to
fulfill her role as a principal. Half of the principals named patience as a personal
quality they valued in a principal, yet when asked which quality she felt was needed
to fulfill her role as principal, the responses were completely varied. There were no
other significant correlations between the principals' responses when they named
personal or professional qualities that were most valued.

Transactional versus Transformational Leadership

The relationship between the Ministry of Education and these principals could
be viewed as one of transactional leadership. Northhouse (2007) explained how
transactional leadership focuses on the exchange between leaders and followers. In
this scenario, the school principals seek the approval of the MOE through recognition
and certificates of approval. In exchange, the principals implement the directives of
the MOE. For example, according to Um Mohammad III, her role is to execute the
goals of the MOE, and to implement the Ministry's directives in all areas. Um
Mohammad I stated that the certificates of appreciation from the MOE and the
MOE's recognition of her achievements motivated her to do more.

Additionally, the relationship between these principals and their teachers can
be described in the same terms. Um-Saeed described her role as a school principal in
terms that linked her to the MOE. She explained how she was the go-between for the
teachers with the Ministry if there were any problems. However, neither of these

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theories fully explains the leadership of these 12 principals which was strongly influenced by their cultural beliefs.

Conclusions

To understand people's behavior we need to understand their perception of the situation (Richards, 2009, p. 74).

In conducting this study, I wanted to understand the leadership role and the perspectives of that role of the individuals who will be responsible to implement the Saudi education reform initiatives at the local level. As a result of the interviews and the data collected, I made two specific conclusions concerning the principals' role and the 12 participants' perspectives of that role. The leadership role and perspectives of that role are: 1) highly impacted by their religion, and 2) greatly influenced by the Ministry of Education.

The Impact of Religion on the Role of Leadership

Leadership is culturally contingent. That is, views of the importance and value of leadership vary across cultures (House, et al, 2004, p. 5).

Whether it was in describing their role as a principal, defining personal or professional qualities they valued, or explaining their educational vision for their respective school, eight of the 12 principals spoke of the importance and role of religion in their leadership. This should not have come as a great surprise, considering that the Ministry of Education's vision for education in Saudi Arabia includes the statement, "Engendering of a new generation of male and female youth who embody the Islamic values in their persons," (*Our Vision*).

In a Western society like the United States, leaders are usually more sensitive to their own personal religious views and usually make a concerted effort to leave religion out of public school educational philosophy. However, in a non-secular

society like Saudi Arabia, where religion is tied to all aspects of private and public life, religion permeates even educational goals and objectives. In the early 1990s, as a beginning teacher in Saudi Arabia, I was encouraged to write lesson plans for each subject I taught, from Math to Language Arts, which included religious objectives alongside educational objectives. Understanding Islam's influence is key to understanding the Arab world (House, et al, 2004). In Saudi Arabia, the national religion of Islam is the foundation of the culture.

Dimrock and Walker (2000) described the role of societal culture in defining the role of leadership. "The inclusion of societal culture as a factor in investigations covering such themes as curriculum, teaching and learning, leadership and school-based management is an imperative for the development of the field" (p. 304). In Saudi Arabia, perhaps more than many other cultures, religion is the dominant feature of society and a major consideration in a study that examines the role of Saudi educational leaders. Understanding the influence of societal culture on the role of leadership is easily observed through the impact of religion on these principals' perception of their leadership role.

"My vision is to graduate a generation that is excellent in creativity, committed to Islamic values, focused on Islam and religion," Um Mohammad I responded when asked to explain her educational vision. Um Mohammad II described her role as a principal: "I am influenced by the Prophet [Peace Be Upon Him] and how he led his nations." Religion was also a focus of Bint Al Watani's description of her educational vision: "I want to be the top and to graduate students who are great in all aspects: personality, religion, and education. I want to build in students a great personality with ethics and scientifically wise and committed to their religion and with great character."

Um Osama explained some of the personal qualities she valued as an educational leader, "To understand the huge responsibility, feel safe, and know that God is watching you…." Um Mohammad III referred to religion as she listed personal qualities she valued, "Patience, being balanced, fulfilling the Islamic teachings, an open heart, wisdom and the ability to solve problems, honesty and it all comes from fulfilling the laws of Islam."

The value these principals placed on their religion and how it should be implemented through their leadership greatly impacts their role and their perspectives of their role as an educational leader. During the interviews, the principals were quite clear that religion was paramount to them and held a position of prominence as they described their role as educational leaders. Second to religion were the influence of the Ministry of Education on the leadership role and the perception of the role of these 12 Saudi female principals. Whereas the impact of religion on the role and perspectives of the role can be described as a matter of choice to some extent, the influence of the MOE was not always a welcomed influence according to some of the school principals.

The Ministry of Education's Influence on the Role of Leadership

> *The Ministry of Education is a strategic management team dedicated to fulfilling plans structured by other functionaries even further up the bureaucratic hierarchy. As such, the Ministry has applied a management-approach straight jacket to virtually the only individuals in the system positioned to lead: the school principals (Alsufyan, 2002, p. 151).*

The impact and influence of the Ministry of Education was very evident in this study as the principals interviewed described their role and their perception of their role as educational leaders. Three of the 12 principals interviewed directly described

their role as a principal as one of responsibility to implement the goals of the MOE. "I see myself as the leader for the school; I execute the goals of the MOE and I implement them in all areas; educational academic, behavioral," Um Mohammad III stated. Madeara Subha described her role as a principal, "It is not just one role; it is many. First you achieve the goals of the MOE, if you are firm you can, each principal will achieve them differently, because they all have different abilities." Um Saeed, the principal with the longest tenure, explained the influence of the MOE at three different stages in her description of her role as principal:

> It is a responsibility from the MOE, and the goals are part of my responsibility
> to complete. I am a link or a connection between the school and the MOE for
> any problems for the teachers, if the teachers want anything from the MOE, I
> am the go-between. I also supervise and oversee what the teachers are doing
> and I implement what the MOE wants; curriculum-wise and behavior-wise.

Working with Saudi female principals as a private school teacher in Saudi Arabia under the authority of the Ministry of Education gave me knowledge and experience of the influence and power the MOE holds over both public and private schools in Saudi Arabia. In my experience, very few changes can be made in a school without the MOE's permission. Principals in private schools seem to have more opportunity for decision making and developing their programs, curriculum and teachers than the principals of public or government schools. In 2002, Alsufyan examined what prevented Saudi male principals from being effective leaders. He expressed his concern that the limitations placed on principals by the MOE prevented them from leading and improving their schools.

Also important in describing the influence the MOE has on how school principals describe their role is the power that the MOE has to motivate these

individuals. When asked to explain what motivates them to initiate changes in their school and what support they received that kept them motivated, four of the 12 principals included the Ministry of Education in their response. "Certificates of appreciation from the MOE; when the MOE sees my effort that makes me want to do more. The support is the certificates," explained Um Mohammad I. Madeara Subha responded similarly, "First is getting results from what I have done. Support from the MOE has an influence through thanks and appreciation I have learned to appreciate others."

The responses received to the last interview question were the most revealing about the influence and impact of the MOE on these individual principals' leadership. The principals were asked how the goals of the MOE influenced the goals of their school and what expectations of support did they have of the MOE. Every principal explained that the goals of the Ministry of Education influenced the goals of her school. Some principals indicated that they implemented the goals as directed; others suggested they had to implement the goals, but they managed to do so on their own terms.

Um Mohammad II was one of the principals who expressed her belief in the value of the MOE's goals. "We have one goal, it is the same goal, it is one country, one people, and we should work together. The MOE has educated goals, goals that they made after much study. They work for the Saudi society." Um Mohammad III similarly explained the influence of the MOE's goals on her school's goals, "They are interlocked, the school goals finish the MOE goals, and they complete each other." As did Madeara Subha, "The goals of the school came from the goals of the MOE. We can change some, but the main part is from the MOE, even the mission, vision, and goals are from the MOE."

However, even though all of the principals described the goals of the MOE and their school goals as being synonymous, several of the principals indicated they were confident in exercising their power as a leader in implementing the MOE's goals.

> The goals are the same as the goals of the MOE, we take them and want to achieve with the students and make it easier. We react actively to the goals that we see directly benefitting the students, but when we don't agree with the goals, we decrease our action, when we see that the goals of the MOE don't have much purpose then we don't give them as much effort," Um Saeed explained.

Um Kumsa described the influence of the MOE's goals on her school, "The MOE has some things you have to follow, but in your own leadership you can balance things and do them your own way".

In 2002, Alsufyan's study of 50 male principals in the Saudi capital of Riyadh identified four major problems faced by school principals; one was the centralized bureaucratic operation of the MOE and the resulting lack of authority and decision-making power of principals. Two of the principals in my study of Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province alluded to the lack of authority they felt because of the influence of the MOE. Both of these principals were from a larger, more modernized urban city, both principals were in their fifties and had worked in the Saudi public education system for more than 25 years each. Um Mishal described her expectations of support from the Ministry of Education.

> I expect the MOE to provide me with all of the things I need for education, especially for the new curriculums introduced through Tatweer, and I expect specialized subject teachers, and the resources and aids needed for

implementing the new curriculum. But I don't get everything I need. I also

wish that the MOE would give me more authority to deal with some of the

problems I am facing.

Um Ibrahim succinctly made her point when describing the support she expected

from the Ministry of Education, "A principal gets respect, but no authority."

The Ministry of Education's influence also impacted these twelve Saudi

principals indirectly. Throughout the interview process, principals described their role

as principal, their vision for their school, and their personal impact. Several principals

described their personal impact in terms related to the physical environment of the

school. These repeated references to the physical environment lead me to examine the

significance of this aspect of their leadership.

MOE's influence on the principal's vision.

Vision is increasingly regarded as an essential component of effective

leadership (Bush, 2003, p. 6).

In *Leading Change,* Kotter (1996) described an eight-stage process for

creating change. The third stage was developing a vision and strategy. Implementing

the reform initiative at the local level will require that each Saudi principal have a

vision for her school. Each principal was asked to explain her educational vision and

her goals and why those goals were important. In the U.S., principals' missions and

visions are often viewed as tied to their role as an instructional leader.

Surveys suggest that the vast majority [of principals] see instructional

leadership as a key mission. More than 9 in 10 public school principals (92%)

say that "ensuring that all teachers use the most effective instructional

methods" is an essential part of being a school leader today (Johnson,

September 2008, p. 72).

Most of the principals participating in this study described their educational vision as wanting to graduate excellent students prepared to serve their nation. When asked about the goals for fulfilling this vision, several spoke about the need to provide technology or make other physical improvements in the school. What seemed to be missing was an explanation of how their goals would help them to accomplish their visions. Um Osama explained her vision for her school, her specific goals, and why they were important:

> My vision is to give every single student in the school her right of a good education, the best quality; to gain all the values. As for the environment, it needs to support the child's learning, it needs to be a supportive environment that enhances and develops the child's learning and education, instills that quality they need for learning, to get her ready to evolve. A good education means to be online with our religious teachings and the scientific developments happening in the world today. My goals are for every student to have her own computer, and a plan to develop specific skills and improve talents. These are important because it helps in the learning process, something that is missing from students and we want them to be confident in themselves and to communicate with the rest of the world.

The majority of these principals shared a similar vision for their schools. They described aspects of school improvement for the benefit of their students. Yet the goals stated to accomplish these visions seemed to be mainly focused on school environment issues such as technology or building requirements. In other words, when they spoke about the school environment they were referring to the physical environment. A real disconnect occurred between the vision and the goals for achieving their vision.

The significance of issues of environment, technology and building requirements suggested these principals were concerned with cosmetic and physical issues of their schools. Some had the tendency to be more concerned about the appearance of their schools and others suggested that they had very little control over issues occurring in the classrooms. When they described their impact on improving their school, several named the physical improvements such as building improvements or cleanliness of the school. Was this due to the fact that they felt they had little control over what happened in the classroom and that they could exercise more authority over the physical aspects of their school? The exchange during my interview with Abla suggested her lack of authority to make changes in the curriculum led her to use her authority to make changes in the only area she could; the school's physical environment:

> *Interviewer: The fourth question, please discuss some areas that you think have improved in your school since you've become the principal.*
>
> *Abla: There are a lot of things that I have accomplished, but the first thing is...you know it might not be as important....but it was the first thing that I did was that I um.....changed the learning environment....what I could... what little things that I have....I tried you know fixing the school....the area...*
>
> *Interviewer: So you are talking about changing the environment, do you mean the physical environment or the learning environment?(To the translator) How does she mean that?*
>
> *Abla: Look..... you know, not from education wise....um, because we don't have the right from the Ministry to change ....I do what I can do.... um by motivating teachers um, and changing the school environment from buildings and the areas that students hang out in...training teachers....giving teachers courses.....caring for the students and their problems....especially because of the age that they are at, you know, helping students that are weak.....when it comes to the curriculum we don't have the right to change it because this is what they give us......*

Abla described her impact on her school in physical terms. She implied that the Ministry of Education did not allow her as a principal to make changes to other aspects of the school. Whereas Abla's description of her impact on physical aspects

seem contrary to a Western sense of a principal as an instructional leader, in Saudi Arabia the influence of the MOE prevents these individuals from acting in any other capacity. Another aspect of the influence of the Ministry of Education on the leadership role of these principals was stated emphatically as the principals responded to my question about what motivated them to initiate change and what support kept them motivated.

MOE's influence on motivation to meet responsibilities.

The essence of leadership is motivating others to follow and achieve (Chance & Chance, 2002, p. 127).

Not only does leadership require that principals motivate their teachers, but the principals need motivation to lead their schools. Understanding the individual motivation of each of these principals was considered a major component for understanding her role as an educational leader and her perspective of that role. "Recognition of the different values and motivations of the people who work in organizations is an essential element if they are to be managed successfully," (Bush, 2003, p. 130).

In consultation with my dissertation committee, during the proposal stage for this study, I decided that the research questions would not directly refer to the educational reform program in Saudi Arabia, *Tatweer*. This decision was based on the unknown factor of whether these principals were aware of the educational reforms. If they opened the discussion of *Tatweer* or acknowledged the reform initiative, the issue was discussed as it related to their leadership. Throughout the interview process, only two principals referred directly to the educational reform initiative. One principal spoke of the newly developed curriculum that is a part of *Tatweer* and her

hope that the MOE would provide the necessary training for the teachers to be able to implement the new curriculums.

The interview questions were worded in more general terms such as ***Question 5: What motivates you to initiate change and what support do you receive that keeps you motivated?*** In response to this question, several of the principals discussed self motivation as being the impetus for meeting their responsibilities. Some principals explained that the success of their students motivated them to want to do more. Several of the principals addressed the issue of positive response from their teachers including cooperation and positive feedback. Others spoke about the positive response of students and parents. However, many of the principals described the positive support of the Ministry of Education through certificates of appreciation and other positive feedback that provided them with the encouragement and motivation to continue meeting their responsibilities.

Principals who described receiving motivation in the form of certificates of appreciation from the Ministry of Education were working to please the individuals responsible to evaluate their performance. One principal explained what motivated her to initiate change: "The certificates of appreciation from the MOE; when the MOE sees my effort that makes me want to want to do more." The impact of the Ministry of Education on the principals' motivations to meet responsibilities exposed just how much influence the MOE has on these principals.

The manner in which these principals acquiesce to the MOE may be the result of cultural mores in Saudi Arabia that prevents individuals from questioning authority. The impact of religion on Saudi principals' leadership is tied to their culture and national identity. Understanding the role of societal culture on leadership proved to be of great importance in building a conceptual framework for this study.

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Recommendations for Research

This study described the leadership role and perspectives of that role of Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Obviously, there were other areas of consideration and uncharted directions not included in this study of Saudi female principals. Further study of the leadership role and perspectives of the role of Saudi female principals is recommended.

My first recommendation is to examine the leadership role of school principals in all areas of the country, most specifically including the capital area of Riyadh and the Western Province area including Jeddah. An additional study should include as many rural and remote areas of the country as possible. Secondly, an additional study might be more effective if it were conducted by an insider, a Saudi citizen. Although the translator who accompanied me on these interviews was Saudi, and I had documentation from the Ministry of Education that supported the study, I was an outsider; this may have prevented some of the principals from opening up with me. Finally, additional research is recommended once the *Tatweer* reform initiatives have gained more momentum and the full extent of the initiatives is more fully realized by the principals serving the public school system.

Personal Reflections

I felt privileged to conduct this study and to describe the leadership of Saudi female principals. These women will be the major change agents responsible for implementing the national education reforms. Although much more research than one individual could produce is necessary to fully describe their leadership, this glimpse of the leadership role of Saudi female principals and their perspectives of that role is a starting point for informing educational leadership practice in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the value of this study is the contribution to understanding the

leadership role of the individuals, and their perspectives of that role, responsible for the actualization of reform initiatives at the local level. This study not only informs educational leadership practice; it can be a valuable tool for those charged with implementing the reforms at the national level.

Before conducting this study, I believed Saudi female principals acted more as managers concerned with the day-to-day operations of managing their respective schools rather than as educational leaders who will be responsible for educational reform and school improvement. The conclusions I described in this chapter suggested that although the Ministry of Education serves a major role in the educational system, the MOE often hinders many principals from realizing the true potential of their educational leadership. The role that religion plays in the leadership of Saudi principals' works to their benefit as it is a necessary and guiding principle not only accepted, but encouraged, in Saudi society.

Describing the leadership of Saudi female principals was a unique experience for a non-Saudi who is deeply embedded in the Saudi culture both personally and professionally. My personal background gave me first-hand knowledge of some of the cultural aspects of the Saudi society. Professional experiences taught me the educational culture of Saudi schools is much different than my own Western education. I believed that before I undertook this research and I believe it even more strongly now.

My concern for the educational leadership of Saudi schools was the impact that school principals will have on the actualization of educational reform in Saudi Arabia. I have often remarked that the current Saudi educational system did not serve my own children well. I hope my grandchildren's education will be better. Perhaps understanding the leadership role and perspectives of that role of Saudi female

principals will contribute to a better education for all Saudi children. I have high expectations for educational reform in Saudi Arabia and great admiration for the current Saudi Monarch, King Abdullah. I believe his educational reform initiatives are visionary. I only hope that those initiatives will include the professional development of all educational leaders.

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APPENDIX A

Request Letter to Ministry of Education

<div align="right">
Saudi Aramco Box 10549
Dhahran, KSA 31311
03-882-3533 H
050-481-2545 C
bmathis@okstate.edu
</div>

Dr. Sameer AlOmran
General Director
Eastern Province Girls Education
Dammam, Saudi Arabia

Dear Dr. AlOmran,

Asalamu alaikum.

I am very much interested in conducting my dissertation research here in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia where I have lived since December, 1984. Being married to a Saudi citizen, having raised and educated four children here, and having worked in the Saudi private school system since 1993, I have a personal as well as professional desire to better understand and hopefully assist in the educational reforms that are expedited through educational research.

I have recently completed my studies of Educational Leadership in School Administration with a cognate in Higher Education at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma, U.S.A. I am now preparing my proposal for dissertation and hope to be admitted to candidacy in late Winter or early Spring of 2010. In order to develop my dissertation proposal I am trying to finalize the focus of my topic. Hence, I request your assistance.

I have contacted members of the Girls Ministry of Education in Al-Qateef and individuals at the main office in Dammam. There I was directed to the Educational Research and Studies Department and was informed that I should contact you to receive permission to conduct research with schools here in the Eastern Province. I would like to meet with members of the Educational Research and Studies Department in Dammam, if possible, to discuss my ideas on topics in order to discern what area of interest will be of most value to education in Saudi Arabia. Currently, I am reading and researching two areas: 1) the role of culture on educational leadership, and 2) the effect of school leadership on teacher efficacy.

At this time, I am requesting your permission and assistance for discussing with members of the Educational Research and Studies Department these two topics as possible focuses. Once I am accepted into candidacy I will kindly request your assistance in conducting my research. My methodology will be subsequent to the topic I undertake and will be discussed with you once my Dissertation Committee has approved my dissertation proposal, insh'Allah.

Any and all assistance you might render me will be greatly appreciated. I will be in the Kingdom through December 6th and will return again on January 11th. Thank you for your time and attention, I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Brenda Mathis

SCHOOL OF
Educational Studies

College of Education
204 Willard
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078-4045
Ph 405 744 8276
Fax 405 744 7758

General Director
Eastern Province Girls Education
Dammam, Saudi Arabia
alali1964@gmail.com; alali1964@hotmail.com

Dear General Director,

As faculty member at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma, U.S.A., and dissertation advisor for Brenda Mathis, I am writing to you regarding her request to complete dissertation research focusing on the leadership of Saudi female principals. Brenda is a dedicated student with high professional and ethical standards. Her desire, as expressed to me, is to pursue research that will increase the knowledge base of leadership in education.

To meet program requirements for the Doctorate in Education, Brenda will submit a detailed proposal (consisting of the first three of five dissertation chapters) for her research. This proposal will include a comprehensive literature review, the theoretical framework for the study, and a detailed plan for methodology. After Brenda receives approval by her committee and our university Institutional Review Board (IRB), she will conduct the planned research.

Brenda's preliminary plans are to utilize interviews of Saudi female principals of government schools to gather information about their leadership beliefs and practices. As currently planned, this will be a descriptive qualitative study to analyze the aspects of leadership that support attaining educational goals. To insure fidelity to the information provided, interviews will be audio-taped, transcribed, and reviewed for accuracy. Anonymity of participants will be insured by using pseudonyms, and tapes will be destroyed by IRB guidelines.

I look forward to working with Brenda on this important endeavor. If you have questions regarding any aspect of the study or the research process, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Bernita Krumm, Ph.D.

Faculty, Educational Leadership
School of Educational Studies
College of Education
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078
(405) 744-9445
bernita.krumm@okstate.edu

3) 566794/22/D : الرقم

2010 / 5 / 11 : التاريخ

المرفقات : —

المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة التربية والتعليم
الإدارة العامة للتربية والتعليم بالمنطقة الشرقية
«بنات»

وزارة التربية والتعليم
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Planning and development Administration
Researches and educational projects.
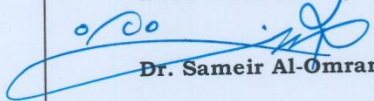
title: about the scholar Mrs. Brenda Mathis.

Dean of Oklahoma Stat University

Hello we want to enforme you about the scholar Mrs. Brenda Mathis, who is making a study in Educational Leadership in School Administration in order to finish all requests to have he, doctorate research from your university.

She is doing the conducts of her study in government school in Eastern province of kingdom of Saudi Arabia after our agreement in 17/11/2009, helped by researches and educational projects department in planning and Development Administration.

With all my regard.

General director of education administration
in eastern Provence (girls)

Dr. Sameir Al-Omran

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APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your role as a principal?

2. What personal qualities do you most value in a principal?

    a. What professional qualities do you value most?

    b. What qualities are needed to fulfill your role as a principal?

3. Please explain the educational vision you hold for your school?

    a. What are some of the specific things you would like to accomplish in your school?

        i. Why is it important for you to accomplish these things?

4. Please discuss some areas that you feel have improved in your school since you've been principal.

    a. What difficulties have you encountered in reaching your goals?

5. What motivates you as a leader to initiate changes in your school?

    a. What kind of support do you receive that keeps you motivated to improve your school?

6. How do the goals of the Ministry of Education in the Eastern Province influence the goals of your school?

    a. What expectations of support do you have of the MOE?

APPENDIX E

Participant Demographic Questions

1. What is your age?

2. How long have you been a school principal?

3. Have you been a teacher before? If so, how many years did you teach? If not, what previous experiences have you in the field of education?

4. Are you married? Do you have children?

5. What is your highest level of education?

6. If you have an undergraduate degree, what was your major?

7. If you have an advanced degree, what is your field of expertise?

APPENDIX F

Research Questions

1. How do Saudi female principals define their educational roles?

2. What are the individual educational visions of Saudi female principals for their schools?

3. What motivates Saudi female principals in meeting their responsibilities?

4. How do Saudi female principals' describe the impact they have on their schools?

5. What theoretical framework(s) describes the leadership of the Saudi female principals in the Eastern Province?

Protocol for Interviews

Interview: _____   Date: _____

Procedures:	Completed:
Introductions	
Describe the purpose of the research, give a copy of the memo from the MOE	
Read the consent form and ask if there are any questions	
Sign the consent form	
Give a copy of the Arabic consent form to the Principal to keep	
Either choose or assign pseudonym	
Begin tape recorders	
Begin interview with personal questions	
Continue with research questions	
Make observation notes	
(other)	

Consent Form for Interview, Observation, and Research Activities

Project Title: Educational Leadership: A Description of Saudi Female Principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia

Investigator:

Name of student researcher: Brenda Kay Mathis
Address: Saudi Aramco
                                P.O. Box 10549
                                Dhahran, 31311
                                KSA
Telephone number: 966 3 882 3533
Email address: bmathis@okstate.edu

Purpose:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study with the doctoral candidate, a graduate student at Oklahoma State University. This form outlines the purposes of this research and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant. The purposes of the research are the following:

1. To gain insight into the following research problem or question :
    a) The researcher would like to understand your role as a female principal in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.
    b) The researcher would like to understand your perspective of that role as a female principal in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

Procedures:

You are invited to participate in this study by agreeing to an interview. As the researcher, I agree to meet the following conditions:

1. I will audiotape our interview with your permission and transcribe the tape for the purpose of accuracy. A translator will be available to translate all questions and your responses. A second translator will review the transcripts and interview tapes to ensure authenticity of translation. At the end of the study, the tapes will be erased or destroyed.
2. A copy of this consent form in Arabic will be given to you.
3. I will assign a fictitious name on the transcript or you may choose one yourself. Your real name will not be used at any point for this study.
4. Data collected for this project will be published in the form of a dissertation. However, your identity will never be revealed.

Risk of Participation:

There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Participants' Rights

As a participant in this research, you are entitled to know the nature of my research. You are free to decline to participate, and you are free to stop the interview or withdraw from the study at any time. No penalty exists for withdrawing your participation. Feel free to ask any questions at any time about the nature of the research and the methods I am using. Your suggestions and concerns are important to me. Please contact me at the addresses/email provided above. Or you may contact my advisor.

Contacts:

Name of Advisor:	Dr. Bernita Krumm
Address:	Oklahoma State University
	Stillwater, OK USA 74075
Email Address:	bkrumm@okstate.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405.744.3377 or irb@okstate.edu .

Benefits:

There are no specific benefits to be expected from this study.

Confidentiality:

1. I will assign a fictitious name on the transcript or you may choose one yourself. Your real name will not be used at any point for this study.
2. Data collected for this project will be published in the form of a dissertation. However, your identity will never be revealed.
3. The tape recordings of our interview will be heard by me, the female translator who attends the interview, the second female translator who will review the transcripts, and my advisor, Dr. Krumm, who is also female.
4. The tape recordings and transcription of the interviews will be kept separately. The tape recordings will be stored in my home safe. The transcriptions and USB devised they are stored on will be kept in a locked drawer in my home office. Tapes and transcriptions will be destroyed and USB devise erased after the completion of the study.

Please indicate your willingness to participate in this research process by checking one of the following statements and providing your signature below. The signature below indicates an acknowledgment of the terms described above.

_____I wish to participate in the research described above, have read this consent form, and agree to be audio taped.

_____I wish to participate in the research described above, have read this consent form, but I do not agree to be audio taped.

_____   _____
SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT   DATE

(The participant signs two copies; the participant receives a copy, and the researcher retains a copy)

APPENDIX I

Arabic Consent Form for Interview, Observation, and Research Activities

ملحق د

نموذج موافقة على المقابلة، و مراقبة انشطة البحوث

اسم الطالبة الباحثة: برندا كاي ماثس
العنوان: أرامكو السعودية
ص.ب. 10549
الظهران، السعودية 31311
رقم الهاتف: 966-3-882-3353
البريد الالكتروني: bmathis@okstate.edu

شكرا لموافقتك على المشاركه في هذه الدراسة البحثية مع مرشحة الدكتوراة، طالبة دراسات عليا في جامعة ولاية اوكلاهوما. هذا النموذج يحدد الغرض من هذا البحث، و يقدم وصفا لمشاركتكم والحقوق المترتبة عليها.

الغرض من هذا البحث ما يلي:
1. إلقاء نظرة ثاقبة على مشكلات او اسئلة البحث التالية :
   أ) الباحثة تود معرفة دور المرأة كمديرة مدرسة في المنطقة الشرقية في المملكة العربية السعودية.
   ب) الباحثة تود معرفة وجهة نظرك كمديرة مدرسة في المنطقة الشرقية تجاه استعدادك لقيادة الإصلاح التعليمي.

مشاركتكم في هذه الدراسة تتطلب الموافقة على المقابلة. كما التزم أنا كباحثة بالشروط التالية:
1. حوارنا سوف يسجل بناء على موافقتك وسيتم نسخ الشريط لتحري الدقه. و سيكون هناك مترجمة لترجمة جميع الأسئلة و ردودكم. كما سيكون هناك مترجمة أخرى لمراجعة النصوص و تدقيق الأشرطة لضمان دقة الترجمة. وفي نهاية الدراسة، سيتم مسح جميع الأشرطة أو التخلص منها.
2. سيتم توفير نسخه من هذا النموذج باللغتين العربية والأنجليزية.
3. البيانات التي تم جمعها لهذا المشروع سيتم استخدامها على شكل رسالة دكتوراة, علما بأن هويتك او ما يتعلق بمعلوماتك الشخصية ستكون مجهولة.

كمشارك في هذا البحث، يحق لك أن تتعرف على طبيعة بحثي. و يحق لك أن ترفض المشاركة و أن تنسحب من المقابلة و الدراسة في أي وقت مع العلم أنه لا توجد اي عقوبة للإنسحاب من المشاركة . والرجاء عدم التردد من طرح اي أسئلة تخص طبيعة البحث أو الأساليب التي أستخدمت.
اهتماماتكم و اقتراحاتكم مهمة بالنسبة لي. لمزيد من المعلومات الرجاء الاتصال على العناوين او البريد الالكتروني الوارده اعلاه.

وللرغبة في المشاركة في هذه العملية البحثية يرجى اختيار إحدى العبارات التالية, مع توفير توقيعك دليلا على موافقتك للشروط المذكوره مسبقا.

_____ أود المشاركة في البحث المذكور أعلاه، و أوافق على أن تكون المقابلة مسجلة صوتيا.

_____ أود المشاركة في البحث المذكور أعلاه، و لكن لا أوافق على أن تكون المقابلة مسجلة صوتيا.

_____   _____   توقيع المشارك

التاريخ
(المشارك يوقع على نسختين، يحصل المشارك على نسخه و الباحث يحتفظ بنسخه.)

Consent Form for Translator of Interviews and Transcription of Interviews

Name of student researcher: Brenda Kay Mathis
Address: Saudi Aramco
        P.O. Box 10549
        Dhahran, 31311
        KSA
Telephone number: 966 3 882 3533
Email address: bmathis@okstate.edu

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study by serving as an English/Arabic translator for the doctoral candidate, a graduate student at Oklahoma State University. This form outlines the purposes of this research and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant. The purposes of the research are the following:

1. To gain insight into the following research problem or question :
   a. The researcher would like to understand the leadership role of female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.
   b. The researcher would like to understand their perspective on the leadership role of female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

You are invited to participate in this study by agreeing to serve as a translator during the interview process and/or as a translator to ensure authenticity of transcribed interviews.

As the researcher, I agree to meet the following conditions:
1. The interviews will be audio taped as they are conducted and translated. The researcher will transcribe the tapes for the purpose of accuracy. The oral translator will review the audio tapes with the transcripts for accuracy. A second translator will review the transcripts and interview tapes to ensure accuracy of translation. At the end of the study, the tapes will be erased or destroyed.
2. During the interview process the translator will be assigned a fictitious name or may choose one. The real names of neither translator will not be used at any point in this study.
3. Data collected for this project will be published in the form of a dissertation. However, the identities of the translators will never be revealed.

As a participant in this research, you are entitled to know the nature of the research. You are free to decline to participate, and you are free to withdraw as a translator from the study at any time. No penalty exists for withdrawing your participation. Feel free to ask any questions at any time about the nature of the research and the methods being used. Your suggestions and concerns are important. Please contact the researcher at the addresses/email provided above.

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405.744.3377 or irb@okstate.edu .

Please indicate your willingness to participate in this research process by checking one of the following statements and providing your signature below. The signature below indicates an acknowledgment of the terms described above.

_____I wish to participate in the capacity of a translator in the research described above, have read this consent form, and agree to be audio taped.

_____I wish to participate in the capacity of a translator in the research described above, have read this consent form, but I do not agree to be audio taped.

_____   _____
  SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT (Translator)   DATE

(The participant signs two copies; the participant receives a copy, and the student researcher retains a copy.)

VITA

Brenda Kay Mathis

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Dissertation: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: A DESCRIPTION OF SAUDI
FEMALE PRINCIPALS IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE OF SAUDI
ARABIA

Major Field: Educational Leadership in School Administration

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education in School
Administration at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in
December, 2010.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Education in Teaching at
Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma in 2007.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and
Psychology at Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma in 1981.

Experience:

School Supervisor at AlBassam Private Girls School Dammam, Saudi
Arabia from 1998 until 2007

English Language Supervisor University Private Girls School Dhahran,
Saudi Arabia 1993 through 1998

Grade 3 teacher Manarat Private Girls School Al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia from
1990 until 1993

Name: Brenda Kay Mathis   Date of Degree: December, 2010

Institution: Oklahoma State University   Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: A DESCRIPTION OF SAUDI
                FEMALE PRINCIPALS IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE OF SAUDI
                ARABIA

Pages in Study: 153   Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major Field: Educational Leadership in School Administration

Scope and Method of Study:

This is a qualitative study using a descriptive case study methodology. 12 Saudi
        female principals in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia were interviewed
        and asked to describe their leadership role and their perspectives of that role.

Findings and Conclusions:

Saudi female principals' leadership role and perspectives of that role are highly
        impacted by the Saudi national religion, Islam, and influenced by the Saudi
        Ministry of Education. Western leadership theories do not adequately explain
        the leadership of these Eastern educators; societal culture contributes to the
        leadership role and perspectives of the role held by these Saudi principals.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Bernita L. Krumm