

CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE STUDY

Aims, Scope and Focus

This study focuses on the social, political and economic impacts of the King Abdullah overseas Scholarship Program (KASP) in Saudi Arabia. Established by the Saudi government in 2006, the Program sponsors highly qualified Saudi students to undertake their higher education studies abroad at the bachelors, masters and doctoral levels.

The Program operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia. Nominated student candidates must meet academic standards which are set by the Ministry of Higher Education in question. Students have a list of countries and disciplines to choose from and KASP covers their university fees. Fees paid include tuition, examination, registration and compulsory health insurance for the students and their family members.

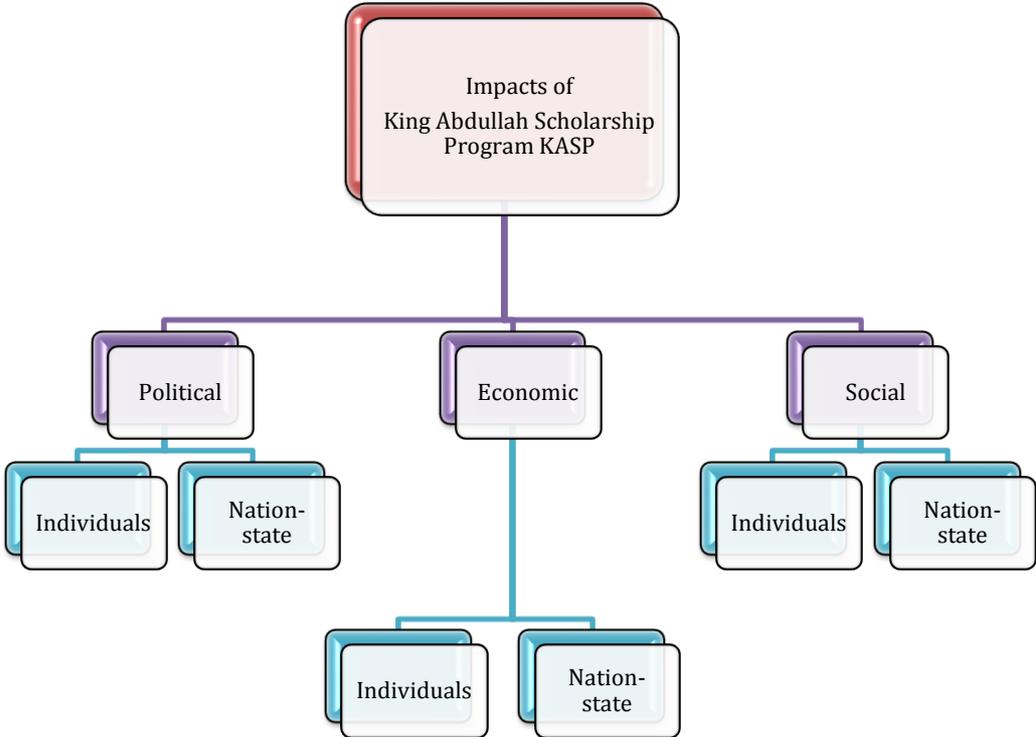
In a religious-based country like Saudi Arabia, the Islamic religion is instrumental in shaping and forming the national identity and different aspects of life such as lifestyle, education, culture, society and politics too (Nevo, 1998). Consequently, Saudi Arabia needs to be sure 'from where to wield the stick' if it plans to make reforms and transform any or all of these aspects, while maintaining adherence to its religion and traditions.

Contributing to this transformation, the King Abdullah overseas Scholarship Program is the largest of its kind worldwide as it sponsors more than 130,000 Saudi students (Fallatah, 2012). Until 2012, Saudi Arabia spent around \$5 billion on this program (Ali & Alali, 2012) which is planned to end in 2020 (Wagner, 2012, para. 2). Recent statistics released by the Saudi Ministry of Finance indicate that the number of the Saudi students who are sponsored by KASP has reached 185,000 with an estimated annual expenditure of SR 22 billion that

equals USD 5,864,950,000 (Ministry of Finance, report 2014, p.5). Most importantly, King Abdullah is committed to providing equal chances for all Saudis to pursue their university studies abroad (Hillyard, 2008). Coleman (2012, para. 5) states: “Scholarship recipients are chosen not just from upper middle class elites who have been privately educated, but also from small towns and poorer regions of the country”.

Given KASP’s key role in capacity building and societal transformation for the Saudi nation, the study investigates the economic, political and social impacts of the Program at both the individual student and the Saudi nation state levels. The study’s scope, problem under investigation and aims are depicted in the following figure.

Figure 1: Scope of the study



Aims of the study

Four aims guided this study. These were to investigate:

- 1) the social, economic and political impacts of the scholarship scheme, KASP, for the recipients and for the Saudi nation-state;
- 2) the extent to which the Program's recipients and the Saudi nation have reaped value for investment from the KASP;
- 3) new opportunities and challenges that have arisen from the KASP scheme; and
- 4) in what ways the Program might be improved if it is to be sustained.

Statement of the Problem

The impacts of sending Saudi students abroad are potentially profound because Saudi Arabia historically has been so protective of its cultural identity (Denman & Hilal, 2011). To begin, Saudi Arabia is facing several internal and external challenges. For example, the Arab region is undergoing some vital political and social uprisings and changes (e.g., the civil wars and revolutions in Iraq, Tunis, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Palestine and Israel). These uprisings affect and alarm the neighboring countries, including the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which are (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates). Internally, this sort of uprising in the Arab region pressures the government of Saudi Arabia to appease its citizens and look carefully for their needs and keep the situation controlled. This includes the annual income for Saudi citizens, their rights to criticize, enhancing their job opportunities, and maintain gender equity. Besides, Saudi Arabia faces another sort of internal issues involving the high youth population. At the external level, Saudi Arabia has a vital role to play in the Middle East (Väyrynen, 1984); it is anticipated to help in settling the peace in the region and to resolve conflicts due to its

geo-political significance and due to its financial capacity. In addition, Saudi Arabia has been improving its relations with the West especially after the 11th September 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York (Fawcett, 2013) where 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudis.

A better higher education system which aids in developing the intellectual capacity of its citizens is seen by the Saudi government as the path to solve many of KSA's issues especially if student mobility can be encouraged. This position reflects its view of education which helps to achieve a more highly qualified society, as not merely an economic driver in the global knowledge economy and innovation as a key to prosperity, but importantly, as a means to address broader societal issues. The KASP scheme is one strategy adopted that aims to fulfill this vision.

Given this scenario, this research investigates some key current political, economic and social challenges faced by the KSA and seeks to discover whether sending the students abroad through KASP will help to address these challenges, or will have the potential to create more issues and challenges.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed in order to address the problem under investigation.

1. What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program?
2. What benefits to the KSA and recipients of the KASP scheme has the Program brought?
3. To what extent has the emphasis on student mobility been successful?
4. What major challenges and issues arising need to be addressed?

5. What policy or other initiatives are needed for improving the efficacy of the Program?
6. What social, political and economic tensions are emerging following the implementations of the KASP scheme?

Types of Higher Education International Student Scholarships

Four main kinds of international student scholarships supported by higher education institutions world-wide can be identified. First they can be differentiated into government or non-government (industry) supported scholarships. These can be further differentiated into either incoming (students attracted to study in the sponsoring country) or outgoing scholarships (for students to study abroad). Table 1 illustrates these four types.

Table 1: Types of international students scholarships

Scholarships	Government	Non-Government
Incoming	Australia Awards Endeavour Scholarship and Fellowships	BHP
Outgoing	Brazil, King Abdullah overseas Scholarship Program	Coca Cola in USA

As alluded to earlier, the Saudi KASP scheme is identified as a government outgoing scholarship type. A further explanation of these four types is provided in Chapter 4.

Government incoming scholarships

These types of scholarships are those provided by governments to bring international students into their countries to study. There are different forms of this government incoming scholarships. The most common forms are: 1) Bringing International students into a specific

country can happen as part of an exchange students program between one government and a number of other governments/countries in which they can bring students from those countries and send their own students to pursue their studies in those countries, such as Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD), which is the German Academic Exchange Service. 2) Some of the government incoming scholarships are “binational”, which means governments fund an exchange program with one specific country such as the Australian American Fulbright Commission. 3) Some governments grant annual scholarships for the qualified international students as part of their commitment to the international development cooperation without sending their students in turns. These kinds of scholarships are usually given by the developed countries, such as the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand, Japan and the British Commonwealth, to students from developing countries (Scheyvens, 2003).

Government outgoing scholarships

This category refers to scholarships provided by governments for their national higher education students to pursue their studies overseas. The Saudi’s KASP awards, the focus of this study, clearly fit this category.

Until 2009, the top four destinations for international higher education students were listed as the U.S, UK, Australia, and Canada (Choudaha & Chang, 2012). By grouping the international students according to their countries of origins, it is found that the top five countries of origin are China, South Korea, India, Canada, and finally Saudi Arabia.

More recent examples of government outgoing scholarship programs are the Brazilian and the Saudi (KASP) scholarships. In 2011, Brazil started its outgoing scholarship program as it

planned to send 75,000 fully funded students to 12 countries (United States, France, Portugal, Spain, Germany, UK, Canada, Italy, Australia, Netherlands, South Korea, and Belgium (Monks, 2012). Saudi Arabia launched KASP in 2006, a program which sponsored around 140,000 Saudi students up until 2013 (Meo, 2013).

Non-government incoming scholarships

These scholarships are offered by some private organizations or industries to international higher education students in order to attract them to pursue their studies within the countries where the sponsors are located. This kind of scholarships is also known as industry-sponsorship. Usually sponsoring the students is arranged between an industry and one of the universities; and the students are chosen based on selective criteria. From Organisations/industries' perspective, some stakeholders sponsor the qualified students in order to comply with their roles towards the social responsibilities to reward or punish their businesses (Darnall, Potoski and Prakash, 2010); while some tie the bonds with the universities to benefits from the research results in the business fields (Blumenthal, 1996). From the universities' perspectives, the belief is that students need a broad understanding of the business nature in the global environment (Douglas, 2009) hence the need to bring international students to benefit the local industry with their broaden and global perspectives.

Non-government outgoing scholarships

These kinds of scholarships are offered by private companies to local higher education students for pursuing their studies overseas. In the U.S., for example, there is a large number of companies such as Coca-Cola, Walt Disney, the Ford motor company, and Johnson & Johnson which offer such scholarships. These scholarships sponsor American students to

pursue their studies in relevant areas in a number of different countries. These scholarships can be classified as development scholarships because those selected sponsored students usually must return to their home countries and work for the sponsor company for a certain amount of time depending on the agreement. For instance, Coca Cola has a scholarship program called the *Coca Cola Foundation Scholarship*, which aspires to sponsor 100,000 American students to undertake their studies in China. Coca Cola is funding this program with substantial support from the Obama government. Apparently, U.S. is keen to strengthen the ties between United States and China because it is believed that education is a key to cross-cultural understanding (Office of International Education, 2013).

Background and Context of the Study

Saudi Arabia: geographical and educational features

Saudi Arabia, the country in question for this study, is officially called the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and it was founded in 1932 by King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud. KSA is largest country in the Arabian Peninsula by land area; it occupies approximately 2,150,000 km². The population of Saudi Arabia is estimated as 27 million, 9 millions of whom are foreign expatriates, and 2 million of whom are registered as illegal immigrants (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington, 2013). Saudi Arabia is surrounded by Iraq and Jordan to the north, Kuwait to the northeast, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Arabian/Persian Gulf to the east, Oman and Yemen to the South, and the Red Sea to the west. Riyadh is the capital of Saudi Arabia while Makkah (Mecca) is the religious capital. Figure 2 which follows indicates the geographical location of Saudi Arabia.

Figure 2: Map of Saudi Arabia and its borders



Source: Defense Industry Daily, 2009

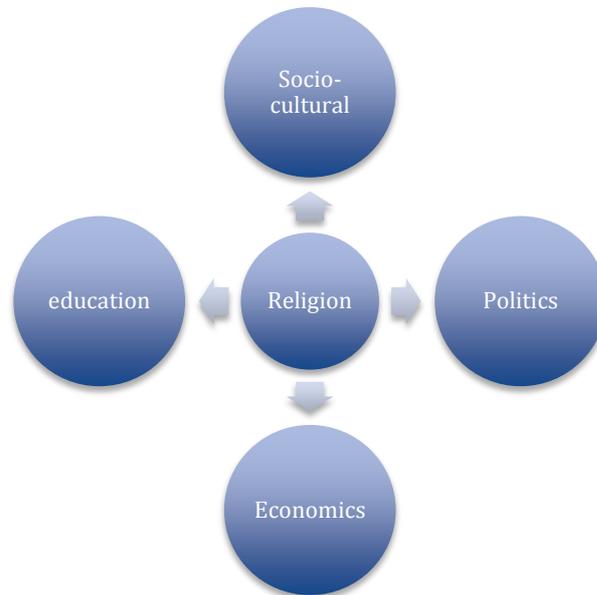
As a recent study explained (Hilal, 2013), there are a number of unique characteristics that distinguish Saudi Arabia from all other countries in the world. Most obviously, the religion (Islam) affects and governs most of the life aspects in Saudi Arabia including the internal politics, economy, social life, and the life style. The culture of Saudi Arabia is collectivistic and one needs to have an adequate grasp of Islam in order to understand it (Long, 2005). For essence, Saudi Arabia is the only country that does not permit for its citizens to believe in any other religion except Islam. Selling alcohol is not tolerated except in the foreign embassies. Women are not allowed to drive cars (this case has still been under discussion in the Saudi Parliament, which is known as (Majlis Al-Shura'a). Besides, cinemas are not to be found in Saudi Arabia (except in some foreign compounds i.e. the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMOCO), which was owned by Americans) (Hilal, 2013). Furthermore,

when it is prayer times in the mosques, all shops have to close until the prayer is over. This justifies why Saudis start their social life (visit each other, attend wedding ceremonies, go shopping and the like) after the last prayer, which is around 8.00pm.

Segregation policy between men and women is applied in most of the schools, universities, restaurants, in all mosques---except the holy mosque in Makkah. The separation between genders also applies to the waiting areas in hospitals and clinics. The Islamic religion not only imposes its firm rules regarding trade, bequests from wills, seller-buyer contracts, but also the business/economy of that nation. Vogel argues: “The majority of the Saudi people highly value their religion and intend to preserve its force in their legal and social life. Most Saudis consider Islamic law their indigenous law, natural and inevitable” (Vogel, 2000, p. xiv). Vogel also adds: “aspects such as prayer, fasting, personal ethics, family life, and social mores, all vital parts of the law” (Vogel, 2000, p. xviii). Most importantly, the Saudi educational system is also based on strict Islamic rules (Halstead, 2004). Finally, Long and Maisel (2010, p.1) described Saudi Arabia as “a country of startling contrasts—a huge landmass and a small population; a barren desert terrain situated over great oil wealth; a traditional Islamic society undergoing rapid modernization; a closed society that is often in the news”.

Such characteristics of KSA do not determine how good or bad its society is, but only indicate that the country is a conservative and unique society given its specific historic, religious and cultural aspects. Figure 3 below displays how life aspects are centered around the religion in Saudi Arabia.

Figure 3: How religion influences different life aspects in KSA



Given the importance of religion, Saudi Arabia is a highly significant country for all Muslims. Significantly, it has the two holy Mosques in Makkah and Medina, which are the annual destinations for pilgrims who visit from all parts of the globe (Saleh, 1986). A wealthy nation, Saudi Arabia plays a very important role in the global economy because it is the world's largest exporter of oil owing to its massive spare capacity (International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2013; Fawcett, 2013). Indicating the importance of this role, Al-Naimi, the Saudi Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, announced recently that, "...the Kingdom's number one interest is a well-balanced oil market which leads to a healthy global economy" (Al-Naimi, 2013, para. 1).

But, despite its economic wealth, Saudi Arabia has a number of internal and external challenges. These challenges are mostly economic, political, and social. Economic wise, foreign expatriates represent 80% of the workforce in Saudi Arabia, which results in a high rate of unemployment among Saudi citizens.

Socio-cultural and political issues are mainly related to religious identity, preservation, and conservatism. Saudi Arabia is under pressure from many powerful developed countries such as the United States, to change its religious-oriented curriculum and some religious life aspects such as allowing Saudis to choose other religions and to not make it restricted to Islam, permit women to drive cars, and so forth. This suggests that globalising influences do affect nations such as Saudi Arabia. As a result, Saudi Arabia is currently in a dilemma as to how to rebuild its international relations and appease other, more powerful countries---especially after September 11---and, at the same time maintain its inherited historical identity; it is conventionally challenging for the government of Saudi Arabia to set new rules or policies in such a conservative society.

Education-wise, since King Abdul Aziz unified the Kingdom in 1932, he started to dedicate special attention to establish a strong Saudi educational system (Hamdan, 2005). The following kings carried the same interest in improving the system. However, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, the current king of Saudi Arabia, prioritized the education sector over all other sectors in Saudi Arabia. The table below displays the increasing allocated budget for higher education in Saudi Arabia from 2008 until 2013.

Table 2: The allocated budget for higher education in Saudi Arabia 2008-2013

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
SR 105 billion	SR 122 billion	SR 137 billion	SR 150 billion	SR 204 billion	SR 21,600 billion
US\$ 27 billion	US\$ 32 billion	US\$ 36 billion	US\$ 39 billion	US\$ 54 billion	US\$ 54 billion

Source: Saudi Ministry of Finance (2014)

Reasons for establishing the KASP scheme

King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz started an “educational revolution” as he increased the numbers of private and public universities and colleges in Saudi Arabia. Needless to say, the most substantial and vivid example of his awareness of the significance of a solid education system is the King Abdullah overseas Scholarship Program (KASP). However, the real reason/s and motives for launching this unique scholarship program was not very explicit until now. The literature and the available data propose and suggest three possible reasons why this was the case.

Before presenting the reasons, it is important to bear in mind that while this study continues to separate the political, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of KASP, in many cases those three aspects overlap and can hardly be separated (as it will be noted through the study). For example, it is argued that socioeconomic change always leads to political development eventually and indirectly; and that the economic change increases the chances of social changes via its affect on the political culture (Mitchell, 2010).

Reason 1: KASP was founded on political grounds

There is a strong link between the foundation of KASP and the September 11th terrorist attack in the US in 2001. The ramifications of 9/11, especially on Saudi Arabia, have continued until recently. For instance, since 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudis, more restrictions were placed on issuing visas for Saudi students to go abroad, especially to United States. For Saudis, “the open door for Saudi students slammed shut in 2001” (Knickmeyer, 2012, para. 39, Heyn, 2013) and thus only around 1,000 Saudi students were studying in the U.S. in 2004 (Knickmeyer, 2012, para. 5; Hall, 2013). The international Saudi students---especially in the United States---experienced variant sorts of

discrimination, social anxiety, verbal as well as physical assault, and a wide range of emotions as a result of the negative media representations (Batterjee, 2010). The discrimination against Arabs/Muslims particularly Saudis, took different forms. For example, Sami Al-Obeid's U.S. visa was revoked without explanation, and he could not finish his U.S. degree (Knickmeyer, 2012, para. 40). Consequently, American universities lost around \$40 million a year in tuition from Middle Eastern students after 9/11 (Knickmeyer, 2012, para. 41).

Four years later, King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz was proclaimed as the sixth King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on 1st August 2005. Accordingly, in 2005 and 2006, he visited many influential countries for the purpose of *strengthening the* international's relations between Saudi Arabia and the rest of the world (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC, 2013, para. 12; Heyn, 2013).

Most importantly, in 2005 King Abdullah visited the United States and met President George W. Bush (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC, 2013, para. 14). King Abdullah persuaded President Bush to reopen the student visa service for Saudi students, arguing that "education" program is crucial for a Saudi-U.S. long-term relationship (Knickmeyer, 2012, para.16). Ultimately, that meeting between King Abdullah and President Push has resulted in KASP, which is the largest overseas scholarship program worldwide. The Pie News reports that KASP was established mainly to help Saudi Arabia rebuild the international relations with the West after the 9/11 terrorists' attack (Thomas, 2013, para. 1). Knickmeyer adds that, "The impassioned plea that the King made for this, and the long-term importance of the relationship, really made an impression on President Bush" (2012, para. 17).

So, clearly, there is a connection between KASP and the willingness to amend 9/11 ramifications, maintain its international relations, to correct its stereotype, and re-locate itself in the world map (Denman & Hilal, 2011). The KASP scheme is also described as a tool for peace (Hilal & Denman, 2013), and as a strategy that transforms barriers between cultures into bridges (Denman & Hilal, 2011).

Reason 2: KASP was founded on economic grounds

The majority of the literature tends to assume that the main reason for founding KASP lay on an economic base. For example, the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia (2014a) states, under the mission of KASP, it is meant to “prepare and qualify Saudi human resources in an effective manner so that they will be able to compete on an international level in the labor market and the different areas of scientific research, and thereby become an important source of supply of highly qualified individuals for Saudi universities as well as the government and private sectors”. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss more about the challenges in Saudi Arabia’s economy, specially regarding the low employability among nationals owing to their ill preparation for the industrial markets. Bukhari and Denman (2013, p. 151) point out the importance of the KASP scheme because, “overseas study is considered for a nation that is in need for skilled Saudi nationals. Moreover, Prof. Abouammoh (2010), in discussing the trend of reforming the higher education system in Saudi Arabia, believes that KASP is one of the strategies that is meant to help improve the economic prosperity and solve the high unemployment in Saudi Arabia. The Center for Higher Education Research and Studies (CHERS) in Saudi Arabia adds that, “the scholarship is restricted to discipline[s] mostly needed by the Saudi labor market such as medical studies, engineering and business” (Mazi & Abouammoh, 2009, p. 14). Interestingly, some scholars perceive

KASP as a strategy for “promoting a transition to a knowledge economy” (Gallarotti, 2013, p. 1). Bin Taleb (2013, pp. 22-24) explains the role of KAPS in KSA’s economy as, “Aspects of controlling the financial boom and directing it in a way to support the economy and build society is manifested in the massive scholarship programs which the Kingdom carried out led by the Custodian of Two Holy Shrines external scholarship program”. Bin Taleb (2013, p. 27) also argues,

The extent to which education helps in achieving the economic development depends on the standard and the quality of education and because scholarships for studying abroad is one of the educational areas which provide distinguished and sophisticated contributing to the development of the cultural and educational standard on society. The economic return will undoubtedly be great.

Hence, the argument here strongly suggests that KASP is a strategy created for economic reasons.

Reason 3: KASP was founded on socio-cultural grounds

In order to effect changes in government policies guiding education and social-cultural customs decision makers need to know that the society would accept these. Otherwise, risks of failure could be high. In the Saudi’s conservative society, change or reform would necessarily take time until people learnt to tolerate and accept change. In interesting research conducted by Clary and Karlin (2011), there was a story was reported about a discussion between King Fahd (the former King of Saudi Arabia before the current King Abdullah) and King Abdullah. King Fahd referred to the huge improvements that Saudi Arabia had achieved, and how the nation had transformed from deserts into a wealthy, modern country. King Fahd, however, believed that changing the country was easy, but changing the Saudis’ way of thinking seemed impossible. Six years later, King Abdullah, proved that changing the rigid ways of thinking among Saudis is also possible after considering and embracing

deliberate policies to stimulate reforming the society (Clary & Karlin, 2011; Ottaway, 2012). King Abdullah is thus seen as reform-minded within the Saudi context (Profile: Saudi Arabia: Head of State, Prime Minister: King Abdullah Bin-Abd-al-Aziz Al Saud, 20 February 2013 BBC News).

Some scholars such as Ottaway (2012) declare that many Saudis presume that King Abdullah's secret objective of starting KASP is to create a critical mass of reform-minded Saudis who will eventually form a pressure group sufficiently powerful to untie the rule and influence of the ultra-conservative Wahhabi religious establishment over Saudi society. In this way, King Abdullah is seen to increasing the pace of change (Ottaway, 2012). Coleman (2012, para. 5) adds, "in fact, part of the rationale of the [KASP] program is to make Saudi Arabia a more open society". Coleman also mentions the internal scholarship program, but she believes that its recipients will miss the biggest benefit of the overseas scholarships, which is the exposure to more open societies (Coleman, 2012, para. 6).

Furthermore, Bashraheel in Saudi *Gazette* (March, 11, 2013) stated that there is a hope that KASP's graduates will bring social change and create a more open society, and that is one of KASP's goals (Bashraheel, 2013, para. 4).

Research Design Adopted

For data collection, an exploratory case study approach was chosen (Stake 2000) which allowed use of multiple methods for gathering the qualitative and quantitative data needed. A descriptive survey of Saudi KASP recipients was used for collecting measurable data, while interviews and a focus group were used for the purpose of understanding and interpreting the quantitative data collected (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2005).

The case study chosen was able to provide an in-depth investigation of the phenomena being studied (Patton, 2002). Stake (2000) expanded on this, explaining that a case study provides the unit of analysis for the study – a specific, bounded system for the investigation. The unit of analysis, or the ‘case’ in point, was the King Abdullah Scholarship Program, with a particular focus on its impact on recipients and the nation state of KSA.

The survey used in the study was an on-line instrument that sought biographic information about Saudi students studying outside the Kingdom, together with their perceptions of the present and future benefits of international study to themselves and their country. Two pilot studies were conducted with small student samples to test and refine the instrument before it was distributed to the 666 Saudi students studying outside their homeland. Except for biographical information, items on the survey required responses on a five-point Likert scale. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the findings.

Thirty Saudi students studying in Australia under the KASP scheme were interviewed for this study. The reason for only interviewing Saudi students in Australia primarily was logistics – the researcher did not have the financial or time resources to interview students studying in other countries. Questions for the interviews derived from both the literature review and the major themes emerging from the survey. The information collected through the interviews was analysed using thematic analysis for encoding (responses Boyatzis, 1998, p. vii), conducted both manually and with the assistance of the Leximancer 4.0 text analysis software. Thematic analysis essentially involves sorting the data into categories, thereby revealing emerging patterns and themes (Patton, 2002).

The focus group used allowed the researcher asks a group of respondents a small number of relevant questions, after which there was interaction among the group in order to formulate a response (Creswell, 2005). The capacity of individuals in the group to elaborate on, or to challenge, the opinion of their peers significantly enhanced the quality of the data by providing checks and balances, eliminating extreme views, and providing a richness of interpretation. The focus group used in this study had the particular purpose of assisting the researcher to develop and to validate findings emerging from the analysis of the data from the survey and interviews. Participants were identified on the basis of their depth of knowledge of the Saudi higher education system and the KASP initiative, in the context of the future developmental plans for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

For more on the research design and strategies adopted, Chapter 5 provides greater detail on methodological considerations guiding the study.

Role of the Researcher

A recipient of a KASP award to support her doctoral studies, this researcher approached her study from an ‘insider’ perspective. The insider’s perspective is a tool used in qualitative research that offers an excellent opportunity to observe, record and analyse the phenomena under study first-hand (Conrad, 1990; Kusow, 2004; Holden, 2010). In this sense, the ‘insider’ is usually more aware about the context, in this case, the Saudi culture including the internal political, economic and socio-cultural strengths and weaknesses, than the outsider. As the ethnographer, Kusow (2004, p. 592), observed,

The perspective [of the insider] claims that outsiders cannot have the necessary sensibilities that can make, to borrow from Max Weber, *verstehen*, or empathetic understanding, possible because outsider ethnographers are not initiated in the cultural values of the people they study.

Exercising the insider's perspective, or the 'worm's eye view', proved most helpful in understanding and interpreting meanings from the data collected. On the other hand, using an insider's perspective can have implications for the trustworthiness of the research findings because of possible researcher bias. Aware of this possible limitation on the findings and in order to minimise such bias and subjectivity, rigorous methods were adopted that helped in designing the survey, the interviews and the focus groups.

Significance of the Study

The research in this study is particularly significant because of the key role the KASP scheme is playing in a country which is using education to build human resource capacity, and drive transformation, modernisation and innovation in its society. It attempts for the first time to investigate the various consequences of the overseas KASP scholarship scheme in KSA. The findings should help to identify and address problem areas as well as highlight the advantages accrued by the Program for individual recipients and the nation-state which is aiming to be a stronger player in a global context. Moreover, outcomes of the study will help to address the scarcity of literature on the topic which currently exists in the Arab-Speaking world.

As recently expressed by an observer of the changes occurring in KSA, King Abdullah bin Abdullah is considered as a 'mind-reformer' (Oasis in the desert, 2009, para. 3). Accordingly, as it builds its intellectual capital, Saudi Arabia is transforming and it is writing a new history of its progress and achievements. As the *Arab News* reported on 4 January, 2013, Saudi Arabia is in its 'golden age; under King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz rule (Meo, 2013, paras. 1,2,17). Consequently, this research is of high significance as this transformation takes place.

This research also has the potential to assist Saudi's Ministry of Higher Education to reform and/or modify its rules and guidelines regarding overseas scholarships in order that each respective program will work more effectively in meeting the needs of the nation and its citizens. Moreover, as alluded to earlier, this study highlights and emphasizes the efforts that Saudi Arabia is taking in order that it might become a stronger player in the global knowledge economy.

Key Concepts and Definitions

Higher education: Higher education in the KSA context refers to any study beyond secondary education levels. It concerns education at universities and colleges which offer high diploma (associates), bachelors, masters, PhDs, and fellowships. KSA has an independent Ministry of Higher Education that has overall responsibility for regulating the system.

Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission (SACM): It is a Saudi governmental authority that exists outside Saudi Arabia where Saudi students pursue their overseas study. There are 32 Saudi Cultural Missions, in total, distributed as: 19 in Asia and Australia, 6 in Europe, 5 in Africa, and 2 in the United States and Canada. The SACMs are affiliate to the Royal Embassies of Saudi Arabia in Australia, and they work as executive tool to facilitate the implementation of King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) and other scholarship programs run by Saudi ministries, universities and corporations. The SACMs have expanded after KASP in order to effectively meet the demands of the Saudi sponsored students, and to facilitate their study and living arrangements in host countries. Finally, the SACMs are also charged with

promoting bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and host countries in the academic, cultural, scientific and technological fields.

Student mobility: For the purposes of this study, student mobility is referred to the movement of students from their countries of origin to study university degrees in other countries. International higher education student mobility has different facets and aspects. For instance, student mobility usually happens in the form of the scholarships; these scholarships can be government incoming scholarships, government outgoing scholarships, non-government incoming scholarships, and non-government outgoing scholarships. Also, student mobility could have many positive political, economic, and socio-cultural impacts on the nation states. For example, Europe promotes student mobility to tie the relations among the European Union, and Australia encourages the student mobility to flourish its economy. At the end, Scholarship programs such as KASP are instrumental in encouraging student mobility between countries and can also be seen as tools of internationalization of higher education in the global knowledge economy.

Internationalisation of higher education: This refers to the process of integrating an international/universal and intercultural dimension into the teaching and research service functions of higher education. This has occurred largely as a result of the growing global knowledge economy. Intercultural education, comparative education, multicultural education and international education are other terms that are seen as the internationalisation of higher education trends (Knight & de Wit, 1997; King & Findlay, 2010).

Gulf Arab States: The term Gulf Arab States is used in this study interchangeably with Gulf Monarchies, Oil monarchies, oil-rich Gulf States, Gulf Cooperation Council GCC

Countries and GCC Arab State, all of which refer to the same six countries of the Gulf (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates).

International students/foreign students: ‘International students’, ‘overseas students’ and ‘foreign students’ are terms that will be used interchangeably in this thesis. The definition of international/overseas/foreign students differs from country to country according to their tertiary education system. While Chapter 3 explains some of the differences in the defining ‘international students’, the general meaning refers to any students who travel from the home country to another country other than their own for the purpose of pursuing tertiary study.

Hosting/host countries: These are the countries that permitted the non-citizens to obtain students visa and stay in their lands until the end of their study period.

Countries of origin: The home countries for the international students where they did not need visa to stay.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis comprises seven chapters, the contents of which are outlined briefly in what follows.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides an overview about the background and context of Saudi Arabia. It begins by highlighting the history of higher education and student mobility in the broader context of Saudi Arabia (Islamic/Arab world). More information about the higher education system in the six Gulf Arab States is then provided.

Chapter 3 explains the contemporary or modern higher education system in Saudi Arabia. The chapter provides, in detail, information about the scheme of King Abdullah Scholarship Program, concluding with the challenges that face KSA's higher education policies.

The literature pertinent to international student mobility at the tertiary level is reviewed in Chapter 4. It also maps the distribution of the students by illustrating the sending countries or (countries of origin) and the receiving countries. The chapter goes on to discuss the political, economic, and social-cultural impacts of the international student mobility on nation states and the risks posed by international student mobility for the nation.

Methodological considerations for the study and the nature of the tools of data collection and analysis are outlined in Chapter 5. The Chapter also explains the limitations of the study and ethical procedures that were followed for data collection purposes.

Findings from the online survey as well as the interviews are presented and analysed in Chapter 6. The chapter draws out common themes pertinent to the main political, socio-economic and cultural opportunities and challenges for the recipients of the KASP and for KSA as a result of this Program.

The final chapter, Chapter 7, draws conclusions from the findings following receipt of feedback from the focus group analysis. It addresses each of the research questions in turn, highlights the implications of the research findings for policy and decision makers and the tensions arising that will need to be addressed by higher education policy makers. Finally, selected areas for future researchers to explore are suggested.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Introduction

In order to best understand the development of higher education in Saudi Arabia, one has to appreciate the broader socio-cultural context of Saudi Arabia. As Saudi Arabia is an important part of the Arab speaking world as well as being a significant player in the Gulf Arab States, the chapter begins by explaining some historical aspects of this region, especially those that relate to the development of higher education and student mobility in the Arab speaking world. It then focuses on the higher education system in Saudi Arabia and provides details of the government overseas scholarship programs offered in the Gulf Arab States, what is technically called the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Importantly, this chapter highlights some of the internal and external political, economic, and socio-cultural challenges in the broader context of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Higher education and student mobility in the Arab-Speaking world

a. Higher education

Higher education has a longstanding history in the Arab-speaking world with a number of institutions having existed well before their counterparts in Western Europe (Denman & Hilal, 2011). Among those that have been recognised worldwide include the University of Al-Karaouine (Morocco); Al-Azhar (Egypt); Jundishapur University (Iran); Munstansiriya University (Iraq) and Nazamiyya (Iran). These institutions, including the famous library, ‘the House of Wisdom’ (Baghdad) ---founded in 765 BCE (Lyons, 2010) ---were considered

magnets for knowledge-seeking European travelers during the Renaissance era. This appears to confirm a form of educational (borrowing) known as ‘travelers’ tales’, a phrase coined by Noah and Eckstein (1998), which describes how educational observers would travel to distant lands to learn about ‘best practice’ and bring their tales home for dissemination (Denman, 2006). Moreover, Lyons (2010, p. ix) adds:

Medieval Western scholars who wanted access to the latest findings also needed to master the Arabic tongue, or work from translations by those who had done so. It is also worth noting that such labels, today largely associated with nation-states and the demands for distinct cultural identity, were far more fluid in the era under discussion.

In the Arab world, the university in itself was not perceived to be important to the student; the student's relationship with teacher was more significant. As Marrou (1956, p. 197) explained, "A group of disciples centering round the same master was often described poetically as a chorus or a ‘thiasos’ or a fraternity...so that the spiritual bond that untied them had an almost sacred character".

Historically, if one were to relax the definition of 'university' to include higher learning, institutions of higher education in the Arab-speaking world and in some Asian countries (e.g. China and Vietnam) existed some 200 years before those in Europe (Denman, 2004, pp. 1-3). Figure 4 identifies three significant institutions of higher learning from the Arab-speaking world, two of which precede the historical Common Era.

Figure 4: Historical Institutions of Higher Learning in the Middle East

“Bait Al-Hekma” <ul style="list-style-type: none">• House of Wisdom in Baghdad; built in 830 (BCE) (Anderson, 1990)
Jama’at Al-Qaraween <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Founded in Fes (Morocco) in 859 (BCE)
Al-Azhar University <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Built in 970 (CE) (Rabbat, 1996) and considered to be the first Arab university in history.

Source: Denman & Hilal, 2011

At the peak of early higher education development in the Arab-speaking world, the Arabic language was viewed as the international language of science (Anderson, 1990), particularly in medicine (Wakim, 1944). In Europe, many families viewed Arab schools as a destination for obtaining higher education standards for their children. In a letter from King George II (1727-1760 CE) to the third Caliph of Muslims in Andalusia (Spain), the letter reads:

From George II, the King of England, Gaul, Sweden and Norway to the Caliph of the Muslim Kingdom of Spain, his majesty Hisham III”,

We have been advised that science, knowledge, technology and industry are far advanced in your country, therefore we wish to take the opportunity for our youth to benefit from your achievements as our country lacks in these facilities and is in total darkness.

We hope this opportunity will give us the chance to follow in your footsteps to illuminate our people with knowledge. My niece Princess Dobant and a group of noble English girls seek the favour of your academic staff, with the honour of your favour to bestow upon us the opportunity to achieve our goal.

The young princess is carrying a gift to your majesty. Your acceptance will honour us.

Your obedient servant, George. (Ibn Abd Al-Barr, 1993, pp. 13-14)

Educational achievements were not necessarily earmarked by any one nation state in the Middle East but rather holistically by all Arab peoples who came from the greater Arab Peninsula (Gulf Arab States) and beyond. Parenthetically, this may have something to do with the nomadic nature of the region and mobility itself. This seems to be in contrast to contemporary views, especially those from within the Middle East as Dessouki (in Zia, 2010, p. 263) explains:

...states use their own brand of Islamic world views to justify and legitimize their regimes and their ideological underpinnings. At the same time, different groups within countries might use Islamic symbolism to legitimize political action in their political resistance and in articulating social, political and economic agendas.

What appears absent is a holistic Islamic worldview that is consonant and consistent with changing global contexts (Ibid, p. 263).

b. Student mobility

The letter between King George II and Caliph Hisham III demonstrates that student mobility is not a new trend by any stretch, especially in the Islamic world. In addition, in one of prophet Mohammad's Hadiths (messages) discloses his concerns about having a well-educated nation, he states 'Seek knowledge even if in China' (Naghavi, 2009). On the one hand, this Hadith denotes the significance of knowledge and education in Islam,. On the other hand, it illustrates that prophet Mohammad motivated and encouraged Muslims to travel as far as China for the sake of knowledge, which, in its present-day form, would be considered as "student mobility".

It is believed that the Great Library of Alexandria (323-283 BCE) was possibly the first in the world and it was well regarded due to its role in the history of scholarship (Erskine, 1995).

Although this library has been destroyed, it has never lost its significance on the European imagination (MacLeod, 2005). It is also presumed that the Great Library of Alexandria was probably the first library that attempted to systematically collect the works and all the books from different parts from around the world under its roof (Philips, 2010). Furthermore, “they were willing to buy, borrow, or steal in order to get them [the books]” (Philips, 2010, p. 4). Moreover, Alexandria has started to gain increasing attention from both historians and students of literature and science. Scholars and students are now reconsidering its history in order to learn more about classical methods of studying science and literature, as well as learning about the transmission of ideas across cultural frontiers (MacLeod, 2005).

Welch (2012, p. 71), in writing about the role of the Great Library of Alexandria in terms of student mobility, states:

Situating at a strategic point that made it an international trade hub, a royal mandate assigned scholars to travel from Alexandria to centres such as Rhodes and Athens, to purchase works from their book fairs...Alexandria also became a scholarly centre for scribes to transcribe copies of books that were then sent abroad.

The Great Library of Alexandria did not require and acquire only enormous numbers of books but rather it demanded outstanding students and scholars from around the world. In other words, it offered, books, international scholars, servants, lodgings, tax exemptions and high rated salaries (Welch, 2012; Philips, 2010) which successfully attracted many overseas scholars to go to it. Noteworthy, Euclid and Aristotle travelled to Alexandria to learn, particularly mathematics. Pythagoras also was noted to be have come up with Pythagoras theories there (James, 1989). Historically, the Great Library of Alexandria was, by no means, the only early example of student mobility which dates back to the ninth century CE (Welch, 2012).

Such a history highlights not only the old Muslims'/Arabs' achievements but the power of education which helped to shape their identity. History also shows that 'student mobility' has existed over many centuries in Islamic countries and in many ways has also helped to shape cultural identity.

Background of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

As mentioned earlier, explaining some aspects of the Gulf countries such as their political, economic, and social challenges along with the increasing awareness of the need to improve their higher education systems helps to set Saudi Arabia in its broader context. Moreover, the whole region (Gulf) seems to endure similar challenges. Besides, with common strategic and ideological concerns, the GCC has become a powerful political and economic union of the Gulf Arab states. They also have a set of annual and long-term objectives which they plan to achieve as a union. The heads of the six states meet annually in Riyadh (the capital city of Saudi Arabia) (Ramazani, 1988; Tripp, 1995; Pinfari, 2009).

Another common factor shared by the GCC nations is the scarcity of higher education resources and literature that exists and the challenges their higher education system/s have in adapting to change in order to enhance the quality of educational services. Mitchell (2010, p. 276) believes that the region has been ignored by scholars due to its lack of region-wide political change. Bahgat (1999, p. 128) adds that there has been little, if any, focus on what has been occurring in education, and points out that, "One of the most salient, and least analyzed, developments is the change in their [Gulf Arab States] educational system".

Higher education and student mobility in the Gulf Cooperation Council

The 1970s and 1980s represent the era that more modern higher education systems in the Gulf Arab region were established. Thanks for this development are certainly due to the founding of oil in the region (Gause, 1997). As Bagat (1999, p. 128) explains,

Since the early 1950s, the Gulf regimes have accumulated huge wealth from oil revenues. After the boom in oil prices in the mid 1970s, the six Gulf monarchies had to deal with an unusual dilemma, what to do with the extremely vast revenues from oil export. It seems that they decided to invest in three interrelated major fields: the creation of socio-economic infrastructure and public bureaucracy, the development of the agricultural and industrial sectors, and the improvement of social services including health care and education system. Thus, the creation and expansion of the public system of education can be strongly attributed to the rise in oil revenues.

In other words, the founding of oil and its revenue provided the impetus for developing education along the same line as the West. Insoll (2005, p. 175) stresses how important the revenue from oil has been:

...the world economy still runs on oil, and the Gulf is by far the largest reservoir of oil in the world. The six Gulf Arab States (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates) states themselves account for 46.3 percent of proven world reserve of oil.

Education systems in these countries have been great beneficiaries of this money. According to the annual report by the Economist Intelligence Unit, “The GCC’s spending on education as a percentage of GDP is among the highest in the world” (*The Economist*, September 2009, pp. 11-12).

Gause (1997) believes that the GCC countries have utilised their oil's revenue to invest in education (especially scholarship programs), a strategy that has resulted in the successful and noticeable leap in educational development, in a short period of time. Table 3 indicates the development of higher education institutions in the six GCC countries during this period and the recent support of student mobility via their overseas scholarship programs.

**Table 3:
Overview of the GCC's higher education & government outgoing scholarship programs**

Countries	Year of the First University	Number of public universities	Number of Private universities	Overseas Scholarship programs
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	1957 King Saud University	25	9 and 21 private colleges	King Abdullah (overseas) Scholarship program from 2006 to 2020
Bahrain	1979	1	10	NA
Oman	1986	1 and 9 colleges	7 and 19 Colleges	Oman MoHE has "The Thousand Scholarships" started in 2012. It covers 1,500 students
Qatar	1973 Qatar University	1 University	7 universities 10 Colleges	In 2009: there were two new scholarship programs established: 1-Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani scholarship, and 2- Tamim bin Hamad scholarship.
Kuwait	1966	1 and, 1 college:	6 private institutions 3 colleges 2 universities and 1 business school	According the MoHE (Kuwait), 2000/2001 was the beginning of the official government overseas scholarships program which sends the students to the Arab and Western countries
United	1976	2 and 1	76 licensed	Apparently the government

Arab Emirates		College with 11 campuses around the country	institutions	oversea scholarship system has started a long time ago yet there are no specific dates recorded.
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Sources: King Saud University/history of KSU (2012); Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education/*higher education in Saudi Arabia* (2014b); study in KSA/ Government Educational institutions (2014c); Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education Education/Study in KSA/Private Educational institutions (2014d); Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education/King Abdullah Scholarship Program (2014e); Sultan Qaboos University/ Glance at SQU; Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Higher Education/ Government University (2013); Oman Private Higher Education/Institution (2013); Universities for the thousand scholarship (postgraduate) (2013); Omani Government offers merit-based scholarships of up to \$24,070/year for five years (2013); Qatar University/History (2012); Universities in Qatar (2012); Qatar Higher Education Institute/Scholarship programs (2013); Kuwait Cultural Office/Higher Education in Kuwait (2012); Kuwait Ministry of Higher Education in Kuwait (2013); Commission for Academic Accreditation (2012); Online Qatar (2013).

The budgets and efforts that have been exercised by the GCC governments in supporting the education sector foresee projections for a highly educated generation in the GCC in the near future. Two ways seen for enhancing learning are to do so either outside or inside their countries. While Table 3 demonstrated the vast interest by GCC governments in expanding and increasing the number of public and private universities and supporting external scholarships programs on the other, the following table displays 2007 statistics that indicate the five most popular destinations for tertiary students of the GCC to pursue their studies overseas.

**Table 4: Top 5 Destinations for Tertiary Education for Individual GCC Country
Students – Basis Year 2007**

Rank	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
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1	UK (964)	US (1796)	Jordan (1310)	UK (509)	US (3170)	UK (1803)
2	US (394)	Jordan (1507)	UK (1152)	US (303)	UK (2438)	US (1209)
3	Jordan (371)	UK (885)	Australia (470)	Australia (148)	Jordan (2314)	Australia (976)
4	Australia (187)	Canada (351)	US (370)	Jordan (143)	Canada (921)	Canada (430)
5	Canada (163)	Ireland (244)	India (179)	Canada (46)	Australia (446)	India (232)

Source: Figliolini, Hofman & Kanijirath, 2008, p. 21

Weaknesses of higher education systems in the Gulf Arab States

Scholars tend to believe that there is an imbalance between the curriculum in the Gulf countries and global needs (Gause, 2002). Also, there are factors that have caused the mismatch between local demand and supply for national labour (*The Economist*, September 2009). For example, the quality of higher education, in the Gulf States, has been questioned and criticised from economic as well as political perspectives.

Some believe that the quality of higher education is influenced by the immense dependence on an expatriate labour workforce as a 2009 report on the Gulf states indicated:

...since the 1970s, dependence on expatriate labour has increased alongside the expansion of higher education for nationals. This may reflect both the quality of education offered and a mismatch of expectations. Higher education tends to increase salary expectations. However, the types of jobs that have been created as the economy has expanded—largely in construction or in services sectors serving affluent nationals—

tend to be low-wage. The result is a mismatch between local demand and supply for labour (*The Economist*, September 2009, p. 12)

For a start, modern schools required trained teachers but the shortage of national teachers and of qualified staff was one of the first challenges that appeared. Subsequently, six Gulf monarchies considered inviting and hiring expertise teachers from other neighboring Arab countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon (Bahgat, 1999). Later and as a result of the national teachers' shortage, the governments of the Gulf States realised the necessity in having domestic teacher-training colleges, which were later incorporated, into comprehensive universities (Bahgat, 1999).

From a different vantage point, Bahgat (1999, p. 128) illustrates the imbalance between the Gulf States' needs, the orientation of the Gulf States' curricula, and exists social development and economic growth:

The number of individuals with formal schooling is rising, but the quality of the education they receive does not correspond to the need of Gulf societies...the educational policies pursued in the last several decades have contributed to a number of societal distortions [which caused] a mismatch between traditional and modern schooling, an imbalance between indigenous and foreign laborers.

Education at all levels is offered free of charge in the GCC countries. Moreover, in some of these countries, students are given monthly allowance and some other necessities such as uniforms, books, and transportation. As a result, Gulf governments have a strong hand in controlling universities (Smith & Abouammouh). However direct steering of universities by the state has had an impact on university autonomy as Bahgat (1999, p. 130) points out:

...since the former provide all the funding for the latter, there is very little room for academic and political freedom Universities were created by the governments to perform a specific job: to prepare citizens for employment in the expanding bureaucracy.

In addition, there is very little emphasis placed on vocational and technical training, which is a popular but unrecognised form of education in the Gulf. As Looney (1994, p. 45) points out, “There are too many PhDs and too few mechanics”. While humanities and religious studies have been the main focus of public education, for a long time, these disciplines are now perceived as failing to prepare GCC nationals for the workplace (Barber et al, 2007); hence, they should be accompanied with a proper dose of modern diversity in science, technology, and information. In simple words, the Gulf Arab students have the knowledge but do not have skills to apply their knowledge (this problem and its ramifications will be discussed later in this chapter).

Unfortunately, instability within the region (such as the Israel and Palestine war, Iran, Arab spring, radicalism and civic unrest) is also impacting by restricting the free movement of information between countries (Bahgat, 1999).

Contemporary internal and external challenges facing Gulf Arab States

Just like most countries in the world, nation state governments of the Gulf Arab States have various types of external and internal challenges that affect their own countries and their relations with other countries. These challenges naturally impact on their education systems. How these challenges impact on higher education will be a focus in the following section.

External Challenges

The external challenges derive from some developed countries, some of the developing countries and some Arab neighboring countries. For instance, the powerful or developed countries such as the United States and other countries from the European Union have been demanding that the six monarchies consider and modify some of their internal policies. Sadly, the kind of the Gulf States’ education and its curricula have been blamed for the attacks in the

US of September 11th 2001. It is believed that Osama bin Laden was a product of the GCC educational and cultural milieu (Gause, 2002). Moreover, the events of September 11th have obviously weakened the bridges that had been built between the East and the West. It is common for the West to see Muslims (particularly Saudis and Gulf Arabians) as terrorists; and in the Islamic world, Westerners have been perceived not so much against 'terrorism' but against Muslims in general (Gause, 2002), a situation which has eventually built up a very cautious relationships between those countries. Therefore, the Gulf Arab States are striving to preserve and strengthen the robust relationships that had been built with the developed countries, at least for security purposes.

As for the need to strengthen the relations with the developed and/or Arab countries, in 2004 there were ten million foreign workers in the Gulf Arab States (Pakkiasamy, 2004, para. 3) coming from Arab countries (i.e. Egypt, Syria, Lebanon), or South Asia such as Indonesia and Philippines (Silvey, 2006). In other words, around 70% of the total population has comprised of foreign workers. More precisely, in Kuwait 82% of the workforce were foreigners; in Qatar and UAE almost 90 % are foreign workers. While Saudi Arabia and Bahrain are recording the lowest rates, 50% and 65% of their workforce are expatriates respectively (Kapiszewski, 2006). These huge numbers of foreigners represent some threats to the security and social norms of the GCC (Winckler, 1997; Kapiszewski, 2006). On the other hand, the source countries of overseas workers are asking for more rights for their citizens. Unfortunately, some local citizens in the six monarchy nations are abusive towards and use violence against the foreign workers, especially lower paid people such as home-servants and drivers (Silvey, 2006). The governments of the Gulf States are required to set up new policies to protect the low-wages foreign workers to enhance the humans' rights and to avoid conflicts with their countries. (Kapiszewski, 2006).

In addition to the challenges with developed and developing countries, the region of the Middle East has been suffering from problems such as political unrest as in Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon and Tunis, as well as the ongoing conflicts between Palestine and Israel, and those recently in Syria. Eventually, such conflicts could represent a major threat to the GCC. Therefore, the Gulf States, as members of the Arab League, found themselves automatically involved in these conflicts in one way or another. For example, although the chain of the “Arab Spring” has started from Tunisia, it extended and reached the shores of the GCC. Bahrain and Oman have witnessed prolonged street protests whereas the other Gulf Arab countries experienced short-lived public and even virtual protests (Colombo, 2012). Moreover, the GCC countries now demand increasing its partnerships with the other countries more than it has before. The initial step was taken by adding Morocco and Jordan to the GCC but these Gulf Arab States are still anticipated to create a more robust relationship with the other Arab countries (Schumacher, 2011).

Internal challenges

The internal problems are essentially of a political, economic and social nature. In many cases, the external and internal issues overlap, and each can evoke and/or influence the other. For example, the unstable political situation in the neighboring countries can threaten the security of the GCC as Gulf people may get inspired to start a movement against their regime. Moreover, the issues with the foreign workers need internal policies to solve them. Table 5 below summarises some of the economic, social and political challenges experienced and Appendix 1 spells out further challenges. Again, there are overlaps between the economic challenges and the political ones. As Gause (1994, p. 147) points out, “In oil states such as the Arab monarchies of the Gulf...economic issues are particularly central to the political

agenda”

In terms of economic challenges, Gulf countries are clearly struggling to find policies that can operate like engines to ensure that trends such as “nationalization” (e.g. “Kuwaitization,” “Omanization,” and “Saudization”) work effectively. These trends aim to replace foreign workers with locals. The reason for this imbalance between market demands and national skills can be traced back to poor training and ill preparation from schools to work, as discussed. Unfortunately, however, there is still no single GCC labour policy which is likely to be forthcoming in the future (Bahgat, 1999).

Table 5: Key political, economic and socio-cultural challenges for the GCC states

Political Level	Economic Level	Social Level
<p>Gulf States are challenged to reconsider and amend the immigrant labour rights in order to avoid clashes with their source countries. After all, the Gulf countries are less likely to pursue a common policy to manage immigration. Also, as the numbers of the graduate students are exceedingly increasing, it becomes so challenging for the governments to provide every graduate a job.</p>	<p>The gulf region is anticipated to continue pursuing a strong market demand due to the robust population growth, the affluence of the regions together with its ample natural resources. As a result, the region will continue to be an attractive destination for foreign investors. “At the same time, the region’s long-term economic growth will depend critically on the success of efforts to educate and employ the rapidly expanding young population”</p>	<p>The Gulf Arab States region is one of the fastest-growing populations worldwide. The estimation is that by 2020 this population will increase by one-third, to around 53m people. The majority of this population will be under 25 years of age. Although this rapid growth and the relative youth of the population present major opportunities, they represent serious challenges as well.</p>
<p>After the war of Iraq, there become sect’s wars (Sunni and Shi’a. Because each of the Gulf countries has these two sects, the governments are concerning about policies can maintain peace.</p>	<p>The doors for women to enter the labour force are more welcoming than before and it is more likely that the number of working women is going to increase over the next years. Subsequently, businesses will face pressure to offer and provide more and more jobs to absorb those women workers.</p>	<p>The identity, social attitudes and norms of the young Gulf Arabs may possibly change and influence by the potential increasing access to education as well as the international media and the new technologies.</p>
<p>Because of the increasing population growth which will</p>	<p>The rapid growth will also affect the labours. For</p>	<p>As part of the modernization and urbanisation, young</p>

mainly remain concentrated in cities, a number of considerable pressure is being put on governments as the public services and infrastructure in those cities have to modify to absorb the needs and numbers of this populations.	instance, the mismatches will not be only of skills, but also of expectations of salaries and working conditions. From an optimistic perspective, <i>ongoing education reforms will help</i> ; however, it is not anticipated to solve these mismatches within the next ten years.	people in the GCC are going more towards the up-word mobility. In other words, “showing off” is a big phenomenon there. As a result, the Gulf Arab States are now known as one of the best places for shopping worldwide.
In lights of the Arab Spring, the GCC governments will have to react through a mix of economic and political reforms in order to avoid and revolution. They also have to set up a plan or policy to deal with any potential protests.	Nationals are pressuring the Gulf governments to be prioritized over foreign workers. In other words, there are parallel pressures from groups that want to protect jobs for nationals and those that want more rights for immigrations.	As the Gulf states started heavy overseas scholarships programs recently, the students will be back with different ideas, thoughts and manners that may conflict and affect the Islamic and existing ones.

Sources: Bahgat 1999; Barber et al 2007; Davis et al 2007; the Economist (*September* 2009); the Economist (*March* 2009); Gause 1994; Gause 1997; Gause 2002; GulfTalent.com. (2012), Kapiszewski 2006, Al-Khathlan, 2000.

Table 6 below presents the GCC population and rate of expatriates compared with citizens. This raises the question as to whether the KASP scheme aims to bring back more ‘local’ citizens who are better educated?

Table 6: GCC population and percentage of expatriates compared with citizens

Country	Total 2007 population ‘000	Population growth rate 2007, %	Population under 15 years of total	Non- citizens of % of total	Expatriates as % of workforce
Bahrain	708	1.4	28.8	40	64
Kuwait	2,505	3.6	33.5	64	81
Oman	3.205	3.2	44.5	26	55
Qatar	907	2.4	26.8	80	90

Saudi Arabia	27,601	_____	43.4	27	55
UAE	4,444	8.8	26.7	82	90

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, 2007

Statistics disclose that there is a high number of unemployed nationals in the GCC, but there are no accurate statistics showing the exact numbers of unemployed.

Girgis (2002, p. 10) explained that:

It should be emphasized that data regarding expatriate workers and population are sparse in some GCC countries while they are available in greater detail in others. Where they are sparse, estimates are made as indicated. The reader is advised to focus on orders of magnitude rather than on exact and accurate data. Thus, while the overall picture may not be exact, it does reflect GCC realities rather adequately.

Moreover, Baldwin-Edwards (2011, p. 5) points out some of the deficiencies of employment statistics in the GCC nations: ‘Uniquely in the GCC ... employment data are fairly meager; although ... unemployment rates are provided, more detailed data are not available.’ Al-Qudsi (2005, p.3) adds that, “There is also complete absence of data on subjective unemployment expectations and relationship to wages, job characteristics and job insecurity”.

Al-Qudsi (2005, p. 3) also emphasises that,

Despite the central importance of unemployment to economic and fiscal policy-making [in the GCC countries], data on unemployment in the GCC economies is very scarce”. On the other hand, Forstenlechner and Rutledge (2010, p. 39) argue, “that such data are being purposely hidden from public scrutiny (i.e., collected but not disseminated). It is more likely that many of the respective government agencies do not themselves know exactly how many nationals of working age are unemployed or the precise sectors [public, private, volunteer] in which they work.

While some believe that education reform can sort out the problem of expatriate workers, others argue that education reforms alone will not be adequate to achieve the needed/required change, to the structure of the GCC labour force, simply because skills shortage is not the only reason that motivates the private sector to recruit foreigners.

It is important to note, that until 1940, there were not many expatriates working in Saudi Arabia but rather it was common to see young Saudis do what is so-called 'dirty jobs' i.e. painting, plumping, farming, electricians, cleaning dishes and so forth (Alfawaz, Hilal & Alghnnam, 2014). After the discovery of oil, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia needed to import qualified workers from outside. The continuous import of the expatriates has, eventually, resulted in dividing jobs into prestigious jobs and to dirty jobs. The latter has become underestimated by the society. Most of the dirty jobs are left for the workers from South Asia while Saudis have become ashamed of being employed in such fields. Mellahi (2000, p. 338) comments, "They [students] argue that Saudi families and Bedouin tribes take pride in not being involved in manual work associated with dirty work practices".

From a different vantage point, Hertog (2012, p. 115) believes "a reform of technical training with heavier involvement of private sector players is probably needed".

Clearly, education is the key to reform but how should it be developed to be most effective? Should these be international partnerships aimed to build capacity in this region which is so important geographically and economically? Should governments provide greater incentives for their students to go abroad to gain the skills necessary for national gain and repute? Or should emphasis be placed on education only within their respected territories to build an educational attainments related to need while maintaining and preserving cultural values and mores? What follows provides more information about KSA and identifies the strategies undertaken to address these questions

Summary

Education and student mobility have a longstanding history In KSA, and have always had a high priority in the Arab-speaking world and/or the Islamic World of which Saudi Arabia is part. Clearly, Saudi Arabia and its counterpart GCC countries have been keen to develop their education systems in different ways. Higher education since the 1970s in the KSA has seen a relatively rapid development, urged on by the amounts of funding that have been invested since the discovery of oil in the region. Governments across the GCC have increased their support and funding to their higher education sectors in the quest to develop their human resource capacity in order that their nations might compete more favourably with the developed nations.

Helping in this quest, has been considerable investment in tertiary overseas scholarship programs. Part of the agenda of these scholarships has been a bid to address some of the internal and external political, economic and socio-cultural challenges facing the GCC governments,

Despite the effort and budgets allocated by the GCC's governments to improve their higher education systems, a number of weaknesses nevertheless remain to be addressed. these governments increased their support and funding to their higher education sector hoping to cope with the developed world, and also to cope with some of the facing challenges.

The following chapter goes on to shed particular light on the features of the contemporary higher education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Attention is paid to particular aspects of the generous KASP scholarship scheme.

CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODERN SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SAUDI ARABIA

Introduction

How higher education has developed in KSA since the 1970s to the present is a key focus of this chapter. What strategies the government of Saudi Arabia has undertaken in order to build its human resource capacity and best-educate its people via higher education reform is another focus. As the country is understandably keen to be accepted as a valued member in the global knowledge economy, the number of higher education institutions (i.e. private and public universities and colleges) has vastly increased in the past decades with an accompanying rise in the quality and standards of their educational provision. Boosts in funding to support these reforms as well as the generous funding allocated to the overseas KASP scholarship program have had a significant impact.

How Saudi Arabia has responded to the forces imposed by globalisation and internationalisation via its King Abdullah Scholarship Program is elaborated further in the chapter. The goals of the Program and the support it offers students who go abroad are explained and finally, some of the current challenges faced by Saudi's higher education system and how these impinge on the goals of the KASP scheme are discussed.

The Modern System of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia

With the rapid growth and increase in the numbers of schools and students which triggered the establishment of new universities, the government of KSA decided to initiate another

Ministry with the specific focus on higher education. Therefore, in 1975, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) was established in Riyadh. As cited in (Saleh, 1986, p. 19) at that time, the main purpose of education, as it was declared by the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education (1980) was said to be:

To have the students understand Islam in a correct comprehensive manner, to plan and spread the Islamic creeds, to furnish the student with values, teachings and ideals of Islam, to equip him with the various skills and knowledge, to develop the society economically, socially and culturally, and to prepare the individual to become a useful member in the building of this community.

Since this time KSA's higher education system has continued to reform its curriculums due mostly to political pressures. For instance, in the past, Saudi students were taught only religious subjects: the memorisation of the Quran, the interpretation of Quran---*Tafseer*---and how to best apply Islamic manners in everyday life (Sedgwick, 2001). While these subjects are compulsory at all educational levels, the emphasis has changed with recent curricular reform (Sedgwick, 2001). During the Second World War secularism was introduced into curricula, which broke the traditional Islamic system of KSA's emphasis on religious education. While KSA continues to devote a large part of its new curricula to religion, new subjects have been introduced that aim to develop well-roundedness and to improve literacy and numeracy rates (Sedgwick, 2001).

As already acknowledged, with the involvement of fifteen Saudi hijackers in the 9/11 attacks in the US in 2001, the KSA's educational system was heavily accused of advocating violence (terrorism). Moreover, many Western-based scholars have accused the Saudi educational system of fostering an attitude of intolerance towards non-Muslims and a hatred towards Americans (Doumato, 2003; Elyas, 2008; Blanchard, 2007).

Soon after the 2001 attacks, a revolution in Saudi Arabia's higher education began. For a

start, the number of universities jumped from eight in 2001 to fifty two in 2013 (see Table 8 in this chapter). Moreover, the number of Saudi students enrolled in higher education institutions within KSA jumped from over 750,000 in 2003 to 1.2 million students enrolled in 2013 (Aljubaili, 11 February 2014, para. 1).

Also, the government of Saudi Arabia has been increasing the budget allocated for higher education since 2005. For example, in 2011/2012, 25.9 percent of the national budget was devoted to higher education alone, including the educational infrastructure – the building of new colleges, universities and research laboratories, and funding internal and external scholarship programs for higher education (Meo, 4 February 2013, para. 19). Aljubaili (11 February 2014, para. 2) declared that with 25% of the national budget being allocated for the sector of higher education, Saudi Arabia recorded the highest percentage of a national budget allocated for higher education worldwide at that time.

Meo (4 February 2013, para. 16) points out the important role of the Saudi leader, King Abdullah, in initiating this significant investment:

King Abdullah has had a commendable vision towards the [higher] educational sector. Over the last six years, the Saudi government's budget has increased markedly. It was \$ 28.12 billion in 2008, \$ 32.62 billion in 2009, \$ 36.63 billion in 2010, \$ 40.10 billion in 2011, and to the highest-ever level of \$ 54.54 billion in 2012. The allocation of such a large budget to the education sector reflects the determination to develop education, science and technology.

This investment has resulted in a huge growth in the rate of literacy in Saudi Arabia. In 1970, for example, the national literacy rate for the total population was 17 percent (15 percent for males and 2 percent for females), whereas it is currently over 90 percent of the total population of KSA (Aljubaili, 11 February 2014, para. 3).

KSA's higher education budget expenditure for 2006–2010 is depicted in the following table.

Table 7: Saudi Arabia’s budget for higher education from 2006 to 2010

Year	Amount in \$US
2006	1,868,866.00
2007	2,327,418.00
2008	2,578,022.00
2009	279,930.00
2010	325,518.60
Grand total	1,282,879.20

Source: Denman & Hilal, 2011, p. 308

Program in 2006 would help to explain the large portions that have been devoted to the higher education sector as can be seen in Table 7. The precise budget/funding figures for KASP are provided later in the chapter.

Contemporary Universities and Tertiary level institutions in KSA

According to Denman and Hilal (2011, p. 306), “in the World List of Universities (2006), only eight universities were listed for KSA, which seems to suggest that little is known about higher education in Saudi Arabia outside its borders”. In order to address this gap in knowledge, this part aspires to increase the outsiders’ knowledge about the current position of higher education in Saudi Arabia, and the efforts that have been directed to support this sector by the government of Saudi Arabia, especially in recent years.

Today, KSA has twenty four government universities, eight private universities and twenty private tertiary colleges. Table 8 lists all the higher education institutions including government and privates universities and colleges with their establishment dates.

Table 8: Numbers and Types of Higher Education Institutions in Saudi Arabia

Government Universities	Private Universities	Private Tertiary Colleges
1-Umm Al-Qura University <i>founded in 1949</i>	1-Effat University (Women) <i>founded in 1999</i>	1-Dar Al-Hekma College (Women) <i>founded in 1999</i>
2-Al-Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University <i>founded in 1953</i>	2-Prince Sultan University (men and Women) <i>founded in 1999</i>	2-College of Business Administration (Men and Women) <i>founded in 2000</i>
3-Islamic University <i>founded in 1961</i>	3-Al Yamamah University (Men and Women) <i>founded in 2001</i>	3-Prince Fahd Bin Sultan College (Men and Women) <i>founded in 2003</i>
4-King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals <i>founded in 1963</i>	4-Alfaisal University <i>founded in 2002</i>	4-Qassim Private College (Men and Women) <i>founded in 2004</i>
5-King Abdulaziz University <i>founded in 1967</i>	5-Arab Open University (Men and Women) <i>founded in 2006</i>	5- Riyadh College of Dentistry (Men and Women) <i>founded in 2004</i>
6-King Faisal University <i>founded in 1975</i>	6-Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University (Men and Women) <i>founded in 2008</i>	6- Ibn Sina National College for Medical Studies (Men and Women) <i>founded in 2004</i>
7-King Saud University <i>founded in 1982</i>	7-Dar Al Uloom University <i>founded in 2008</i>	7- Batterjee Medical College (Men and Women) <i>founded in 2005</i>
8-King Khalid University <i>founded in 1998</i>	8- King Abdullah University for Science and Technology KAUST <i>founded in 2009</i>	8-Albaha Private College of Science (Men and Women) <i>founded in 2006</i>
9-Taibah University <i>founded in 2003</i>		9- Arriyadah College of Medical Sciences <i>founded in 2006</i>
10-Taif University <i>founded in 2004</i>		10-Buraydah College for Applied Medical Sciences <i>founded in 2006</i>
11-Qassim University <i>founded in 2004</i>		11-Prince Sultan College for Tourism & Managment (Men) <i>founded in 2007</i>
12-University of Ha'il <i>founded in 2004</i>		12- Almaarifah College for Science and Technology <i>founded in 2008</i>

13-Al Jouf University <i>founded in 2005</i>		13-Al-Ghad International Medical Science Colleges (Men and Women) <i>founded in 2009</i>
14-King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences <i>founded in 2005</i>		14-Prince Sultan College for Tourism and Business (Men) <i>founded in 2009</i>
15-Jazan University <i>founded in 2006</i>		15- Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges (Men) <i>founded in 2009</i>
16-Al Baha University <i>founded in 2006</i>		16- Al-Farabi Dentistry College <i>founded in 2009</i>
17-University of Tabuk <i>founded in 2006</i>		17-Global Colleges was founded in 2009 but it closed.
18-Najran University <i>founded in 2006</i>		18- Mohammad Al Mani College for Medical Sciences <i>founded in 2010</i>
19-Northern Borders University <i>founded in 2007</i>		19- Saad College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences <i>founded in 2012</i>
20-Princess Nora bint Abdulrahman University <i>founded in 2008</i>		20-Soliman Fakeeh College for Science and Nursing (Men and Women)
21-Shagra University <i>founded in 2008</i>		
22-Al Kharj University <i>founded in 2009</i>		
23-University of Dammam <i>founded in 2009</i>		
24-Almajmaah University <i>founded in 2009</i>		

Source: Ministry of Higher Education, 2014b,c

In total, since 1949 52 tertiary institutions have been founded in Saudi Arabia including 24 government universities, 8 private universities, and 20 private colleges (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014b). Noteworthy is the fact that out of the eight private institutions, five were founded since 2001. This suggests a recent pivotal change in higher education provision. The King Abdullah University for Science and Technology (KAUST) is an independent institution that is not operated by MoHE, but rather by its own Board of Trustees (Al-Eisa & Smith,

2013). In its bid to build an international reputation, it is seen as an exemplar of the kind of higher education policy reform that Saudi Arabia is seeking.

Saudi Arabia and the Growing Internationalisation of Higher Education

The concepts of Internationalisation and globalisation are highly connected but often confused (Altbach, 2007). On the one hand, the literature suggests that there are three key dimensions or driving forces of globalisation: economic, political and societal forces. Despite the positive or negative role globalisation plays on a world scale, a commonly shared and simple definition of globalisation refers to diminishing the geographical distance between cultures and countries to allow the flow of information, knowledge, and goods to cross borders as if we live in one small village (Basiga, 2004; Altbach, 2011; Castells, 2011; Sassen, 1991; McGrew, 1992; McGrew, 1998). Featherstone (1995) stresses that globalisation is about gathering dissimilar cultures together to diminish the importance of geographical borders. McGrew (1992; pp. 65-66) contends that,

...globalisation constitutes a: Multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcend the nation states (and by implication the societies) which make up the modern world system. It defines a process through which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can come to have a significant consequence for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe.

Internationalisation, as it applies to higher education, is more associated with internationalising or universalising higher education standards, policies as well as practices that are undertaken by institutions and/or academic system, in response to the forces of globalisation (Altbach, 2007). Hilal and Denman (2013, p. 24) add, “In recent times, the concept of education has been confronted by globalisation pressures and standardising quality control and performance-based measures”. Furthermore, education, particularly in the form of

overseas student mobility, is affected by and helps to affect globalisation. Reinforcing this, Bin Taleb (2013, p. 58) expresses that, “students’ mobility to study abroad is considered one of the most important aspects of globalization”.

Many governments implement strategies and plans in order to build and empower their human resources, a capacity building exercise which feeds into the knowledge-based economy. Government-initiated outgoing student mobility programs represent awareness of the necessity to shift from an industrially-based society to the knowledge-based society. This indicates that there is a robust connection between student mobility and the knowledge economy. Likewise, Guruz (2011, p. 320) argues that student mobility is an essential part of today’s global knowledge society. Further, Varghese (2008, p. 9) believes, “knowledge is the key to development, and a lack of it is a major constraint to economic and social progress”. Diamond (2008) who is Chief Executive of The Economic and Social Research Council in the UK, adds to this theme by stressing the important role education is playing in developing a highly skilled workforce:

Governments all over the world want their countries to have high-value, high-skill economies, and they realise that the first step towards this aim is to have a well-educated workforce.... This means that we may be entering an era in which many of the young people now investing heavily in their education across the developed world may struggle to attain the comfortable jobs and careers to which they aspire.

Like other governments, Saudi Arabia has also realised the importance of diversifying its investment, and reducing its economic dependency on oil and oil revenue, which is a depleted commodity, and move into investing in its human capital, which is a more sustainable resource. To achieve that purpose, KSA sponsors thousands of its students to study abroad, in the best universities, so that they can be well educated and well trained and prepared for upskilling the Saudi workforce (Bin Taleb, 2013).

Via its responses to global forces, Saudi Arabia has, undoubtedly, taken serious steps in order to climb higher on the international ladder and place its nation amongst the developed nations. The commitment of King Abdullah to achieve the political, economic and social revolution brought on by globalisation is clearly evident in two of his significant projects:

- 1) *King Abdullah overseas Scholarship Program (KASP)*. This program's political, economic, and social aims and/or motives, as Chapter 1 indicated, align with the three key driving forces of globalisation (political, economic, and social).
- 2) *Establishment of the King Abdullah University for Science and Technology (KAUST)*. This is a good example of how internationalisation of higher education has impacted on KSA. For instance, KAUST promotes aggressively international standards for recruiting high-class researchers and academics who are hired solely on the basis of merit (Onsman, 2010). To facilitate life for the multicultural students, KAUST has been constructed in a new city called King Abdullah Economic City. It aims to provide suitable and comfortable environment for both men and women. For example, women are allowed to drive at King Abdullah Economic City while they are not permitted to drive anywhere else in the Kingdom. Moreover, although Saudi universities have similar campus-like characteristics/features in terms of gender segregation, KAUST broke the tradition in late 2009 by having mixed gender classes. In addition, more than 70 professors and 800 students from abroad have been attracted to KAUST (Denman & Hilal, 2011). The university is noted for its centres of trade and enhancement of polymer production. As Kumetat (2010, p. 1) observes:

In the field of research, the newly established King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) aims to set new standards in science education. It is a direct

competitor to Qatar's Education City and various United Arab Emirates (UAE)-based attempts to put that country on the map for world-class research and tertiary education.

King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP)

As noted earlier, KSA achieved its nation-state in 1932; however, the first overseas scholarships were given by KSA in 1927 while King Abdul Aziz was busily unifying the Kingdom's regions (Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission in Washington, 2013). According to Bin Taleb (2007, pp. 8-19), three Saudi friends were discussing strategies for improving the newborn country and they eventually agreed that sending Saudi students overseas is the way to accomplish this. Accordingly, they sent a letter to King Abdul-Aziz Al Saud proposing sending Saudis abroad in order to benefit his country. King Abdul-Aziz then adopted their suggestion and, likewise, sent 14 students abroad.

The fourteen scholarships in 1927 were limited to Bachelor degrees only, and students were sent exclusively to some Arab and Islamic countries, but mainly to Egypt. Accordingly, the areas of studies were limited to the Arabic and Islamic studies (Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission in Washington, 2013). As noted earlier, in 1947, Saudi Arabia offered a second round of overseas scholarships, where it sent its students, this time, to pursue Masters and PhDs in different disciplines in Europe and the USA (Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission in Washington, 2013; Bin Taleb, 2007). The Third stage offer occurred between the 1970s and 1980s when KSA sent around 45,000 students to the USA (Wright, 2006).

In 2005, KSA launched the largest student overseas program worldwide – the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) (Bukhari & Denman, 2013). This program was planned to run for one year only and was supposed to consider only the USA as a destination for the Saudi students (Ottaway, 2012). Nevertheless, based on his 2012 announcement, the Minister of

Higher Education, Dr. Al-Ankari, announced that it would continue until 2020 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014e).

Tables 9–16 below, indicating the number of overseas Saudi students who are sponsored by KASP, show that approximately 9,000 recipient students began in 2006, then this number expanded to 140,000 Saudi students studying abroad in 2012 (Zeigler, 2012, para. 5), and 185,000 KASP recipients in 2014 (Ministry of Finance, 2014). This increase is indeed, significant.

Table 9 below displays the number of Saudi students who are/were sponsored by KSA to study abroad in various years from 1927 until the present. These years were selected because 1927 was the first government outgoing scholarship program approved by the Monarch family of Al-Saud: 1950 figures show that a similar number of scholarships as in 1927 had been granted over 33 years, mostly because of the reconstruction the new country; in 1970 figures rose dramatically owing to revenue from the beginning of oil discovery in Saudi country; 1980 marked the second government outgoing scholarship program for Saudi students (during King Fahd's time); the 2001 figures reflect the number of Saudi students studying abroad in the US when the event of September 11 took place; 2005 figures reflect the number of Saudi students studying overseas the year before the King Abdullah Scholarship Program was launched; and 2014 figures indicate the noticeable progress KASP has achieved in around eight years.

Table 9: Government outgoing scholarships to Saudi students since King Abdul-Aziz Monarch until King Abdullah

1927	1950	1970	1980	2001	2005	2014
14	13	1,029	9,540	5,579	3,448	185,000

Discipline areas supported by the KASP scheme

The KASP programs encourage specialisations from the following fields of study:

- Medicine and Dentistry
- Basic Sciences including Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology
- Medical Sciences including Physiotherapy, Laboratory Sciences, Radiology Sciences, Biomedical Technology
- Computer specialisations including Computer Engineering, Computer Science
- Networking, E-Commerce
- Accounting
- Finance
- Engineering
- Insurance
- Marketing
- Pharmacy
- Nursing

The vision of KASP

The named-above discipline areas to be developed reflect the vision of KASP which sees that building KSA's human resources via higher education will ultimately not only benefit the Saudi employment market but help the country to compete successfully in a global economic and intellectual market. This indicates further how KASP's vision sits firmly with the principles of a global knowledge-based economy. Indeed, the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia sets as its vision for the KASP scholarship program, "To prepare distinguished generations for a knowledge society built upon a knowledge-based economy" (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014f). Moreover, the Ministry of Higher Education (2014a) also explains

the mission of KASP in the following way:

The Program is commissioned with qualifying Saudi youth to take an active role in development in all fields in government and private sectors. Its mission is to actively develop and qualify Saudi human resource to be: a) World-competitive in the work market and academic research; and b) provide a high caliber base in Saudi universities, public and private sectors.

It is thus clear that the KASP scheme aims to build it's nation's intellectual capacity and develop its human resources in order that KSA develops the capacity to compete successfully with more developed nations in a global market.

Distribution of the students' choices of countries

Eligible students are given the opportunity to select a country of their choice with some exceptions. According to the Ministry of Higher Education (2014g), the countries where the Saudi students are sent to study are chosen on the basis of the excellence of the educational programs studied, which are subject to periodic review.

The Saudi Arabian MoHE offers 58 recommended countries available to Saudi students under the auspices of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program. Besides the Arab countries, the students are accepted to choose one of the following countries: United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Spain, Italy, Australia, Germany, The Netherlands, Poland, New Zealand, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, People's Republic of China, Malaysia, India, South Africa, and, Turkey. Approximately 107,706 Saudi-sponsored students participated during the years 2006-2011 (Denman & Hilal, 2011).

Denman and Hilal (2011, pp. 310-314) detailed where Saudi students chose to study abroad

according to regions. The following two tables provide and analyse the distribution of the Saudi students who are sponsored by KASP from 2006-2010.

Table 10: Number of full-time Saudi students enrolled at universities in the Middle East 2006-2010

Countries	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Bahrain	102	197	307	893	986
Jordan	1433	2352	2812	4906	5213
Kuwait	245	545	1500	2796	2076
Lebanon	80	127	153	237	236
Oman	18	21	28	49	61
Qatar	1	7	17	24	31
Syria	32	51	98	142	170
UAE	154	434	575	838	953
Yemen	49	237	450	804	874

Source: Data compiled from the website of the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education (2010)

Table 11: Number of full-time Saudi students enrolled at universities in North Africa 2006-2010

Countries	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Algeria	1	7	21	41	46
Egypt	555	1724	2188	7001	7250
Libya	1	2	4	10	10
Morocco	14	30	41	51	53
Sudan	19	51	75	100	136
Tunisia	9	22	30	43	49

Source: Data compiled from the website of the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education (2010)

Based on the Denman and Hilal (2011) analysis, tables (10-16) indicate the numbers of Saudi students who are enrolled as full-time students in each of the mentioned countries. Figures in the tables indicate that the numbers of Saudi students have been increasing since 2006. The available data do not specify age or total number of students in each degree.

It is often difficult for Saudi students who are interested in pursuing studies in one of the

Middle East countries to choose one over another, as all the countries share a similar cultural milieu, the same religion and the same language. Jordan, however, distinguishes itself by providing a significant standard within its offering of higher education. The Jordanian system ranks first in the Arab world and it is one of the most rigorous in the developing world, thus explaining the increasing numbers of Saudi students matriculating in that country.

Data in Table 11 indicate that the continuous increase of Saudi student matriculation during 2006–2010 in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia. Note that Egypt claimed the majority of Saudi student sponsorships within the Middle East region. Egypt has the largest overall education system in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The reputation of the nation’s education system rests on its longstanding history. Egypt has always been an attractive and reliable academic destination for many Arab students. Moreover, instruction in most fields of study there is conducted in English, especially in the sciences, which is another attraction for Saudi students. Egypt is also a desirable tourist destination, with an ancient history and historically significant places to visit. In addition, living costs tend to very reasonable. Note that figures in Table 11 reflect a significant increase in the number of Egypt-matriculated students between 2008 and 2009.

Table 12: Number of full-time Saudi students enrolled at universities in Africa 2006-2010

Countries	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Chad	0	2	2	3	0
Gabon	0	1	1	1	1
Kenya	1	2	2	3	0
Mauritania	0	1	1	1	0

Nigeria	1	1	1	1	0
South Africa	1	5	7	19	23

Source: Data compiled from the website of the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education (2010)

Data in Table 12 indicate the fact that there is only modest student interest in undertaking tertiary study in Africa. South Africa, however, is a new Saudi tourist destination, which explains the slight preference for South Africa as a study destination. The fact that instruction is in English is also an attraction.

Table 13: Number of full-time Saudi students enrolled at universities in North America 2006-2010

Countries	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Canada	387	1527	4448	9382	10398
USA	9306	12380	16091	24511	27688

Source: Data compiled from the website of the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education (2010)

Table 13 shows the enrolment data for students studying in the United States and Canada. In 2006, when the scholarship program was initiated, the United States was the only country where sponsored students could matriculate. Accordingly, the USA initially attracted the largest pool of Saudi students. Before 2008, Canada had around 1,527 self-financed Saudi students. When it was added to the list of approved countries in 2008, numbers increased significantly – already reaching 4,448 Saudi students in 2008. The number still continues to increase.

Table 14: Number of full-time Saudi students enrolled at universities in Europe 2006-2010

Countries	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Austria	9	25	41	50	58
Belgium	0	1	2	4	4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	0	1	1	0
Czech Republic	6	10	18	49	59
Finland	0	0	0	0	2
France	171	334	537	694	682
Germany	112	156	219	385	446
Greece	0	1	1	3	3
Hungary	23	57	139	267	282
Ireland	8	37	92	301	474
Italy	1	7	22	23	25
Netherland	2	71	164	178	202
Poland	22	51	88	201	270
Romania	8	20	27	41	43
Russia	1	6	10	15	28
Slovakia	9	44	86	86	88
Spain	11	32	65	152	157
Sweden	3	13	22	63	65
Switzerland	14	34	55	72	70
Turkey	3	6	12	12	9
UK	974	3345	9862	16392	16552
Ukraine	51	86	110	111	54

Source: Data compiled from the website of the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education (2010)

European countries, shown in Table 14 were added to the list in 2008. As a consequence, there was a substantial increase in the number of Saudi students studying there. The United Kingdom is noticeably the most preferred and favoured destination for Saudi students. Given the dramatic increase there, the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education terminated approvals in 2009 and the United Kingdom has been dropped from the list. The slight increases in student numbers in 2009 and 2010 suggest that the enrolments were self-financed. Other European countries have not seen significant Saudi student interest. This may be because of language considerations. In Saudi Arabia, English is considered the new lingua franca. French is the

second common language, which may explain why France is the second preferred destination after the UK with 682 students enrolled in 2010.

Table 15: Number of full-time Saudi students enrolled at universities in Australia and New Zealand 2006-2010

Countries	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Australia	521	2294	5932	7577	8067
New Zealand	56	572	1471	1879	1932

Source: Data compiled from the website of the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education (2010)

Australia and New Zealand were added to the list in 2007, predating European countries. Approved Anglophone nations in 2007 included only the USA, Australia and New Zealand. Because of strict visa regulations and alleged racial profiling in the United States, some Saudi students decided to study in Australia. Table 15 reflects the fact that approximately 2,000 students moved to Australia in 2007 and 572 chose New Zealand. Replicating earlier actions, the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education terminated sponsorship in Australia in 2007 and excluded it from the approved list due to the over-representation of Saudis in specific Australian universities. Accordingly, only some 500 were present in Australia in 2010. Overall, this country is preferred to New Zealand because of its relative proximity to the Middle East and warmer weather.

Table 16: Number of full-time Saudi students enrolled at universities in Asia 2006-2010

Countries	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
China	20	190	261	566	570
Hong Kong	0	2	4	5	5
India	2	116	190	381	446
Iran	0	0	1	1	1
Japan	2	180	216	321	306
Malaysia	47	704	1124	1197	997
Pakistan	37	68	96	141	149

Philippine	0	1	6	8	24
South Korea	0	56	60	81	65
Singapore	1	13	35	39	45
Turkmenistan	0	0	0	1	0

Source: Data compiled from the website of the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education (2010)

Malaysia and some Asian countries such as China, India, South Korea, Singapore and Japan (see Table 16) were added to the list of approved countries in 2007, joining Australia and New Zealand. As Malaysia is becoming a recent tourism destination and because Islam is the dominant religion there, Saudi students are particularly attracted to this destination. For unknown reasons, Indonesia is not similarly attractive.

Table 17: Grand total number of Saudi students enrolled in universities outside Saudi Arabia 2006-2010

Grand total	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	14523	28258	49823	83155	88435

By analysing patterns based on student choice and contextual issues, the following trends were observed:

1. The Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia is paying attention to the significance of English language as an international language and, as such, countries that provide instruction in English whether in Arab countries like Egypt and Jordan or elsewhere such as Malaysia, are targeted.
2. The number of students who choose to study in Anglophone countries indicates the advantages of studying in English in native English-speaking countries. And students able to study in English in non-native speaking countries of geographic proximity is also seen as important.
3. As in the case of Egypt, Jordan and Malaysia, students would prefer to choose a familiar culture to their own. As the majority of the people in these countries are Muslims, there

is no religious barrier or concern about racial profiling.

4. The study also indicates that countries with major tourist attractions are highly desirable. For example, the most attractive countries---in order of enrolments--- are the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Egypt, South Africa, and Malaysia.

KASP's Goals

In accord with the principles underlying global market trends, the KASP scheme specifically aims to:

- Sponsor qualified Saudis for study in the best universities around the world;
- Work to bring about a high level of academic and professional standards through the foreign scholarship program;
- Exchange scientific, educational and cultural experience with countries worldwide;
- Build up qualified and professional Saudi staff in the work environment; and
- Raise and develop the level of professionalism among Saudis (KASP, 2011).

What do KASP Scholarships Offer?

The King Abdullah Scholarship Program offers generous support for its recipients as indicated below (monetary amounts are shown in US\$).

Support includes:

- A monthly stipend for the principal sponsored student with around \$3,000; around \$2,700 for the spouse if the spouse does not study as well. In case the spouse pursuing a degree, he/she receives the same salary as the principal sponsored students. If the sponsored student has children, each of them receives a round \$500 monthly.
- Tuition fees for the higher education institutions where the sponsored students are assigned to study. KASP also covers the tuition fees for the kids either in private or

public schools in the host countries.

- Payment of fees to attend conferences, seminars, workshops, and training courses.
- Covering the costs of the educational trips (i.e. data collection), including the tickets for the sponsored student and his/her family.
- Annual tickets to Saudi Arabia for the sponsored students and their families.
- Cash allowance for books and clothing.
- Bonuses for outstanding academic performance.
- The Ministry of Higher Education creates a Saudi club in each city where KASP's recipients exit to study. The MoHE funds the club to support the community of Saudi students. Those clubs are funded by the ministry of higher through the Saudi Cultural Missions. There are a number of purposes for established these clubs, some of the are: strengthen the relations between Saudis students, ease the difficulties for the newly arrived Saudi students, celebrate the Islamic celebrating occasions, participate in the host countries' cultural occasions and introduce define Saudi Arabia to strengthen the relations between the Saudi culture and other cultures. The clubs also fund the students in other activities such as camping, soccer, and swimming lessons (Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission in Australia, 2012).

Bin Taleb (2013, p. 103) explains the benefits of the Program:

This support considers all the financial, social, and academic needs of the students and the standard of living of the nation in which the study takes place. The amount of support is evaluated and increased on a continual basis so that a high standard of living may be maintained. This provides an environment in which the student can focus on their studies and academic achievement.

It is worth noting that KASP does not obligate its recipients to return to Saudi Arabia upon completing their studies. This of course has the potential to result in a significant 'brain drain'

for the country, a problem which will be taken up at a later point in the thesis.

Challenges for higher education in Saudi Arabia

To a large extent, the KASP scheme is helping to address the deficiencies inherent in Saudi's higher education system. Put bluntly, the quality of its system has not been meeting the international standards to which the country aspires. Three particular issues that Saudi Arabia's education and higher education face are:

1. The government's central control of the textbooks and classroom materials. Committees in the ministries of higher education determine the proper content of basic courses as well as textbooks
2. The pedagogical approach relies on rote memorisation which does not give the students the chance to be creative or analytical.
3. The religious subjects are gaining a huge portion of the KSA's curriculum. In KSA, the study of Islam was the only subject in the past (Rugh, 2002; Smith and Abouammouh, 2013).
4. The following shortcomings are seen by Alamri (2011, p.90) who adds:
5. Limited varieties of specialties and departments, which disappoint the students who are looking forward to pursue their studies in these unavailable areas of studies.
6. Saudi faculties receive incentives but they do not utilize them properly. For instance, they do not use these for publications
7. Online education is not approved and there is a very limited number of education providers who include this type of education
8. Insufficient funds for research is one of the main drawbacks that disable researcher from conducting their research in KSA.

9. Scientific journals and scientific conferences are very rare or nonexistent in most departments.

10. Most importantly, due to the political and cultural contexts, there is no real space for the academic freedom.

However, these issues are being slowly, if surely, addressed and it is clear that change is on the way under the country's latest leadership. Internationalisation of higher education would seem to have an impact. Krieger's (2007) study records Shafeeq Gharba, a former president of the American University of Kuwait, observing one indicator of this kind of impact,

Saudi Arabia is one of the places where people are starting to question more, particularly under a reform-oriented king [Abdullah], so reforming their education system will be like opening a Pandora's box (Krieger's, 2007, p. 6).

The KASP scheme, set up aiming to address inherent problems and build human intellectual capacity in a global setting, must share some responsibility for this trend.

Summary

This chapter highlighted how, since the 1970s, the higher education sector evolved in Saudi Arabia to its current form. Recent higher education reform has occurred under the leadership of King Abdullah bin Abdu-Aziz who is seeking to re-gain a place for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia amongst the advanced and developed countries by addressing in particular, the educational needs of the nation. The generous KASP scheme which supports students to study overseas is helping in this transition.

It is clear that reforms in Saudi higher education have been impacted by the forces of globalisation, geared to a knowledge-based economy. Responding to these pressures, KSA

appears to be using education and student mobility as a major strategy to not only build human resource and knowledge capacity, but to address a number of its political, economic and social problems.

The goals, and vision of the KASP scheme are clearly aimed to contribute to these major reforms and to help address many of the deficiencies of Saudi Arabia's higher education system.

How the Program is contributing will be taken up in subsequent chapters but the following chapter reviews the literature pertinent to the focus and aims of the study.

CHAPTER 4

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature related to international student mobility, with a particular focus on the movement of students going abroad to gain higher education qualifications. For the purposes of this study, international student mobility refers to the movement of students from their home countries to other countries in order to further their post-school education. Kelo et al. (2006, p.210) explain this process simply as,

...students who have crossed a national border to study or to undertake other study related activities, for at least a certain unit of a study program or a certain period of time, in the country to which they have moved.

While international student mobility occurs between school-level education as well as between universities, the focus of literature reviewed in this chapter is exclusively on higher education student mobility across international boundaries.

Four types of higher education international student scholarships and programs that foster student mobility were identified in the first chapter – government incoming scholarships, government outgoing scholarships, non-government incoming scholarships, and non-government outgoing scholarship programs. These four types are explored in more detail in what follows in order to best situate where the KASP scheme fits in the broader context. Furthermore, particular aspects of international student mobility are reviewed as well as the anticipated political, economic and social impacts they have on the students concerned and on their nation-states.

How selected countries use their government outgoing scholarships for economic, political and social purposes is also canvassed. So too are the benefits and risks that can result for governments which support students going overseas to study. The chapter goes on to indicate some of the most obvious gaps in the literature where it is deemed that important factors pertinent to student mobility have not been dealt with adequately by researchers. Finally, commonalities between developed countries' governments and Saudi Arabia's government in relation to what they aspire to achieve from sending their students abroad, are identified.

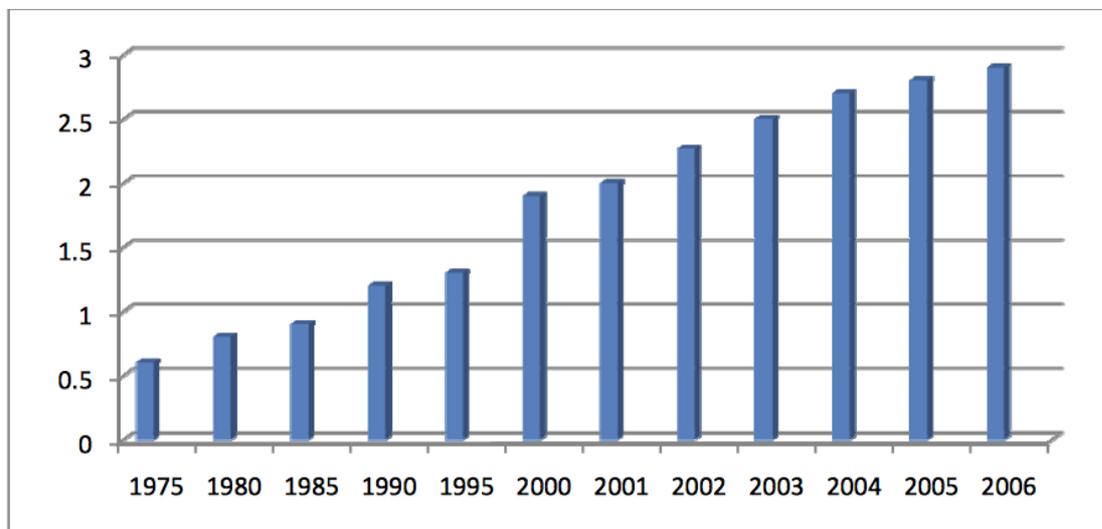
International trends associated with student mobility

As noted earlier, international student mobility has a very longstanding background and history, which can be traced back centuries. The travellers' tales were seen as a primitive stage of mobility where groups of students travelled from their countries to other countries to learn and bring knowledge and stories through observation (Noah & Eckstein, 1998, pp. 15-16). Also, students travelled, mostly from Europe to the Great Library of Alexandria for the sake of learning. However, at this time in history, this movement was not known as "student mobility".

Unfortunately, the literature does not provide adequately explanations as to what were the main reasons for students travelling abroad before World War II. Was it only for the sake of getting a better education and advancing their knowledge? Of interest is research showing that during the last two decades higher education has grown to be a sector with enormous potential compared with other sectors, and, correspondingly, student mobility has been noticeably accelerating in this sector over the past two decades. This development is helping to feed the growing global knowledge economy. To illustrate, Verbik & Lasanowski (2007, p. 1) observed that, worldwide, "The total number of mobile tertiary education students was estimated to have reached more than 2.7 million in 2005, a nearly 61% increase since 1999".

Only within the European countries, enrolments of international students have increased from 0.6 million in 1975 to 2.9 million in 2006 (González et al, 2011, p. 5). Figure 5 indicates growth in enrolments of students outside their European Union (EU) countries at the tertiary level from 1975 to 2006. Such growth is indicative of the internationalisation of higher education that has occurred and is still occurring in the global knowledge economy (Sanyal & Varghese, 2006).

Figure 5: Growth of the international students' numbers who studied overseas from 1975 to 2006 in OECD countries (in millions)



Source: González et al, 2011, p. 4

During the colonial era (from the 16th century to the mid-20th century) in Europe, students, who were willing to pursue their studies outside their borders, typically moved from their home colonies into the world capitals. Moreover, Verbik, L., & Lasanowski (2007, p. 13) explained that historically,

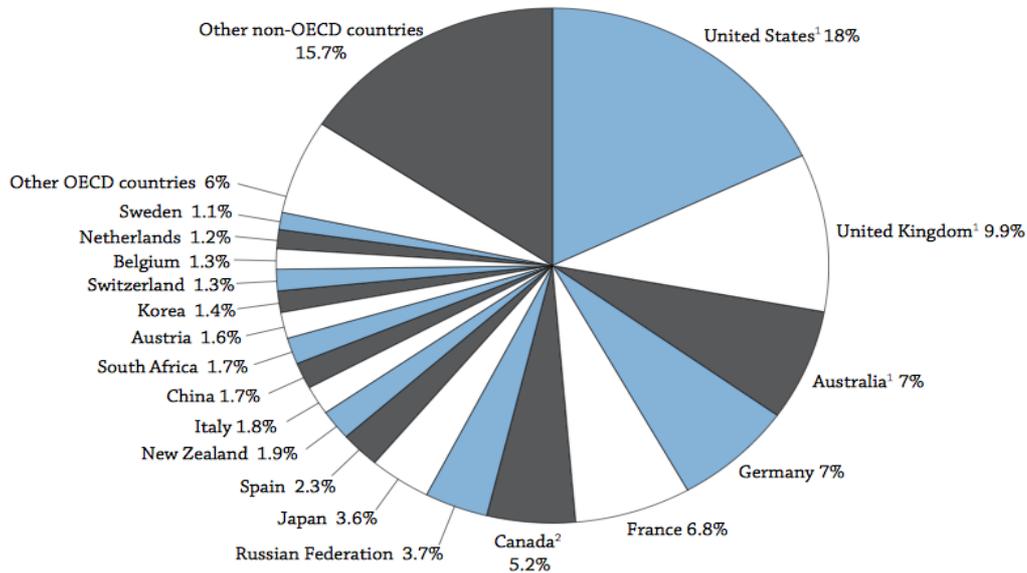
During the colonial period, the imperial governments used to provide avenues for selected nationals to pursue higher education in the imperial capital for the purpose of developing supportive administrative cadres in the colonies. Overseas education...was based on the assumption that the graduates would return to the homeland to serve the colonial administration after developing the skills and absorbing the values of the colonial rulers.

Nowadays, in the era of a global world economy, other preferred destinations for overseas students are becoming more common as Varghese (2008, p. 8) explains:

During the period of globalization, [international student mobility] became a market-driven activity and, at times, a commercial activity traded under GATS [General Agreement for Trade in Services]. The recent changes in the flow of cross-border students indicate that the dominant flow continues to be toward Europe and the USA. However, countries such as Australia and New Zealand are becoming attractive destinations for overseas students. These changes in the direction of flow are influenced more by the cost of education than by political considerations.

Hall points out that, “Developing nations often view education in developed or wealthy nations as superior (Hall, 2013, p. 109). So, around 90% of international students were enrolled in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, with the main destinations among those countries being the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Australia (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007; Simmons & Simmons, 1987). Recently, Australia, New Zealand, Spain, the Russian Federation and South Korea are seen as new players who have emerged on the international education market in the past decade (OECD, 5 July 2013). Also, Japan, Canada, Russia and Spain have emerged as other popular destinations for international students in the recent past (Gera, 2007). More specifically, the total number of international students who were enrolled in OECD countries increased from 1,588, 862 students in 2000 to 2,838,027 students in 2009. Figure 6 indicates the distribution of tertiary students among the OECD countries and non-OECD countries.

Figure 6: The distribution of international students in tertiary education according to their country of destination (2009)



Source: *Source: OECD Indicators, 2011, p. 322*

The student percentages in Figure 6, along with other given statistics, indicate that ‘developed countries’ are clearly the preferred destinations for international students. It also appears that the United States has the lion’s share in receiving international students; however, after the attack of September 11th in 2001, the US has tightened visa requirements for overseas students. Ultimately, since 2001 other countries such as the UK and Australia took the opportunity and succeeded in absorbing most of the growth in international students. Indeed, enrolments of international students grew by 81% and 47% in Australia and the UK respectively between 2000 and 2009, whereas there was around only 18% growth in the US (Choudaha, 2011, para. 4 & 5).

Only a small percentage of students from industrially developed countries elect to go to developing countries, a situation which has not changed much in the last decades. As Altbach

(1991, p. 308) pointed out over twenty years ago, “There are a small number of students from the industrialized nations who study in the Third World, and a much larger number of students from Europe and North America who study in the 'rich' countries”.

Recent statistics reveal that most of the international students who go to study overseas are from China, India, and Korea. Statistical evidence also demonstrates that Asian students are the largest percentage of international students enrolled in various countries as they comprise 53% of all students studying outside their countries (OECD, 2013; Liu & Wang, 2008, p. 1). Furthermore, the number of international students from the top sourcing countries including Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Singapore, is anticipated to remain stable or maybe even decline in the next five to ten years; whereas India and China are expected to continue to be the major source countries, with average growth in the next five to ten years (Calderon, 2010, p. 5). Additionally, there are a number of other countries which are identified as emerging source markets for international students such as Pakistan, Brazil, Vietnam, Russia, Georgia, Romania, Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Saudi Arabia (World Education Services, 2010). Figure 7 details the main and top sending countries.

Table 18: The top 10 countries of origin of the enrolled international students studying in the United States (2011-2012)

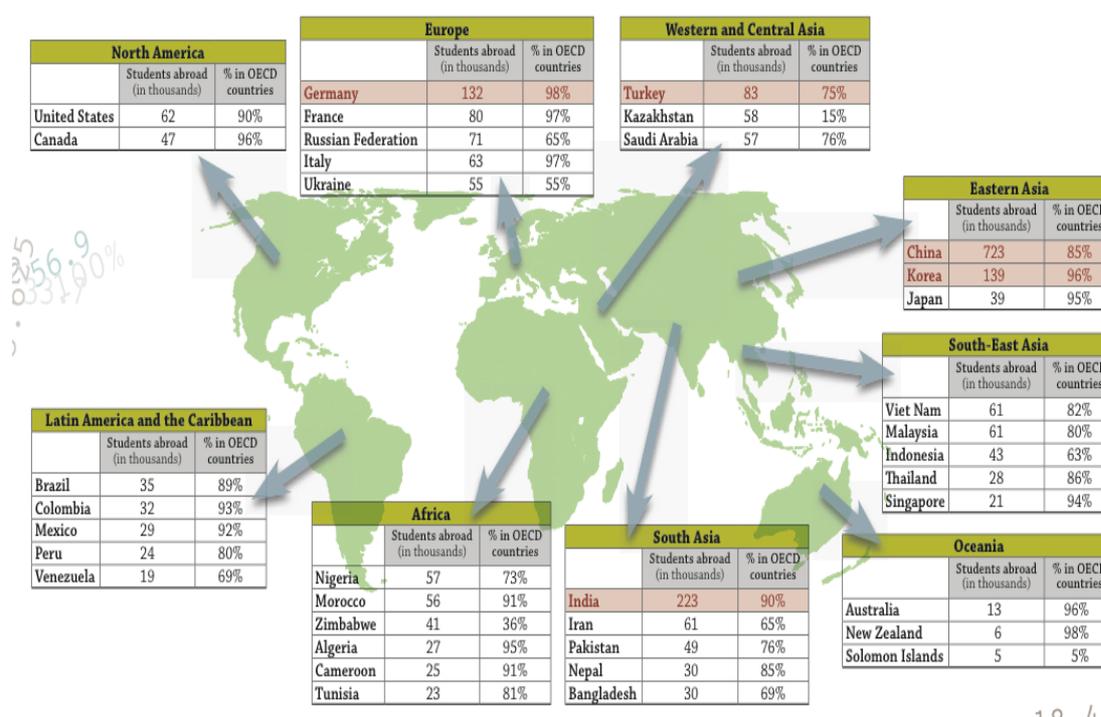
	Country of Origin	Number of Students	Percent of Total
1	China	194,029	25.4%
2	India	100,270	13.1%
3	South Korea	72,295	9.5%
4	Saudi Arabia	34,139	4.5%
5	Canada	26,821	3.5%
6	Taiwan	23,250	3.0%
7	Japan	19,966	2.6%
8	Vietnam	15,572	2.0%
9	Mexico	13,893	1.8%

10	Turkey	11,973	1.6%
	All Others	252,287	33.0%

Source: Choudaha & Chang (2013)

Figure 7 displays the sending countries of international student around the world, in 2011. Countries in red are the overall top countries of origin.

Figure 7: Top countries of origin of foreign students, by regions of the world, in 2011



Source: OECD and UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Education Indicators in Focus, 2013, p.

2

The given data clearly indicate that mobility occurs most commonly from developing countries to developed countries. Also, mobility is directed towards the English-speaking (Anglophone) countries. For example, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia host approximately 36% of all foreign tertiary students enrolled worldwide (OECD, 5 July 2013, p. 2).

Types of higher education international student scholarships

As discussed in Chapter 1, four main types of higher education international student scholarships that countries offer are: government incoming scholarships, government outgoing scholarships, non-government incoming scholarships, and non-government outgoing scholarships.

Government incoming scholarships

These types of scholarships are those provided by governments to bring international students into their countries to study and they are the most common form of scholarships. There are different forms of this government incoming scholarships. The most common forms are:

- 1) Bringing International students into a specific country can happen as part of an exchange students program between one government and a number of other governments/countries in which they can bring students from those countries and send their own students to pursue their studies in those countries, such as Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD), which is the German Academic Exchange Service.
- 2) Some of the government incoming scholarships are “binational”, which means governments found an exchange program with one specific country such as the Australian American Fulbright Commission.
- 3) Some governments grant annual scholarships for the qualified international students as part of their commitment to the international development cooperation without sending their students in turns. This kind of scholarships is usually given by the developed countries, such as United States, UK, Australia and New Zealand, Japan and the British Commonwealth (Scheyvens, 2003, p. 309).

For example, King Abdullah University for Science and Technology (KAUST), in Saudi Arabia, attracts gifted national and international students by providing them with full tuition scholarships for graduate study and covering the cost of completing students' undergraduate studies plus travel and living stipends through what is so called 'KAUST Discovery Scholarship' (Bruininks, Keeney & Thorp, 2010, p. 115). The official website of KAUST displays the message given by the King Abdullah when launching the university in 2009. He believed that KAUST is the new facet of "House of Wisdom", which was one of the main destinations for getting high-standard education worldwide. King Abdullah states "As a new "House of Wisdom," the University shall be a beacon for peace, hope, and reconciliation and shall serve the people of the Kingdom and benefit all the peoples of the world in keeping with the teachings of the Holy Quran, which explains that God created mankind in order for us to come to know each other" (KAUST under message from the King, 2014, para. 4). According to Matthews (14 June 2012, para. 17), the proportion of Saudi students studying at KAUST is almost equal to students coming from the Americas and Europe. Students coming from Asia and Middle East comprise 30% for each, and 10% of KAUST's students are from Africa.

Another example of government-sponsored incoming scholarships is Australia's government which has an International competitive scholarship program known as Australia Awards Endeavour Scholarships and Fellowships. This program, on one hand sponsors, Australians to undertake study, research and professional development abroad; and most importantly, it sponsors students from eligible countries to pursue their studies, conduct research and obtain professional development in Australia. While the program mainly sponsors the students from the Asia Pacific region, some students come from Africa, Middle East, Europe and Americas were given the awards too (Australia Awards Endeavour Scholarship and Fellowships, 2013).

In many cases, those governments' incoming scholarships are known as development scholarships in which the students are obliged to return back to their countries after finishing their studies (Scholarships for Development, 2013).

Among the three forms of the government incoming scholarships, perhaps the students' exchanging program is, however, the most common form.

As listed in the Australian Scholarships Foundation 2013, Australia's government established its Endeavour Awards program in order to:

- Develop on-going educational, research and professional linkages between individuals, organisations and countries
- Provide opportunities for high achieving individuals from Australia and overseas to increase their skills and enhance their global awareness
- Contribute to Australia's position as a high quality education and training provider, and a leader in research and innovation
- Increase the productivity of Australians through an international study, research or professional development experience.

Government outgoing scholarships

In terms of its popularity, this sort of scholarship, which represents Saudi's KASP scheme, is placed second, with government incoming scholarship programs rating more highly.

Governments have been supporting overseas scholarship systems to send their students abroad since two centuries ago (Haghdoust, 2005). Nonetheless, the event of 9/11 and the 2008 recession have transformed the overseas scholarships and the international student mobility in the first decade of the 21st century to match the needs of globalisational and the local market demand (Choudaha, 2011, para. 1; Haghdoust, 2005).

Apart from this, until 2009, the first top four destinations for international higher education students were listed as the U.S, UK, Australia, and Canada (Choudaha & Chang, 2012, p. 7). By grouping the international students according to their countries of origins, it is found that the top five countries of origin are China, South Korea, India, Canada, and finally Saudi Arabia as indicated in Table 19 below.

Table 19: International scholarship recipients by country of origin 2010-2011

Country	2010	2011	2010/2011
All	799,581	858,180	7.33%
China South	153,312	196,857	28.40%
Korea	105,696	104,908	-0.75%
India	103,760	99,316	-4.28%
Canada	30,803	30,779	-0.08%
Saudi Arabia	29,391	43,910	49.40%
Japan	28,805	27,188	-5.61%
Taiwan	27,046	25,918	-4.17%
Vietnam	17,116	18,044	5.42%
Mexico	15,660	16,777	7.13%
Nepal	13,353	NA	NA
Brazil	NA	14,378	NA

Source: Choudaha & Chang, 2012, p. 11

Figures in the table indicate that governments from the developing countries show more interest in sending their students offshore to undertake their studies. On the other hand, the table displays the number of the international students from India, Japan, and Taiwan

decreased between 2011-2011. Literature suggests that this decline caused by the visa's restriction especially in Australia and New Zealand (Australia Government, 30 June 2012, p. 7; Higher Education in Science and Engineering Indicators, 2012, p. 25; Choudaha & Chang, 2012, p. 7; ICEF Monitor, 14 May 2013).

More recent examples of government outgoing scholarship programs are the Brazilian and the Saudi (KASP) scholarships. In 2011, Brazil started its outgoing scholarship program as it planned to send 75,000 fully funded students to 12 countries (United States, France, Portugal, Spain, Germany, UK, Canada, Italy, Australia, Netherlands, South Korea, and Belgium (Monks, 2012, p. 3). Saudi Arabia launched KASP in 2006, a program which sponsored around 185,000 Saudi students up until 2014 (Ministry of Finance, 2014). Unfortunately, there is a lack of statistics concerning the total numbers of students who are sponsored by their government to study abroad.

While government outgoing scholarships have existed for some years, their purpose of sending students overseas has remained relatively unchanged. For example, as cited in Kinginger (2008, p. 1), The Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program (2005) expressed its ambitious, cultural-broadening goal of sending the students overseas as, "...in the national interest of the United States to send at least one million undergraduates abroad annually to study other lands, languages, and cultures". It would thus appear that the incoming and outgoing government scholarship programs aspire to achieve political, economic and social development through international student mobility.

Cummings (1993, p. 40) summarised the rationale for countries offering their governments' outgoing scholarships as:

1. The lack of domestic facilities, particularly in certain subject areas

2. The social prestige of a foreign degree encouraged
3. Knowing, exposing and gaining experience in another country and exchange cultures

Non-government incoming scholarships

These scholarships are offered by some private organisations or industries to international higher education students in order to attract them to pursue their studies within the countries where the sponsors are located. This kind of scholarships is also known as industry-sponsorship. Usually sponsoring the students is arranged between an industry and one of the universities; and the students are chosen based on selective criteria. From Organisations/industries' perspective, some stakeholders sponsor the qualified students in order to comply with their roles towards the social responsibilities to reward or punish their businesses (Darnall, Potoski and Prakash, 2010); while some tie the bonds with the universities to benefits from the research results in the business fields (Blumenthal et al, 1996). From the universities' perspectives, the belief is that students need a broad understanding of the business nature in the global environment (Douglas, 2009) hence the need to bring international students to benefit the local industry with their broaden and global perspectives. Douglas (2009, para. 5) explains,

Sure, you can read a book about Chinese manufacturing, German steamship lines, or warehousing in Argentina. You can use multimedia Web sites and videoconferences to learn what it's like to hammer out deals in the far-flung corners of the world. But, as Andrews says, "There's no substitute for going there."

Non-government outgoing scholarships

These kinds of scholarships are offered by private companies to local higher education students for pursuing their studies overseas. In the U.S., for example, there is a large number of companies such as Coca-Cola, Walt Disney, the Ford motor company, and Johnson & Johnson which offer such scholarships. These scholarships sponsor American students to

pursue their studies in relevant areas in a number of different countries. These scholarships can be classified as development scholarships because those selected sponsored students usually must return to their home countries and work for the sponsor company for a certain amount of time depending on the agreement. For instance, Coca Cola has a scholarship program called the Coca Cola Foundation Scholarship, which aspires to sponsor 100,000 American students to undertake their studies in China. Coca Cola is funding this program with substantial support from the Obama government. Apparently, U.S. is keen to strengthen the ties between United States and China because it is believed that education is a key to cross-cultural understanding (Office of International Education, 2013). Likewise, Landis and Bhagat (1996) in Anderson et al (2006, p. 459) emphasise that,

... intercultural sensitivity is crucial to enabling people to live and work with others from different cultural backgrounds. As our workplace and society become more diverse, and as globalization of business intensifies, an individual's sensitivity to cultural differences combined with an ability to adapt his or her behavior to those differences will become increasingly valuable.

Altbach (1991, pp. 307-310) suggests that there are 'push' and 'pull' factors that encourage the students from the Third world to study abroad, and that there are at least three perspectives influencing student decisions about studying abroad: the individual student; the sending country, and the host country. Table 20 below summarizes the variables/factors affecting the direction and magnitude of major flow patterns from sending and host countries' perspectives.

Table 20: Variables affecting the magnitude and direction of major flow patterns

Host country variables	Sending country variables
Economic difficulties leading to restrictions on international students through measures such as higher tuition fees, e.g., United Kingdom, Australia	Economic difficulties leading to reduction in available state funds as well as available foreign exchange, e.g., Nigeria, Venezuela
Population changes leading to increase in available student places, e.g., some states in	Economic boom leading to expansion of demand for trained personnel and hence an increase in

the United States	numbers of students going abroad, e.g., oil producing countries
Changes in foreign policy leading to completion of bilateral agreements	Economic policy changes leading to emphasis in areas with a dearth of requisite personnel and training facilities, hence necessitating that students go abroad, e.g., China
Reemphasis on political commitments leading to increase in inflow of international students from a given politically volatile region, e.g., Afghanistan	Political changes (such as revolution) leading to change in foreign policy and hence change in flow direction, e.g., Nicaragua
Education policy changes leading to emphasis on international area and language studies and hence a greater commitment to study abroad programs, e.g., U.S.	Educational changes such as completion of appropriate training facilities - thus reducing numbers of students abroad, e.g., ???

Source: Altbach, 1991, p. 309

Benefits for students studying overseas

Saudi students' perspectives about the benefits to themselves of studying overseas will be seen in Chapters 5 and 6. What follows is an account from the literature of the benefits that are to be seen by a number of countries to result from international students studying overseas.

For several decades, the literature highlighted the benefits of study abroad programs (Goldstein and Kim, 2006). These benefits included: enhanced cross-cultural skills and global understanding; enhanced foreign language competencies and understanding international political concerns; and enhanced interest in learning histories of other countries (Kitsantas, 2004; McCabe, 1994; Opper, Teichler, & Carlson, 1990; Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Carsello & Creaser, 1976; Dwyer & Peters, 2004).

It is also believed that gaining a foreign qualification would high likely enhance the students' opportunities in finding good job positions upon the completion of their studies. As cited in Goldstein and Kim (2006, p. 508), Carlson et al (1990) believe,

In addition to interest in experiencing new cultures and continuing language study, US students were motivated to study abroad by the expectation that the experience would

allow them to be more competitive in an increasingly diverse and globally oriented job market. These students were significantly more open with regard to career choice than those staying home and viewed study abroad as a critical factor in their career development.

Political, economic, and social reasons for governments to support international student mobility

Globalisation has been a major driver for governments to provide scholarships for supporting higher education students going overseas to further their education. As Anderson et al (2006, p. 458) noted that,

In today's global society, ... An international education is becoming a necessity, not a luxury, and study abroad is one of the best ways to get such an international education ... an examination of literature relating to international programs reveals that most overseas programs seek to achieve multiple objectives.

Indeed, much of the literature reveals that apart from gaining better educational standards, there are other reasons for governments to offer scholarships to their students to pursue their studies overseas. For example, as noted earlier), The Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program (2005) was established to broaden students' cultural horizons.

a) Political reasons

Several political scientists and policymakers see that student mobility is often used as an important element of foreign policy (Baron, 1993; Greenwood, 2009; (Novak, Slatinsek & Devatak, 2013). From the perspective of both 'sender and receiver countries', Baron (1993) indicated that agreements for sending and acceptance of the foreign students is largely viewed to be motivated by foreign policy agenda and objectives. Baron (1993) stated that this was linked to political influences that hoped to facilitate future ties and to prepare grounds and

networks for international trade relations. Additionally, national governments in some Western European nations became gradually more aware of the benefits of supporting student mobility as a foreign policy instrument. It is within this perspective that studies by Kuhn (2012) and Mutlu (2011) suggested that the stronger motivations for student mobility that European nations sought to acquire was linked to gaining direct control over their contribution to student and staff mobility in order to seek favourable foreign ties.

Current literature indicates that national governments promote sending their students for undergraduate and graduate studies to hedge them against likely influences of unstable political situations and poverty in their home countries (Salmela, 2008; Chang and Deng 1992; Xiang 2005). In a study of the history of student mobility in China, Salmela (2008) found that among the reasons that motivated the Chinese government to send students abroad between the 1980s and 1990s was the political situation of the country. Since the 1978 Chinese government reforms, the Chinese government assumed a friendlier approach to sponsoring post-graduate students for courses overseas. Indeed, after the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, more Chinese students were sponsored for higher education within Western destinations such as the United States offering them permanent residency (Salmela, 2008). According to Xiang (2005), 10,000 students who had been sent for studies abroad to Canada were given permanent residence, while 20,000 and 28,500 received permanent residency in the United States and Australia respectively. An extensive survey conducted by Chang and Deng (1992) shortly after the Tiananmen Square incident underscored the fact that the perception of the effects of political situation on China's education was a principal factor that motivated the government to support student mobility (David, Fung & Han, 2008). In his review, Salmela (2008) elaborated that since the Tiananmen Square incident, China became the biggest sender of students to study abroad to date.

A large body of research also shows that some countries have based their rationale for sending students abroad for further studies on the premise that they, the sender country, would restore their place in global affairs (Baron, 1993; Becker and Kolster, 2012). Baron (1993) illustrated such a trend in his analysis of post-war German policies. He argued that for many decades since the late 1940s, the Federal Republic of Germany became preoccupied with restoring its place in international affairs after the World War II. Germany's active policy of sending students abroad and opening doors to foreign students was motivated by the need to seek recognition in global affairs after becoming relatively irrelevant. The UK, US, France and Spain teamed up to establish a student exchange service called the Institute of International Education, which encourages student mobility of participating countries.

A survey by Becker & Kolster (2012) illustrates that Germany has been successful in restoring its voice in global affairs, specifically in matter concerning research. According to some researchers, countries such as the Netherlands, India, Brazil and China have maintained a clear internalisation strategy that fronts Germany as the most attractive student destination and beneficiary for research and innovation (Ibid). To this end, the Netherlands, India, Brazil and China sent their students to Germany with the view of developing global political ties that facilitate commerce and trade. The Indian government allocated about € 6 million each year to send students to study in Germany through the “Year of Germany and India 2011-2012” student grant programme. Becker & Kolster (2012) agree that such strategies are credited for attracting most research students across the globe to Germany.

The need for political equality has also motivated national governments to support student mobility (Baron, 1993). This remark reflects that made by Saarikallio-Torp and Wiers-Jenssen

(2010) in their study of the rationale behind high student mobility in Nordic countries such as Finland and Denmark. The researchers found that among the reasons for supporting Faroese Student Grant Fund by the Danish government was to promote political equality and stability among the people in Faroe Island in Denmark. The political objective of sending students abroad for quality studies was to eliminate the social and economic barriers in order to cope with the insecurity problems on the islands. Saarikallio-Torp & Wiers-Jenssen (2010) discusses that the island faced critical economic and social issues related to political instabilities. The basis of the grant was that by sending Faroese students to study abroad, they will come up to offer effective and friendlier political leadership in the island.

The need to create political alliances and integration is also stressed by researchers (Baron, 1993; Saarikallio-Torp & Wiers-Jenssen, 2010). In a past survey, Baron (1993) illustrated that student mobility for purposes of academic or economic was no longer the objective of the national governments as concern was more on seeking political integration that could open up opportunities for more transnational co-operation. Baron (1993) argued that this inspired the creation of European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) in 1987. He pointed out that the European Commission on numerous occasions considered the need to take a political lead in regards to motivating countries to send their students to study abroad. According to Baron (1993), the absolute and relative increase in the number of the students sent abroad by industrialised countries (such as Great Britain, Denmark and Belgium) that already had greatly developed systems of higher education was linked to political rather than academic or economic reasons. Scholarly arguments reinforce this view in noting that political interest focused more on the need to have a large proportion of students study abroad (Kuhn, 2012; Mutlu, 2011). Baron's (1993) arguments are consistent with several other studies that examined the impact of ERASMUS and noted that the program was

intended to cause considerable public interest in creating the need for international co-operation (Kuhn, 2012; Mutlu, 2011). Indeed, Baron's (1993) analysis of ERASMUS showed that the program was more of a political outfit as among its key objectives was to promote European identity as well as facilitate the creation of a "People's Europe."

b) Economic reasons

Much of the literature reviewed points to the fact that the decision to send students for study overseas was inspired by economic reasons (Liu and Wang, 2008; Mukhrjee & Chanda, 2012). *The basis for this assertion currently is based primarily on qualitative rather than quantitative analyses.*

A study by Mukhrjee and Chanda (2012) showed that national governments have tended to promote student mobility basing on the rationale that the more they become involved in global systems, the more they become economically integrated. In this vein, Liu and Wang (2008) provided evidence that indicated due to the real effects of globalization, businesses in the global economy have become more integrated. Based on this perspective, countries have become involved in sponsoring student mobility with the view of investing in more exposed human capital resources that can handle the issues in the global system. An underlying argument for this is that the nation can benefit from human capital resources that are more aware and competitive in the global economy (Mukhrjee & Chanda, 2012). Such findings reflect an idea fronted by Liu and Wang (2008) that sending students overseas has had a direct impact on the balance of payment of sender and recipient countries because of the revenue from domestic consumption and tuition fees. Liu and Wang (2008) reiterated that this is a primary factor that motivates source countries to encourage and sponsor students to study abroad.

Countries have also promoted student mobility to build and strengthen human capital as well as integrate their regional labour market (Liu and Wang, 2008). Since the 1990s, despite the precipitating globalization and sectoral changes, European countries such as the UK increasingly emphasized sponsoring students for studies abroad to be an economic commodity for use in fostering employability in Europe as well as to advance Europe as a knowledge-based society (Liu and Wang, 2008). As stated in a later study by Qianru (2011), most industrial economies have supported student mobility in the hope that their countries can benefit from highly skilled labour. Indeed, over the last three decades, developed economies such as the United States, Canada and United Kingdom have maintained a policy consensus emphasising the pursuit of a knowledge-based economy by upgrading the expertise and skills of their labour force as well as maintaining a sufficient supply of skilled workforce. Indeed, statistics from OECD (2011) show that as of 2008, three countries -- the United States, Canada and United Kingdom -- were among the highest recipients and senders of international students, who represented more than one-third of the global students at tertiary level of education. This also signifies that changes in national and international policies to support international studies have significant impact on student mobility trends. Qianru (2011) explained that such policies are triggered by human capital theory which proposes that much of the inexplicable increase in economic growth, income and productivity can be justified by investment in human capital.

Becker and Kolster (2012) identified the many forms of investment in human capital, including sponsoring students to study overseas. According to Qianru (2011), students sponsored to study abroad may in this way increase their lifetime earning and in return, governments will be able to improve employment and a steady economic growth (see Brown

at al., 2001). Junor and Usher (2008) argue that the reasons why the United States, United Kingdom and Canada have strides in student mobility is because of the policy change to support student mobility (Greenwood, 2009). According to Junor and Usher (2008), among the dominant study aids and grants originate from these countries. In the United States, Fulbright US Student Program is the leading US exchange program that offers students an opportunity to pursue graduate studies or advanced research. Each year, some 3,500 students across 150 countries are sponsored to study over abroad through the programme. On the other hand, Canada has two such programs, namely the Canadian Merit Scholarship Foundation (CMSF) program and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) Explore bursary program, both of which offer student mobility incentive. In Britain, the Chevening Scholarships program is the dominant student scholarship program that sponsors students to study abroad (Junor & Usher, 2008).

By sending students to study abroad, governments compete for worldwide mobile talent. According to Qianru (2011), because of the impacts of economic globalisation, many governments have changed their economic agenda to essentially compete for global mobile talent. Inability to attract foreign expertise or talent has hence influenced nations to sponsor students to study abroad with the hope that the economy will gain from global class economic talent. Brown et al. (2001) argued that it is indeed clear that policy appeal for investment in human capital continues to be irresistible for governments globally. The researchers posited that the likelihood of achieving economic prosperity is not merely conditioned by the skill aspect, but rather by the principle that, the more capable, intelligent and creative the national workforce, the more likely the political issue of opportunity and equality will shape a country's economic competitiveness.

A survey by Shah and Long (2007) found that among the motivations for supporting student mobility is to prevent likely impediments of labour mobility, which caused inefficiencies in nations' gross productivity. Inefficiencies in the Australian economy were particularly evident during the period of its White Australian Policy that prohibited integrating with the Asian world. The policy advocated for a homogeneous white population (Whittington, 2012). Indeed, among the reforms prioritised by Australia was that of influencing a change in national government regulations to support the flow of goods and services, including human capital across borders. Shah and Long (2007) argued that Australian policymakers felt that the state-based regulations during the era of White Australia impeded labour movements and promoted Aboriginal marginalisation which created inefficiencies (Campbell, Kelly & Harrison, 2012). Therefore, major advances had to be made in the areas of promoting labour mobility and policymakers saw in this context the relevance of student mobility for the Australian policy agenda. Based on this perspective, the Australian government introduced the Australian Scholarships program called "Australian Scholarships" to promote student mobility across the Asia-Pacific region. The Australian government now commits some AUS\$1.4 billion dollars to the program each year. Whitty (2006) and Whittington (2012) argued that Australia became a developed economy partly due to having investing programs that promoted research and improved the skills of its labour force, which was enhanced by labour mobility. A similar perspective is shared by Parey (2007), who stated that student mobility has increased labour mobility, which is beneficial for economic development. Parey (2007) argued that the student mobility in Europe, facilitated by the ERASMUS program, has enabled efficient matching between jobs and workers.

c) Social and cultural reasons

It is argued that national governments collectively send students abroad to promote their social identities (Kuhn, 2012; Mutlu, 2011). It is against this background that the European Commission (EC) initiated the educational exchange programs such as ERASMUS with the view of instilling a sense of European identity. Since the program's launching in 1987, countries within the EC have sent some 2.3 million students abroad, as of 2011 (Kuhn, 2012). European countries put high hopes on the significance of cross-border interactions as precursors to developing a common identity among the European nations. Indeed, a fundamental rationale for the Erasmus student exchange program has been to enable students to work together in the hope of developing supranational identity (Kuhn, 2012). Mutlu's (2011) findings are consistent with this view. In a survey of ERASMUS students and their respective governments, the Mutlu (2011) found that ERASMUS is one of the most used tools among European governments to create European consciousness. According to Mutlu (2011), developing European dimensions in education with the hope of strengthening the European identity as well as to increase knowledge on socio-political issues. Mutlu (2011) explained that the reason for this is to promote knowledge on the cultural and historical aspect of Europe.

In matters of social differences, some national governments have considered promoting student mobility with the hope of reconciling and reaching mutual understanding. Teichler (2003) traced this social perspective to the end of the World War II after countries sought conciliation after preceding years of animosity. Student mobility under such circumstances was viewed to be capable of spreading professional educational achievements both horizontally and vertically. It was also viewed as capable of striking mutual understanding between countries that shared animosity. According to Teichler (2003), such perspectives

inspired the need for scholarship programs such as the American Fulbright program, which was started in 1948 with the view of improving international understanding. Such a perspective was instrumental in promoting social cohesion in Europe, after Eastern European countries were regarded as means of socially integrating the countries that were initially dominated by Soviet Union cultures, such as Ukraine (Teichler, 2003).

Many countries have also considered the need to have a more educated population for sustainable social and cultural development. Based on this perspective, the European community initiated 14 programmes in the 1980s and 1990s aimed at providing support for Cooperation of Europe in attaining quality education (Kuhn, 2012; Mutlu, 2011). Among the premier programs includes ERASMUS that aims to provide framework for cooperation between university departments. This ensured curricular coordination as well as ensured that countries achieved returns from host institutions (Teichler, 2003). Fernandes (2011) opined that China's curriculum and skills at the university are in predominantly outdated and focus mostly on teacher-centred learning in addition to recalling facts, passive examination, rote learning and passive learning. This sharply contrasts Western learning styles that are predominantly learner-centred and which aim to develop learner's independence, questioning, debating and analytical skills (Fernandes, 2011). Baron's (1993) observations are consistent with these views when he noted that the quest to send students abroad was part of a broad strategy to improve the quality of higher education as well as serve as an education policy.

The need for cultural integration is also key motivator. A study by Fernandes (2011) on the variety of factors that motivate source countries to send students overseas established that part of the reason that explains why China is leading as a sender country is because of its culture. According to Fernandes (2011), China's culture has always been to prioritise education

because of the country's Confucianist values. The trend has further been triggered by the country's one child policy. The researcher however found that the most underlying factor was the fact that China's perception of foreign education, degrees and career advancements. Byram and Feng (2006) support this view when they suggest that a key outcome of student mobility is the creation of inter-culturally-competent students. According to the researchers, intercultural competence includes meaningful curricular, interaction and service learning.

The growing interest in multicultural issues by national governments has also inspired student mobility. Studies have investigated and rationalised why multicultural issues motivate some national governments to participate in student mobility programs (Byram & Feng, 2006; Liu & Wang, 2008). A study of Japan's motivation for sponsoring its students abroad revealed that from the 1990s, a common destination for the country's students has been the United States and the United Kingdom, partly inspired by the need to have a workforce that can speak and integrate in foreign cultures and languages (Byram & Feng, 2006). This view is consistent with an observation made by Liu and Wang (2008), that the increase in foreign direct investments in Asian countries by Western firms has inspired governments in Asia to sponsor students for studies in Western countries. Rosen and Hanemann (2012) share the view that the Chinese are less familiar with Western practices and cultures and operating overseas. Rather, they instead tend to be fixated with the varied regulatory environment. Such a perspective is shared by Mutlu (2011) who found that the idea that learning a new language as a motivation is indeed true. In a study of how ERASMUS students develop European consciousness, Mutlu (2011) found that learning a new language was critical factor since the emphasis is placed on communication through foreign languages.

A similar perspective is taken by Saarikallio-Torp and Wiers-Jenssen (2010) in their survey of student mobility trends in Nordic countries, namely Iceland, Norway, Denmark and Finland. The researcher found that among the factors that motivated governments to send students for studies overseas was to benefit from students who are more globally exposed. Saarikallio-Torp & Wiers-Jenssen (2010) argued that Nordic countries are generally isolated geographically, culturally and linguistically, hence the need for citizenry with multicultural and multilingual skills. Baron (1993) also outlines an almost similar trend in highlighting that Western European nations believed that experience in studying abroad would provide their students with the professional and personal qualifications in regards to intercultural skills, foreign language proficiency.

Like Saudi Arabia, China is reforming its higher education system more towards the creativity and applied approaches in order to embrace the global knowledge-based economy. Nevertheless, China is many years ahead of Saudi Arabia in terms of its trained labour and advanced technology. For instance, in 1998, the Chinese Deputy Minister of Education Wi Youy claimed that,

Twenty years ago China waited for everything ruined to be built, it was witnessing a wave of reforms...The first priority was to develop education, science and technology and to train the specialist that the country needed as soon as possible. (Cited in Bin Taleb, 2013, p. 80).

Accordingly, China increased the government outgoing scholarships for its tertiary students who became its first foreign scholarship holders to study in the United States in 1998 (Davis & Katzman, 1998). The country continued to support its student mobility through exchange programs and other various forms of cultural exchange.

In 2008 China started to develop as a powerful force worldwide as one of the Asian ‘Tigers’. There would appear to be a high correlation between China’s educational reforms and its student mobility programs and the accelerated advancements they embrace nowadays. In response to this, Saudi Arabia still has a way to go but its educational reforms and schemes to support student mobility and build its human capital, should aid in this kind of development.

Another example of reported benefits of student mobility or interchange, can be witnessed between Israeli and Palestine which have a long history of conflicts. Some scholars aspired to test the effectiveness of cross border student mobility between these two conflicting cultures, attempting to bring them together ‘under one roof’. So, one non-government organisations (NGO) in Israel organised a three-day workshop at the Givat Haviva compound. The students involved were not asked to present analogies about their local conflicts but instead they were asked to work collectively.

Both sides were very cautious in the beginning and unwilling to communicate with one another. However, by engaging them in a peaceful academic environment and giving them the opportunities to communicate, the hatred was swiftly replaced by closer ties, friendship and mutual understanding (Salomon, 2004 as cited in Hilal & Denman, 2013). The Chinese and Israeli/Palestinian examples highlight the potential power and usefulness of international student mobility as a key to open students’ minds and open doors to cooperation.

Resonating with this theme, Teichler (2003, pp. 312-313), explained benefits of student mobility in addition to raising educational standard as,

...[moving] from a place where a high calibre of educational provisions was lacking to get acquainted with a higher level of education somewhere else. But mobility ... was considered desirable to get to know a variety of regions, cultures and educational

provisions.

The September 11th destructive forces in the US in 2001 built barriers between Saudi Arabia and the West. The situation between Saudis and Westerners was best described by Salomon (2004, p. 259) as,

...Typical beliefs are that “we” are right but “they” are wrong; “we” are the victims, whereas “they” are aggressors; “we” only respond, thus even when “we” do harm, “they” are to blame; “we” are moderate, whereas “they” are radical; or “they” understand only the language of force.

As it is believed that these kinds of oppositional beliefs derive from a lack of knowledge about dissimilarities between different cultures, one advantage of international student mobility is its capacity for students to learn about and break the cultural barriers that divide different cultural groups. Students studying in other countries also allows them to live and experience others’ perspectives on ‘the other side of the fence’. Scholarship programs that support students’ overseas studies are seen to play an important role in developing positive intercultural understanding.

Risks associated with student mobility for countries of origin

Despite the numerous benefits of overseas scholarship programs, the governments which encourage and support students to study abroad, face a number of risks in doing so. First of all, Altbach (2004, p. 12) revealed that 80% of international students move from developing countries to developed countries a situation that can have detrimental effects on developing countries. Developed countries tend to have shortages in their skilled workforce and rapidly decreasing and aging populations. Therefore, they attempt to attract the skilled international students after their graduation to work in the industrial sector in order to remain competitive

in an era of globalisation (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007; Dustmann, 2007; Commander, Kangasniemi & Winters, 2004). As a result, many of these international students find jobs in their host countries and do not return to their countries of origin (Altach, 2004, p. 12; Tremblay, 2002, p. 194). For example, after interviewing 273 Chinese students in the United States, only less than 9 percent of the Chinese interviewees revealed their passion to go back to China. Indeed, 50,000 Chinese students turned to become permanent residents of the United States; with 10,000 working in Canada and in Australia; and more than 20,000 Chinese students were permitted to stay however the longevity of that commitment is in some doubt (Zweig, 1997, pp. 92-93).

Moreover, Baas (2006, p. 8) declared that the propensity for international students who seek permanent residency (PR) in their host countries after finishing their degrees is now noticeably high. More specifically, 33 per cent of those International students, who completed their studies in 2003, obtained a PR visa under the onshore overseas student visa subclasses. Baas also stated that the origin countries of those students were all South Asian (e.g., Pakistan with 67 per cent; Bangladesh with 71 per cent; India with 73 per cent; and Nepal with 77 per cent) and that nearly three quarters of Indian students, who finished their courses in 2003, obtained their PR visas in and remained in Australia. In addition, in the United States, approximately 50% of European doctoral graduates stay in the USA after they finish their studies, and many do not return at all (Straubhaar, 2000, p. 10; Mahroum, 1999, p. 20). Because of this situation, countries of origin are seen to be wasting money sponsoring those students, especially as these countries are deprived from benefiting from their own students who graduate and do not return from overseas (Tremblay, 2002).

Furthermore, the fact that many of the overseas students prefer to stay and live in the host

countries, risks a significant 'brain drain'. To Commander et al (2004, pp. 235-237), 'brain drain' is a term referring to the movement or migration of personnel with technical skills or knowledge from developing countries to developed countries. In the student case, brain drain is the migration by students with new skills who choose to stay in the host countries after the completion of their degrees. In this sense, Tremblay (2002, p. 42) sees that "student flows represent a form of migration of qualified labour". This migration of skilled individuals typically leads to a distortion of the labour market in the countries of origin and tends to lower the welfare of the population remaining behind in the countries of origin. Solimano (2008, p. 10) sees these downsides for poor economies in the following way:

From a global perspective these policies of attracting talent by affluent economies compete with the efforts of developing countries and poor economies to retain its internal talent or attract it from other nations, to cover internal skills shortages, from other countries.

An example of this can be seen in the healthcare sector where brain drain worsens the already depleted healthcare resources in some of the developing countries. This occurs especially in Africa, and enlarges the gap in health inequities worldwide (Pang, Lansang & Haines, 2002, p. 499).

Furthermore, while the developed countries usually have better facilities, more job opportunities, more leisure, better lifestyles than the countries of origin or sending countries (Feng, 2001; Inglehart, Foa, Peterson & Welzel, 2008), students returning to their home countries become more able to see what their countries of origin lack compared with the developed/host countries. Nevertheless, this situation, can result in less loyalty to their countries of origin (Baruch, Budhwar & Khatri, 2007, p. 103), losing their national identities (Rizvi, 2005) and political instability. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of research in this area that can throw more light on this situation.

Finally, on the risks of ‘brain drain’, Commander et al (2004, p. 266) argue that,

Overall, our conclusion has to be that while there is clearly a possibility that the brain drain is beneficial to the residents left behind in the home countries, there are reasons – some of them of recent origin – to be suspicious of that conclusion. It is not even certain that there is an overall global welfare gain from the brain drain, although given the apparently large private benefits of the migrants themselves and their higher productivity in their new locations, it seems highly likely.

Gaps in the literature

Noticeably, most of the literature reviewed discusses student mobility between the OECD countries. While a lot of research in this area provides data and statistics about international students in Europe, the United States, UK, Australia and Canada, it is rare to find research with detailed data on student mobility between Arab countries. Also, while there has been a recent strong emphasis on Chinese and Indian students who study overseas, little attention has been paid to Arab students who study abroad. Welch (2012), and Insoll (2005) convey that there are many facets of Arabs that are not readily apparent and understood by the West, particularly concerning its people, lifestyle, norms, schooling systems, higher education, and Arab student mobility.

Regarding the effects or impacts of the overseas scholarship programs on the politics, economic, and socio-cultural levels for the nation states, it appears that economic factors dominate followed by the political impact these programs have. Sadly, the impact of student mobility on the socio-cultural dimension appears to be least considered by scholars.

Because less attention has been paid to the political and socio-cultural risks that may result from international student mobility, and as a fair amount of data indicate the negative impacts

on the economies and labour markets in the origin countries, it could be speculated that international student mobility may threaten the political and socio-cultural stability in conservative countries such as Saudi Arabia more than in other more developed countries. However, studies that measure these risks are scarce. Adding to this point, Pinfari (2009, p. 9) states that,

Research on the Gulf Cooperation Council is even more erratic. No comparative or systematic study of the effectiveness of the GCC in tackling regional conflicts has been undertaken to date.

In accord with this observation, Altbach (1991, p. 307) emphasised over twenty years ago that,

There is a significant literature, perhaps the majority of studies, that are about Third World students in industrialized nations, problems of adjustment and return, and related issues, but such research generally does not explore these questions from a Third World perspective. Any future research agenda concerning foreign study must take into account the needs and perspectives of the major sending nations.

Connecting these gaps in the light of the main scope of the study, there is an increasing interest in researching Saudi Arabia's new era and especially its higher education system under King Abdullah's decree. Yet, most of the recent publications and research studies are produced by overseas Saudi research students and perhaps co-authored by their academic foreign supervisors. For example, the first and only book written about higher education in Saudi Arabia was published in 2013, titled, *Higher Education in Saudi Arabia* (Smith and Abouammoh, Eds.). Each chapter of the book is written by a Saudi scholar co-authored by an international scholar. Only one book that touches on higher education has been written by a Saudi author. It discusses different aspects of studying overseas. The book is written by Dr. Abdulaziz bin Taleb (2005) and is based on his personal journey to the United States where he pursued his masters and PhD degrees. The book is written in Arabic language and titled,

Adderassa fil kharij (translated as 'studying abroad'). It has fifteen chapters starting with a brief history of scholarship programs in KSA and ending with important widely used terminologies used in Western universities. Bin Taleb also published a book about KASP in 2013, titled, *The Upcoming Oil: Why do Saudis invest in higher education and scholarship?*

Also in 2013, two PhD dissertations were completed about overseas Saudi students sponsored by the King Abdullah Scholarship Program. However, these theses are written by non-Saudis, and both focus only on Saudi male students who studied in the United States (Heyn, 2013; Hall, 2013).

Such gaps in knowledge need to be addressed. To date, there is no literature or robust studies that have been undertaken to investigate the economic, social and political impacts of Saudi student mobility on Saudi Arabia economic, politic and social life. As already indicated, this study aims to address this gap.

Summary

This chapter explained different facets of international student mobility including its longstanding history, demonstrating the increasing flows of students around the world, mapping the distribution of the students, and also specifying the main receiving and sending countries. More detail was provided about the four different types of international student scholarships that foster mobility (government incoming scholarship program, government outgoing scholarship program, non-government incoming scholarship program, and non-government outgoing scholarship program). The King Abdullah Scholarship Program scheme is clearly identified as a government outgoing scholarship, one that fosters international student mobility.

The literature reviewed highlighted the significant roles student mobility plays at the global level where many benefits have been reported. For example, international students are seen to act as ambassadors for goodwill in their host countries (OECD, 2012). Governments also send their students as ambassadors of goodwill to attract skilled manpower (Rudolph, 2003). The era of globalisation makes it possible for countries to complement workforce shortages by sending their citizens to study abroad. Economic benefits reaped through trade in education are the main motivation for the formation of United Kingdom policy aimed at attracting more international students. In addition, some governments pursue and encourage their students to study abroad for promoting their foreign policies regionally or internationally, to prosper their home economies, strengthen international relations between the sending and hosting countries, and increase cultural awareness and understanding between nations.

The main risk for the home nations that send their students abroad is seen to centre on the danger of 'brain drain'. Literature points out too that another real risk of losing students who choose to settle in the host countries, is the danger of their becoming less loyal to their countries of origin.

Gaps in the literature were also highlighted. The most obvious gap is related to the dearth of research in relation to Arab student mobility, whether between Arab countries or between Arab countries and foreign countries.

Importantly, the chapter explained the aims, efforts, and policies that governments of the developed (host) countries embrace in order to receive international students or send their own students to study abroad. In this sense, it would appear that Saudi Arabia has been taking

huge steps in order to be aligned and compete with the developed countries. Embracing the knowledge-based economy and building its human resource power, especially its intellectual capacity will hopefully ensure that it will not be left behind when it comes to making an impact at the international level.

The following chapter explains the research strategy adopted for the study and the reasons for its choice. The methods and tools chosen to collect the data for this study relate closely to the aims of the study and the research questions raised,

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, this exploratory investigation constitutes a case study of the social, political and economic impacts of the King Abdullah overseas Scholarship Program (KASP) for Saudi Arabian students. The specific aims of the study were to investigate:

1. the social, economic and political impacts of the scholarship scheme, KASP, for the recipients and the Saudi nation-state;
2. the extent to which the Program's recipients and the Saudi nation have reaped value for investment from the KASP;
3. new opportunities and challenges that have arisen from the KASP scheme; and
4. in what ways the Program might be improved if it is to be sustained.

Case study research

A case study is a research approach that provides a detailed description and understanding of a contemporary phenomenon within its 'real-life context' (Punch, 1998, p. 150). Case studies focus on the nature and consequences of a major decision or decisions: "why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result" (Schramm, 1971, p. 1). A case study, therefore, is "not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied" (Stake, 2000, p. 435). The purpose of conducting a case study is to gather, organise and analyse comprehensive, systematic and in-depth information so as to allow a deep understanding about the case of interest (Patton, 2002, p. 447).

Stake (2000, p. 435) suggests that there are three major approaches to case studies:

1. Exploratory case studies – essentially pilot studies for subsequent more comprehensive and more targeted research;
2. Explanatory case studies – causal studies that seek to explain the complex relationships among the variables comprising the case; and
3. Descriptive case studies, that describe in detail the observed behaviours and pattern of relationships that exist for the particular case.

All three approaches can be involved in the same piece of case study research (Patton, 2002, p. 447).

Stake (2000, pp. 437-8) argues that case studies are “intrinsic” in that their purpose is to provide insights and understanding based on the particularity of the individual case. For Stake, case studies are worth conducting because their descriptive information alone is revelatory and will stimulate high-order and highly productive thinking about broader contexts and issues. As a consequence, Stake suggests that case-study researchers should not attempt to generalise their findings beyond the immediate case. Yin (2003, p. 37), however, suggests that writers such as Stake, who suggest that case studies lack external validity, are “implicitly contrasting the situation to survey research, in which a sample (if selected correctly) readily generalizes to a larger universe”. Survey research, he argues, relies on statistical generalisations whereas case studies rely on analytical generalisations in which the researcher is attempting to use the outcomes of the study to generalize to a broader emergent theory or set of principles. The findings from a case study, he contends, aim to be revelatory, not representative.

The phenomenon and the context that are the subject of investigation in a case study often interact and are not distinguishable in real-life situations. As a consequence, case studies usually require a mix of both quantitative and qualitative evidence and data collection and

analysis techniques, and thus constitute what Creswell (2005, p. 210) calls a ‘mixed method’ approach. The mixed method design, suggests Creswell (2005, p. 510), facilitates a powerful understanding of the research issue because “assessing both the outcomes of a study (i.e. quantitative) as well as the process (i.e. qualitative) can develop a complex picture of social phenomena”.

Case study research design

Yin (2003, pp. 13-14) argues that case studies are better considered as a research strategy rather than a research method. So called ‘case study method’, he suggests, is actually a “logical plan for getting from here to there, where *here* may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and *there* is some set of conclusions (answers) about those questions” (p20). Similarly, Philliber et al. (1980, p.1) refer to ‘case study methodology’ as a ‘blueprint for the research’, while Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992, p.77) use the term ‘logical model of proof’. All of these authors, however, agree that case study research usually consists of five major steps:

1. Determining the unit of analysis or focus for the study;
2. Deciding on the research questions to be addressed;
3. Deciding what data is needed to provide insights about the research questions;
4. Deciding how best to collect that data (the method or methods to be used); and
5. Determining how the information collected can best be analysed.

Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis chosen for this study is the King Abdullah overseas Scholarship Program (KASP) for Saudi Arabian students, details of which are provided in Chapter 1. KASP is a

comprehensive Government-sponsored scholarship program for Saudi students seeking to gain higher education qualifications from major universities outside the Kingdom. It is the largest scholarship program of this nature in the world; however, no claims are made that it is representative of other programs in this category, particularly as it comprises a number of quite unique elements and is operating in a very different cultural context from most other similar programs internationally.

Research questions

Five research questions were posed in order to address the issues under investigation for this study. These questions, detailed in Chapter 1, are:

1. What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program?
2. What benefits to the KSA and recipients of the KASP scheme has the Program brought?
3. To what extent has the emphasis on student mobility been successful?
4. What major challenges and issues arising need to be addressed?
5. What policy or other initiatives are needed for improving the efficacy of the Program?
6. What social, political and economic tensions are emerging following the implementations of the KASP scheme?

Data required

In order to address the five research questions, this study needed to collect the following information:

1. Descriptive information about the current nature and operation of the KASP, such as: the monetary value and conditions of the scholarships; countries in which Saudi scholarship

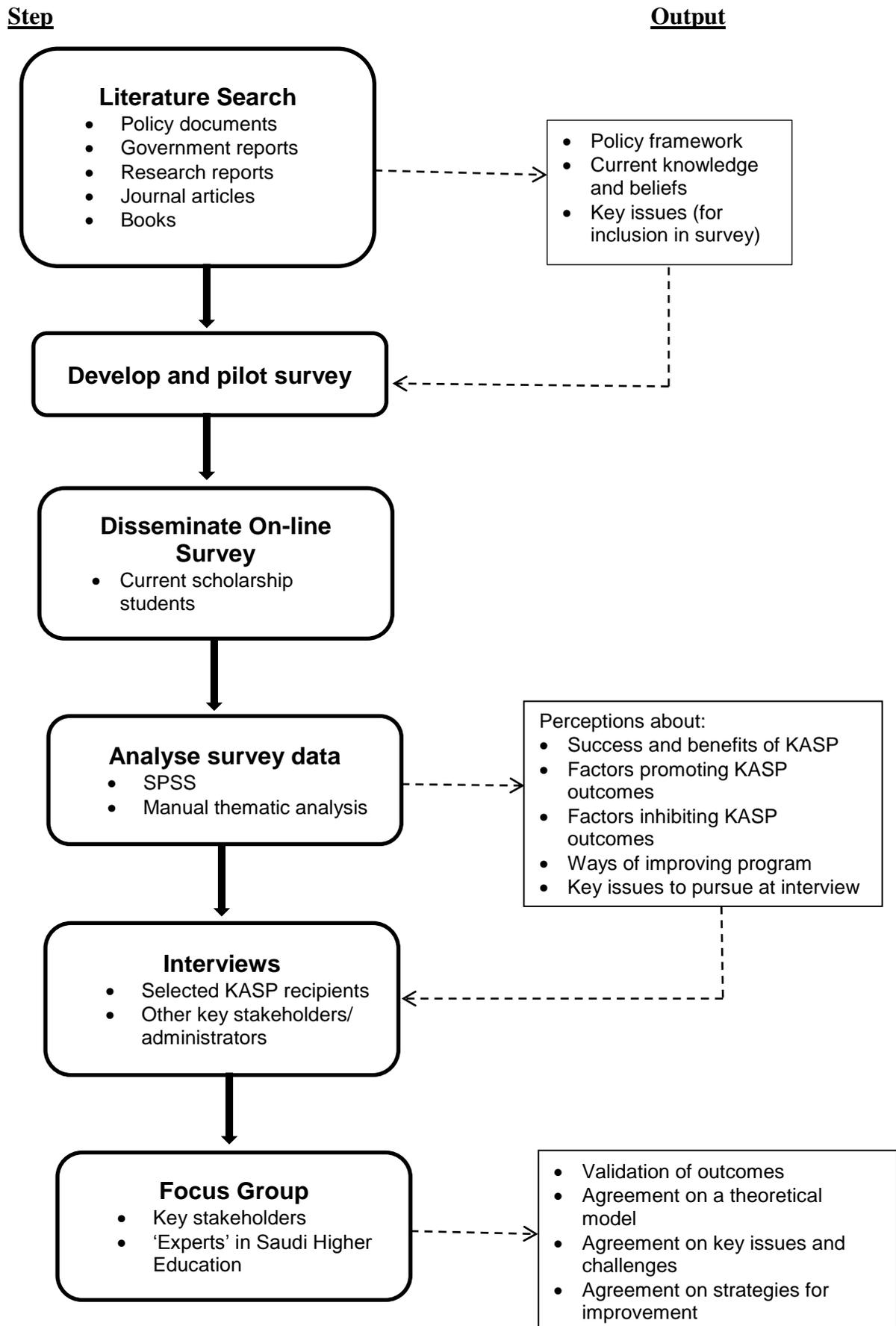
holders are studying, and any associated trends; the number of students involved, both in total and partitioned by country; and the courses being pursued.

2. Outcomes of KASP, both positive and negative, as perceived by scholarship recipients and other major stakeholders – what do they believe has worked well, and what do they believe has not worked well, and why?
3. Perceived success of the program overall – has it achieved its objectives, or is it likely to achieve its objectives, at the levels intended?
4. Identification of the factors that appear to promote the success of the program – what actions, activities, processes and policies do stakeholders believe have contributed to the success of the program, and why?
5. Identification of the factors that appear to inhibit the success of the program – what actions, activities, processes and policies do stakeholders believe have acted as barriers, undermining the potential benefits of the program, and why?
6. From their knowledge and experiences, what actions do key stakeholders believe should or could be done to improve the success of the program?

Data collection and analysis plan

Figure 8 shows the research design that was developed for collecting and analyzing the data necessary to address the research questions for this study. The design involves six steps:

Figure 8: Data Collection and Analysis Plan



Step 1: A Literature Search of relevant policy documents, Government reports, research reports, journal articles and scholarly books designed to provide ‘known’ information about: the policy framework within which KASP operates; current knowledge and beliefs about what is working and not working with KASP; and key issues about which more information and understanding is required. The outcomes of the literature search are reported in Chapters 2 and 3 of this report.

Step 2: The development of an *On-line Survey* for distribution to current and past recipients of King Abdullah scholarships, and the subsequent piloting of the survey with a small group of participants to ensure that the questions are clear and that the data responses are of the form required.

Step 3: Dissemination of the Survey to the population of current KASP recipients.

Step 4: Analysis of the surveys using both the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and manual thematic analysis (Guest, 2012, p. 11). The focus of the analysis is on the identification of the major issues and challenges for KASP, perspectives about the success of the program and the factors that are seen to promote or inhibit that success, the impact of the program on individual students and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and realistic suggestions for improvement of the implementation of KASP.

Step 5: A series of *Semi-structured Face-to-Face Interviews* (Patton, 2002, pp. 339-427) with selected KASP recipients and other key KASP stakeholders and administrators in order to provide more comprehensive information and a greater depth of understanding about key issues arising from the survey and literature search.

Step 6: A Focus Group involving a small group of key stakeholders and ‘experts’ in Saudi Higher Education, the purpose of which is to validate findings from the research, gain agreement about the key issues and challenges regarding KASP, establish a theoretical model to underpin KASP, and seek agreement regarding strategies for improving the effectiveness of KASP.

Survey methodology

A survey consists of a predetermined set of questions that is given to a sample or an entire population in order to obtain information and insights about current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, behaviours or practices (Shaughnessy et al., 2011, p. 161). The most widely-used form of survey – and the one used for this study – is the questionnaire (Neuman, 2006, p. 272) which is a research instrument consisting of a series of carefully-formulated questions designed to gather relevant information from respondents in a form that can be analysed in a rigorous and comprehensive manner (Creswell, 2005, p. 358).

Survey design usually involves six steps (Creswell, 2005; Neuman, 2006; Shaughnessy, et al., 2011):

1. Identify the key issues about which information needs to be collected from the respondents;
2. Construct a question(s) designed to collect relevant and comprehensive information about each of the issues;
3. Decide on an appropriate response mode that will collect the information in a form capable of appropriate analysis relevant to the research question being addressed;
4. Decide on an appropriate sample to which the survey will be distributed;

5. Decide on an appropriate method for distributing and collecting the survey questionnaires; and
6. Determine a valid and reliable method for analysing the information collected.

The key issues identified by the researcher as the focus for this study's survey were:

1. Biographic information about respondents that can be used for subsequent analyses: the country and institution in which the Saudi scholarship holder is studying; the course taken; and the age and gender of the student.
2. What KASP recipients believe has worked well with the Program, and what they believe has not worked well.
3. What KASP recipients believe should or could be done to improve the success of the program?
4. Any other issues relevant to the program that they wish to raise.

A number of questions was then constructed in order to provide relevant and comprehensive information about each of these key issues. Appendix 2 presents a matrix matching the questions developed against each of the key issues. In developing the set of survey questions, the researcher followed the 'Principles of Good Question Writing' elaborated by Neuman (2006, pp. 277-281):

1. Avoid jargon, slang and abbreviations
2. Avoid ambiguity, confusion and vagueness
3. Avoid emotional language

4. Avoid double-barreled questions (a single question that addresses two different issues, thus providing an ambiguous answer because the researcher can't be sure of the respondent's intention)
5. Avoid leading questions (one that leads a respondent to favour a particular response because of the wording)
6. Avoid asking questions that are beyond respondents' reasonable knowledge-base or capabilities
7. Avoid beginning a question with a premise with which respondents may not agree, and then ask them to make choices about it

The survey was distributed on-line with participants asked to provide their responses either by using 'tick the appropriate box' or Likert-scale (level of agreement) or short answer options. Responses were analysed using both the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and manual thematic analysis (Guest, 2012, p. 11) as discussed earlier in this chapter. The final survey instrument used for this study is provided as Appendix 2.

Sample for survey

Bartlett et al. (2001) provide a method for calculating the appropriate sample sizes for survey research. Using this method, the appropriate sample size for surveying a population of 130,000 (the approximate number of Saudi students sponsored by KASP) is 383 for a confidence level of 95% and 662 for a confidence level of 99%. The on-line survey for this study was distributed to a random sample of 1000 Saudi international students, with 688 students returning completed surveys, a response rate of 68.8%. It is reasonable to assert, therefore, that the random sample used for this study is representative of the general population of Saudi scholarship students, at a confidence level of 99%.

Characteristics of the sample included:

- 374 students (54.4%) were married and 314 (45.6%) either unmarried or divorced;
- 68.2% of the sample had one or more children;
- 303 respondents (44.0%) were studying in the United States, 227 (33.0%) in Australia, 65 (9.4%) in the United Kingdom, and 28 (4.1%) from Canada. Other countries in which small numbers of respondents were studying included Austria, China, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, South Korea and Sweden.
- 215 respondents (31.3%) were in their first year of international study, 122 (17.7%) were in their second year of international study, with the remaining 351 (51.0%) in their third or subsequent year of international study; and
- 202 respondents (29.4%) were enrolled in Engineering, 191 (27.8%) in Business/ Economics/ Accounting/ Finance, 101 (14.7%) in Computing Science, and 53 (7.7%) in medicine. Other disciplines represented in the sample included Medical Science, Mathematics, Health Sciences, Nursing, Pharmacy and Law.

Focus group methodology

It was considered important to ‘test’ the findings of this research study for their validity; that is, to ensure that the outcomes of the data collection and analysis process provided findings that are, and that are seen to be, reasonable, realistic and useable. A focus group of academics and system administrators with experience and expertise relevant to the topic was chosen as the methodology for undertaking this step.

A focus group is a semi-structured qualitative research technique in which a purposefully-chosen group of people are collectively interviewed in order to engage them in focused conversation (Stewart et al., 2007, p. 1). Focus groups “afford researchers access to ... the

complex ways in which people position themselves” in relation to particular issues and topics (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 904).

A focus group is a ‘natural setting’ that assists participants to express their ideas and opinions freely and openly in a way that helps them to feel empowered (Neuman, 2006, p. 412). Participants are afforded the capacity to provide explanations for the opinions they express and the views that they hold, and to query and to seek deeper understanding of the views of others. Above all, focus groups provide a setting for the open and critical review and evaluation of ideas against the criteria of feasibility and importance (Brinkerhoff, 1988) – what Lunn and Smith (2009) refer to as ‘reality checking’. Focus groups, therefore, are an effective research methodology for validating the outcomes of qualitative research (Fern, 2001, p. 73).

Fern (2001), Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) and Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook (2007) present arguments and research findings that suggest that if a focus group is to have maximum interaction and input among all members of the group, then it should ideally constitute of no less than four and no more than ten members. If a focus group consists of less than four members, then issues are unlikely to be subjected to a sufficient range of critical perspectives. If the focus group consists of more than ten members, then group dynamics will limit the capacity of at least some members to contribute to discussion in a meaningful way. This means that there may be a need to eliminate several high-credibility professionals in favor of a better group mix.

A matrix mapping exercise was used to facilitate the process of selecting members for the focus group. Possible group members were listed down one axis and the set of desired criteria for focus group membership down the other. The criteria used for determining contribution to group knowledge and understanding were:

- knowledge of the international higher education context;
- knowledge of student scholarship schemes and processes;
- knowledge of education and cultural issues confronting international students; and
- knowledge of the Saudi higher education system.

Each potential group member identified through the matrix mapping exercise was then contacted and invited to become a member of the focus group. All those contacted agreed to participate. A letter was then sent to each participant, detailing the processes to be followed before, during and after the focus group session, and what would be expected of each person throughout that time.

All of the people who agreed to participate in the focus group session had extremely busy professional and personal diaries. Further, the researcher had a very limited budget with which to facilitate the focus group, and it was not feasible to physically bring all of the participants together at one location given that some of the desired participants lived in different countries (Saudi Arabia, Australia and the United Kingdom). Lunn and Smith (2009) and Fern (2001) argue that while a focus group attains maximum benefit from face-to-face interaction, much can still be gained by exchange of ideas and perspectives facilitated through videoconferencing, teleconferencing or the on-line exchange of emails. Consequently, it was decided to conduct the focus group in part by teleconference and in part by exchange of on-line emails. Face-to-face interaction was not feasible given the geographic diversity of desired participants, and videoconferencing was not feasible because of hardware and software issues. It was also decided to limit the length of the teleconference focus group to two hours so as to limit disruption to the professional commitments of participants.

Prior to the focus group, all participants were provided with an outline of: the purpose of the study; background literature, including major findings of previous research; the research methodology; the major findings; and conclusions drawn from analysis by the researcher. This process of 'setting the scene' is sometimes referred to in the literature as 'historical examination' (Fern, 2001), and is considered to be a critical part of the focus group process because it allows participants to develop a critical understanding of the issues prior to participating in the focus group where those perspectives will be challenged and refined.

The focus group was facilitated by the doctoral candidate for this study. The basic purpose of the focus group leader is to provide the necessary level of direction and structure to ensure the desired outcome of the session is met within the time available, while simultaneously ensuring that group synergy and spontaneity are maintained (Lunn and Smith, 2009). While it is important for the focus group leader to control the nature and direction of discussion during the session, she must not herself become a participant in that discussion: that is, except to stimulate further discussion or to probe ideas further, she must not assert her views or perspectives on the group.

At the start of the focus group, the researcher stressed that the purpose of the focus group session was to validate the findings of her study, and then outlined the processes and procedures that would be followed. Participants were then asked in turn to provide their name, to talk briefly about themselves and their professional background, and to state what they believed their special perspective and contribution would be to the session. Permission was also sought to record the teleconference session so that the researcher was not personally distracted by having to take notes when she should be actively listening and engaging participants.

A critical issue for a focus group session is ensuring that the message that participants believe they are communicating is the same as the message that is received. In order to avoid miscommunication, the researcher used the technique of 'reflective listening' which involves four strategies (Fern 2001, pp. 81-82): clarifying ("Could you please state that point in a different way?"); paraphrasing ("What I think I heard you say was ..."); reflecting ("You appear to feel that ..."); and summarizing ("Your major points appear to be ...").

Each of the major themes, issues and trends arising from the study were presented, in turn, to the focus group participants for comment, elaboration and debate. After a reasonable length of discussion on each topic, the researcher sought to gain consensus by asking: "Does everyone agree with that?". Where one or more people did not agree, they were asked to explain to the rest of the group the reasons for their position, and others were asked to present the counter argument, before another 'vote' was taken. If consensus could not be reached after the second vote, the person(s) holding the minority view were asked whether they could 'live with' the majority perspective (Lunn and Smith, 2009). This process worked well, with no obvious animosities persisting with respect to decisions made.

Focus Group Participants

Those participating in the focus group were:

- The Saudi Cultural Attache to Australia, Dr Abdulaziz Bin Taleb, who is responsible for overseeing the administration and welfare of all Saudi scholarship students in Australia;
- Professor Larry Smith, who has recently published a major academic text on Higher Education in Saudi Arabia, and who has worked as a Senior International Consultant to

the Centre for Higher Education Research and Studies in the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education;

- Professor Geoffrey Elliot from the University of South Wales, who has been involved in academic consultancies in Saudi Arabia for more than five years, and has written on Saudi Higher Education in international publications;
- Dr. Abdulhalim Mazi, who is a recent retired Director of the Centre for Research and Studies (CHERS), Saudi Ministry of Higher Education;
- Mr Abdullah Alanazi, President, Saudi Arabia Student Association, University of New England; and
- Professor Fawzi Bukhari, who has published a book chapter on the King Abdullah Scholarship Program; and
- Dr Brian Denman, who has published journal articles and a book chapter on the King Abdullah Scholarship Program.

Ethics approval

Ethics approval for conducting the research was provided by the University of New England Human Ethics Committee (approval number HE11-013, appendix 7). This step ensures that the research is conducted according to nationally-approved ethical standards for Australia which protect the rights of participants and ensure that researchers fulfil their professional obligations. In particular, the requirements for the ethics approval ensures that the anonymity of study participants will be assured.

Conclusion

This study employed a mixed-method design to collect information about a case study of the King Abdullah overseas Scholarship Program (KASP) for Saudi students. The design involved a comprehensive literature review, an on-line survey, semi-structured face-to-face interviews, and a focus group. Analyses were performed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and manual thematic analysis.

The following chapter provides the information collected and the outcomes of the analyses performed.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter reports and presents the findings which were collected (by the researcher) from the overseas Saudi students through both methods: survey and face-to-face interviews. Therefore, the chapter presents the findings based on the research methods as it devotes its first part to articulate the findings and outcomes that generated from the online surveys whilst the second part of the chapter is dedicated to report the interviews' findings.

Each of the two parts (surveys findings and interviews findings) start with a brief explanation of the respondents' biographic data. Referring to the four aims the research was designed to investigate (as mentioned in Chapter 1: i) the social, economic and political impacts of the scholarship scheme, KASP, for the recipients and the Saudi nation-state; ii) the extent to which the Program's recipients and the Saudi nation have reaped value for investment from the KASP; iii) new opportunities and challenges that have arisen from the KASP scheme; and iv) in what ways the Program might be improved if it is to be sustained), the data is presented in this chapter to highlight the impacts of KASP on individuals and on KSA; at the same time it points out the weaknesses and strengths of King Abdullah Scholarship Program and suggests certain procedure to reduce its problems and to boost its positive outcomes.

The last section of the chapter reports the students' recommendations and comments; the recommendations were essentially suggested by the surveyed students while the comments were given by the interviewed students. Noteworthy, this chapter only presents the data while

the analysis is provided in Chapter 7. All the Tables for survey and interview questions are provided in Appendices 2 and 4.

Survey findings

Biographic data

Of the 688 students who responded to the survey, 513 (74.5%) were from 20 to 30 years of age, only 18 students (2.6%) were under 20 years old, 114 (16.5%) students were from 31 to 35 years old, and 37 (5.3%) participants were above 35 years of age. In terms of marital status, out of the 673 students who answered the marital status question, 374 students were married with (55.5%), 286 (42.5%) students were singles, and 13 (2%) students were divorced.

This study identified that 504 (79%) students, of a total of 636 respondents, were sponsored by the Ministry of Higher Education via the King Abdullah Scholarship Program. 61 students were university-sponsored, 43 students were government-sponsored, 11 students were hospital-sponsored, eight were sponsored by industry (Aramco), three were sponsored by the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation, two were sponsored by Ministry of Defense, one student was sponsored by the Ministry of Health, and one student was sponsored by the Ministry of Education.

The majority of study abroad recipients came from the KASP programme; however, because all of the students in this research were sponsored by a Saudi government department or organization, thus the typical Saudi study abroad student were reported to having additional responsibilities to report their academic progress regularly to Saudi Arabia Cultural Missions or to their sponsoring organizations. This differs significantly to other study abroad programmes and experiences identified by students from other countries, as oftentimes, their study abroad programmes and exchanges were considered self-funded. In the latter case, the study abroad

student was responsible for keeping track of their academic progress towards their academic degree. In the Saudi case, students were awarded to study abroad in specific fields according to the sponsor's needs.

The students who participated in this study were studying in eight different countries during the time the survey was distributed. The highest percentage came from the United States with 303 students (47.1%), followed by Australia with 227 students (35.3%). A further 65 responses (10.1%) came from United Kingdom, 28 from Canada; eight from Germany; five from New Zealand; 4 from South Korea, and three from France.

The survey revealed that Engineering, Business and Computer Science were the three major disciplines that the students were sent abroad to study. For instance, out of the 662 students who responded to the question of the discipline, 202 (30.5%) were studying Engineering (i.e. civil engineering, electrical engineering, industrial engineering, chemical engineering, or architecture), 191 students (29%) were studying Business (accounting, marketing, accounting, electronic trade, insurance, or finance), and 101 students (15.2%) were studying Computer Science. A further breakdown of other disciplines include 53 studying Medicine (including dentistry), 38 studying Medical Science, 33 in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, or Biology, 22 in Health Science, 13 in Nursing, 6 in Pharmacy, and one student each in Law, Arts, and Translation and Interpretation.

See Table 21, which summarises the responses to each of the questions raised in the survey¹

¹ Because some students skipped certain questions in the online survey, the total responses vary according to each question, as it will be shown throughout the section of the survey findings. Nevertheless, the researcher calculated the percentages for each question based on the total on that particular question.

Table 21: Survey results concerning voluntary personal information given by student respondents (N=688 students)

		N	Percentage
Group of Age	Under 20	18	2.6
	20-25	230	34.7
	26-30	283	41.4
	31-35	114	17
	35+	37	5.3
	Marital Status	Single	286
Married		374	42.5
Divorced		13	2
Sponsor	Ministry of Higher Education (KASP)	504	79
	University sponsored	61	9.5
	Government sponsored	43	6.7
	Hospital sponsored	11	1.7
	Saudi Aramco	8	1.2
	Ministry of Defense	2	0.3
	TVTC	3	0.4
	Ministry of Health	1	0.1
	Ministry of Education	1	0.1
Hosting Country	United States of America	303	47.1
	Australia	227	35.3
	Britain	65	10.1
	Canada	28	4.3
	Germany	8	1.2
	France	3	0.4
	New Zealand	5	0.7
	South Korea	4	0.6
Field of Study	Engineering	202	30.5
	Business	191	29
	Computer Science	101	15.2
	Medicine	53	8.0
	Medical Science	38	5.7
	Mathematics	33	4.9

	Health Science	22	3.3
	Nursing	13	1.9
	Pharmacy	6	0.9
	Law	1	0.15
	Art	1	0.15
	Translation	1	0.15

Data generated from the survey

Due to the nature and focus of the survey questions, the answers were grouped in two categories: as the impacts of KASP on the individuals, and on KSA as a nation state from the students' perspectives. Moreover, as some of the survey questions aimed to investigate the students' perspectives about KASP itself, another section is dedicated to present the students perspective regarding KASP. The findings in this section of the study are supported by the perspectives of Saudi students who were interviewed in Hall's (2013) and Heyn's (2013) study.

The impacts of KASP on the personal level

One of the survey questions was to register the level of agreement among the students whether the overall experience of KASP had been positive, 479 (85%) of the 557 respondents agreed and strongly agreed on this, 66 students (12%) were neutral, 12 (2%) disagreed, and none of the students (0%) strongly disagreed. This finding parallels the fifth pattern of Hall's study, which indicates that Saudi students, who sponsored by KASP, are appreciative of KASP and generally pleased with the program, and they felt that they have been given a unique opportunity (Hall, 2013), despite that Hall's study focused only on Saudi male students as stated earlier. One of the several advantages the Saudi students acknowledged was the amount of money the Saudi Arabia government spends to sponsor them. As cited in Hall (2013, p. 96), one of the Saudi students believes,

Having the salary and tuition costs the government a lot of money. After seeing the costs for Americans too, we are lucky that our government pays for us, and we don't have to worry about these things. We don't work or anything and focus on study. Other

international students sometimes talk about how much their family pay in tuition. How it is too much high for them. That makes me know it is good we don't have to worry about money.

The previous finding revealed that Saudi international students are privileged to be sponsored by KASP in general. The responses to another question of the survey gives an insight into specific advantages that KASP offers them and they are privileged to gain. For instance, of 616 students, 444 students (72%) strongly agreed that studying overseas is a great opportunity for each of them in terms of getting a better standard of education and in terms of knowing different cultures. Another 151 (25%) agreed; 15 students (2.4) were neutral; four students (0.6) disagreed, and two students (0.3) strongly disagreed. In a related question, 459 students out of 561 (82%) expected a higher salary or higher ranked job position upon their return to Saudi Arabia as another benefit or value of the qualification acquired overseas via KASP.

The findings in these two questions appear to be comparable to other studies cited earlier in the thesis on study abroad, which suggest that students generally choose to study abroad in order to obtain a high-standard international degree, to broaden their knowledge about other cultures and in order to improve their prospects for employment and to expand their ways of knowing and thinking through international engagement.

The fact that students strongly agreed that study abroad offers new opportunities cannot be understated. Based on the findings, Saudi students seem to link the proper education to the increased opportunities for good jobs. In other words, knowing and experiencing other cultures and increasing job opportunities ranked as the main two personal benefits descending from KASP from surveyed students' perspectives. This appreciation will be elaborated further later in the chapter. Heyn (2013, pp. 43-44) comments,

Most of the [Saudi students] participants expressed that studying in the United States broadened their awareness about other cultures and that this awareness has served as a mechanism for reshaping some of their personal beliefs and values. The overarching idea that surfaced was the participants' recognition that they had gained a respect for and had become more open to other cultures.

In addition, Hall declared that many of the Saudi student participants frequently say that KASP is a great program because it makes Saudis more open-minded as a result of interacting with different cultures, well-educated people, and it helps Saudis to find good jobs (Hall, 2013). For example, one of Hall's respondents said, "It [KASP] is working because ... they're [KASP sponsored] more open and they have high education; they are better. So KASP is helping a lot of people to move their life let's say"; another respondents said, "it [KASP] is a chance to change and get a good job at home" (Hall, 2013, pp. 95-96).

Even though 82% of the surveyed students identified job opportunities and high salaries as one of KASP's personal benefit resulting from the foreign qualifications, this high percentage may represent or cause a problem/challenge for the government of Saudi Arabia as to how KSA can meet with their expectations. One of Hall's study findings revealed that, although Saudi students are pleased with KASP, they are concerned about finding jobs when they return back to Saudi Arabia given the competition of huge numbers of KASP recipients worldwide. Hall (2013, p. 97) comments,

While Saudi men participating in the KASP are grateful for the opportunities the scholarship provides them, and are mostly optimistic about the changes for their own lives (if not for Saudi culture as a whole)...Most concerning for KASP participants are the job prospects waiting for them upon returning to Saudi Arabia.

Another question of the survey was to investigate the level of agreement the students have towards allowing their children to pursue their tertiary studies overseas, the responses of 81%

of the students were between strongly agree and agree, while 14% were neutral, 4% as disagree, and only (1%) was identified as strongly disagree. This finding adds to the high level of satisfaction among the International Saudi students about their experience of studying overseas even though it has raised question about issues of identity.

In terms of concerns about being misperceived by families and friends (as becoming ‘Westernised’) upon their return to Saudi Arabia, 58% of the students disagreed and strongly disagreed whereas only 9% strongly agreed, 18% agreed, and 16% were neutral. The predominance of students who disagreed about being misperceived suggests that families and friends were encouraging and welcoming about the academic opportunities offered abroad and were not worried about any negative consequences associated with living in a different culture, albeit a Western one.

Nonetheless, the third pattern in Hall’s study reveals that overseas Saudi students are very keen to hide part of their experiences and changes to their beliefs and ideology from friends and families back in Saudi Arabia fearing of being misperceived (Hall, 2013). One of Hall’s Saudi international respondents said, “my family doesn’t like some of the things I believe now, and I don’t let them know it. I may be different with close friends, but I can’t do everything I think” (Hall, 2013, p. 81). Hall also explained that Saudi students are mindful about what they share with their families and friends, back in Saudi Arabia, via the social media channels. For example, some students have two Facebook accounts, one for Saudis and another one for Americans. As one of the respondents believed that if his family in Saudi Arabia were to see his pictures with women, they will think that he is “doing something wrong”. To summarise, Halls (2013, p. 83) explains that,

This reluctance to share their lives creates anxiety for the Saudi men as they report sometimes “being nervous” about what family and friends may discover about not just

what they are doing in the United States, but also ways they have changed their personal beliefs as a result of living and studying in the U.S...This feeling that family is not always supportive of changes in attitudes and opinions as a result of studying in America is a common feature of interviews with Saudi men.

When combining Hall's finding to this study findings, it seems to assume that overseas Saudi students are not worried about being misperceived by families and friends in Saudi Arabia as long as the student do not show that they have changed.

When students asked about the reasons or motives to apply for the overseas scholarship program, the findings suggest that the main reason was to seek a quality education and foreign qualification (86%; 490 responses), followed by learning a different language (74%; 423 responses), expand their worldview (71%; 405 responses), learn a different or expanded way of thinking (63%; 361 responses), discovering the world (358 responses), obtaining a higher salary upon completion of the degree (55%; 313 responses), and the perception of prestige resulting from studying in a Western host country (29%; 166 responses). Causality of reason for studying abroad and expectations concerning higher salary seem to suggest that while Saudi students normally expect to obtain higher salaries based on past experience from media and association. Unexpected finding of the data analysis seems to suggest that developing the 'whole' person was viewed as significantly important. Again, this seems to be in keeping with the literature on study abroad in other studies conducted around the world.

Shifting focus from student expectations to experience, survey findings revealed that Saudi students experienced various levels of discrimination. Among 563 students who responded to this question, 2% (12 responses) experienced discrimination frequently, 50% (283 responses) experienced discrimination sometimes, and 48% (268 responses) experienced no discrimination. Although Batterjee (in Chapter 1) declared that Saudi students experienced

variant ways of discrimination as a result of the bad representation of Saudi culture and religion particularly post September 11, the literature in Chapter 3 indicated that there has been always this kind of discrimination against the non-Caucasian in the OECD countries whether they come from Asia, Africa or South America. Nevertheless, this finding also seems to suggest that while international student mobility has brought with it a number of new challenges to acculturation, orientation, and inter-cultural communication, the adage that the global village is becoming ever smaller through international relations, students continue to experience varying levels of discrimination despite increased interaction. The only notable difference identified in the responses of this study is the levels of prejudice and discrimination against Arab peoples in general---and in particular Saudi Arabia---due in part to social media and events following 9/11 (Lee, 2007). While further research is necessary to determine if increased international interaction and engagement helps to diminish prejudice and discrimination, the analysis of the data from this study appears inconclusive.

The overarching evidence concerning challenges Saudi study abroad students have had to overcome is ranked below according to three main challenges based on need (purpose).

- 1) Educate my children
- 2) Obtain a driver's license
- 3) Study away from home
- 4) Communicate with non-Muslims
- 5) Maintain Islamic identity; maintain financial support, and obtain /renew student visas
- 6) Understand the host culture
- 7) Communicate in host-country's language
- 8) Social/racial profiling
- 9) Obtain health insurance

Figure 9: Challenges for overseas Saudi students

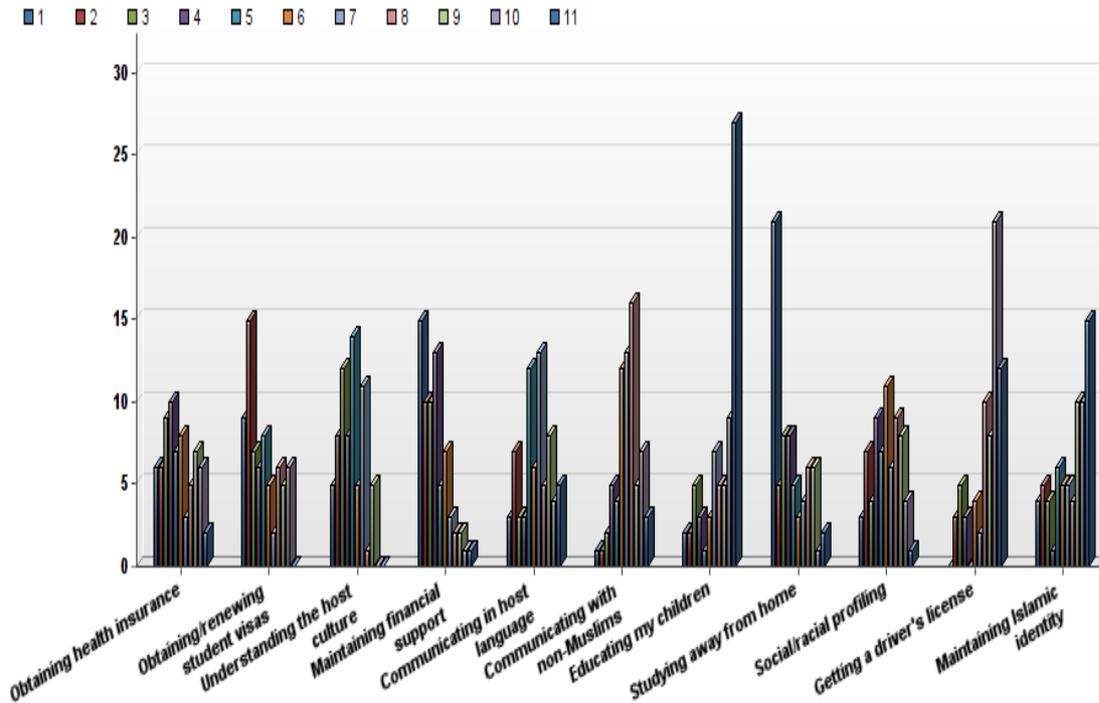


Figure 9 helps to illustrate how the responses reflect differences according to host country. Although the expressed perception of each of the challenges is gender-neutral, in that the survey was designed purposely not to differentiate between male and female students, the differences in responses appear to indicate differences of opinion about family commitments, personal interactions amongst Westerners, financial issues, and acculturation between genders. Further evidence is apparently needed in order to establish a closer understanding about whether these perceptions can be delineated as gender-specific, resource-specific (in terms of financial and travel documentation), and identity-specific. In other words, no patterns emerged from data collected concerning challenges based on the host country. In spite of this, Saudi students studying abroad appear to share commonalities with other like-minded students in terms of both individual expectations and experience.

Due to the nature of the survey purposes, the students were not asked to elaborate on their answers; however, the interviews' findings section will explain these personal difficulties further.

The impacts of KASP on Saudi Arabia

From the students' perspectives, KASP is impacting Saudi Arabia in many ways. For example, among a total of 556 students, 434 students (78%) believed that obtaining foreign qualifications would eventually result in a higher standard of living for the nation. Only 122 students (22%) did not believe this to be the case. This finding tends to be aligned with the common assumption discussed earlier in this research that building great/developed nations and uplifting their living standards starts by implementing effective strategies to best-educate their people.

In another question, the students were asked how 'as ambassadors' they could adopt, follow, or improve KSA's cultural and national stereotype outside Saudi's borders. Among a total of 411 responses, surveyed students ranked:

- 1) being more hospitable and respectable towards Western people as the most important;
- 2) changing the way Western people feel about Islam;
- 3) following traditional customs in order to correct stereotypes;
- 4) promoting greater equality and piece in the host country; and
- 5) more communication with non-Muslims.

In relation to other students studying abroad, Saudi students appear to reflect the same attributes in wanting to serve as cultural ambassadors of their country-of-origin.

Heyn's study states that all the Saudi participants acknowledge KASP as a chance to represent Saudi Arabia positively and help others to correct the possible misperception they might

portrayed about Saudi Arabia's culture via the false media. Heyn's participants explained that many of their classmates had negative views about Saudi Arabia and they helped their classmates to know 'the good and bright side of Saudi culture'. For example, as cited in Heyn (2013, pp. 109-110), one of the participants declared that "[he] is like a messenger for his country . . . and [he] has to leave a positive view of Saudi to Americans... and that he believes that he is responsible to "correct the negative picture here[United States". Another Saudi student believed that he is "responsible being a Muslim, to give a positive idea about [Saudi people] to [help] change the ideas that some Americans still have about [Saudi people]." Similarly, the third participant stated, "I am from Saudi Arabia and this makes me a Saudi Ambassador in [America] . . . when I go back to Saudi I will be a United States Ambassador . . . both are important."

So, the findings from both studies suggest that KASP is improving KSA's reputation outside its borders through its students.

When asked whether the return of qualified KASP scholarship holders would ultimately result in lesser numbers of foreign workers in Saudi Arabia, responses were mixed and therefore considered inconclusive. Also the answers given did not support whether a lesser number of foreign workers would be beneficial or problematic (78 responses (14%) strongly agree; 182 responses (32%) agree; 165 responses (20%) disagree; and 26 responses (5%) strongly disagree).

A similar question about whether their KSA national and cultural identity would remain intact upon completion of their study abroad was also deemed, by the researcher, as inconclusive. Results included: 54 responses (10%) strongly agree; 138 responses (25%) agree; 160 responses (29%) neutral; 179 responses (31%) disagree; and 33 responses (6%) strongly disagree. While it is clear that further research is necessary to better understand differences of

opinion regarding these two questions, it is believed that the former question may have been confusing due to the lack of clarity on roles and definition of skilled and unskilled labour. It was hoped that this question would yield answers concerning skilled workers, as it is believed that the Saudi government has made a concerted effort to diversify the workforce and to decrease its dependency on skilled labour. Similarly, with regards to the latter question, it seems that survey students are not certain whether KASP would affect the Islamic identity of Saudi Arabia eventually.

In addition to the positive impacts of KASP scheme, there were also challenges identified by the surveyed students. For instance, the findings revealed one potential major challenge for KSA resulting from sending its students abroad, and this challenge has unveiled other internal challenges in Saudi Arabia. The main challenge appears in the number of Saudi students who are willing to extend their stay abroad. For example, 464 students (79%) were willing to extend their stay in the host country after the successful completion of their degrees. Again, further research is necessary to specify and identify the length of the extensions the students are seeking i.e. the extension could be for days, months, years or forever.

In addition, the reasons provided by the students add to the internal challenges as stated in Chapter 2. The reasons for extending the stay abroad were listed as:

- 1) seek better opportunities for their kids (309 responses);
- 2) embrace different ways of thinking (291 responses);
- 3) host countries have a better standard of living (279 responses);
- 4) exercise a greater freedom of speech (256 responses);
- 5) experience a Western lifestyle (234 responses);
- 6) take advantage of more employment opportunities (225 responses);
- 7) improve social interaction (135 responses);

8) exercise freedom of religion (79 responses), and

9) marry foreigners (46 responses), and other ‘personal’ reasons are listed in Appendix 3.

Nevertheless, the most frequent provided reason was referring to the ‘unfair’ and ‘messy’ system practiced in Saudi Arabia, which known as *wasta*, which literally means “the intervention of a patron in favor of a client to obtain benefits and/or resources from a third party” (Mohammad & Hamdy, 2008, p. 1). *Wasta* is a variety of cronyism or nepotism which lays in the use of the social connections in order to obtain benefits such as jobs, promotions or even better rooms in hospitals that otherwise would not be provided (Al-Maeena, 2001). In Heyn’ study, he revealed that two participants unveiled their concerns about going back to Saudi Arabia after experiencing the American/Western culture. For example, one of the participants (as cited in Heyn, 2013, pp. 111-112) said,

I don’t know how to live the rest of my life back home. It is going to be hard because I have made a lot of friends here. I came when I am young. I came like before technology, before Facebook. I mean we have technology back home, but it was not like that big deal, but now it’s big deal and I don’t know who is my friends. You know when I go back like I went back last year and I just saw my family. I get a lot bored and I just want to come back here because all of my friends are here.

This part identifies the surveyed Saudi students perspectives about specific challenges for KSA as a result of sending Saudi students overseas. This was confirmed when analyzing responses that appeared to reflect contradictions or conflicting information (e.g. varied responses in terms of benefits and challenges). While data collected remain inconclusive, it appears that Saudi students demonstrate levels of self-confidence when pursuing study abroad for their own personal growth, but have, at the same time, expressed doubt as to how study abroad---as an aggregate whole for the nation---will benefit the country. Adding to the complexity of addressing realistic expectations of one’s own hopes and desires to make the most of a study

abroad experience, the overlap and interconnectivity of experiences through contact--- regardless of gender, resources, and identity issues----suggest patterns for divergent (as opposed to) convergent views expressed concerning perceived benefits for the nation-state. Despite perceived allegiances to sponsorship, which was addressed earlier in the chapter, the expressed concern by the majority of the students surveyed about their country was an interesting find in this study.

Students' opinions related to KASP

When asked the to express their level of agreement on the statement that supposed that they were pleased or satisfied with the disciplines that KASP assigned them to study overseas, 484 responses (82%) varied between Strongly Agree and Agree, while 64 students (11%) were neutral, and 41 responses (7%) varied between Strongly Disagree and Disagree. Allocating the students in preferred fields could be one of the reasons behind the successfulness and continuity of the KASP programme.

Another question of the survey was designed to specify whether Saudi-sponsored students preferred going abroad or stay stateside when pursuing study with a foreign-based institution. The responses were divided: 64% of the respondents preferred to study overseas in order to gain a qualification whereas 36% expressed interest in overseas institutions based in Saudi Arabia. This information could be useful in developing study abroad opportunities in Saudi Arabia post KASP.

Furthermore, due to an apparent lack of a skilled workforce in KSA---based on government-initiated reports---the survey investigated job preferences of KASP recipients and what jobs they would like to occupy upon completion of their degrees. In instances where the students

were willing to work for other sectors (outside of their discipline) that were not provided on the list, the survey questionnaire allowed students to type/add the other answers. Accordingly, the survey revealed that among the 567 responses, education as academics and teachers was reported as the most favourable profession (182 responses). Other choices included government positions at local, regional, national, or international levels (80 responses); Engineering positions including the civil, mechanical or electrical engineering (68 responses); business executive positions (65 responses) (i.e. Marketing, Management, Finance, or Accounting departments); hospital administration (workers/administrators) (55 responses); self-employed (Entrepreneur) (45 responses); banking sector (25 responses), and tourism and hospitality (3 responses). Finally, there were other careers added individually by the respondents: Architecture (two responses); private sector (two responses); Aviation, Researcher; Scientist writer and researcher; Aviation, Digital media (two responses); and parenthetically, one student expressed interest in becoming a ruler or King. This last response is important to document and consider, as it helps to highlight that some students may have taken these questions lightly---not considered them thoroughly---and may have given ‘off-the-cuff’ responses. Every effort has been made to ensure that the quality of the answers given are parallel with what has been found in the literature and/or followed up by the interviews. Worth mentioning, the provided disciplines by KASP and the desired careers by its recipients seems to indicate that the ‘dirty jobs’ or lower paid jobs will remain for the foreign low-wages workers.

Interview findings

The second part of the study seeks to better understand specific answers to the questions raised in the online survey questionnaire through the conducted interviews. The objective of the interviews was to collect rich data concerning the student respondents' perceptions of their study abroad expectations and experiences, how they self-describe identity in various forms and/or manifestations over time, and to gather more pertinent perspectives on how study abroad would help them upon their return to Saudi Arabia. The interviews were conducted in both English and Arabic. In instances where Arabic was used, the Arabic was translated back into English. The main reason for using Arabic in some cases was to ensure that student respondents were able to express themselves freely and without concern for being misperceived or misunderstood.

Biographic data

Among the 19 Saudi students interviewees in Australia, four of them (21.0%) were females and 15 students (79%) were males. Moreover, the 19 (100%) students were scholarship recipients; 10 students (53%) were sponsored by King Abdullah Scholarship Program; three students (16%) were sponsored by the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC); three (16%) were sponsored by Saudi government universities, and the other three students were sponsored by the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Defense and Aviation, and by the Royal High Commission.

The level of the study for the respondents varied from the Bachelor degrees to the PhD level; however, some students were newly arrived and were still attending English classes, which are designed to prepare international students for entry into degree programmes at the university.

four females were all Master's degree students, 15 males were Bachelor's degree students (60%) nine responses, five males were PhD candidates, and only two males were Master's degree students.

In term of the fields of study, four students (including 1 PhD student) were studying Engineering (including Mechanical Engineering and Bio-medical Engineering). Moreover, two students were studying IT, and two students were studying Accounting. Two students were studying Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), both of which were sponsored by the King Abdul Aziz University. The rest of the discipline fields ranged from medical nature type of study such as Clinical Science, Monocular Microbiology, Lab Medicine, Pharmacy, Genetics, Biochemistry to Business focused areas like Digital Marketing and Electronic Commerce. Finally, one of the PhD students was studying Communications. Table 22 helps to summarise the students interviewed for this second portion of the study.

Table 22: Summary of Interviewed Students' Demographics (N=19 students)

		N	Percentage
Gender	Males	15	79
	Females	4	21
Sponsors	KASP	10	53
	TVTC	3	16
	Gov. Universities	3	16
	Ministry of Health	2	10
	Royal High Commission	1	5
Level of Study	Bachelor	9	56
	Master	6	33
	PhD	4	21
Field of Study	Engineering	4	21
	IT	2	10
	Under the school of Medicine	6	33
	Business		
	MRI	4	21
	Communication	2	10
		1	5

Data generated from the interviews

The 19 students were asked seven questions to explain their perspectives regarding the personal benefits, personal challenges, benefits for KSA, and challenges for KSA that associated or may generate of King Abdullah Scholarship Program. Question 1, 3 and 5 were asking about personal impacts of KASP while question 2, 4 and 6 focused on KASP impacts on the nation state. For example, question one was concerned about the current personal benefits, whereas question 5 asked about the predicted impacts of KASP at personal levels in the long run (10 years ahead). Similarly, question 3 investigated the perspectives around the current benefits of KASP on Saudi Arabia while question 6 focused on the future impacts of KASP on Saudi Arabia. Seemingly, The students could hardly separate the answers for questions 1 and 5, and questions 3 and 6. For instance, the students anticipated more benefits as ‘positive impacts’ for the future both for themselves as well as for KSA as a nation. Consequently, the researcher defined and reported the answers from questions 5 and 6 as under the personal benefits and/or the benefits for KSA from sending its students overseas.

Personal benefits associated with the foreign scholarship program/s

Knickmeyer (2012) interviewed some Saudi students to learn about perspectives regarding the experience of studying overseas, Dana Al Mojil, one of the Saudi students who was interviewed and who finished her degree at Portland State University in USA, states, “I pay bills myself. I shop myself...In Saudi, you don't do that.” (Knickmeyer, 2012). Similarly, more than half of the interviewed students (53%) believed that learning how to be self-dependent is the first and foremost benefit they gained from studying overseas. Rana Al-Hulais (one of the interviewed students in this study) said, “Well, these two years of my life have changed me a lot ... I feel more self-confident now ... I am more dependent unlike when I was in Saudi

Arabia, I was relying on my parents, brothers and homemade to do what I have to do... but here I do everything by myself and I am enjoying this". Fayez said, "I never understood or appreciated what my parent do in my behalf until I came here and started to undertake the whole responsibility for myself... now, I can say that yes I was spoiled and not very responsible".

On the other hand, eight students (42%) appreciated the opportunity of studying overseas as it allowed them to be exposed to different cultures and to know more about them and in turn tell others about the Saudi culture. Improving communication skills by conversing directly with people who come from different backgrounds was considered another personal benefit resulting from the overseas scholarship program (26%). This benefit appears to be substantial and common theme for international Saudi students. Many of the participants discussed that KASP scheme was a useful strategy to tighten the international relations and brighten Islam's and Saudi Arabia's picture. Njood A said,

Although I travelled before for tourism, I never learned interesting things about the cultures...you know when we go for fun, we look for restaurant, theme parks, and things like that...but when I came to Australia and attended the English courses, I had to talk and work as groups with other people from everywhere... I didn't expect the Chinese culture to be similar to us in some aspects... I loved the Colombian people...I learned about Japanese culture...you know that is great...I have friends from everywhere now... Oh, I forgot to say, I actually learned about Australian culture too...

Dania Bashraf adds,

Thanks God we are given this scholarships to correct the image other have about us... you won't believe it, many of the Chinese and Korean classmates believed that we live in deserts and still riding camels...they also believed that each Saudi house has a barrel of petrol in the roofs of the houses...but I with other Saudi students explained to them and showed them pictures...they were shocked to know and see.

Foad (PhD student) added, "I believe that KASP aimed to correct the stereotype of KSA after

September 11th ... Saudi students, through the good manners, in their different hosting countries, could prove that not all Saudis are extremists and that the majority of us are friendly and open minded”.

Moreover, four students found overseas scholarships as truly beneficial because it improved English language proficiency, which has become an important skill in order to find jobs. Anas Said, “I am happy to learn the English language in its home [Australia]...because when we go to English language institutes in Saudi Arabia, we don't have a chance to practice the language everywhere... maybe only in restaurant when we use a few words like ‘please’, ‘give me this’ and ‘thank you’. He continued, “I heard that in every job interview, the interviewer test your English language which was worrying me”. Two other young male students had almost the same answers.

Three students (16%) referred to the memorisation-based, rote learning methods used in Saudi Arabia, and therefore disclosed that the foreign scholarship program was important to enlighten them to new, innovative, and more creative learning environments.

Finally, there were two students (10%) who found the overseas scholarships beneficial as the programme allowed them to gain a better and more prestigious international qualification than they would otherwise acquire in the home country. Overall, the survey revealed that 97% of the survey respondents finding KASP personally valuable in terms of providing them with high standard international qualification.

As for the anticipated impacts of studying abroad on the personal level, the students reported numerous benefits. For example, four students (21%) believed that after they completed their

studies overseas, they foresaw themselves as more self-confident. Also, four students anticipated being offered prestigious job positions with high salaries which aligned with the survey findings. The same portion of students (21%) assumed that they would speak 'very fluent' English in the future as a result of studying overseas. Furthermore, two students assumed that studying overseas would result in a better personality in general. For example, Mr. Rashood explained that taking the whole responsibility when abroad makes him aware of his capabilities, and that he never thought what he capable of until he came to study in Australia. Mr. Loai believed that after overcoming the academic and social difficulties associated with the study overseas, he is confident now that "there is nothing impossible". As noted, there were only 8 students out of 19 articulated their expectations of KASP impacts on their career life, four expected fluent English language; and 4 students expected the high ranked job. One of the Bachelor students, who were interviewed in this study, expected to receive around \$13,000 per month as starting salary. He said, "I believe when I go back to Saudi Arabia having a certificate from Australia...and speaking good English, I will be given a job with high salary that could start from 40,000 SR (\$13,000)".

The other students such as Mohammad, Eissa, and Loai simply believed that while the Saudi market needs foreign qualification and English language, they expect to be employees for 'big companies' and occupying important positions.

Two students explained how studying in Australia encouraged them to do voluntary jobs and revealed their hopes to volunteer more in the future. Mazin (PhD student) stated that only after he arrived in Australia did he learned how to be volunteer and he is now dedicated to do more voluntary works when he is in Saudi Arabia, and will also help to promote the concept of voluntary works amongst Saudis, in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, 2 students expected the overseas

scholarship programme to result in developing more respect as individuals when dealing with people from different cultures or backgrounds.

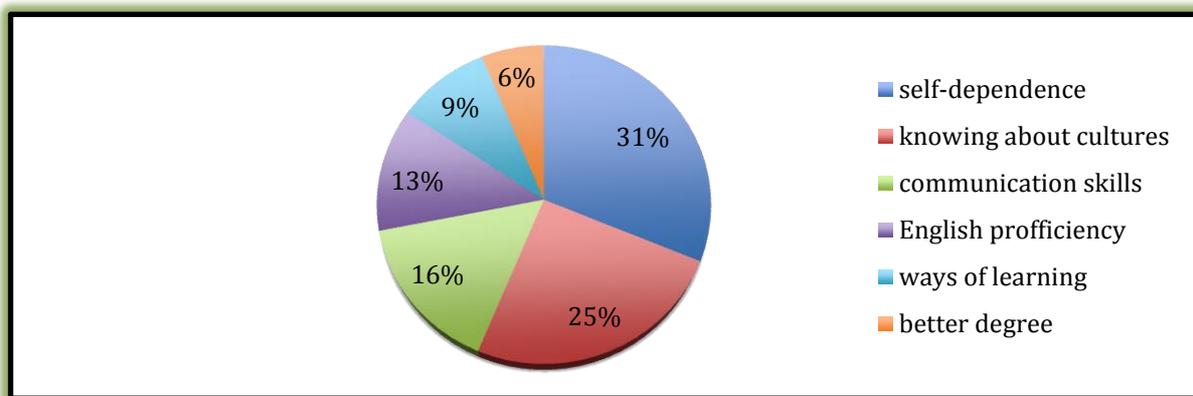
Again, this finding is comparable to the survey finding and Heyn's (2013) findings. While knowing other culture was mentioned as a personal benefits resulting from KASP, this finding seems to suggest that respecting people from cultures, religions and backgrounds will be a new positive attitude overseas Saudi students learnt. Fayeze stated, "I feel I have become a better person and personality has become mature here ... Living and studying here taught how to respect and accept people because they are humans... I don't care what they believe or where they come from..." Fayeze also referred to some people who are anti-Islam or anti-Arab. He said "I used to get angry very quickly if someone criticize my beliefs but now, I say I respect your belief but these are beliefs and I end the conversation peacefully".

Another finding of the interview phase reveals that (10%) of the students believed that they would spend their money more wisely. Fayeze and Njood A explained the life in Saudi Arabia and how they used to spend money to buy what they need and what they do not need. Fayeze said, "Because Australia is expensive and my salary could finish before I receive the next salary, I become wise with spending money...unlike when I was in Saudi Arabia...I used to buy anything I like even if I don't need it because I now that when my money finishes, I can ask my parents to give some money". Njood adds to this that "only in Australia I learned how to save money in case of emergencies and because my family is away from here". Finally, two Saudi students disclosed that mingling and interacting with different people from different cultures in Australia, encouraged them to discover more cultures and that they would continue travelling and exploring the world in the next forthcoming years of their lives.

For the benefits, Van Hoof and Verbeeten (2005, p. 56) state:

When asked what they saw as the greatest benefits of studying abroad, by far the most common comments were that it had brought them a greater understanding of other cultures, that it had helped them appreciate their own culture more, that it enabled them to learn more about themselves, and that it had enriched them personally. Figure 11 reflects personal benefits from studying overseas from a Saudi perspective.

Figure 11: Personal benefits from studying overseas from Saudi Perspectives



Personal problems/challenges associated with studying overseas

Based on the analysis of students' perspectives collected, the personal challenges appear to focus on social/cultural difficulties and academic challenges. The analysis revealed that of the 19 students interviewed, cultural adjustment became a common theme, specifically related to religious and national identity, given that religion and culture are not separated in Saudi Arabia. On the one hand, the interviewed students raised a number of common and understandable cultural adjustment difficulties associated with the foreign scholarship programs. For instance, cultural shock was one of the personal problems associated, which was self-evident with (16%) expressed by the interviewed recipients. Another student referred to the loneliness when away from the families, and two females reported the discrimination against hijab as personal challenges when studying in a different culture. The costly phone calls to Saudi Arabia and the

geographical distance between Australia and Saudi Arabia are also listed as further challenges for the overseas Saudi students. Missing family gatherings in the home country are reported as the biggest problem or challenge (26%).

Differences in cultures and religions practiced in Saudi Arabia and other countries was also an identified concern, there were 13 (68%) students expressed their concerns about their religious identity, while studying in a Western country, in different ways. Alhazmi (2010, p. 197) states that, “Saudi international students may have a serious challenge and encounter difficulties in adjusting to a social environment that is extremely different and might be, in some ways, contradictory to their home social environment”. For example, four students (21%) believed that living outside the home country caused internal conflicts between their values and contradicting values expressed by the host country. Ali states that when he was in Saudi Arabia, he was firm in term of segregating men and women, and that he never smiled at a woman who is not one of his relatives. However, when he came into Australia and was taught by female teachers and had classmates from both genders, he felt “confused... should I act like in Saudi Arabia?”. He was also concerned that if he was not friendly to the respectable women in Australia, he might reflect a negative image about Islam, and that “Muslims are rude and not friendly”. Njood B had similar conflict, she explains,

In Saudi Arabia I feel like I must wear the *Abaya* [i.e. long dress covers the whole body, in KSA, it is usually black]... but in Asutralia I took it off and I am just wearing clothes that covers all my body... sometimes I feel that Allah may not forgive me for this but other times I feel it is alright as I am still covering myself.

Three students (16%) admitted being influenced by contradictory beliefs, and they blamed the overseas scholarship programme for not tackling this issue. On a related issue, two students (10%) believed that they remained strongly committed to Islamic instructions in Australia but acknowledged that this is very challenging; and two students were challenged to raise their

children based on Islamic values in a non-Islamic culture. Mr. Wesam (PhD student) believed “it is very challenging for me [as a father] to raise my teen children on Islamic base and teach them the rules of Islam when they are surrounded by Western children who are doing everything incompatible with Islam”. Also, 2 students explained that missing religious events (i.e. Ramadan and Eid) is a major problem generated from a study abroad experience.

On the other hand, two of the most commonly repeated problems were related to the process of getting the educational qualification/s (academic challenges). For instance, the language is a barrier for international students that may hinder their academic progress. For example, since *Arabic* is the formal language in Saudi Arabia’s schools and Universities, five students (26%) believe that studying and learning in English is consider problematic. Ahmad viewed the language barrier as “unfair instrument” that doubled the tasks and difficulties for Saudi students. Mohammad K elaborated on this, “we are as smart as Australians; however, it is easier for them to understand the lecturers... for us, if we don’t understand, for example, one word, maybe we can’t understand the whole lesson”. Mohammad G combined all them main points in the following sentence,

Teachers should consider the language differences between us and native speakers...we work hard to write our assignments and we lose marks for the linguistic problems... not because we don’t understand the material...Besides, in the exams, we need to read the questions many times to understand what the teacher wants us exactly to write...while Australian doen’t need that extra time...the universities here must give us extra time out of respect to our different spoken language”

Moreover, the differences between the learning style in Australia comparing to Saudi Arabia was also reported as a challenge by five interviewed students. for example, Mosab, Rashood, and Abdulaziz explained, they used to memorise as a learning method, and they were not used to work as groups in the classes; that was challenging. In addition, the plagiarism to be avoided

was a shock for another 3 students as, in Saudi Arabia, they were had not been taught the concept of plagiarism or how to reference and cite the information. Regarding the cultural uneasiness for international students, Saudi students are no difference to all other international students.

For example, Van Hoof and Verbeeten (2005, p. 56) points out:

The words and ideas that came up most often in the many challenges that were described were sentiments like “adapting,” “adjusting,” “being away from home,” “breaking stereotypes,” “culture shock,” “language barrier,” “managing,” “staying patient,” and “trying to assimilate. “Yet, even though these were seen as challenges, they are, in many ways, not negatives at all and valuable to the development of the student, both personally and academically.

Finally, although knowing how to be self-dependent was reported as a personal benefits resulting from KASP, it is also one of the personal challenges, reported by two students, who had used to have external assistant like many other Saudis.

The last personal problem reported by three students blamed the Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission (SACM) for not providing sufficient administrative and other help when needed, which had caused frustration and distraction to their studies. For example, those students referred to the unanswered phone calls and emails, which results in a delay the process of their urgent requests sometimes, or delay in solving problem by the foreign institutions at other times.

Benefits for KSA associated with the Saudi foreign scholarship programs

In relation to the benefits for Saudi Arabia of sending its students overseas, the 19 students listed eight main benefits. Around 37% of the students expected Saudi Arabia to be receiving and importing---through its students---several new ideas to be implemented in its systems in

order to make them work more efficiently. In addition, seven students (37%) believed that the education system is improving in Saudi Arabia as a result of knowing more about foreign education systems of the countries where the Saudi overseas students are studying.

Four students (21%) assumed that through the interactions between the overseas Saudi students and foreign students and the negative stereotype of Islam and of KSA would most likely be improved.

Responses indicate that the students believed that the individual improvements of the Saudi students would eventually result in the country improvement. For instance, three students (16%) associated an enhanced version of extroversion among Saudi people with the resulting impact of the foreign scholarship programme. As a result, other students (16%) believed that Saudi Arabia is now more tolerant than ever before; and KSA and its people are more respectful to humanities regardless of those people different backgrounds. Finally, four students supposed that Saudis started to correct some of their irrational strict cultural customs or beliefs as a result of greater exposure to the world, specifically through the overseas scholarship programme. They also assumed that this flexibility and adaptability is helping the Saudi government to amend some of the rules that some Saudis were not ready to accept previously (e.g. encouraging women to work in the workplace).

The benefits identified from respondents interviewed are quoted side by side with similar findings found in Hall's and Heyn's studies. They are as follows:

Njood D and Foad are two among the other Saudi respondents who believed that Saudi Arabia's different sectors are improving as a result of KASP. Njood states, "The government of Saudi Arabia is sending the students in various fields, so... I think each student possesses unique ideas, projects and goals to utilize and achieve in Saudi Arabia...that would more likely result in a marvelous revolution in different fields in KSA". Foad adds, "I guess the education

sector is remarkably improving because of KASP... I mean to say, while we expect a revolution in all sectors in Saudi Arabia, education will take the lion's share"

Rana and some other students believed that Saudi Arabia's culture has been changing after KASP and becoming more lenient. She explains,

"we have wrong attitudes like, for example, some Saudis hide their sister's, mother's and wife's names from other men believing that women's names are ashamed to be known by strange men... this has nothing to do with the religion... so, I believe that sending Saudis overseas to experience the Western life will make those easier on themselves...and ultimately, the Saudi culture will be an open-minded one.

Abdulaziz highlighted the changing of the negative attitudes Saudis had until the near past. He explains,

In the near past, we were very critical to those whom worship cows (Hinduism), and we were so "anti"-the people who does not believe in God, but now, we see things differently...we have our religion and they have theirs and it is the end of the story...no big deal and it is none of our business to judge people's orientations...Moreover, not many women were working...but now the number is increasing and the government and society encourage them to enter the work field.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, one of the internal challenges in KSA was the conflict between the two sects of Islam (Sunni and Shi'a). Nevertheless, one of the patterns found in Hall's (2013, pp. 71-78) study revealed that international Saudi students have become accommodating to ideas and individuals from their own culture in ways they would not have done in Saudi Arabia. In relation to this study, Hall found that Sunni Saudis and Shi'a Saudis have established strong relationship that would not have occurred if they had not been recipients of KASP. Secondly, Hall found that Saudi men have become more flexible about talking and working with Saudi women; this was fully attributed to KASP.

From another perspective, Heyn (2013. p. 43) emphasized that the multicultural exchange of

ideas and knowledge through KASP helped to amend misperceptions and stereotypes in both groups (Sunni and Shia'a). Heyn indicated his belief that KASP will ultimately develop a friendly attitude between Saudis and other cultures, which thereby improve the foreign relations in the future and enhance the positive views from both sides. Thus the findings of Heyn and those of this study suggest that KASP has already improved some of the political, cultural and social aspects of Saudi Arabia.

Similar to the above current benefits of KASP on KAS, the anticipated long-term impact on Saudi Arabia from sending its students abroad are reported as follow, eight students (42%) expected general improvements in the various fields, especially education and health sectors. Among the 19 students, seven students (37%) anticipated Saudi Arabia to be a more open-minded community. As a consequence five students (26%) expected a forthcoming educational revolution and foresee Saudi's education system paralleled to the advanced education system identified in the West. Nevertheless, two students (10%) expected very minor improvement on KSA's education system.

On an economic level, there were five students who predicted that---in ten years time---the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would rely more on its own people to occupy higher salaried positions (as opposed to foreign-skilled workers). There were other anticipations in relation to the impacts of KASP or the overseas scholarship program on Saudi Arabia. These include a wide adoption of the Western system in different sectors; Westerners would obtain more positive perceptions of both Islam and Saudis; English language would replace Arabic language in Saudi schools and universities, which would further result in a wider usage of English language in the country; Saudis would become a well-educated nation. Some students also predicted that Saudi Arabia would be reclassified as one of the developed countries, and finally,

some students foresee Saudis embracing different and new ways of thinking. Each of the previous answers were received by two students, which represents 10% of the total number of the interviewed students.

Problems for KSA associated with the Saudi foreign scholarship programs

Of the 19 students, 14 students (74%) worried that the 'Saudi identity' would be jeopardized as a result of the long interactions with the non-Saudis and non-Muslims. They also worried that KSA would adopt ideas and lifestyles that are incompatible with Islamic rules and law. On a related matter, four students (21%) expected that KASP would diminish its sense of commitment to Islam among Saudis, which was considered the most important concern for the programme. Furthermore, two students believed that marrying foreigners would be considered a problem for KSA resulting from the KASP programme. The fear of losing KSA's identity and KSA's reputation appeared to be secondary, which was raised by six students (32%). For instance, these six students referred to the misbehaviours of some young overseas Saudi students, in host countries, and they expected these misbehaviours to negatively impact KSA's reputation.

Bearing the conservative Saudi society in mind, it was not surprising to find that 57.1% of them revealed their concern about having KSA's identity changed (this is the highest percentage that Saudi students presented in the whole interview process). "The young students are susceptible to the change...and that change can be negative if it touches their beliefs, values and manners", Mohammad Al-Khaibari said. "Foad Bogest adds, "KSA's identity can be negatively influenced by the West...some people may convert into other religions and some may get used to drinking alcohol...anyway, I fear that people would start being distant from Islam's rules". "I am afraid that Saudi Arabia would be unable to stick to Islamic nature...we started to see

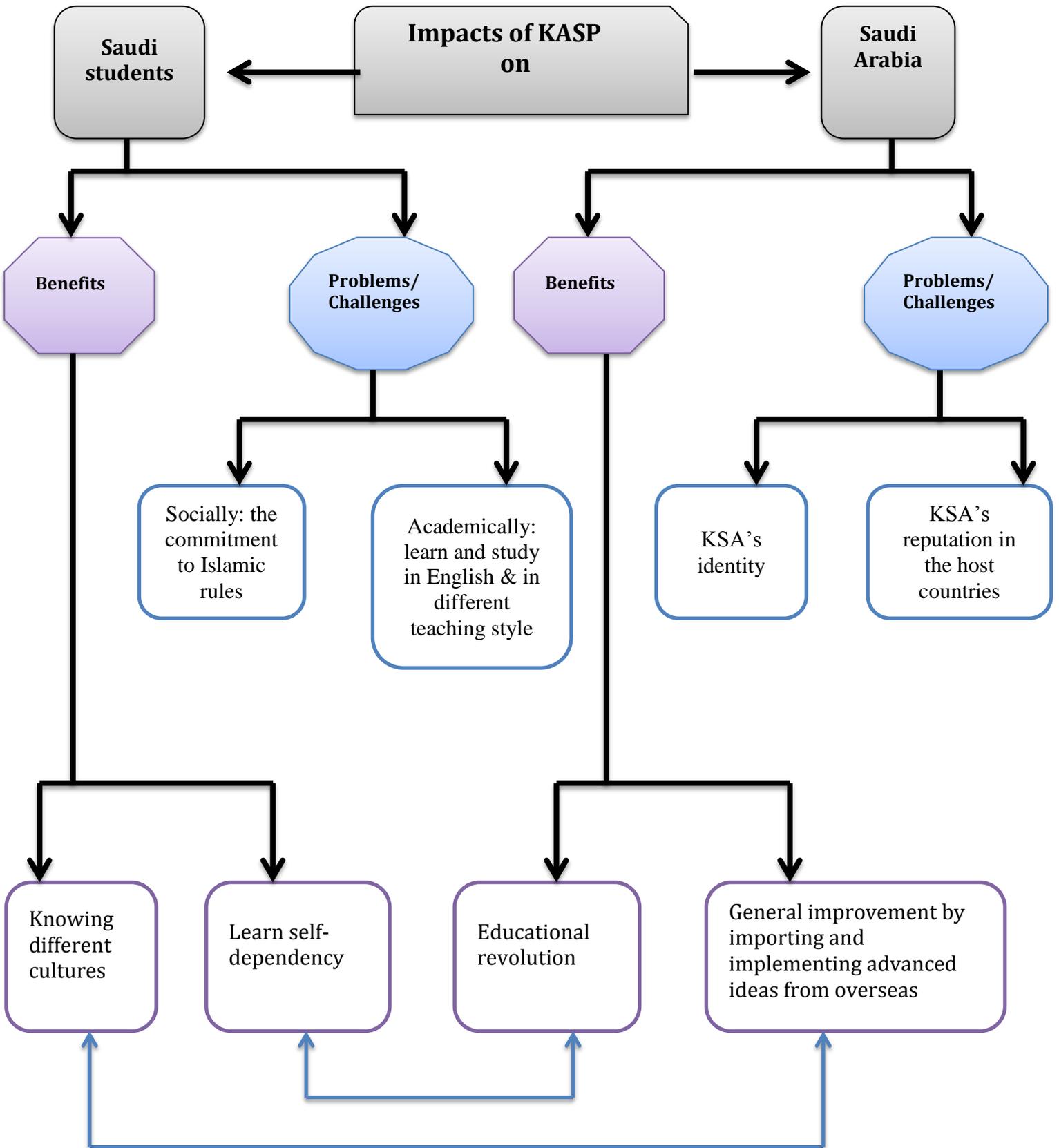
some young Saudi guys wearing necklaces and stuff like that”, Mohammad Al-Ghamdi said. “I expect many Saudi students would return back to Saudi Arabia claiming for the kind of “freedom” that Saudi Arabia and Islam would not expect such as drinking alcohol, allowing boys and girls to have affairs outside the frame of marriage, and so on...” Anas Al-Malki said.

In addition to the above, 31.25% disclose their anxiety about importing concepts that are not in alignment with Islamic rules such as “the Valentine’s Day”; and 25% were concerned about the chances of reduced commitment to Islam. In total, 18 responses from 16 Saudi students reveal the same concern about the detaching from KSA’s identity, the resistance to the contradictory beliefs and norms, and how to remain committed to Islamic rules. Moreover, 37% of Saudi interviewees were concerned that young Saudi students may easily drift from their culture and identity. Another concern was that young students’ chances in misbehaving in the hosting countries are higher which will affect KSA’s reputation worldwide. Dania states, “unfortunately some young Saudi men embarrass us...I mean, for example, we (Saudi females) tell international students that, in Islam, drinking alcohol and the relationships between males and females outside the frame of marriage is forbidden...and they answer, ‘but many Saudi men do these things’”.

Another predicted negative impact of KASP for KSA was raised by four students (21%) who explained how KASP was just a waste of money particularly when it sponsors unqualified students. Two students believed that Saudis compare the Saudi systems and lifestyle to the Western one and, subsequently, they started to be less patriotic to KSA. Finally, 10% of the students assumed that returning overseas students would be looking for better jobs that matched their expectations and hence Saudi Arabia would be pressured to provide more job opportunities, which is addressed earlier in this chapter. The Figure (12) below summerises the

main two benefits and challenges resulting from King Abdullah Scholarship Programme for Saudi Arabia and for overseas Saudi students.

Figure 12: Summary of Interviews' findings



The Political, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of KASP

The presented findings, in this chapter, helped the research to formulate the main possible/potential political, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of KASP. See Table 23

Table 23: Summary of the Political, Economic, and Socio-cultural impacts of KASP

Impacts of KASP on	<i>KSA Politics</i>	<i>KSA Economics</i>	<i>KSA Socio-culture</i>
Benefits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Improve KSA's image after 9/11 2) Improved education and health sectors 3) Import more effective policies to improve KSA in general 4) Saudis as less patriotic 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Skilled Saudi labours 2) Reduce the unemployability among Saudis 3) 46% believed that KASP would shrink the number of foreign workers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Saudis as more open-minded 2) Saudis as more tolerant towards people with different backgrounds 3) Higher standard of living 4) Extensive use of English language country wide
Risks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Brain drain with 79% of overseas Saudi students willing to extend their stay abroad 2) Waste of money 3) Immature overseas students cause problems between KSA and hosting countries 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Offer enough job opportunities 2) Manage the high expectations of the returned students to find high positions with high salaries 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Loss of the Islamic and national identity 2) Import unamplicable customs into Saudi culture 3) Saudis marry foreigners

Students' Recommendations and Comments

This part reports the recommendations followed by the comments given by the overseas Saudi students. The recommendations have essentially descended from the interviewed students whereas the comments are represented by data collected from the survey. Regarding the recommendations, they were obviously directed to the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi

Arabia; however, some of the recommendations suggested certain procedures to improve the internal Saudi education system, and other recommendations proposed amendments or implementation of strategies aiming to improve KASP and to enhance its benefits for KSA. The students' comments and recommendations were collected in 2011/2012 at a time when KASP enrollments exceeded 120,000 placements worldwide. Information obtained come directly from the respondents and are expressed verbatim, but they may not necessarily be the views expressed by this researcher. Clearly, it must be acknowledged that the KASP program continues to change based on student comments and organizational efficiencies. The expressed needs to share voice from the student's perspective is to add another critical element in improving the organizational efficiency and effectiveness of the KASP program. In other words, they are to be read as constructive rather than critical.

Students' recommendations/visions

Three students suggested that the MoHE should consider improving and lifting quality standards of education in the Kingdom by borrowing from the Western system, so that the Saudi education system becomes equally strong. Excluding Arabic language subjects and religious subjects, three students proposed that all the materials/subject in Saudi schools and universities must be taught in English. In addition, two students explained dissimilarities between the university system and the schooling system hence these 2 students recommended sorts of linkage between the schools' system and the university's system. Finally, there were two students who expressed that MoHE should recruit qualified staff with the 'right people in the right positions' and stop recruiting people based on nepotism and/or cronyism (*wasta*).

When students were asked whether permitting international universities to educate inside Saudi Arabia, continuing overseas scholarship programmes, or building better quality universities in

Saudi Arabia is better, 308 students (55%) recommended this. Nevertheless, 174 students (31%) preferred the overseas scholarship programme, and only 13.9% recommended opening up foreign universities to offer degrees in Saudi Arabia, or what is so-called as ‘offshore branch campuses’.

Many respondents referred to some Saudi students---who are sponsored by the MoHE---were seen to be taking advantage of the scholarship by using it as a form of entertainment and receiving a monthly salary. 6 of the interviewed students recommended harder criteria or nomination refinement to be set up by the Ministry of Higher Education in order to choose only highly qualified students. They also recommended face-to-face interviews as an important additional step to be taken to distinguish between qualified students and those who would likely cause further problems in terms of acculturation or who took the scholarship less seriously.

Five interviewed students believed that the host institutions are taking advantage of Saudi students knowing that they are Saudi-sponsored, and thus are ‘easy money’. Subsequently, they suggested that MoHE enroll and sponsor the KASP-nominated students to be placed in the best English-taught institutions inside Saudi Arabia (i.e. British Council, or Berlitz) and send them overseas only after getting the required IELTS or TOFEL marks.

Some students recommended more detailed tutorials (orientations) to be conducted for Saudi students before leaving Saudi Arabia concerning visa rules, civic law and other lifestyle-differences. They believe that these tutorials may help reduce cultural shock and also prevent actions that could be considered as crimes in host countries and institutions.

On a related matter, six students believed that sending Bachelor students who are not mature enough is adding unfair risk in their respective religious and national/cultural identity. So, they recommended that MoHE limit the scholarships only to Masters and PhDs students. Another recommendation was to exclude Australia's universities because of the perception that education in Australia is not as strong as its other Anglophone counterparts (e.g. U.S.A, Canada, and UK).

Two students advised that MoHE should not limit the options of study areas and leave it open to the students. Moreover, some respondents suggested that the Saudi Cultural Missions should allocate one representative of SACM to each university where behaviours and academic progress could be properly monitored, and also to deal with potential problems more directly.

Finally, three students believed that if the MoHE could secure jobs for each overseas Saudi student before he/she finishes their studies, that would help reduce the unemployment in Saudi Arabia and would reduce the brain drain as well. In other words, they recommend securing jobs by the MoHE for the overseas Saudi potential graduates when they are still overseas.

Students' comments

- 1- KASP has not only equipped Saudi students with strong foreign qualifications but also taught them how to be analytical thinkers.
- 2- Going overseas has taught me that there is nothing impossible. We (Saudi students) should benefit our country from what we learned overseas. If we do so, Saudi Arabia could be a pioneer at least in petrochemical sector.
- 3- The disadvantages of sending Saudi students overseas are greater than its advantages on both levels, personal and national.

- 4- Some English institutions, in the hosting countries, intend to fail Saudi students until they reach the 1 and half year, which is the maximum allowable time decided by the MoHE for studying English language. Those institutions take advantages of the Saudi government.
- 5- As Saudi students are exposed to positive and negative sides of Western culture, I hope that the returned students would implement only the positive side that is applicable and compatible with our culture and religion to make Saudi Arabia a better place.
- 6- Saudi Cultural Mission in USA is horrible and not supportive at all.
- 7- It is hard to find and talk to your supervisor at the Cultural Mission (UK)
- 8- I'm afraid that KASP would result in changing our Islamic identity.
- 9- The absence of the close supervision from SACM to the young Saudi students is resulting in ethical issues.
- 10- Even though Saudi Arabia is allocating huge budget for KASP, the priority will always be to foreign workers over Saudi citizens.
- 11- There are no jobs for us upon our return.
- 12- I wish I could live in Chicago forever and never go back to Saudi Arabia.
- 13- Due to the poor job opportunities and women rights some Saudi students would not return to Saudi Arabia. I think those people never knew how to love their country and work hard to make a better place, they rather complain and criticize.
- 14- Saudi Arabia is corrupted and it is not motivating people to think, invent, or to be talented. If the person has connections, he/she can survive but she/he cannot achieve their dreams otherwise.

Excluding Bachelor degree from KASP appeared as a common point/theme in the survey and the interviews of this study. Unsurprisingly, Jammaz (1972) and Hofer (2009) conducted researches to investigate the adjustment problems to international Saudi students and have

found that younger international Saudi students experience more adjustment difficulties than older students. This seems to support at least part of the respondents rationale behind their views.

Summary

This chapter reported the main findings resulting from surveys and interviews totalling 650 overseas Saudi students. The findings from both methods help to clarify the students' perspectives concerning the current and predicted positive and negative impacts of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program both as a student recipient and on KSA as a nation-state. Based on the findings, a conceptual framework was developed to map the political, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of KASP. Finally, the chapter utilised the comments and recommendations of the KASP recipients to better the programme. Importantly, the recommendations suggested particular amendments to the policy of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia, and to the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme in order to enhance their effectiveness.

The next chapter will discuss and analyse these results in depth, suggest the need for further research using social media as a tool for collecting information on scholarship recipients worldwide, and conclude by answering the research questions of this study.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The research reported in this thesis has been an exploratory case study of the social, political and economic impacts of the King Abdullah overseas Scholarship Program(KASP) for Saudi Arabian students. The specific aims of the study were to investigate:

1. the social, economic and political impacts of the scholarship scheme, KASP, for the recipients and the Saudi nation-state;
2. the extent to which the Program's recipients and the Saudi nation have reaped value for investment from the KASP;
3. new opportunities and challenges that have arisen from the KASP scheme; and
4. in what ways the Program might be improved if it is to be sustained.

The specific research questions addressed by the study in order to achieve these aims were:

1. What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program?
2. What benefits to the KSA and recipients of the KASP scheme has the Program brought?
3. To what extent has the emphasis on student mobility been successful?
4. What major challenges and issues arising need to be addressed?
5. What policy or other initiatives are needed for improving the efficacy of the Program?

6. What social, political and economic tensions are emerging following the implementations of the KASP scheme?

The methodology used for collecting and analyzing the information needed to address the research questions involved:

1. A *Literature Search* of relevant policy documents, Government reports, research reports, journal articles and scholarly books;
2. An *On-line Survey* distributed to King Abdullah scholarship recipients;
3. *Analysis of the surveys* using both the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and manual thematic analysis (Guest, 2012, p. 11);
4. *Semi-structured Face-to-Face Interviews* (Patton, 2002, pp. 339-427) with selected KASP recipients and other key KASP stakeholders and administrators; and
5. A *Focus Group* involving a small group of key stakeholders and ‘experts’ in Saudi Higher Education.

Key Issues to Emerge

A preliminary set of eight key issues emerged from the analysis of data collected through the literature review, survey, and interviews. These preliminary issues were presented to a focus group of key stakeholders and ‘experts’ in Saudi Higher Education for analysis, comments, discussion and debate regarding their validity (see Chapter 4 for details about the process involved). The focus group generally was in agreement with the intent of all eight of the preliminary issues, although some amendments to the wording were suggested, as well as the addition of a ninth issue (that had previously been subsumed within another preliminary issue). All of the suggestions from the focus group members were accepted by the researcher.

As a result, the following ten key issues are proposed to have emerged from an analysis of the findings from this research study:

Issue 1: Participation in international study through the King Abdullah Scholarship Program appears to create a tension for many Saudi students between their commitment to the traditional Islamic laws, customs and behaviours of their homeland and the 'freer' cultural and behavioural norms of the countries in which they are studying.

Respondents in this study, both those surveyed and those interviewed, consistently identified the difficulties they faced in finding an acceptable balance between the 'internal' pressures they experience to conform with the cultural and religious norms of their homeland and the 'external' pressures they experience in order to live and learn effectively in another country. Saudi Arabia is a remarkably homogenous society in terms of culture, language, religion, politics and social norms. Traditional Saudi culture and religious teachings are based on adherence to standards and norms, centralised systems of governance, structured lifestyles and work environments, rote learning of key information, and a reluctance to engage strongly in open collaboration and exchange of ideas with the 'outside world'. Alternatively, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States of America and Australia – the major countries in which Saudi students are pursuing international study – are essentially multicultural communities, consisting of people who exhibit a wide range of social behaviours and who come from a plethora of country backgrounds, religions, and political beliefs. Saudi students studying abroad under the King Abdullah Scholarship Program are, therefore, subjected to significant pressure to adapt their own behaviours, attitudes, perceptions, feelings and ways of thinking in order to allow them to communicate and interact effectively with their peers in the host country. This process of modifying one's own cultural beliefs and behaviours in response to

contact with one or more different cultures is generally referred to in the literature as ‘acculturation’ (Fan, 2004).

Issue 2: A significant percentage of Saudi students participating in international study through the King Abdullah Scholarship Program indicate that they would like, if possible, to extend their overseas stay beyond completion of their studies, thereby delaying the educational and economic impact that they can have on their homeland.

Unfortunately, the researcher had not anticipated when constructing the survey for this study that this would emerge as a major issue for the KASP program. As a consequence, only superficial information about this issue was collected through the survey which identified that 79% of survey respondents indicated that they would like to extend their stay overseas when they completed their studies under the King Abdullah Scholarship Program. A further research study will need to be undertaken in order to understand the intentions and motivations of the significant number of Saudi scholarship students who indicate that they would like to extend their stay outside of their homeland when they complete their studies. Feedback collated through the interviews and focus group suggest that possible reasons include a desire to: undertake further study with international experts in their discipline area; gain further experience in world-standard research centres or laboratories; spend more time exploring overseas countries through travel and casual employment; or spend informal time with friends they have developed from other countries and cultures. An issue raised by some of those interviewed is that the more time the Saudi students spend outside their homeland with world-class experts and facilities and experiencing high-satisfaction employment, the less likely they are to return to their homeland, at least in the short-term, and thus the emergent danger that the knowledge and expertise they have gained through KASP study may not be transferred quickly and effectively to their home country.

Issue 3: It is still unclear whether the King Abdullah Scholarship Program is meeting one of its primary aims – to reduce the need for foreign workers in KSA. There are up to 5 million foreign nationals currently employed in Saudi Arabia (Smith, 2013). In response, a policy of ‘Saudi-ization’ was introduced in 1990 for the purpose of progressively replacing the large numbers of ex-patriate workers employed in Saudi businesses with Saudi workers. In particular, Saudi-ization targets the large number of young Saudis who will be seeking employment in the near future. The policy is strongly supported by the Saudi business sector as well as the Saudi community generally, both of whom are demanding a Saudi workforce that is at the “cutting edge of knowledge and skills” (Bukhari & Denman, 2013, p. 158). A major challenge for the policy initiative, however, has been the lack of appropriate skills among Saudi job seekers. The King Abdullah Scholarship Program is seen by the Saudi Government as a major initiative for addressing this concern fostering international-standard workforce competence, and for increasing the number and percentage of Saudi citizens employed in Saudi businesses.

The data collected and analysed for this study did not confirm that KASP was necessarily delivering on this objective, at least in any substantial way. In particular, respondents were not convinced that sufficient numbers of students entering the program are pursuing areas of study that will be of significant benefit to the Kingdom, and that are likely to lead to effective and appropriate employment on their return. Further, several respondents expressed a concern that students who had learnt and developed their knowledge and skills outside of the Kingdom might find opposition from traditional business managers when they returned to their homeland to seek employment. There was strong support for major research to be undertaken into this issue, with Smith and Abdulrahman (2013, p. 178) arguing that “such a review needs

to be conducted by education experts who are independent of the program and government, because of the potential for vested interests to distort the review process”.

Issue 4: There is a tension between the expectation of many KASP students that international study will ensure that they will obtain a high-prestige high-income position on return to their homeland, and the realities of the Saudi employment market. A significant 82% of respondents to the survey used in this study stated that they expected that their international study would result in them gaining high-prestige high-income employment when they return home. There is, however, no evidence identified through this study that suggests that this outcome will be a reality for the majority of KASP students. There is little strong evidence to suggest that the high-skill job market in Saudi Arabia is expanding significantly, because as Ohali and Shin (2013, p. 101) note, it is, at present, “quite difficult to judge whether, and by how much, knowledge production is contributing to industrial development because most of the Saudi economy still depends on oil”. Given the very high number of students studying under KASP, it is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the number of new high-status jobs available will be considerably less than the number of KASP graduates seeking high-level employment, meaning that many KASP graduates will not achieve their goal of high-prestige high-income employment. Further, it is also highly likely that because of the much greater pool of highly-qualified young Saudis resulting from the KASP program, the competition for each available position in the Kingdom will be much stronger, making it if anything even harder for KASP graduates to gain the high-level positions that they seek.

Issue 5: There is strong evidence to suggest that the increased interaction between Saudi international students and the people and environment of their host countries is having a direct and positive impact on the international reputation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its

people and its culture. Respondents in this study were overwhelmingly of the view that attitudes towards Saudi Arabia people and culture are changing in a distinctly positive way, albeit slowly, largely as a result of increased interaction between Saudi scholarship students and the people with whom they regularly interact in their host country. There was also a belief that the increased sensitivity of the Saudi students to the opinions of others, and their increased knowledge of other people and cultures (again because of the increased interaction resulting from their KASP study) was ‘softening’ the attitude of many western people to Saudi Arabian people, religion and culture. Further, most of the students were very positive about being pressured by the environment of their host country to be more sensitive to the opinions of others because they believed it broadened their knowledge and outlook, and improved their communication skills and general capacity to contribute in a productive way to their own society. One interesting comment made by a small number of respondents was that the selection criteria for being awarded a King Abdullah Scholarship should include an assessment of the maturity and potential behavior of the applicant when domiciled in a foreign country.

Issue 6: There is some evidence to suggest that, at least in the longer term, exposure of so many young Saudi students to other cultures through the King Abdullah Scholarship Program may lead to a ‘softening’ of some traditional aspects of Saudi culture.

A majority of respondents in this study expressed their intention to bring back to Saudi Arabia at least some of the new attitudes, understandings and behaviours that they had developed during their study in another country. They also expressed the belief that, as a result of the personal changes that they had experienced while studying overseas, they would slowly but surely influence thinking and behavior in their own country. The changes they believe would occur in Saudi society as a result of their study would not, they believe, be either radical or

rapid, but rather would be incremental involving a general ‘softening’ of some of the strict traditional attitudes and behaviours within the Kingdom. Examples of the changes they envisioned would occur in Saudi society included a greater tolerance of different cultures and religions, a greater willingness to accept criticism of long-held beliefs and customs, and greater interaction with the ‘outside world’, particularly through electronic media.

Issue 7: There is evidence to suggest that participation in the King Abdullah Scholarship Program is having a positive impact on the self-confidence, self-esteem and self-dependence of participants.

Over half the respondents to the survey and almost all of those interviewed for this study stated that among the most important personal benefits from studying in another country under the King Abdullah Scholarship Program was the significant development that occurred with respect to their self-confidence, self-esteem and self-dependence. The students generally indicated that in Saudi Arabia, their parents – not them – looked after their day-to-day budgets and basic needs, particularly if they are female. In a foreign country, the students can not rely on their families to organise such things as daily, weekly and monthly expenses for food, clothing, travel and social networking. Similarly, developing self-confidence is both a challenge and a necessity for Saudi students studying abroad if they are to cope adequately and appropriately with the social, cultural and educational aspects of student life in another country. The respondents stressed that as they developed greater self-dependency and self-confidence, they felt much more positive about themselves and their capacities and that they expected this to have a lasting positive impact on their self-esteem.

Issue 8: There is evidence to suggest that the KASP program is significantly increasing the intellectual capacity and expertise of the Kingdom.

Longitudinal quantitative and qualitative research will be needed to confirm whether the King Abdullah Scholarship Program is achieving its aim of increasing the intellectual base of the Kingdom. Nevertheless, the respondents in this study were very strongly of the view that the level of intellectual expertise of the Kingdom had clearly increased significantly as a result of the international-standard study sponsored through KASP. Those interviewed pointed to the increasing number of jobs requiring high-level expertise, particularly in the sciences, engineering and health, that were now being filled by Saudi graduates of international universities, whereas only a few years earlier most of these jobs would have been going to overseas experts, not Saudis.

Issue 9: There is evidence to suggest that exposure of Saudi students to international 'best practice' in teaching and learning is impacting on the nature, and arguably the effectiveness, of Higher Educational delivery in the Kingdom.

Islamic religious and cultural tradition has underpinned a long-held educational focus in Saudi Arabia, both in the school and university sectors, on rote learning, didactic teaching approaches and summative norm-referenced assessment. Respondents in this study, however, consistently indicated that their international learning experience has largely been dominated by group activities, student-centred pedagogy, and a focus on flexible and creative thinking (as distinct from the acquisition of facts). The perception of the majority of the respondents was that learning for Saudi students should include a significant focus on 'processes and investigation, not just rote learning, if they are to maximise their academic potential. Given that many KASP recipients return to teaching positions in the Kingdom, particularly in the university sector, it is reasonable to assert that they will slowly but surely have an influence on the approaches to teaching and learning of their colleagues. Respondents in this study

suggest that this is indeed the case, although longitudinal research will be needed to confirm the changes and their impact.

Issue 10: The large number of female graduates from international universities, funded through the KASP scheme, represents a major intellectual resource that will not only help the future economic development of the Kingdom but will also have a major impact on the future status and role of women in Saudi Arabia.

As Jamjoom and Kelly (2013, p. 118) note, the role of women in Saudi society has changed markedly over the last 30 years, particularly as educational opportunities for women have improved, so that there are now “female doctors, female university teachers and professors and female businesswomen”. Respondents in the present study suggest that the KASP scheme has opened up “massive opportunities” for female university graduates to make a significant and growing contribution to Saudi society and to the economic development of the Kingdom. At present, however, these suggestions are based on opinion and anecdote – rigorous research is needed to fully understand the evolving role and impact of female university graduates in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

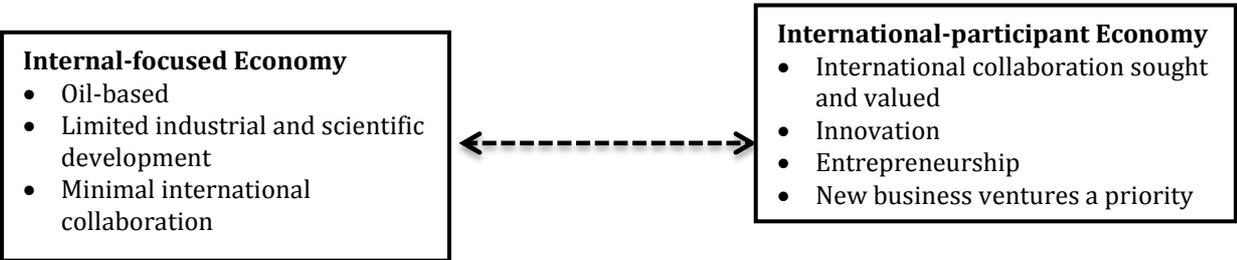
Towards a theoretical model

It is proposed that the nature and outcomes of the KASP program can be explained through the interaction of three continua, each of which defines a tension between Saudi Arabia’s traditions and its future needs:

1. *An Economic-Focus Continuum;*
2. *An Education-Focus Continuum;* and
3. *A Cultural Continuum.*

The *Economic-Focus Continuum* (see Figure 13) defines the tension between the traditional internal-focussed economy of Saudi Arabia (which has been almost exclusively and very successfully based on the extraction and sale of oil, and so has had few motivators for industrial and scientific development or international economic collaboration) and the desire expressed in Saudi Arabia’s strategic plans to become significant participants in the global economy. The rationale behind the push for international economic engagement stems from the increasing realization among Saudis and the Saudi Government that the world in general is undertaking major research and development projects aimed at finding alternative energy sources to petroleum, and thus Saudi Arabia is facing a future in which its financial position will deteriorate significantly unless it develops alternative drivers for its economy (Ohali & Shin, 2013, pp. 95-101).

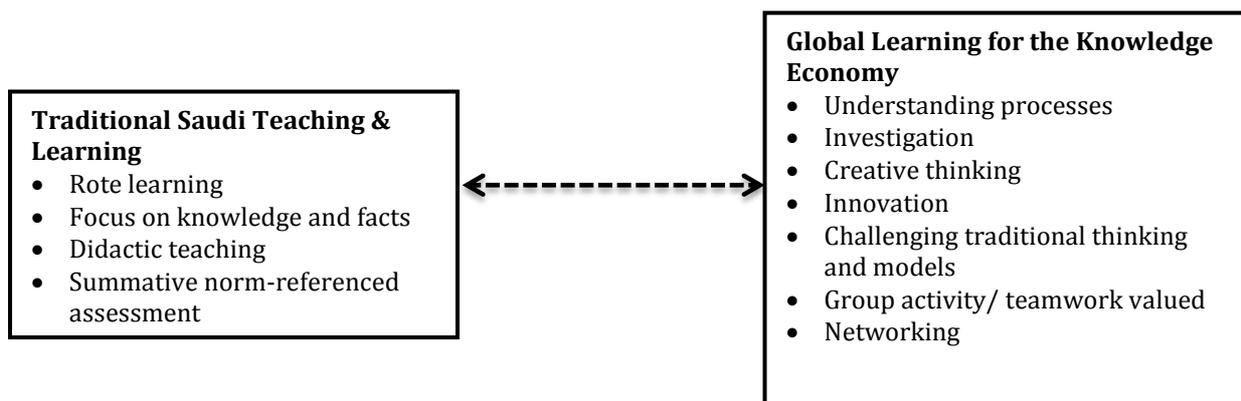
Figure 13: The Economic-Focus Continuum



The *Education-Focus Continuum* (see Figure 14) defines the tension between the traditional Saudi teaching and learning focus on rote learning of knowledge and facts, didactic teacher-centred approaches to teaching, and summative norm-referenced assessment, and the teaching and learning approaches and processes that underpin ‘best practice’ in international education (understanding processes, investigation, creative thinking, innovation, challenging traditional thinking and models, networking, group activities and valuing teamwork). KASP recipients

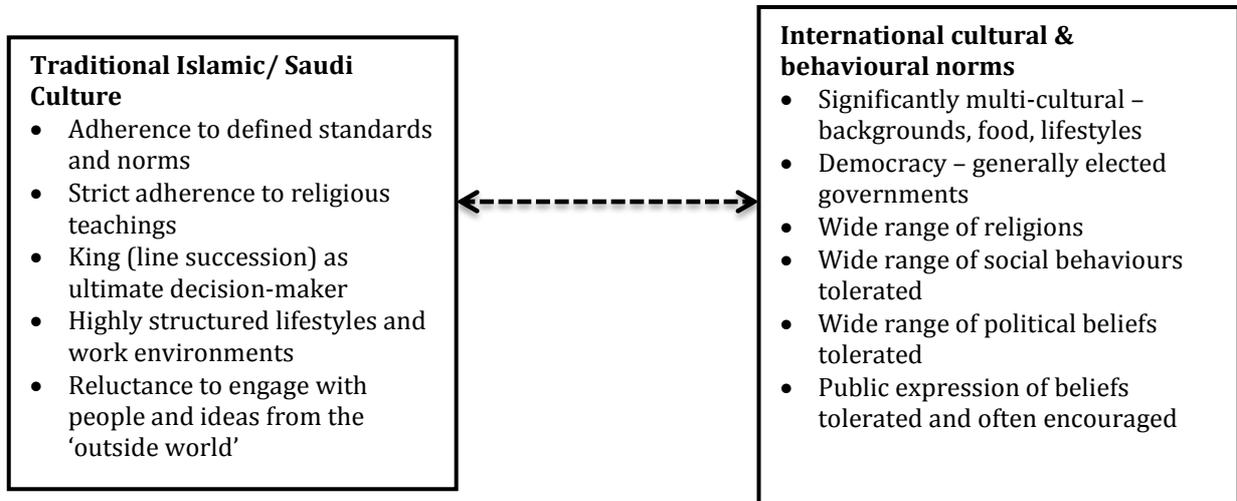
studying at international universities must learn to quickly adapt from the traditional educational approaches they experienced during their schooling in Saudi and the approaches required for academic success in their host university (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013, pp. 186-187).

Figure 14: The Education-Focus Continuum



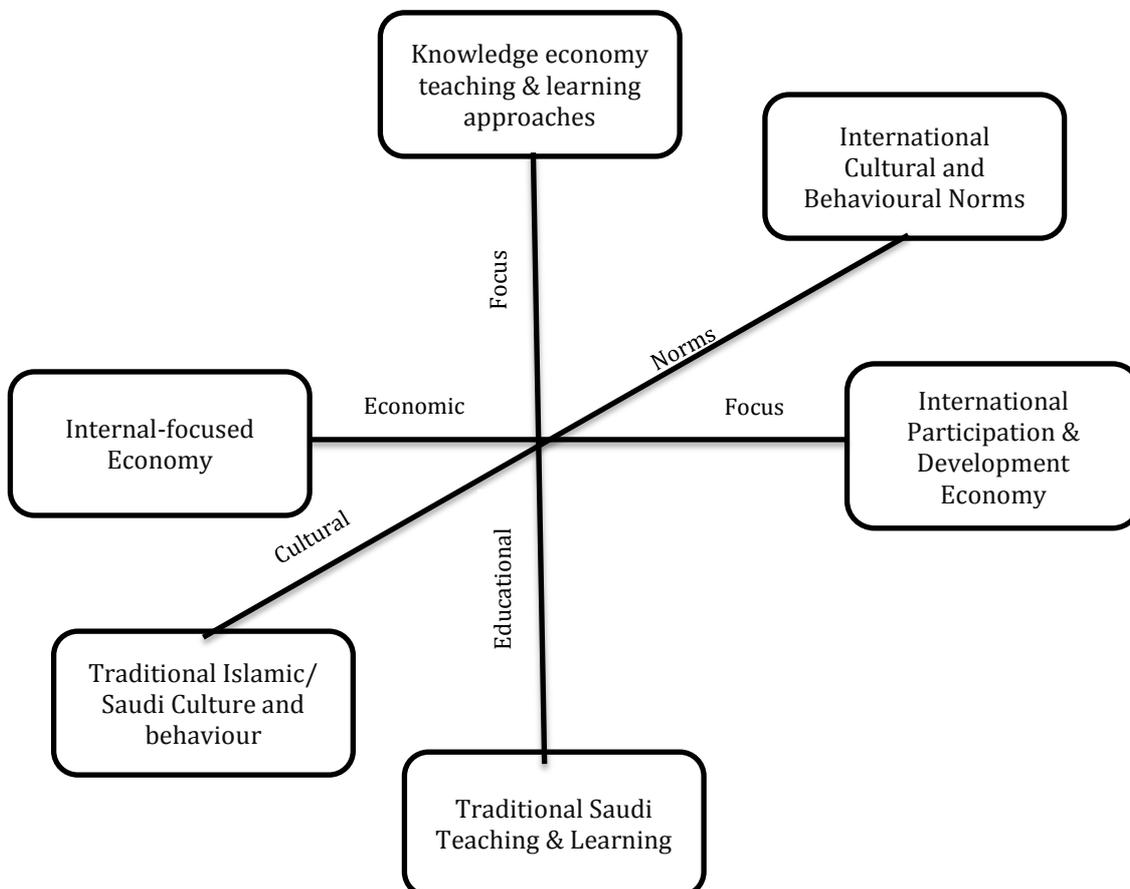
The *Cultural Continuum* (see Figure 15) defines the tension between traditional Islamic/ Saudi culture (adherence to defined standards and norms, strict adherence to religious teachings, the King [through line-succession] as the ultimate decision-maker, highly structured lifestyles and work environments, and a reluctance to engage with people and ideas from the ‘outside world’) and the ‘international’ cultural and behavioural norms that the KASP recipients will need to successfully engage with in their host countries (multicultural backgrounds, highly varied food styles, democratic governments based on public vote, a wide range of religions, tolerance of a wide range of political beliefs, tolerance of a wide range of social behaviours, and the encouragement of criticism of government policy).

Figure 15: The Cultural Continuum



The nature and outcomes of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program can be explained at both a theoretical and practical level by the interaction of these three continua (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: The Three Interacting Continua



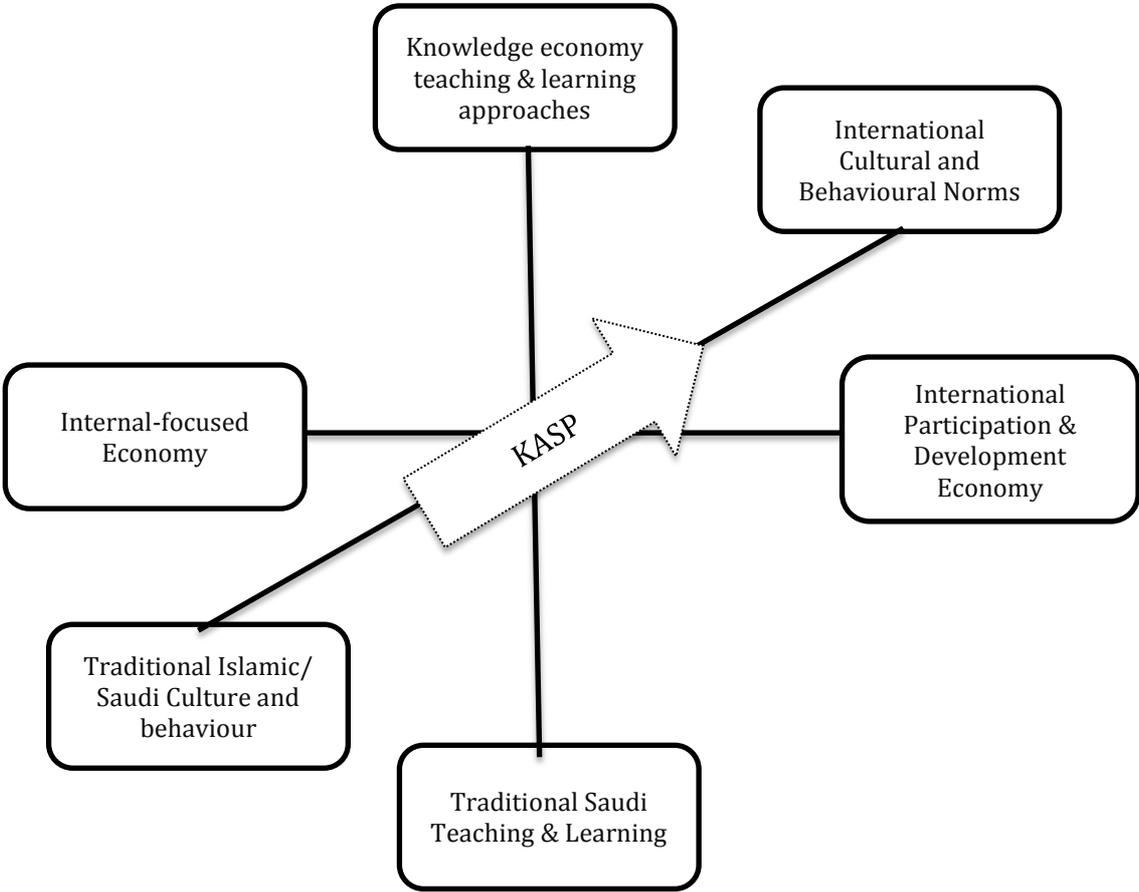
One of the major purposes for establishing the King Abdullah Scholarship Program was to significantly improve the scientific and technological development of the Kingdom by significantly enhancing the professional capability of its workforce and by establishing strong international scientific and economic networks. The Saudi Government firmly believes that the quality of the Saudi workforce will be “significantly enhanced by learner mobility that extends beyond its borders to major international universities” (Bukhari & Denman, 2013, p. 151).

The implementation of KASP in support of the Saudi economic development policy, however, means that over 120,000 young Saudi students are being significantly exposed each year to the cultural and behavioural norms of their host countries, most of which are multicultural western democracies. This creates a significant tension with major initiatives being funded by the Saudi Government aimed at ‘deepening Islamic values, morals and allegiance to family, society and nation, and appreciating and preserving long-established national achievements (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013, p. 4).

The implementation of KASP in support of the Saudi economic development policy also means that the students are being significantly exposed to the teaching and learning approaches and processes that underpin ‘best practice’ in international education; that is, understanding processes, investigation, creative thinking, innovation, challenging traditional thinking and models, networking, group activities and valuing teamwork. These international teaching and learning approaches are very different from the traditional Saudi teaching and learning focus on rote learning of knowledge and facts, didactic teacher-centred approaches to teaching, and summative norm-referenced assessment.

Through the implementation of KASP, then, there is significant interaction between all three continua, as shown in Figure 16. KASP is designed to drive the international economic competitiveness of the Kingdom, but in so doing, is creating significant tensions and challenges for traditional Saudi cultural and behavioural norms as well as for traditional Saudi approaches to teaching and learning.

Figure 17: The Theoretical Model for KASP



The pressures for economic change in Saudi society are enormous (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013, p. 190). Nevertheless, by implementing the King Abdullah Scholarship Program, the Saudi Government is not only supporting its economic strategy but it is also creating conditions that significantly challenge its strongly-expressed desire “to retain its cultural and

religious beliefs that until now have been protected by essentially isolationist policies” (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013, p. 190). The model presented in Figure 17 demonstrates the interaction of economic, educational and cultural desires and processes associated with the implementation of KASP. It conveys the real challenge for the Saudi Government in the future implementation of the KASP scheme: how to achieve the economic and educational goals it has set for the country without undermining the cultural and religious pillars on which the Kingdom is built? As Smith and Abouammoh (2013, p. 182) note, this is not, however, an ‘either/or’ situation. What the Saudi Government needs to determine is the ideal *balance* between the clear benefits to the Saudi economy and people of interacting with world ‘best practice’ education through the King Abdullah Scholarship Program and the need to retain and maintain the important pillars of their religion-based culture and heritage.

Areas for future research

- 1) As identified in Chapter 5, time and monetary constraints meant that the interviews used to inform this study had to be limited to KASP students studying in Australia. It is possible that students studying in other countries may have provided additional issues or somewhat different perspectives from those reported in this thesis. There would be significant advantage, then, in conducting interviews with KASP students currently studying in countries other than Australia, because it would, in particular, enhance the capacity of the interview information to be generalized to the population of KASP students.
- 2) The scope, time and money constraints associated with this study did not allow the researcher to access in any comprehensive and methodologically rigorous way data banks relating to previous KASP recipients or to interview past KASP students.

Research that incorporates data from past KASP students would allow the identification of key trends that could provide an important framework for future policy decisions regarding KASP.

- 3) At present, most of the available information relating to the impact and benefits of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program is based on opinions and anecdotes. There is a need for a rigorous longitudinal study incorporating both quantitative and qualitative information in order to assemble strong and defensible evidence about the nature and scope of the impact of KASP.
- 4) The issue of acculturation of Saudi students into the environment of their educational host country (in which they generally will live for a minimum of three years) needs to be understood much more deeply, both at a practical and a theoretical level. It is true that there have been a small number of studies focusing on the acculturation of Saudi students, but these have been constrained to the United States and the United Kingdom, and have been of a very exploratory nature. There would appear to be significant benefit for both Saudi students and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia itself in conducting methodologically-sound and conceptually-rigorous research into the issues and the associated impacts surrounding acculturation of Saudi students engaging in international education. Such a study should also consider the important issue of re-acculturation when Saudi students return to their homeland after several years in another country.
- 5) This study has raised on a number of occasions the tension between the very traditional educational approach generally supported within Saudi Arabia and the much more flexible and investigative approach to learning generally associated with international 'best practice' education. There is a need to undertake research aimed at identifying the extent to which 'international' teaching and learning approaches can

and should be incorporated into teaching and learning in Saudi universities, and the mechanisms by which any agreed improvements might be implemented.

- 6) There may be significant benefit for the Saudi Government in undertaking the more detailed research necessary to understand, from a political perspective, the higher education policy implications stemming from the implementation of KASP. In particular, there would appear to be significant political policy implications associated with: (a) the real and potential impact, both economic and socio-cultural; (b) the impact on the higher education system of too many well-qualified graduates not returning to staff Saudi universities, to engage in research important to the future of the Kingdom, and to provide research training for other existing and future academics. Two other political policy issues that require more detailed research and analysis relate to appropriate processes for monitoring the implementation of KASP, and decisions relating to whether the scheme should be sustained, and if so, how?

Conclusion

The information collected and analysed through this exploratory study provides consistent, albeit largely anecdotal, evidence to suggest that the King Abdullah Scholarship Program is strongly supporting the scientific and technological development of the Kingdom by significantly enhancing the professional capability of its workforce and by establishing strong international scientific and economic networks. Participation in the program, however, exposes Saudi students to learning, social and cultural environments that are often markedly different from those they have experienced in their homeland. In order to successfully undertake their international studies, Saudi students must be prepared to adapt at least some aspects of their culture, behavior and beliefs in order to accommodate, without undue stress or

conflict, the dominant aspects of their host countries (a process that the literature calls ‘acculturation’).

Respondents in this study strongly argued that the ‘softening’ of traditional Saudi cultural and behavioural norms necessary for them to live harmoniously and successfully in their host countries, and to successfully undertake high-level studies at leading international universities, usually was not ‘lost’ when they returned to their homeland. Rather, the respondents argued that KASP recipients returning to the Kingdom bring with them enriched ways of thinking and doing, both in social and educational environments, and that this inevitably provides a challenge – and they believe a positive challenge – to long-held social and educational behaviours and practices in Saudi Arabia. The critical issue here is one of balance, but not choice. The Saudi Government openly acknowledges the need for change in many aspects of its economic and educational processes if it is to achieve the vision it has for the country. KASP is providing evidence of how this can occur, but occur in ways that ensure that the important religious and cultural pillars on which the Kingdom is built are not only preserved, but indeed strengthened. On that basis alone, it would appear reasonable to assert that the King Abdullah Scholarship Program has been a major policy success.

The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid order.

Alfred North Whitehead

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