

Abstract

Education is a mirror reflection of the community, and it is an open social system that mutually affects the common framework of the current culture. This paper discusses the major events in the history of female education development in an Islamic and conservative community. Female education in Saudi Arabia, along with the accompanied historical events, represents a unique experience that deserves further investigations and deeper analysis. Saudi female education started by a constitutional order, a century ago, in a country where the government supports female education, while the majority of community was against this education. Saudi female education started locally in home schooling known as (Katateeb), and kept developing until reaching higher education. This education started with modest capabilities and tools, and used old traditional styles. Later, it evolved into modern education that utilizes latest technologies, and employs updated teaching strategies.

Added, as this research is concerned with tracking the development history of Saudi female's education, it is also interested in learning the level of progress this education has reached, and what is distinguishing about this level. In this regard, The King Abdullah Project for public Education Development "Tatweer Project" (TP), which announced in February 2007, is considered as significant quality movement in the history of education development in Saudi Arabia, particularly with addressed budget of USD 2.4 billion. This project aims to scientifically and technically upgrade public education, and to build a knowledge community through a group of programs that will be implemented according to a long-term time plan. In which it represents a potential chance to reform the characteristics of education in Saudi Arabia within few years. Hence, studying TP will elaborate more about the level of progress that Saudi female education reached. Added, one of distinguished characteristics of TP is its goals of setting educational environment that fit with the educational requirements in the 21st century through optimal investment and expanding in using suitable technology in schools, and through increasing the efficiency of technology to enhance performance levels. Thus, investigating the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) in TP will reflect the achieved level of progress that development of Saudi female education reached.

Accordingly, the first objective of this study is to identify the significant milestones in the development of Saudi female education by investigating official historical documents and to

explore the vision the future of this education based on the experience and viewpoints of a group of people who witnessed and practiced its development. Additionally, the second objective is to learn about the level of progress that Saudi female education achieved by investigating the application of ICTs within TP in particular.

Hence, the qualitative methodology was used for this study. Particularly its aim is to add verification of previous literature. The data were collected on two stages as follows. The first stage used semi-structured interviews. A total number of 6 interviews, conducted to women educators who had a deep experience in the field of Saudi female education over a long time. In the second stage of data collection, the methods including observation, focus-group, and interviews were used with a group of participants in a number of TP Schools. The sampling technique of convenience and snowball was used to reach all these people.

Regarding the first objective of this research, the majority of interviewees agreed that Royal Decree order, in 1959, to establish female education is considered being the most important event in the history of Saudi female education development. This is because it was a major change point to swift improvement and rapid growth for the favour of female education. Another point is that, the events of Adult Education, Higher Education, and Scholarship Saudi female abroad made positive impacts to develop the education of Saudi female. On the contrary, the introduction of pre-university exams, and the preparation-year in the university had negative impact. To expand this point, the increasing in the count of female students in the higher education, and the rate of joining human science and theoretical majors resulted in unwanted graduates who fit neither with markets' needs nor with the growth plans.

Moreover, the (The amalgamation of the educational authorities) decision in 2002 sounded to be an accurate one. Well, the outcome of the decision of (merging the Ministry of Upbringing and Education with the Ministry of Higher Education into one ministry that named "The Ministry of Education") is still not that clear yet. Finally, the interviewees pointed out there will be promising chance to improve female education through "Tatweer" Schools model of king Abdullah's project, and through the returned Scholarship female graduates.

In regards to the second objective of this research about the application of ICTs in TP, the participants' responses can be categorized within three main themes, namely technical supplement

in TSMs, the usage of technology, and the challenges. Generally, the analysis presented a positive extent of using ICT in TP schools, along with the two application of modern educational, namely organizational learning, and the professional learning communities. This positive analysis outcome reflects optimistic indicators that fit with the goals orientation of TP In terms, it tells how the development of education in Saudi Arabia is keeping up with modern teaching styles, and employing latest technology in its progress for better and advanced education.