

# **FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN SAUDI EDUCATION SYSTEM: INCREASING EXPENDITURE ON PRIVATE SECTOR TO IMPROVE LEARNING**

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**Fundamental Shift in Saudi Education System: Increasing  
Expenditure on Private Sector to Improve Learning  
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**Abstract:**

The private sector has a central input in prompting progressive education outcomes for improved learning as the most practical strategy to transform Saudi education system. The non-state actors are critical to implementing a competitive curriculum when their support is accepted. The study determined the contribution of the private sector in increasing efficiency of public expenditure for improved learning in Saudi Arabia through document analysis of Saudi Vision 2030, Public Investment Fund (PIF), and National Transformation Program (NTP). Accordingly, the article argues that affording favourable education accomplishment necessitates forming a public-private partnership so that students are strategically nurtured since increasing expenditure on the private sector guarantees improved learning. To achieve this paradigm shift in Saudi education system to provide citizens with opportunities of success in future labour market, accounting for the input of the private sector consistent with Vision 2030, NTP, and PIF is essential. This article sheds light into the significance of funding non-state actors to refine learning to adopt curriculum programs aligning with international standards. The paper depicts effective public-

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private partnership on education system improvement to lessen the financial burden on the private sector.

**Keywords:** Saudi education system, Saudi Vision 2030, NTP, PIF, public-private partnership, private sector

- **Statements and Declaration**

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## التحول الأساسي في نظام التعليم السعودي: زيادة الإنفاق على القطاع الخاص لتحسين التعلم

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المستخلص:

للقطاع الخاص دور رئيس في تعزيز نتائج التعليم التقدمي لتحسين التعلم باعتباره الإستراتيجية الأكثر عملية لتحويل نظام التعليم السعودي، وتلعب الجهات غير الحكومية دورًا حاسمًا في تنفيذ منهج تنافسي عندما يتم قبول دعمها في العملية التعليمية، ويتناول البحث الحالي إسهام القطاع الخاص في زيادة كفاءة الإنفاق العام لتحسين التعلم في المملكة العربية السعودية من خلال تحليل وثائق رؤية المملكة العربية السعودية 2030، وصندوق الاستثمارات العامة، وبرنامج التحول الوطني، ومن ثم فإن توفير إنجاز تعليمي مناسب يستلزم تشكيل شراكة بين القطاعين العام والخاص بحيث يتم رعاية الطلاب بشكل استراتيجي لأن زيادة الإنفاق على القطاع الخاص يضمن تحسين التعلم، ولتحقيق هذا التحول النموذجي في نظام التعليم السعودي لتزويد المواطنين بفرص النجاح في سوق العمل المستقبلي، فإن مراعاة مدخلات القطاع الخاص بما يتوافق مع رؤية 2030، وبرنامج التحول الوطني، وصندوق الاستثمارات العامة أمر ضروري، ويلقي البحث الحالي الضوء على أهمية تمويل الجهات الفاعلة غير الحكومية لتحسين التعلم لتبني برامج المناهج الدراسية المتوافقة مع المعايير الدولية، وتصور الورقة الشراكة الفعالة بين القطاعين العام والخاص لتحسين نظام التعليم لتخفيف العبء المالي على القطاع الخاص.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** نظام التعليم السعودي، رؤية السعودية 2030، برنامج التحول الوطني، صندوق الاستثمارات العامة، الشراكة بين القطاعين العام والخاص، القطاع الخاص.

## **Fundamental Shift in Saudi Education System: Increasing Expenditure on Private Sector to Improve Learning**

### **• Introduction**

The Saudi Arabian government's support for educational reforms is not debatable, but there is limited knowledge regarding the extent to which the private sector boosts learning, especially through involvement in the Saudi education system. The government and private sector implement a general education system that is organised into major stages of preschool, elementary (six years), intermediate (three years), secondary (three years), and university and technical or vocation education (Alsaleh, 2019). The national government is keen on improving the people's social and economic conditions by remaining at the forefront in implementing policies supporting quality education system. *Saudi Economic Vision 2030* mandates education reform, including improved teaching and learning strategies (Allmnakrah & Evers 2020). Similarly, the Vision 2030 is based on three major pillars of "a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation" that guide the decision-makers in Saudi Arabia to make decisions pertaining to making public and private sectors cooperate to realize Saudi's aspirations (Mohiuddin et al., 2023, p. 3). The primary role of education is equipping people with skills necessary to engage in lifelong learning experiences. For Saudi government, it has committed to cultivating opportunities boosting the quality of education. Reimers and Chung (2018) recommend public private partnerships in which external organizations to school support innovative pedagogies to bolster the development of students within the changing world. A mismatch in the input of private sector to boost the quality education in Saudi Arabia has been a problem that the government as strived to solve effectively.

While Saudi Arabia government commits to executing better-quality education reforms to elevate learning outcomes, public-private partnership in education context should also guarantee realistic results. The government increasing the participation of private sector through funding is a vital effort. Research findings based on a qualitative case study in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia identified the suitability of a privatisation model to safeguard high-quality education and maintaining equality in the country (Alzahrani, 2021). This exploration examined the factors that enhance or hinder public-private partnership in the Saudi context. Financial impediments are cited as a major hindrance, where private agencies lack flexibility to promote and increase efficiency because of disengaged public-private partnership (Alzahrani, 2021). Studies have also revealed a tension between managing partnership in education sector, stressing the importance of striking a strategic balance between financial and flexible regulation within institutions (Semlali et al., 2023). It is an arrangement considered as an incentive to manage inadequate partnership problem. The government can provide sufficient funding to improve

learning to promote a competitive education system for its citizens. However, an education ecosystem is multifaceted because a successful educational curriculum depends on adequate collaboration between state agencies and non-state establishments. An experimental study suggested that a significant contribution of an ecosystem to academic business is within which the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia government could implement policies promoting effective cooperation between the country's education institutions and business stakeholders (Alrajhi & Aydin, 2019). Conclusions drawn from these investigations underline the requirement for a fundamental shift in boosting the input of private sector in improving educational outcomes in Saudi through increased financial support.

### ***Methodology, Scope, and Study Purpose***

This article provides a scholarly review based on the researcher's document analysis of electronic and printed materials within the education field. This evaluation is intended to develop insights into the Saudi education system from the viewpoint of global education reforms in which the private sector improves learning. The adopted qualitative research approach is an analytical method that facilitates examining and interpreting data to create meaning, gain awareness, and develop vital empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009). This study focuses on the document analysis of *Saudi Vision 2030*, Public Investment Fund (PIF), and National Transformation Program (NTP) and addresses the following critical question: How can the Saudi government collaborate with the private sector to deliver a quality education system to improve learning? This action plan calls for a new fundamental shift. Accordingly, there is a need for increasing expenditure on private sector to link a standard teaching curriculum with improved learning. The Saudi education system is destined to portray progressive outcomes of educational reforms when the government incorporate the private sector in handling problems of organisational and administrative practices. This study is rooted on the proposition that implementing an educational system authenticated by empirical and theoretical research will prompt improved learning in Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, this study proposes that a public-private partnership can improve educational achievement in Saudi Arabia if the government increases expenditure on the curriculum-based proposals by external organisations. In 2019, Dr. Hamad bin Mohammed Al-Alsheikh, the Education Minister, retaliated the effort by Saudi Arabia to improve the quality of education by stimulating public-private partnership (Arab News, 2019). Thus, the study provides a policy recommendation on how to promote a fundamental shift in the Saudi education system guided by the methodology involving document analysis, literature on effective public-private partnerships on education system improvement, and reviews of national and ministry reports regarding changes in the Saudi Arabia education system. Overall, a critical document analysis offers a basis for providing practical recommendations for strategies to boost funding assistance on private sector to improve learning.

The rest of the study is structured as follows: The second section is the study context that presents the inevitable trend of education system in the national, regional, and global contexts. In the third part, the overview of Saudi education system is provided to denote the development of the Saudi education system and contemporary Saudi education system to examine the successes, failures, criticisms, and challenges of educational models implemented. The fourth section is the document analysis of Saudi government documents to outline the key education initiatives and strategies by the Ministry of Education with the engagement of the private sector. The fifth section presents the discussion pertaining to the effectiveness of public-private partnerships for education system improvement and the way ahead regarding increasing expenditure on private sector in order to safeguard a fundamental shift in Saudi education system to improve learning. The final section provides conclusions and lesson learned.

### • Study Context

This study is situated in national, regional, and global contexts. This consideration is grounded on the notion that the Saudi education system has witnessed dramatic transformations attributed to local and international shifts in the education sector. Saudi Arabia was not colonised, implying that its educational system does not follow imperialism pressures. It was rather relatively established upon a desire to overcome major systemic issues within a competitive global economy (Makhlouf, 2021). From the national perspective, *Saudi Vision 2030* demands motivated, rapid and successive modifications of the Saudi education system to improve learning environments, teaching methods, and syllabus (Albalawi, 2018). This study is situated in regional and global contexts to reveal that the Saudi educational system has not benefited significantly from borrowing educational systems from other countries as these modes do not naturally match student's cognitive development in the country and the Gulf region in general. A study published in 2020 investigates the effectiveness of applying educational models from the West to meet a growing demand for education in Saudi Arabia revealed that the culture of rote learning, and inadequate teacher training were the primary reasons why these systems do not fit naturally within the Gulf region (Mirghani, 2020). The significant issue here is curtailed student's cognitive development In relation to such limitations, Saudi national education system is ineffective to improve learning. Research findings provide deeper insights into the role of private sector in promoting dynamic and robust education system to improve learning (Alzahrani, 2021; Hakimovich et al., 2020; Shaturaev, 2021). Hence, the private sector remains an active partner and an operational policymaker influencing positive progression in the strategic nurturing of learners. Overall, this shift towards forming cooperation between state and non-state agencies in the Saudi education system is essential.

Concurrent with global trends in educational reforms, international literature has established the advancement of education systems including the private sector.

Mahmut (2020) emphasised that the increasing demand for education has continued to the growth of education system, in turn, making the private sector an important partner in promoting the transition from education to employment because the private sector is accepting the burden of vocational education and training. Similarly, D'Orville (2020) highlighted that international public-private collaboration is a protentional norm for boosting global education to deliver solutions. Nevertheless, Joseph (2020) emphasised that educational reforms within a developing country is deep-rooted in developing policy framework to positively impact the education quality. This description underlines the involvement of non-state stakeholders to achieve desired educational outcomes. In Saudi Arabia, financial support is a determining factor in public-private partnerships in education (Alzahrani, 2021). With relation to international trend entailing public-private partnerships used to overcome financial restrictions within which the state is actively involved in delivering high-level critical projects, Saudi Arabia has managed to establish a policy framework comprising progressive insights rather than adopting policies implemented in Western context (Biygautane, 2017). The success of the Saudi education system is dependent on regulatory clarity and financial support as approaches to motivate the role and contribution of the private sector.

Currently, an upgraded Saudi education system is treasured as essential for the country's success in its transitioning from a largely oil-based economy to a service-based economy. Based on the prevailing educational reforms guided by Vision 2030, the nation remains determined on adopting social and economic initiatives prompting educational change. The private education sector cannot be neglected, especially whereby the government manages privatisation initiatives, mandating the private sector with responsibility to support public entities (Ernst & Young Global Ltd., 2021). Therefore, the country can continue implementing innovative methods, particularly in activating the contribution of the private sector, as a strategic objective to improve the delivery of teaching and learning in different school levels. Arab News reported a unique growth, 8% increase from 2015-2020, in private K-12 education sector in Saudi Arabia (Arab News, 2022). However, the private K-12 education market is highly fragmented attributed to the global K-12 school chains not establishing its presence in the country (Arab News, 2022). Accordingly, bridging this gap from the perspective of increasing expenditure on private sector is important to enhance the level of educational change positively and effectively.

- **Overview of Saudi Education System**

The Saudi education system has experienced significant transformations encompassing the provision of quality education in various disciplines and at different school levels. The explanation of the country's education system can be presented from distinctive perspectives. For this study, two major approaches are discussed: development of Saudi Education system and contemporary Saudi

education system. The former is historical development and processes related to how the education system has evolved from a widespread to systematic to a complex system consisting of educational standards offering quality training to teachers, improving the performance assessment standards of students, and enhancing the application of educational technology. The contemporary Saudi education system is mostly captured by the Tatweer project to denote the alignment with the Vision 2030.

### ○ *Development of Saudi Education System*

Education policy in Saudi Arabia is associated with accepting an education system as a form of civilisation to meet people's economic and social needs. Adhering to a continuous development of an educational curriculum to align with human civilisation has been a norm in Saudi Arabia. The country's educational experience is connected to the endeavour to influence its economic and social growths away from overreliance on oil. However, informal education, mostly the indigenous Hijazis, prevailed as a widespread on-the-job-training. A positive development is that this informal system motivated the government to initiate a successful education system only that the state did not provide subsidies to private schools and government schools because of the shortage of funding (Ochsenwald, 2019). In the 1930s, Saudi Arabia advanced a formal education system with a curriculum that was intended to provide a context to promote a learning progression at all school-levels. In 1932, after the formation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, education was made accessible to the citizens (Alnajim, 2023). Thus, it was crucial for Saudi Arabia to institute a curriculum characterising features emphasising Saudi Arabia's aspiration to establish itself as a leading Arab country in improving its education structure. Prior to the 1930s, Saudi Administration allowed Saudi students to seek education from international context as a preferred destination for acquiring and progression their higher education. In 1936, after a five-year halting of advancing schooling abroad, Saudi government settled the education expenses of students that proceeded to seek education in international learning setting (Dakhiel, 2017). Overall, it remains clear that Saudi government has continued preparing and supporting students and teachers as well as developing a structured and systematic curriculum program. A summarised version of the significant dates regarding education system change in Saudi Arabia is presented in table 1.

**Table 1. Significant dates of education system development in Saudi Arabia**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Education Development</b>	<b>Citations</b>
1924	Saudi implemented its first formal education system paving the way for a dynamic approach for significant transformations in this sector	(Dakhiel, 2017)
1936	Saudi introduced high school-level to prepare students to seek for the studies abroad	(Dakhiel, 2017)
1944	Learning encompassed an institution for preparing students to become judges, and the education system comprised the intermediate level (three years) and secondary level (three years).	(Dakhiel, 2017)
1945	Education system development was introduced consisting of the first school for nomads	(Dakhiel, 2017)
1949	The establishment of Islamic studies ( <i>Shariah</i> )	(Dakhiel, 2017)
1952	Saudi Arabia established the Ministry of Education and mandated it to provide free and right educating to all students even the students with disabilities	(Alabdulaziz, 2019)
1952	Ministry of Education entrusted with planning and coordinating the general education in the three school levels (primary-intermediate-secondary)	(Ministry of Education, 2021)
1957	Opening of King Saud University (KSU)	(Morad, 2020)
1959	Saudi established General Presidency for Girls' Education with 15 primary schools and one intermediate teacher's institute	(Ministry of Education, 2021)
1970	Saudi Higher Council of Education dispensed Saudi Education Policy Document, designating the foundation to regulate and direct modern (general, special, adult education, college, institutes) Saudi educational system for teacher preparation.	(Dakhiel, 2017)
1970	Government launched five-year development plans, which included the support of education system transformation	(Morad, 2020)
1975	Saudi Arabia instituted the Ministry of Higher Education mandated to implement government's policy frameworks on higher education	(Alabdulaziz, 2019)
1979	The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education collaborated to initiate radio broadcasted education programs to help students, although the initiative was not an official distance learning program	(Abouelnaga et al., 2019)
1980	The Saudi Arabian government founded the General Establishment of Technical Education and Vocational Training	(Alabdulaziz, 2019)
1985	Saudi Arabia was integral part of launching ArabSat, which entailed two communications satellites	
1997	Academic institutions in Saudi Arabia started having access to the Internet	(Abouelnaga et al., 2019)

### ○ *Contemporary Saudi Education System*

Within the first two decades of the twentieth century, Saudi Arabia has witnessed dynamic transformations in its education system. Evidence suggests that two primary motives have been critical in reforming Saudi education system. Firstly, Saudi Arabia has exhibited eagerness in preparing students to graduate and become competitive within the global context by acquiring skills to attain professional education and secure employment opportunities. Secondly, the country has strived to reduce the influence and impact of institutionalised crucial ideas meant to help improve the quality of education (Quamar, 2020). Thus, education system changes since the onset of 2000s to the present are all geared toward solving the problem of inadequate school curriculum. The reference point for adjusting the Saudi education system is the limitation of the existing model, especially the insufficiency to equip young people with adequate skills needed in job market, evident in 2011 low performance benchmark scores (<400) in Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). For this current study, the contemporary Saudi education system provides the foundation of demonstrating how the input of the private sector can be enhanced.

Saudi Arabia introduced Tatweer project to improve student learning to guarantee that the Saudi education system aligned with the twentieth first century needs. A significant initiative of Tatweer project is “to provide students with 21st-century capabilities and attitudes that will help them grow into productive citizens who engage with the rest of the world positively” (Tatweer, 2010, p. 4 as quoted in Alqahtani et al., 2021, p. 323). This quotation underlines the multifaceted and multidimensional aspects of Tatweer project in improving instruction delivery. The expected education system reforms under this plan revolve around school curriculum development, learning environments, teacher training, and extra-curriculum activities (Alghamdi, 2019). Although the program was announced in 2007, its initiation arose in 2011 (Mutahhiri, 2022). Tatweer model’s uniqueness is revealed in a shift of educational system from traditional schooling to a facilitated direct learning process using efficient pedagogical methods. Professionalism, accountability, and excellence ideologies denote the distinctiveness of Tatweer project implementation. The primary goal of this educational model is decentralising educational system, improving teaching training, and executing a student-centred curriculum as the major tactics to advance learning (Mutahhiri, 2022). Tatweer project was introduced to enhance innovativeness, emphasising collaboration and adequate technical support to teachers and school administrators. The model’s critical element is ensuring that key stakeholders (government, teachers, educators) are involved in implementing an effective curriculum entrenched in shared responsibility.

- **Document Analysis**

- *Saudi Vision 2030*

The *Saudi Vision 2030* has set goals to enhance learning via education using a complex curriculum. These goals include lowering unemployment, expanding private sector, and attaining economic diversification. In its second pillar about a thriving economy, the *Saudi Vision 2030* links economic growth to the provision of comprehensive education for positive employment outcomes. Saudi Arabia endeavours to invest in education and training to equip young people for future jobs, with a belief that doubling this effort could guarantee aligning the education system with the market needs (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, n.d.). Another consideration of ensuring that Saudi Arabia is to benefit from a better-quality business environment is building public-private partnerships. The principal goal of pursuing this form of cooperation is to develop the fundamental capabilities to boost service quality for an advanced business environment (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, n.d.). A key theme identified from this explanation is determining the suitability of creating comprehensive programs to intensify best practices in the education sector. Accordingly, there is an emphasis on privatisation because the country has already experienced economic reforms prior to the adoption of the *Saudi Vision 2030*. Habibi (2019) clarified that the persistent deliberation to use privatisation mode by Saudi Arabia is to expand the private sector from 40% to 60% of the economy by 2030. A thriving economy theme underscores that Saudi Arabia maximises opportunities attempting to help students acquire necessary professional skills for future employment.

Ambitious nation pillar designates the fundamental role of the Saudi government in terms of governance. Vision 2030 appreciates the significance of the state's involvement in sustained improvement to match new expectations and handle new challenges. Saudi Arabia demonstrates a high level of commitment to transparency standards and accountability, establishing agile public institutions and tracking the performances of these organisations as well as overall government roles (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, n.d.). Another significant pledge outlined by this theme relates to deepening effective communication between government agencies and citizens and private sector. Organising the government's agencies with agility is intended to promote effectiveness, efficiency, and rapid decision-making. Moreover, the Vision 2030 outlines a solid and dynamic association of policy decisions and performance monitoring, necessitating the government to offer organisational support by pushing for feasible coordination between its agencies and relevant bodies to improve their performance (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, n.d.). This pillar exhibits how Vision 2030 is a policy framework to diversify economic efforts and support social progression. The initiatives proposed is developing a sustainable economy centred on social transformation to eliminate bureaucracy.

○ ***Public Investment Fund (PIF)***

The PIF program is intended for increasing transparency in public and private sector to minimise the multifaceted investment procedures and improve efficiency of public accountability. Whereas the program's vision is to empower the creation of impactful new sectors and opportunities shaping global future economy, its mission is to maximise sustainable returns, enable economic growth, and diversify Saudi economy (Public Investment Fund, 2021). These statements affirm the vital primary reason for establishing a strategic plan fostering Saudi economic growth by emphasising the input of various sectors. The PIF program is a Saudi Sector Development (SSD) investment pool to accelerate dynamism and diversification of Saudi's economy, allowing the private sector to strengthen various strategic economic sectors. For example, between 2017 and 2020, PIF plan developed and supported priority sectors (Public Investment Fund, 2021). The PIF has a definite association with learning and improving the education system. In 2020, PIF hosted a number of business major students affiliated to Harvard Business School. The intention of this arrangement was to expose Saudi students to wide-ranging business portfolio and professional careers for top talents within the domestic and global contexts (Arab News, 2020). The fund portrays a positive commitment to improve a learning culture in different ways, such as promoting partnership with world-class learning educational establishments, actively incentivizing specialized certifications, and delivering study development program (Arab News, 2020). Overall, Saudi PIF demonstrates deliberate reform agenda by supporting the growth of private sector to meet national desires for rapid development.

○ ***National Transformation Program (NTP)***

Launched in 2016, the NTP document lists the strategic objectives associated with the targets to accomplish the outlined goals of *Saudi Vision 2030*. The first phase intended to achieve interim targets for 2020, followed by a sequence of phases to include additional public bodies other than the initial 24 government bodies in the economic and development segments (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). Referencing this document, it states that the expected effects of its implementation are described to signify innovative planning, follow-up methods, and enactment at the national level. The primary objective of NTP is endorsing a substantial impact on effectiveness and the incorporation of government action. In this way, the NTP complements the achievement of Vision 2030 in a balanced fiscal manner, comprising strengthening partnerships between national goals with the private sector and its increased contribution in the gross national product. In 2016, the Saudi Arabia government approved 543 initiatives revolved around different economic sectors, costing around 270 Billion SR (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). Concerning the improvement in the quality of education, the Ministry of Education and private sector were considered as strategic partners involved in boosting the capacity of education system.

The NTP 2016 classified the key Ministry of Education's strategic objectives into eight (8) major categories. The strategic objective (1) was intended to boost the provision of education services for students at all levels. Its specifications were dynamic based on the significance to accomplish the objectives of Vision 2030, for example, establishing positive values and equipping citizens with ample knowledge and competencies to meet the future labour market needs. Strategic objective (2) was aimed at improving teacher recruitment, training, and development. Its value related to the Vision 2030 objectives is safeguarding positive values and building independent citizens' personality as well as providing citizens with applicable knowledge and skills essential to meet future labour market needs. Strategic objective (3) intended to boost learning environment, stimulating both creativity and innovation. Its relevance to 2030 objectives is apparent in enabling youths to develop and leverage skills. Strategic objective (4) anticipated improving curricula and teaching methods to provide citizens with indispensable skills required in the future labour market. Strategic objective (5) proposed an improvement in student's values to complement with enhanced core skills with the intention to acquire knowledge matching future labour market needs. Strategic objective (6) emphasised the ability to enhance the capability of the educational system meeting the requirements for national development and demands of labour market. Strategic objective (7) highlighted the development of financing methods and efficiency of educational system to achieve budgetary balance as stated in Vision 2030 objectives. Finally, Strategic objective (8) focused on increasing the participation of private sector within the education segment envisioned to expand the privatization of government services to create an appealing environment for local and international investors and to boost confidence in Saudi economy (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). With focus on 2020 targets, Saudi Arabia developed 36 key education initiatives shown in Appendix A.

- **Discussion**

Drawing on document analysis, this study sought to identify how a fundamental shift in the Saudi education system could become effective and efficient by increasing expenditure on private sector to improve learning. Saudi government documents were examined to determine the contribution of the private sector in the education field to the Vision 2030, Public Investment Fund, and National Transformation Program. The analysis reveals key findings regarding public-private partnerships for educational system improvement and increasing the expenditure on the non-state organisations embedded in Saudi education system to improve learning.

- ***Public-Private Partnerships for Saudi Educational System***

Public-private partnership is a valuable tool for improving the quality of educational system for a government implementing this agreement. Accounting for the objectives of *Saudi Vision 2030*, it is clear that establishing updated standards is central to safeguarding a knowledge-based Saudi economy. In 2016, the primary objectives and targets of launching Saudi NTP was to accomplish collaboration

within the country's different sectors, namely non-profit, public, and private sectors (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). A closer examination of the NTP 2016 key strategic objectives by the Ministry of Education affirms the input of private sector, with the government remaining at centre of these operations. According to the Strategic objective (8), the decisive focus of the NTP 2016 was increasing the participation of private sector in the education sector in order to expand government services privatization and boost confidence in Saudi economy. The implementation of public-private partnership projects stimulates labour market and boosts labour capacity evident in better-quality services in the education sector (Kruhlov & Tereshchenko, 2019). Saudi NTP 2016 and NTP 2020 connect effective institutional environment to the expansion of knowledge-based economy. Correspondingly, evidence from micro-level studies determined that public-private partnerships positively impact education outcomes and increase socioeconomics in the education system (Fabre & Straub, 2019). The criterion though for attaining positive educational outcomes accounts for defining the nature of programs implemented based on accountability and possible risks. Saudi education system necessitates a collaborative program enhancing educational outcomes apparent in improved learning through active and robust participation of the private sector.

Pertinent to the execution of *Saudi Vision 2030*, the Public Investment Fund, and the National Transformation Program is government collaboration with private sector to promote public-private partnership to propel a knowledge-driven economy. Vision 2030 establishes opportunities for partnerships within which the private sector must be well-positioned to drive healthier employment opportunities to improve Saudi Arabia's business environment (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, n.d.). Regarding the public-private partnership within the education sector, the arrangement allows for educational institutions to develop and maintain a high-level commitment to progressive education outcomes because of the mutual relations between the government and private sector for a specific implemented program. Saudi Arabia government investing in forming a strategic partnership with private entities provides students with skills required in developing job specifications in various segments of education field. The outcome of public-private partnerships regarding infrastructure use increases efficiency and improves labour productivity (Kruhlov & Tereshchenko, 2019). Similarly, Saudi PIF also advances the quality of life in Saudi Arabia and drives the growth of the private sector for sustainable impact consistent with Vision 2030 (Public Investment Fund, 2021). Empowering the private sector is the foundation for supporting the expansion of priority sectors, for example, in the education field. From the standpoint of sustainability, the public-private partnership model is a basic perspective involving a market mechanism to raise substantial funds and diversify investment to improve public infrastructure through efficient cooperation (Liu et al., 2021). Traditionally, most education systems are built around public finance, government agencies and non-state entities in an arrangement

entailing sharing or combining responsibilities to deliver education services (Baum, 2018). Saudi education system should maximise using an operating model that motivates the contribution of the private sector to complement government's efficiency in public spending.

Implementing quality Saudi education system requires financial resources, making it vital for the government to consider applying public-private partnerships model. Conclusions drawn by these studies also reveal that public-private partnerships address budgetary pressure, bridge demand-supply gap, and mitigate fiscal deficits (Al-Hanawi et al., 2020). The extent to which a public-private partnership framework is healthy cannot be exaggerated because opportunities and benefits of this model are multifaceted and multidimensional. A public-private partnership arrangement is associated with tapping innovations within the private sector, reducing risks with the utilisation of public sector assets, enhancing funding of diverse public infrastructure facilities, and increasing the efficiency and sustainability of public service in various segments (Al-Hanawi et al., 2020). Providing Saudi Arabia's education institutions with an opportunity to reduce bureaucracy through adequate funding by the government is a positive change. In that way, a shift in education system promotes an ambitious dynamic, bold, and effective plan towards disciplined learning entities due to an enhanced approach to acquiring financial resources. A comparative analysis study supports the idea of public-private partnership being financially-oriented, aligning with Goals 8 and 11 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and a successful and efficient method to transform public-private partnership ventures through financial capacities (Khahro et al., 2021). This educational change is consistent with the Vision 2030, PIF, and NTP intended to developing education sector by ensuring efficiency in fund acquisition and spending and involving the private sector.

○ ***The Way Ahead: Increasing Expenditure on Private Sector***

Ultimate transformation of the Saudi education system stressing increased expenditure on the private sector designates an advanced perspective of supporting the initiative of the government in implementing a competitive education system. Macroeconomic factors, including demographics and income, underpinning the growth of Saudi education sector, clearly points to making relevant investment efforts to sustain quality education and attract private investors (Ernst & Young Global Ltd., 2021). With respect to the operation of non-state entities in education field, Saudi government provides the needed sectoral regulations within which the private sector effectively engages in the delivery of positive education outcomes. The NTP and *Saudi Vision 2030* pinpoint transparency in the state-owned agencies remaining the foundation of increasing efficiency in public expenditure (Moshashai et al., 2020). An upsurge in funding the private sector to improve learning symbolises a vital way in which the government supports a competitive education system.

Developing public-private partnerships guarantees adequate funding of the private sector since the government is conscious of the contribution of non-state agencies in improving learning. Public funding represents a significant large source of investment in education, and the input of private sources of financing is becoming progressively accepted (OECD, 2022). The management standpoint also proves the significance of active public-private participation in education sector. According to a study examining the contribution of private sector in Gulf Cooperation Council education, public-private association delivers improved service quality, develops local solutions involving global partnerships arrangement, and facilitates providing effective sustainable business models for education institutions (Peddada & Alhuthaifi, 2021). Saudi Arabian government's responsibility is to establish an attractive regulatory setting to oversee improved learning involving the private sector.

Increasing expenditure on private sector enhances learning outcomes, but it is attributed to Saudi Arabian government sharing responsibilities with the non-state entities. Lessening financial burden to the private sector is beneficial to local and international partners. *Saudi Vision 2030* strives to attract international investment to open the country to global economy. Public-private partnerships should leverage effective education spending and produce better results. Increasing public spending on education must align with appropriate strategies to unlock improvement in teaching quality, learning efficiency, and focused teacher training (World Bank, 2023). Affirming that the modification of Saudi education system inspires and creates an appealing practise among students, the private sector has a potential to improve learning. While encouraging public-private partnership initiatives could address the limitation of the Saudi education system, access to the financing this ability seems to be the basis of improving education through curriculum development and the training and recruitment of educators. Private school might not continuously produce impressive learning outcomes compared to government-affiliated schools (Gruijters et al., 2021). This claim does not point to a private schooling context as not associated with improved learning, but it is a clear indication that government's regulation is necessary. Accordingly, increasing the magnitude of expenditure on the non-state agencies can imply supporting an environment facilitating positive learning outcomes accounting to regulatory practises by the government.

- **Conclusion Note: Lessons Learned**

Education systems remain the basic component defining the quality of life in different countries globally. Despite realizing the significance of education outcomes within the economic realms, it is quite unfortunate that some governments have not implemented educational changes matching their strategic objectives and targets. A close examination of the education system transformations made in Saudi Arabia depicts a strive towards a knowledge-based economy, while mitigating challenges limiting the attainment of the expected objectives. Saudi Arabia transitioning from a widespread to a systematic (standardised) system to a more complex education

system has required increased financial resources. The outcome of this transformation is a dynamic structured comprehensive curriculum consistent with students' personal and professional needs. A paradigm shift in the Saudi education system suggests implementing distinctive national programs to provide citizens with opportunities of future successes in the labour market. *Saudi Vision 2030* and the National Transformation Program guarantee that Saudi education system improves education outcomes. However, without accounting for the vital input of the private sector, inconsistencies in attaining progressive educational outcomes manifest. Similarly, the Public Investment Fund depicts a strategic program to support the growth of the public sector and the desire to safeguard noteworthy and rapid diversification of Saudi economy.

Saudi Arabia government, through the Ministry of Education, should critically examine the modification of the education system, highlighting the necessity for increasing spending on the private sector for better results. While the non-state actors are at the core of refining learning, the government can engage actively in promoting curriculum programs characterising international standards. Therefore, allowing strategic partnerships with the private sector is a pathway intended for building a sustainable model in the educator field. For such cooperation, adequate realisation is needed to understand that a competitive education system should be built upon government bodies and non-state entities sharing and combining relevant responsibilities to offer advanced education services. While public-private partnership might resolve the challenges with inadequate education outcomes in Saudi Arabia, the government should directly and indirectly regulate and finance actions toward improving education quality to guarantee consistent with the Vision 2030.

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## Appendix A

### NTP 36 Key Education Initiatives

The *National Transformation Program 2020* identifies 36 Ministry of Education initiatives to be implemented under the program, which aim to contribute significantly to the macro objectives of the program and the *Vision 2030*. These 36 initiatives are: (1) comprehensive framework for continuing professional development for teachers and educational leaders; (2) shift to digital education to support student and teacher progress; (3) increase community clubs' entertainment and educational programs; (4) improve the safety and security in school buildings; (5) reduce the administrative burdens of teachers and education leaders to ensure that they focus on the educational process and to improve the quality of support services; (6) encourage private sector to invest in public education; (7) establish a Transformation Office at the Ministry level to support the

National Transformation program; (8) apply the Ministry of Education's new operating model; (9) develop a national strategy to upgrade the teaching profession by raising the professional level of teachers, improving the profession's ecosystem and raising the quality of services provided to teachers; (10) improve the quality of primary education; (11) development of nurseries and kindergarten programs and the expansion of their services to cover all regions; (12) improve international study scholarship program and improve its efficiency; (13) develop core life and employability skills and integrate it with curricula and extra-curricular activities; (14) establish King Salman University for Technical & Vocational Education; (15) develop student-centric education model; (16) enhance participation in international scientific competitions; (17) establish technical labs in schools to foster students' vocational skills; (18) attract private investments to finance schools' construction; (19) enhance planning and budgeting efficiency in order to achieve the rationalization of capital and operating expenses; (20) establish a Center for English Language Education Development; (21) establish a Center for Arabic Language Education Development; (22) establish a Center for Development of Healthcare Information System; (23) establish a Center for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education Development; (24) project to develop special education/establish a national center dedicated to special education in collaboration with the private sector; (25) establish the e-service framework for universities; (26) establish a practical framework to align university graduates with labor market needs; (27) develop curriculum assessment system; (28) develop and deploy the independent schools model to reach 2000 public schools run by small establishments; (29) develop life-long learning and sustainability; (30) develop an awareness program on investment and entrepreneurship for high schools and university students; (31) enhance the image of the education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; (32) foster the role of the family in the educational process and promote national identity; develop digitization and GIS information system; (34) establish a database of education statistics, alumni and scientific research; (35) establish an office of strategy management at the ministry level; and (36) develop key performance indicators at ministry level.

**(Source: Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2018, p. 40)**