

Identifying Characteristics of a “Good School” in the British and Saudi Arabian Education Systems

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Abstract

This study aims at establishing whether primary schools in the Saudi education system conform to the characteristics of what are referred to as ‘good schools’ in the British education system. The findings established through this study show that only 43.75% of primary schools in Saudi conform to the characteristics of what are referred to as ‘good schools’ in Britain. Moreover, it is established that there are more similarities than differences in the roles played by headteachers in these two education systems when it comes to fostering effective schools and developing schools as learning organisations. Nevertheless, it is established that there are more headteachers in British primary schools than in Saudi primary schools who take up roles geared towards fostering effective schools and developing schools as learning organisations. This disparity has been attributed to the fact that in the Saudi education system the role of headteachers is highly regulated and constrained due to the bureaucratic and centralised nature of the country’s education system whereas in the British education system headteachers have more autonomy and control over school management. Generally, this study provides invaluable insights that can be used to improve the professional practice of educators. It illuminates different characteristics and roles that can contribute to the realisation of effective schools and schools as learning organisations. It also provides an explicit outlook towards school leadership in the global context. As the world is increasingly becoming globalised, it is crucial for educators to acquaint themselves with how different systems of education function.

1. Introduction

The role that schools play in today’s society is tremendous and invaluable. Schools are considered the cornerstone or foundation of today’s society since they provide a platform where young learners gain knowledge, discover their talents, develop skills, grow cognitively and eventually become useful members of the society. Schools are not only intended to help learners gain knowledge but they are also supposed to equip learners with appropriate values, attitudes and relevant skills that will enable learners to become critical thinkers, innovators and self-sustainable members of society (Rose and Rose 2009; Tew 2007). Nevertheless, some studies show that a significant number of learners fail to realise positive school outcomes thus they transit from school to society without gaining adequate knowledge or relevant skills that can enable them to thrive and survive in today’s complex and challenging world. Poor outcomes among learners have been attributed to ineffectual school management and leadership. As a result, policy makers, practitioners and educators have shown increasing interest in establishing sound leadership and management practices that will help to institute reforms in schools so as to develop good schools that improve learner outcomes (Harris 2004).

A considerable number of studies have explored the aspects that make up “good schools” in order to decipher what can be done in order to improve school outcomes (Bollen et al 2012; Ganihar & Hangal 2008; Harris 2004). In some studies, the term “good schools” has been used sparingly to refer to the ability or capability of a school to realise desired outcomes (Feng 2007; Ganihar & Hangal 2008; Sammons 1999).

This study seeks to establish whether primary schools in the Saudi education system conform to the characteristics of what are referred to as ‘good schools’ in the British education system. Generally, this study hopes to shed light on the different characteristics and roles that can contribute to the realisation of effective schools and schools as learning organisations (good schools) in different education contexts.

The findings established through this study will particularly provide insights to headteachers on the areas of management and leadership that they can focus on and the things that they can do in order to develop effective and successful schools. In addition, this study will provide a blueprint or a guideline that policy makers can refer to or adopt in formulating educational policies that will help improve educational practice and improve school outcomes.

2. Literature Review and Previous Work

Over the years, the concept of school effectiveness has increasingly received attention from researchers, policy makers, practitioners, educators, the government, parents and the community at large. This is mainly due to the increasing need to improve school performance and equip learners with relevant skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that will enable them to become self-sustainable and adaptive to continuously changing market trends (Harris 2004). In order to get a good grasp of what school effectiveness entails, it is foremost crucial to understand the meaning of effectiveness. Waldt (2004) notes that, effectiveness is capability of accomplishing a particular purpose or goal. Similarly, Winstanley (2005) notes that effectiveness is about producing the desired outcomes and behaviour. It is the capability to achieve objectives. Drucker (2006) observes that within the organisational context, effectiveness is considered as the capability of organisations to accomplish the right things.

Although a number of literature have tried to define the concept of school effectiveness, it is apparent that there is no standard definition of this concept. Bollen et al (2012) observe that school effectiveness is a vague concept with no standard definition of what it entails. Different authors, researchers and theorists have conveyed different perspectives regarding this concept. For instance, Feng (2007) defines school effectiveness as the achievement of a school’s desired outcomes. Similarly, Ganihar & Hangal (2008) note that, school effectiveness is the congruence between school objectives and achievement. In essence, the higher the degree of congruence between the school goals and the actual performance of the school, the more effective the school is. Moreover, Bollen et al (2012) note that, school effectiveness is “the extent to which any educational institution as a social system given certain means and resources fulfills its objectives without incapacitating its means and resources and without placing undue strain on its members.” It is evident from the definitions provided by Bollen et al (2012), Feng (2007) and Ganihar & Hangal (2008), that the concept of school effectiveness is hinged on outcomes and achievements.

However, in the article “Effective Schools” Kirk & Jones (2004) tend to disagree with the notion of defining school effectiveness based on outcomes and achievements. Instead, Kirk and Jones propose a multidimensional approach of defining the concept of school effectiveness. They suggest that there are seven key characteristics that define school effectiveness. These characteristics include; a clear school mission, positive relations, regular monitoring of students’ progress, orderly and safe learning environment, instructional leadership, high success expectations and time management (Kirk & Jones 2004). The first characteristic of an effective school according to Kirk & Jones (2004) is a clear school mission. They note that, effective schools clearly articulate their mission, priorities and goals. Moreover, these schools ensure that the school staff understand and commit themselves to attaining the school’s mission. The second characteristic of an effective school is high expectation for success. Kirk & Jones (2004) note that, in effective schools there exists a climate of high expectations. The school leadership believes, communicates and demonstrates that all learners can realise the standards set out in the curriculum. Thirdly, effective schools have instructional leadership. Kirk & Jones (2004:4) observe that, in effective schools the headteacher acts as an instructional leader who continuously communicates and reinforces the school’s mission to students, teachers, parents, the community and other stakeholders.

Furthermore Kirk & Jones (2004) note that effective schools frequently monitor student progress. They observe that, in these schools, the progress of learners is frequently measured or evaluated against the set curriculum outcomes. Subsequently, the findings of the frequent assessments carried out are used to identify way of improving instruction or readjusting the school program so as meet the specific learning needs of each student. They also assert that, effective schools have a safe and orderly learning environment (Kirk & Jones 2004). In these schools, time is effectively managed. Teachers allocate adequate time for classroom instruction, group activities and other extra-curricular activities. Additionally, Kirk & Jones (2004) note that effective schools are characterised by positive relations particularly between parents, the school staff and leadership. Parents of children in these schools comprehend and support the school's mission. They are also given the opportunity to participate in school activities or processes that aid the school to attain its mission (Kirk & Jones 2004).

Similarly, Rutter, Mortimore & Ouston (1979), provide a multidimensional approach of examining the concept of school effectiveness. According to Rutter et al (1979), there are eight key characteristics of school effectiveness. These characteristics include; school ethos, effective classroom management, shared student-staff tasks, positive treatment and feedback of students, high teacher expectations, availability of positive teacher role models, suitable working conditions for both students and staff and effective classroom management. Although there is a big gap in time between the sentiments provided by Kirk & Jones (2004) and Rutter et al (1979), it is evident that there exist some similarities between their conceptualisation of school effectiveness. Both Kirk & Jones (2004) and Rutter et al (1979) agree that some of the key characteristics of school effectiveness include; conducive learning environment, positive relations, high success expectations and clear school mission or ethos.

Moreover, Edmonds (1979) observes that, some of the tangible and indispensable characteristics of effective schools include; strong administrative leadership, high success expectation, orderly but not rigid learning environment and frequent monitoring of student progress. In addition, Edmonds (1979), notes that in effective schools, emphasis is exerted on attainment of basic skills over other activities.

Literatures reviewed in this section have clearly highlighted different characteristics of effective schools. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that there are certain underlying factors that come into play as far as defining school effectiveness is concerned. Political, cultural, religious and social aspects play a significant role in determining school effectiveness (Kurdi 2011). For instance, what might be considered as standards of school effectiveness in the British educative system and Saudi Arabian educative systems may not be similar. Cordesman (2008) and Cole (2012) observe that, in Saudi Arabia, religion is the key factor which influences school curriculum, practices, relations, values and standards. The study of Islam particularly, memorisation of the Qur'an and its interpretation through repetition forms the core of the Saudi Arabian curriculum at the primary level. Furthermore, they note that schools in Saudi Arabia are highly regulated with policies drawn from different socio-cultural and religious perspectives. There has also been some hesitancy on the part of policy makers to introduce reforms in the school systems. This hesitancy is mainly due to resistance to the infiltration of western ideals which are perceived as deleterious to Islamic culture by key stakeholders (Cordesman 2008; Cole 2012).

Conversely, the British education system is largely grounded on western ideals. For example, the Teachers' Standards in England published in 2012 provides guidelines on teaching standards, personal and professional conduct that are to be entrenched in schools so as to achieve effective learning organisations. These guidelines accentuate on; the fulfillment of wider professional responsibilities and the management of behaviour so as to ensure safe and conducive learning environments (Department of Education 2012). Unlike, Saudi Arabia, religion does not play a central role in determining school standards, programs, process or the overall curriculum (Rush 2011). Hence, it is likely that there are disparities in viewpoints or perspectives on what characterises effective schools in British and Saudi Arabian educative systems.

3. Examining Characteristics of “good schools”

One of the key objectives of this study is to examine the characteristics that define “good schools” in the Saudi Arabian and British education systems. It seeks to establish whether schools in Saudi Arabia conform to the characteristics of what are referred to as ‘good schools’ in Britain. In order to establish this, different aspects of goods schools highlighted in the literature review chapter were used as the criteria for establishing the characteristics that define “good schools” in the Saudi Arabian and British education systems. Some of the aspects that were taken into account include;

- Alignment of organisational structure to school mission and goals.
- Integration and effectiveness of management processes (resource allocation, budgeting, planning, performance evaluation etc.).
- Effective and valuable school facilities and utilities.
- Effective and valuable human resource processes.
- Knowledge sharing.
- Inclusive working and learning environment.
- Initiatives geared towards employee development (training and mentorship programs).
- Performance review and evaluation.

The findings presented in this section are based on responses provided by twenty teachers in the questionnaires. Ten teachers were from UK schools and ten teachers were from Saudi Arabian schools. This study was based in Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom (UK). In Saudi Arabia, the study was carried out in ten different public and private primary schools located in different provinces. The key participants included one teacher and one headteacher from each school. Similarly in the UK, this study involved one teacher and one headteacher from each of the ten different public and private primary schools based in various cities. Thus, a total of forty participants were involved in this study. The schools that were selected for this study were those that exemplified concepts of school effectiveness and organisational learning.

3.1. Alignment of organisational structure to school mission and goals

In relation to whether the organisational structure of the school is aligned to school mission and goals, 1 out of the 10 teachers from Saudi Arabia who participated in this study indicated that they “Highly Agree”, 3 indicated that they “Agree” whereas 6 indicated that they “Disagree”. In Britain, 8 out of the 10 teachers who participated in the study indicated that they “Highly Agree” that the organisational structure of the school is aligned to school mission and goals. The remaining participants indicated that they “Agree”.

The graph in Figure 1 provides a pictorial representation, comparing the responses provided by the twenty teachers from Saudi and Britain with regards to the alignment of their schools’ organisational structure to the mission and goals of the school.

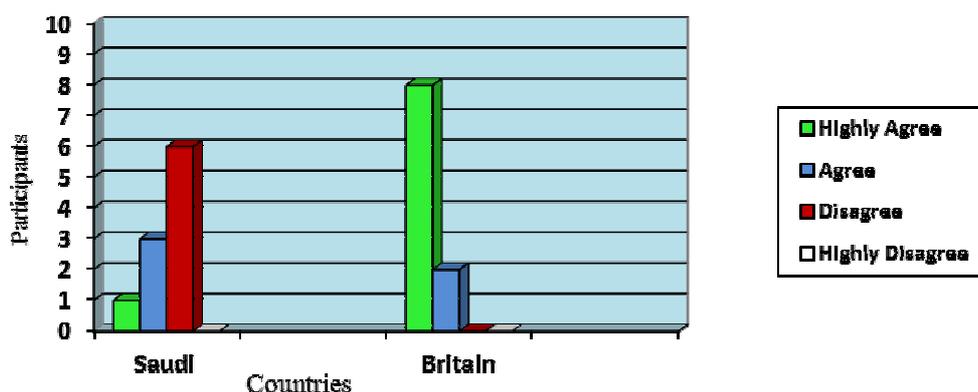


Figure 1: Alignment of organisational structure to school mission and goals

Based on the responses provided by the twenty teachers who participated in this study, it is evident that the alignment of organisational structure to school mission and goals is a characteristic that defines more good schools in the British education systems than in Saudi education systems. There was a 100% affirmative response from teachers from Britain whereas in Saudi there was a 40% affirmative response regarding this characteristic. This shows that alignment of organisational structure to school mission and goals is a significant characteristic of good schools in Britain. On the other hand, in Saudi schools this characteristic is somewhat not evident in most schools.

3.2 Integration and effectiveness of management processes

Integration and effectiveness of management processes such as planning, strategy development resource allocation, budgeting and performance is one of the characteristics identified in good schools. In Saudi Arabia, 6 out of 10 teachers who participated in this study indicated that they “Agree” that the management process in their school is integrated and effective. The remaining 4 indicated that they “Disagreed”. In the British education system, 6 out of 10 teachers indicated that they “Highly Agree” whereas 4 indicated that they “Agree”.

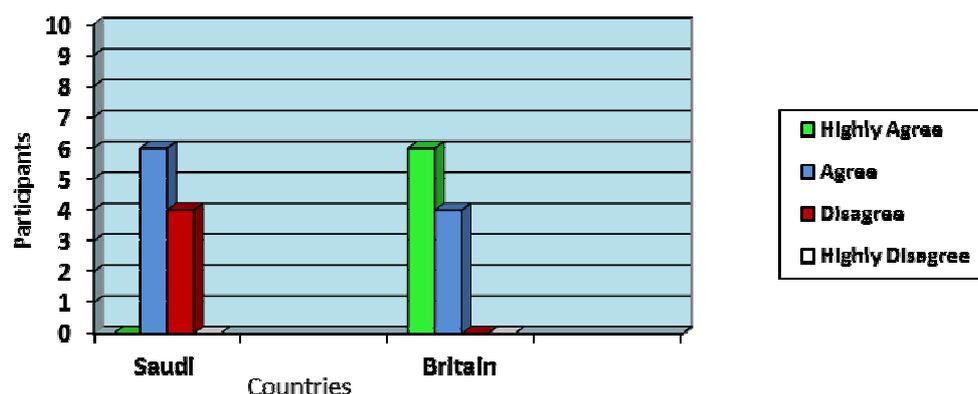


Figure 2: Integration and effectiveness of management processes

The responses provided by teachers from Saudi Arabia regarding the integration and effectiveness of management processes show that there was a 60% affirmative response from teachers, however, 40% of the teachers in the Saudi education system disagreed that their school had integrated and effective management processes. This implies that 6 out of 10 schools in Saudi Arabia have integrated and effective management processes. Thus this characteristic is evident in a significant number of primary schools in Saudi Arabia. On the

other hand, there was a 100% affirmative response from teachers in the British education system regarding the integration and effectiveness of the management processes in the schools that they worked in. This shows that this characteristic is integral in most schools in the British education system. This information is illustrated in Figure 2.

3.3 Effective and valuable school facilities and utilities

In the Saudi education system 3 out of 10 teachers who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they “Agree” that their school has effective and valuable school facilities and utilities, 5 indicated that they “Disagree” whereas 2 indicated that they “Highly Disagree”. Conversely, in the British education system 5 out of 10 teachers who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they “Highly Agree”, that their school has effective and valuable school facilities and utilities, 4 teachers indicated that they “Agree” whereas 1 teacher indicated “Disagree”. The graph in Figure 3 summarises the responses provided by twenty teachers from the Saudi and British education system regarding the effectiveness and value of their school facilities and utilities.

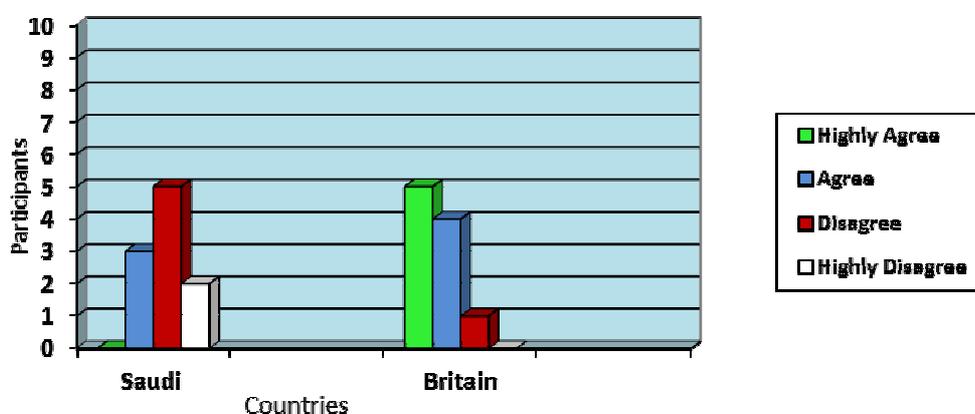


Figure 3: Effective and valuable school facilities and utilities

A critical look at the responses provided by the teachers who participated in this study indicates that in the Saudi education system, a significant number of schools do not have effective and valuable school utilities and facilities. 70% of the teachers who participated in this study indicated that their school did not have effective and valuable school utilities and facilities. Based on these responses it is plausible to conclude that most schools in the Saudi education system do not have effective and valuable school utilities and facilities. On the other hand, there was a 90% affirmative response from teachers in the British education system that their school has effective and valuable utilities and facilities. This shows that this characteristic is evident in most school in the British education system.

3.4 Effective and valuable human resource processes

Effective and valuable human resource processes is one of the characteristics identified in this study as a feature in a good school. Following a review of the responses provided in the questionnaires given to teachers in Saudi Arabia, it was established that, 1 out of 10 teachers who participated in the study indicated that they “Highly Agree” that their school has effective and valuable human resource processes that add value to the school, 5 respondents indicated that they “Agreed”, 2 indicated that they “Disagree” whereas the remaining 2 indicated that they “Highly Disagree”. 3 out of 10 teachers working in British schools indicated that they “Highly Agree” that their schools have effective and valuable human resource processes, 5 respondents indicated that they “Agree” whereas 2 indicated “Disagree”. The graph in Figure 4 summarises these findings.

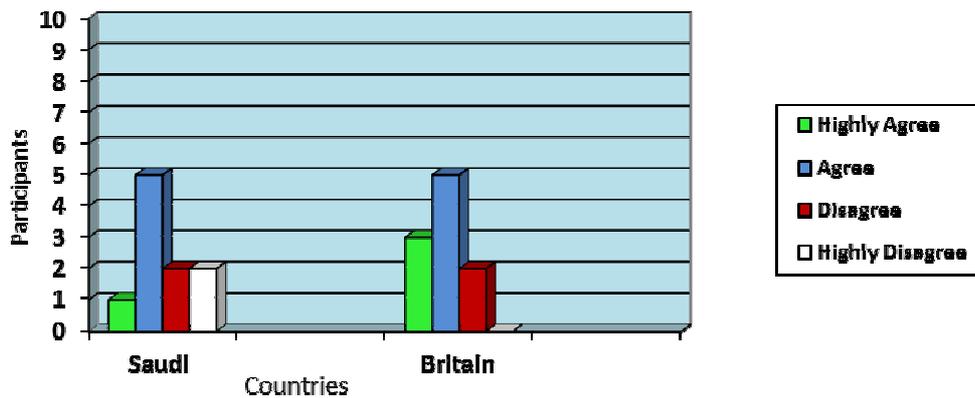


Figure 4: Effective and valuable human resource processes

Based on these findings, it is plausible to argue that effective and valuable human resource processes are evident in a significant number of schools in both the Saudi and British education systems since 60% of teachers from Saudi Arabian education system provided an affirmative response whereas in the British education system, there was an 80% affirmative response from the teachers who participated in this study. The responses provided show that most schools in the British education system have effective and valuable human resource processes that add value to the overall functioning of the school.

3.5 Knowledge sharing

It is established in this study that in effective learning organisations or in “good schools”, knowledge sharing between the school management, teachers, students, stakeholders and the surrounding community is an integral aspect of the school culture. In the Saudi education system, 4 out of 10 teachers who participated in this study indicated that they “Agree” whereas 6 teachers indicated that they “Disagree” that knowledge sharing is an integral aspect of the school culture. In the British education system, 3 out of 10 teachers who participated in this study indicated that they “Highly Agree” that that knowledge sharing is an integral aspect of the school culture, 5 indicated “Agree” where 2 indicated that they “Disagree”. Figure 5 summarises the responses provided by the twenty teachers from the Saudi and British education systems regarding knowledge sharing.

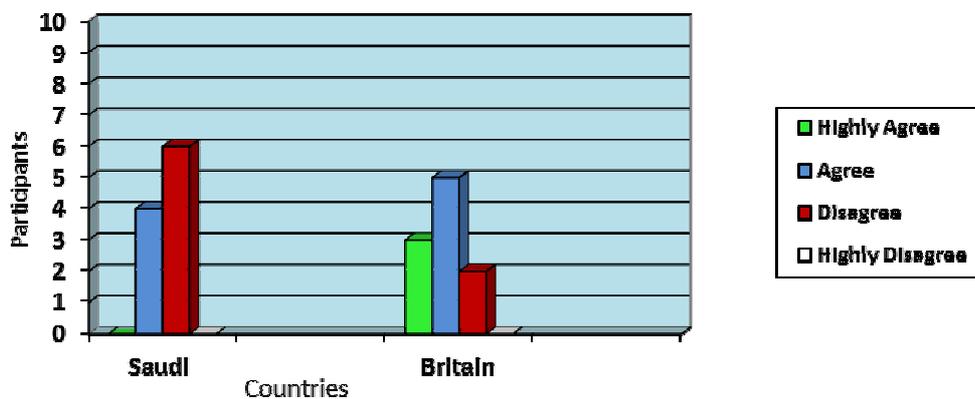


Figure 5: Knowledge sharing

3.6 Inclusive working and learning environment

Another characteristic identified in this study as integral in every good school is the presence of an inclusive learning and working environment where every person in the schools can express their ideas and take part in constructive debate. 1 out of 10 of the teachers from the Saudi education system indicated that they “Highly Agree” that their school has an inclusive learning and working environment, 3 indicated that they “Agree” whereas 6 indicated that they “Disagree”.

In the British education system, 6 out of the 10 teachers indicated that they “Highly Agree”, 3 indicated that they “Agree” whereas 1 responded indicated “Disagree”. The graph in Figure 6 summarises these findings.

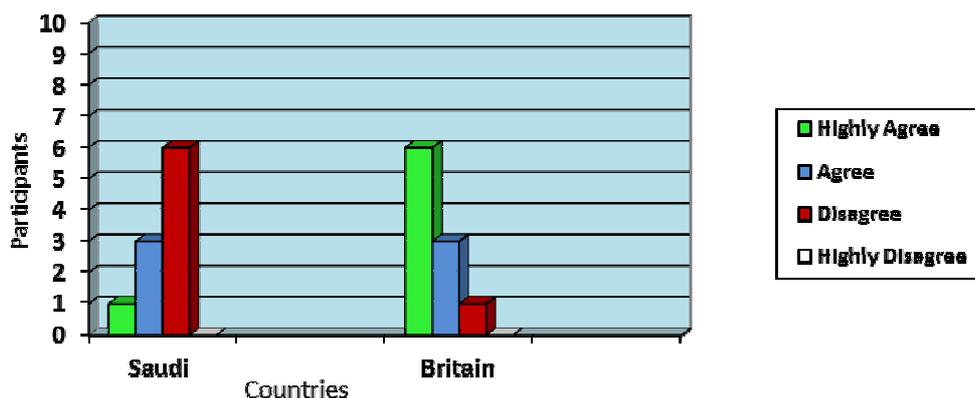


Figure 6: Inclusive working and learning environment

These responses provide a lot of insight regarding the disparities evident in the Saudi and British education system, it is apparent that a significant number schools in the Saudi education system lack an inclusive working and learning environment. This is mainly because a majority of the respondents, about 60% disagreed that their school has an inclusive learning and working environment. Conversely in the British education system, 90% of the respondents affirmed that their schools have an inclusive working and learning environment where they can express their ideas and take part in constructive debate. This shows that most schools in the British education system have an inclusive learning and working environment.

3.7 Employee Development

This study identifies employee development through initiatives such as training, mentorship and provision of opportunities for career development as an integral aspect of good schools. Among the ten teachers from the Saudi education system who participated in this study 2 indicated that they “Highly Agree”, 2 indicated that they “Agree” whereas 6 teachers indicated they “Disagree” that initiatives of employee development are implemented in their school. In the British education system, 7 out of 10 of the teachers who participated in this study indicated that they “Highly Agree” whereas 3 indicated that they “Agree” that initiatives of employee development are implemented in their school. These findings are summarised in Figure 7.

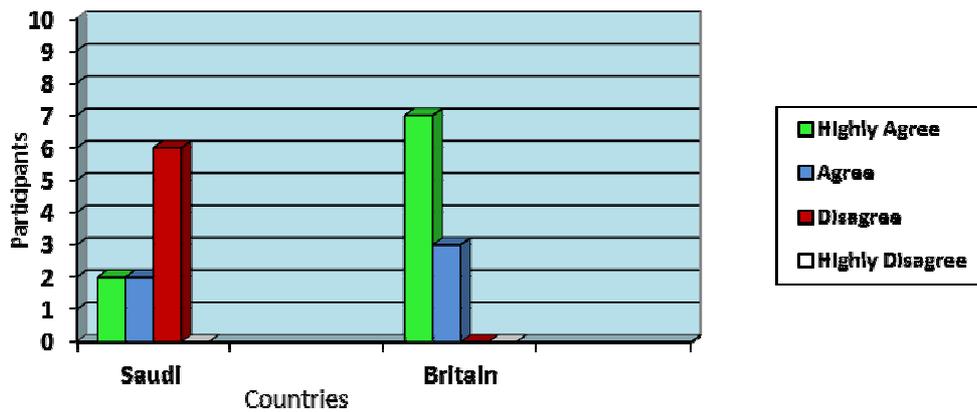


Figure 7: Employee Development

These findings show a noteworthy disparity between primary schools in the Saudi and the British education systems. 60% of the teachers who participated in this study indicated that employee development is not an integral aspect of their school culture. From these findings it is evident that a majority of primary schools within the Saudi education system do not implement initiatives geared towards employee development such as training, mentorship and career advancement opportunities. Conversely in the British education system, there was a 100% affirmative response regarding this issue. It is thus plausible to conclude that employee development is an integral aspect of most primary schools in the British education system.

3.8 Performance review and evaluation

Performance review and evaluation is another characteristic identified in this study as integral in good schools. In order for a school to establish whether it is making progress, despite the workload, the leaders and staff in the school find time to review how their performance is going. In the Saudi education system, 1 out of the 10 teachers who responded to the questionnaire indicated “Highly Agree” that in their school, they regularly take time to review and evaluate performance, 3 teachers indicated that they “Agree” whereas 6 teachers indicated that they “Disagree”. On the other hand, 7 out of 10 teachers from the British education system indicated that they “Highly Agree” whereas 3 teachers indicated that they “Agree” that in their school, they take time to conduct performance review or evaluation. The graph in Figure 8 summarises these findings.

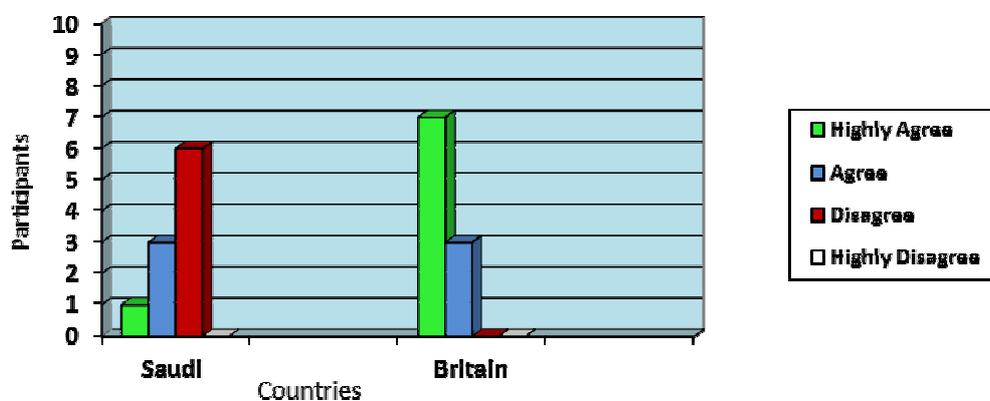


Figure 8: Performance review and evaluation

Based on these findings, it is plausible to argue that in most primary schools in the Saudi education system performance evaluation is not an integral aspect of their school culture. This is mainly because 60% of the teachers who participated in this study indicated that in their school, they do not take time to regularly review or evaluate their performance. Conversely, in the British education system, performance review seems to be an integral aspect in most primary schools since there was 100% affirmative response regarding this issue.

4. Result Discussion

The concept of a “good school” is identified in this study as one that is vague and multidimensional. In essence, standards or characteristics of “good schools” are perceived differently depending on the nature or structure of an education system (Bollen et al 2012; Teddlie & Reynolds 2000). In the UK, schools are regulated by Ofsted inspections which help to determine a school’s effectiveness. Furthermore, school results are published on Government league tables which indicates a school’s performance compared to other schools nationally.

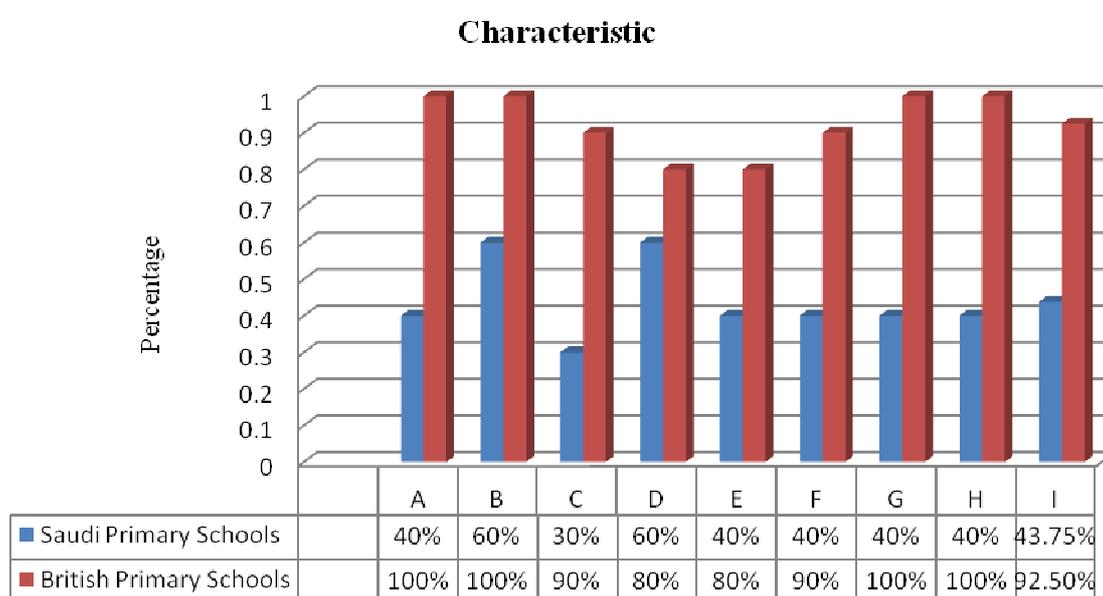
Over time, a number of studies have explored what aspects makes up “good schools”. In a considerable number of studies, good schools have been equated to “effective schools” and “learning organisations” (Leithwood & Louis 1998; Harris 2004). Therefore, this study adopted the premise that good schools are effective schools and learning organisations. One of the key objectives of this study was to establish the characteristics that define “good schools” in the Saudi and British education systems. This study sought to establish whether schools in Saudi Arabia conform to the characteristics of what are referred to as ‘good schools’ in Britain. In order to establish this, eight characteristics of effective schools and learning organisations identified in literature were used as criteria for identifying the characteristics that define “good schools” in primary schools in the Saudi and British education system.

The graph Figure 9 summarises the percentage of schools in the British and Saudi educative systems which manifest eight of the characteristics of good schools. Based on the responses provided by the ten teachers from ten different schools in both the British and Saudi educative systems, it is assumed that, each response provided represents one school. Therefore, assuming that (P) represents an affirmative response regarding a particular characteristic, the percentage of schools which manifest that particular characteristic were obtained using the following formula ($P/10p \times 100$).

A critical look at the data presented in the graph in Figure 9, it is evident that a majority of British primary schools (92.5%) embody all the eight characteristics identified of good schools. Conversely, in the Saudi education system only an average of 43.75% of primary schools embody the eight characteristics identified of good schools. Therefore, it is plausible to argue that only 43.75% of schools in Saudi Arabia conform to the characteristics of what are referred to as ‘good schools’ in Britain. In the Saudi education system it seems that a majority of primary schools (60%) mainly embody characteristics of good schools such as effective and valuable human resource processes and the integration and effectiveness of management processes such resource allocation, budgeting, planning, performance evaluation among others. 40% of schools in Saudi embody characteristics such as; alignment of organisational structure to school mission and goals, knowledge sharing, inclusivity of learning environment and regular performance review and evaluation. On the other hand, only 30% of schools in Saudi Arabia embody effective and valuable school facilities and utilities.

Based on the data provided, there is evidently a 48.75% margin between the number of primary schools in the British and Saudi education systems schools that exemplify the characteristic of good schools. This is a significant disparity that is worth examining. Studies conducted by James et al (2006), Kurdi (2011), Al-Sadan (2000) and Rapp (2010) illuminate the disparities between British and Saudi education systems. These disparities revolve around ideologies, administrative structure and the role played by the Headteachers. It is plausible to argue that the disparities between British and Saudi education systems in relations to ideologies, administrative structure and the role played by the headteachers are what contribute to the big margin (48.75%) between the number of primary schools in the British and Saudi education systems schools that exemplify the characteristic of good schools.

The research by Kurdi (2011) notes that the education system in Saudi Arabia is highly centralised. The government supervises and controls all aspects of education from policy to curriculum and syllabus delivery. Consequently, the role of most headteachers in Saudi Arabian primary schools is limited as far as the development of school as effective learning organisation is concerned. Al-Sadan (2000) also points out that policies and practices in schools within Saudi education system are mainly grounded on Islamic values and ideologies. Unlike in the Saudi education system where the role of the headteachers is highly regulated and constrained, headteachers in the British education system have autonomy. They provide vision, leadership and the strategic direction for the school fraternity that includes students, teachers, workers and other internal as well as external stakeholders (Rapp 2001; James et al 2006). Moreover religion does not play a central role in determining school standards, programs, process or the overall curriculum in the British education system (Rush 2011).



Key:

A	<i>Alignment of organisational structure to school mission and goals.</i>
B	<i>Integration and effectiveness of management processes (resource allocation, budgeting, planning, performance evaluation etc).</i>
C	<i>Effective and valuable school facilities and utilities.</i>
D	<i>Effective and valuable human resource processes.</i>
E	<i>Knowledge sharing.</i>
F	<i>Inclusive working and learning environment.</i>
G	<i>Employee development and empowerment.</i>
H	<i>Performance review and evaluation.</i>
I	Total Average

Figure 9: Percentage of schools that manifest characteristics of good schools

5. Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to establish whether primary schools in the Saudi education system conform to the characteristics of what are referred to as 'good schools' in the British education system. This study also sought to critically compare the roles of headteachers in the Saudi Arabian and British education systems particularly in relation to fostering effective schools and developing schools as learning organisations. These aims were achieved by using a positivism quantitative approach as it was deemed most suitable for this study. Survey questionnaires were primarily used as the method of data collection and questionnaires were administered to a total of forty participants (twenty teachers and twenty headteachers) from twenty different primary schools in Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom.

The findings established through this study showed that a majority of British primary schools (92.5%) embody all the eight characteristics identified of good schools. These characteristics include; alignment of organisational structure to school mission and goal, effective and valuable school facilities and utilities, knowledge sharing, employee development and empowerment, inclusive working and learning environment, performance review and evaluation, effective and valuable human resource processes and the integration and effectiveness of management processes such resource allocation, budgeting, planning and performance evaluation. On the other hand, in the Saudi education system only an average of 43.75% of primary schools embody the eight characteristics identified of good schools. As a result, it was concluded that only 43.75% of schools in Saudi Arabia conform to the characteristics of what are referred to as 'good schools' in Britain. A 48.75% margin was established between the number of primary schools in the British and Saudi education systems schools that embody the characteristic of good schools. This margin was attributed to the disparities revolving around ideologies, administrative structure and the role played by the headteachers in the Saudi and British education systems.

Nevertheless, when the overall findings of this study in relation to the characteristics that define good schools and the role played by headteachers in building effective schools were compared a paradox was established. It was initially established that only 43.75% of schools in Saudi Arabia conform to the characteristics of what are referred to as 'good schools' in Britain. On the other hand, it was established that there are more similarities than difference in the roles played by headteachers in these two systems when it comes to fostering effective schools and developing schools as learning organisations. These findings suggest that although a majority of headteachers in the Saudi education system take up roles aimed at developing effective schools (80%) and learning organizations (74%) the positive outcomes realised in schools in Saudi are less (43.7%) than those realised in British schools (92.5%) as far as embodying the characteristics of good schools is concerned. This shows that there are some underlying problems within the Saudi educative system.

It is observed that inadequate local education authorities in Saudi Arabia deter the head teacher's aspiration and hinders their initiatives to make changes. This in turn frustrates headteachers causing them to give up on their change initiatives. As a result, the role of most headteachers in Saudi Arabian primary schools is not effective in developing effective schools and schools as learning organisations. Therefore, this study recommends that headteachers especially those in the Saudi education system should be given more guidance, control and autonomy to take on roles that foster effective schools and develop schools as learning organisations. Moreover, it is recommended that headteachers in the British education system should take on more roles that involve motivating and supporting students' learning.

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