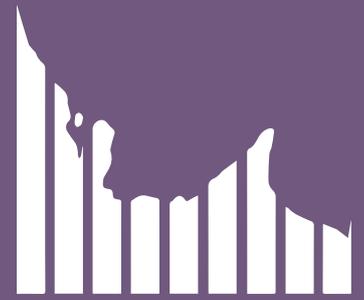




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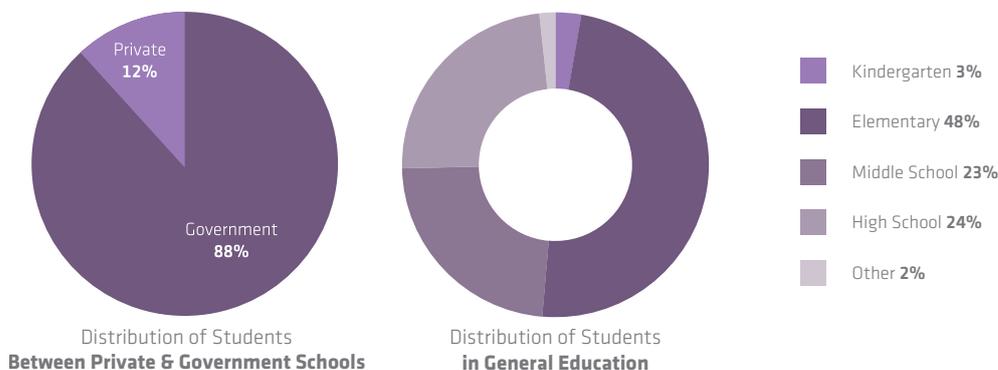
Analysis on Health Care, Education & Energy Sectors in the Middle East



المستشارون الخليجيون
GULF ADVISORS

Saudi Arabia's Education Obstacle Course

Recent government measures to regulate and develop Saudi Arabia's labor market have served to highlight the continuing difficulties faced by the public and private education sectors. A shortage of available and qualified teachers, uncompetitive salaries, unsuitable premises and unsustainable business models on the part of school owners, continue to be pressing concerns for a nation with a population of over 29 million and an annual growth rate, according to the most recent figures from the Kingdom's Central Department of Statistics & Information, of 2.9 percent.



29 M
POPULATION OF
SAUDI ARABIA

2.9%
ANNUAL
GROWTH RATE

Legalization and qualification

The government's moves earlier in the year to rectify the legal status for hundreds of thousands of non-Saudis working or living in the Kingdom had the knock-on effect of preventing thousands of expat women teachers dependent on their husbands' visas from continuing to give classes. Without staff, many schools were forced to close until a reversal of policy allowed them to return to the classroom. In August, however, it was reported [1] that the Ministry of Education had informed schools that the employment of female teachers was now dependent on them passing the mandatory qualification required of other expat professionals. The requirement extends to include foreign teachers in private schools, and to compound the difficulties for educators, some schools say they were not notified by the ministry of the new measure before rehiring staff following their lay-off.

Responding to criticisms following the failure of 60,000 women to pass the test to become licensed teachers, an official from the National Center of Assessment in Higher Education told the Al-Arabiya news network that "education deserves entrants who are qualified".

"None of us are saying that the bodies (producing graduates) are not good, but some teachers require further strengthening in various aspects to qualify them properly so they can practice such a sensitive profession as education," said Ibrahim Al-Rashid, head of the center's Communication and Media Relations.

The current general education system employs approximately 500,000 male and female teachers, and Al-Rashid was steadfast in his faith in the test to have a positive impact on the quality of education in the Kingdom, saying that the exam identified "those who are ready and those who are not".

The test, he said, is "clear and codified and overseen by specialists", and would "serve the interests of the nation, students and teachers".

Al-Rashid noted that those who had failed would have other chances to retake the test. [2]

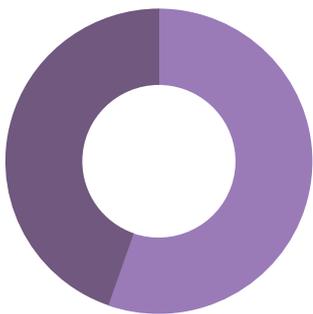


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IBRAHIM AL-RASHID,
HEAD OF COMMUNICATION
& MEDIA RELATIONS,
NATIONAL CENTER OF ASSESSMENT
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Salaries, fees and 'admissions crisis'

The government's determination to improve conditions for private and public school teachers and build a qualified and motivated national staff has nevertheless increased the pressure on state schools. A Royal Decree setting a minimum salary of 5,600 riyals per month for nine professional teaching categories made schools responsible for 3,100 riyals of the salary, with the rest subsidized by the government through the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF). The salary rise, however, led to an increase in private school fees of between 20 and 30 percent, producing in turn an unprecedented demand for enrollment in public schools. Public school admissions officials told Al-Iqtisadiyah daily in August of an "admissions crisis in all years of schooling, but particularly at the primary level, for both boys and girls". Al-Iqtisadiyah quoted the General Manager of the HRDF as saying that the HRDF was currently subsidizing the salaries of 96% of teachers in private schools, amounting to some 960 million riyals per year. [3] It is to be noted, however, that the HRDF subsidy is due to end in 2017.



■ School Portion 55%
■ Government Subsidy 45%

Minimum Wage of Saudi Teacher
if Subsidized by the Government

20-30%

INCREASE IN
PRIVATE SCHOOL FEES

SR960 M

PER YEAR IN
SUBSIDIZED SALARIES

Small schools unsustainable

Speaking to Al-Arabiya news network in August, Khalid Al-Juwaira, Chairman of the Private Education Committee at the Eastern Province Chamber of Commerce, warned that small schools face bankruptcy due to their inability to increase school fees or pupil intake in order to cover the rise in teachers' pay. Al-Juwaira said that the Saudi Credit & Savings Bank had lodged a complaint with the Ministry of Education over the inability of schools, particularly kindergartens, to repay loans running into "hundreds of millions", borrowed in order to begin operating. He noted that many small schools had obtained Ministry of Education licenses to operate despite being incapable of meeting running costs.

Al-Juwaira also cited operational figures that schools need to meet: "Schools whose fees bring in less than 8,000 riyals are loss-making," he said. "Building rent can be as high as 300,000 amounting to 30,000 riyals per each class, and each class needs two (women) teachers, with each teacher costing the school 47,500 riyals. In other words, each class will cost the school around 125,000 riyals a year. On top of that are the costs of electricity, services, workers, and administrative costs, so each class will in the end cost at least 150,000 riyals per year. So the number of pupils in each class needs to be 20, paying 160,000 riyals, in order for the school owner to make 10,000 riyals per year from each class."

Al-Juwaira cited the ministry's raising of school fees in order for schools to continue operating as a feasible solution, but also backed a proposal from the National Committee for Private Education to set Saudi teachers' salaries at 6,000 riyals, with the school, the Human Resources Development Fund and the Ministry of Finance each paying a third. "Schools that cannot keep up with the market will be forced to close," Al-Juwaira said. [4]

SR30,000
IN RENT
PER CLASS

SR95,000
FOR TWO FEMALE TEACHERS
PER CLASS

SR25,000
IN UTILITIES PER CLASS

Quality and licensing

Quality in educational institutions is an ongoing principal concern for the authorities, and it was reported in August that the Public Education Evaluation Commission was laying the groundwork for the introduction of professional licenses for teachers. Sources told Al-Iqtisadiyah that a series of standards would be announced in the near future by which the Commission will evaluate teacher performances at both public and private schools. [5]

Al-Arabiya also reported that through the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Project for Public Education Development a training program was being held in Singapore to train 40 Saudi school heads in areas including planning processes, performance skills, communication skills and human resources leadership. An organizer of the program said it would equip school principals with “21st century skills”, and that over the next year 3,000 school principals would receive training. [6]



Ammar Bakhsh

VP - Placement Services / Gulf Advisors

+966 126 99 66 11

ammara@gulf-advisors.com

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We've been advising schools in the region to improve standards & retain quality teachers for many years. Those schools will have flourishing futures. Challenges are immense but opportunities are even bigger for those who believe our kids deserve better education. If you are a school that needs help or simply have an experience you would like to share, please get in touch with us and we'll be glad to hear from you.

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- [1] expatsblog.com, 26 Sept., 2013: Female expat teachers in Saudi hit with qualification test
[2] alarabiya.net, 3 Nov., 2013: مسؤول سعودي: فشل 60 ألف معلمة ليس نهاية المطاف
[3] aleqt.com, 24 Aug., 2013: رخصة المعلم وتقويم سنوي للمدارس أبرز ملفات هيئة التقويم
[4] alarabiya.net, 5 June, 2013: قرارات التربية والتعليم تهدد المدارس الصغيرة بالإفلاس
[5] aleqt.com, 20 Aug., 2013: 960 مليون ريال لدعم 32 ألف معلم في المدارس الأهلية
[6] alarabiya.net, 3 Nov., 2013: برنامج تدريبي لمديري المدارس في سنغافورة