

# The Reality of Implications of Economic Globalization on Saudi Higher Education

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## Abstract

The implications of economic globalization on the developmental policies of Saudi Higher Education Institutions (SHEI) have been investigated. The descriptive-analytical approach has been carried out in order to describe the characteristics of phenomenon being studied. Besides this, an analysis of information has also been obtained from various sources, which are documents reports, and interviews conducted by the researcher by considering five experts in Saudi higher education, in addition to the participant observation. It has been evaluated through outcomes that economic globalization has reflected on the philosophy of Saudi education. This analysis has been carried out through the keenness of responsible persons on the alignment of its outputs and labor market by making changes in the structures and systems of higher education institutions. The quality system of academic programs encourages research activities that have been adhered by SHEI. These changes are observed to have a weak impact, instead of having a real influence on academic programs.

## Keywords

Saudi Higher Education, Economic Globalization, New Global Economy

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## 1. Introduction

Higher education is generally viewed as an engine of development because it plays an imperative role in the development and qualification of human beings. Moreover, higher education has also been observed as having a vital role to take care of research, study and solve problems, which are faced by the communities in various aspects. Because of various global changes, the higher education seems to be influenced, whether responding, facing the threats, or exploiting the opportunities. The Saudi higher education is not apart. The entire world is experiencing rapid and profound transformations,

which are comprised of different components and structures.

One of the most fundamental aspects is economics, which eases the ability of a state to control the economic mobility. The role of international organizations and transnational corporations has grown, and the capitalism has become the engine of policies. The positive impact of these transformations includes the spread of information and data, attention to knowledge and its investment, and strengthening the values of fighting against corruption and spreading democracy, as alleged supporters of this movement. However, there are negative effects appeared in increasing the volume of loans, the pursuit of profit, and the impact on employment and wage system, weakening the state, and so on. These changes have significant impacts in various institutions of society, including educational institutions, particularly higher education. These institutions have been demanded to change their policies, systems and structures in line with new global economic system and its culture and values. The higher education of Saudi Arabia has been growing quantitatively through establishing of many universities and colleges to achieve a pivotal role in preparation of qualified people and transforming knowledge into economic investment. It has been focusing on meeting labor market needs, creating quality programs that serve the market, promoting the quality process, and diversifying funding sources to keep up with the changes and challenges [1].

The Saudi labor market may adjust itself by bringing in cheap labor and training it for doing the jobs that do not require many skills, enabling the trader to accomplish higher profits. On the other hand, it has been observed that political system does not believe in democracy and sufficient level of freedom and human rights. These are the basic concepts that lead the growth of societies, positive social mobility, and development. Moreover, it has been evaluated that as a capitalist, neoliberalism ideology was so strong that it has absorbed working class in advanced countries and established its dominance that confirm the argument that dominance is a form of ideological hegemony rather than a form of economic oppression [2] [3]. In this context, positive performative mind has been established, which separates knowledge and science for their critical potentials.

The importation of capitalism experience, despite different cultures, perspectives and positions, did not produce effective results, either in level of human outputs or scientific research. It has been observed that the quality and academic programs and research works dominated by formality that unloaded the intellectual and philosophical content, and neglected social and human research. These fields were regarded that have no value in the labor market. Hence, it has been evaluated that the government wants to adopt those standards and occupying universities in order to entirely control the institutions of higher education system keeping them in dependency and imposed framework, unable to go beyond to develop an impact or awareness. This is the reason due to which higher education institutions adopting that system concerned with skills and efficiency of students, who are away from their thought and awareness. The apparent result of this formal performance was clear enough when the universities have reduced the allocation of scientific research by following the drop in government spending for 2016. The rea-

son behind this is the reduction of oil prices, while there was no impact of higher support in past decade either in investments, independence, or the quality of outputs.

We are not against that human outputs, which have a high training, rehabilitation and efficiency, and that man learns a certain profession, because the earning capacity is a basic trait for a good human being. We are, however, against giving priorities to objectives of a low priority, against considering the man as a mechanical machine in work wheel, where can be consumed and confined awareness only in financial returns. Therefore, the objectives of universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in particular, should elevate those communities in thought and behavior, their economy, culture, and politics. The education and universities should be the leader of development, growth, change, and resistance of injustice and tyranny. The higher education should work to promote universal human values, such as democracy and human rights, to raise the nation, and proceed towards knowledge and sincere scientific research. With respect to economic development, the universities should lead the restructuring process of Saudi market to be able to accommodate the expected number of graduates from Saudi and foreign universities. This can be done only by adopting ambitious economic policies to achieve economic development and raise the market level, in order to be productive and a generator of new jobs yielding appropriate material returns. Taking into consideration the creation of new jobs, it has been reported by Alkhuli [4] that “requires achieving economic growth by increasing production, exports of production and goods other than oil and gas, the percentage of the added value of the private sector in gross domestic product, and the ability of these products to compete in the local and global markets”. It could conclude that one of the main causes of unemployment is the modest potentials of local job market.

### Study Statement

Saudi economy is an oil-based economy, which affected in making the Saudi labor market as unproductive market. This market does not require a high level of skill and ability. In addition, the Saudi political system is monarchy, where democracy and its necessities, such as freedoms and human rights are absent, which produced a society dominated by a culture of obedience and absolute loyalty and dependency. It can be said that the Saudi higher education institutions success in responding to the requirements of new global economic system, or so-called economic globalization is a questionable issue. It is difficult to achieve success of any actions, policies or changes in that system in such socio-economic-political context, in which the values and culture of free societies, especially the values and culture of market, are absent. Thus, the primary objective is to examine the implications of economic globalization on the development policies of Saudi higher education institutions, and the actual reality of these reflections in an attempt to reach to the closest perception of the fact that shape that reality. This accomplishment can be done through:

- Identifying new global economic system structure and its ideological background.
- Reflections of global economic system on higher education policies and institutions

in general.

- Reflections of global economic system on Saudi higher education policy.
- The impact of those policies in reality of Saudi higher education practices.

## 2. Methodology

The technique of qualitative content analysis has been opted in order to review the nature of new global economic system, its roots, as well its impact on the system of higher education in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, five faculty members of Najran University have been included as sample of study and face-to-face interviews conducted with them. They were varied in their specializations, experiences, ages and positions as follow: The first one was more than 35 years of experience, full professor at Engineering Faculty and he was a member of the Science and Engineering Research Center (it will be referred to as “Eng. Prof.”). The second one was about 30 years of experience, expert researcher at Egyptian, Kuwaiti and Saudi Humanities and Educational Research Centers and professor at Faculty of Education (it will be referred to as “HRC”). The third one was about 27 years of experience, The Dean of Scientific Research Deanship, ex-dean of Development and Quality Deanship and associated professor of curricula department at the university (it will be referred to as “DSRD”). The Fourth one was a 25 years of experience as lecturer then assistant professor of educational administration and planning, especially in the fields of quality control, planning and teacher programs (it will be referred to as “EAP”). The Fifth one was a lecturer with about 8 years of experience at Education, and Arts and Science faculties (it will be referred to as “LEA”).

The duration of an interview is around 1 to 2 hours, during the first semester of 2016. Some of the essential issues, which have been discussed during these interviews include:

- 1) The objectives and philosophy of Saudi higher education.
- 2) Their perspectives and perceptions of Saudi universities, faculties and colleges, and problems related to evaluation and teaching methods and teaching staff.
- 3) Their opinions about Quality and Accreditation Standards and their effects on academic and research development in Saudi universities.
- 4) Their opinions about scientific research in Saudi universities.
- 5) Their opinions about the Saudi universities’ student level.
- 6) Their views, suggestions and recommends to develop the Saudi universities level.

The information obtained through these interviews is helpful in providing comprehensive information regarding the perceptions and perspectives of faculty members about the reality of Saudi higher education institutions, problems of this education and the real practices based on the trends of Saudi Universities. Besides this, the participatory observation has also been used in order to draw a real picture of Saudi universities, as well as to analyze how they have been affected by new global changes.

The researcher field experiences stem from working as a faculty member at Technical College, then at Faculty of Education in Najran University since 2009, and various administrative positions including Vice Dean of Graduate Studies Deanship, 2012-2015, Head of Department, 2011-2014, Director of Islamic, Education and Humanities Re-

search Center, since 2012, Scientific Council Member, since 2014, Vice Dean of Graduate Studies Deanship, 2012-2015.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. The Structure of New Global Economic System and Its Ideological Background

The new global economy emerged in the late seventies and became more pronounced in eighties and nineties onwards. This new economy came in the wake of traditional capitalist economy, because the old edition faced profitability crisis. Workers were fighting to raise the level of wages; the outer competitor presses to keep prices low. The New Global Economy differs from what was called the World Economy in being working as a single unit on the scale of planet at the same moment, and does not restrict to a tight geographical scope. Therefore, we can say that the new available infrastructure helped transition to the global model [2] [5] [6] [7]. The basic and critical idea of neo-liberal vision is the idea of consumer (whether it was individual or a society, from a pure material perspective), so the desired rational awareness is 'economic rationality', because it is emerged from an important material principle, which is 'benefit versus cost'. It is difficult, to practice ethical behavior while establishing market values imposed by the capital, multinational and overseas companies, as they seek ravenously to harness all state institutions to serve their goals of profitability. It separates the state from the issues that should deal with equality, social justice and civic responsibility [2]. Turning the meanings of these concepts and transition from its original meanings to other material meanings was the result of a great effort by neo-liberal powers and multinational companies. They used a strong media to broadcast new messages and content in a deliberated strategy, in order to be away from original connotation and then disseminate and add legitimacy on these new meanings to become prevalent in the dominant culture on people. These new meanings are consistent with their goals, policies, competitiveness and profitability, as mentioned with the concepts of democracy and freedom [8] [9] [10].

The greatest impact of the culture of market and the idea of consuming, which was adopted by the new alliance of neo-liberal and neo-conservatives and spread to the worldwide, represents in rebuilding of economic restructuring in the light of those policies. It does not seem that modern technology helps to raise people's living standards, though it created some jobs in technological and industrial sectors. These jobs are having simple administrative tasks with a modest wage, because of the dominance of service sector jobs. This happens in advanced and productive markets for knowledge, let alone markets in the less developed or developing world [6] [7] [10].

The culture and values of new economic order was instilled in the consciousness of people. Many of them consider them absolute for granted facts and unchangeable, which is the example that all who wanted to succeed and achieve dreams must embrace and meet the requirements. For educators and officials of higher education all over the world, this feeling was so obvious. It has been evaluated in this study that how higher

education policies have been affected, in most countries, by the policies stemming from economic globalization. In addition, we will clarify how they come to see that the student as a human capital lives in intense competitive economic arena must be provided with necessary skills in capital markets as one of the future workers. Otherwise, the money spent on educational institutions is lost money, and these institutions merely are like black holes that absorbs money with no payoff [10].

### **3.2. The Reflections of Global Economic System on Higher Education Policies and Institutions**

The origination of education was on the basis of public interest, which improves the cultural, intellectual and skill level of society members [7]. However, neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies dominated the agenda of public and higher education in America, and later in other countries of the world. They exerted efforts, spent a lot of money for purpose of instill their neo-liberal ideology, supported it educationally, and by media to become dominated values in societies, and therefore, constitute consciousness and identity in an economic material framework [10].

It is regrettable that the educators and higher education policies in many parts of the world acquiesce to this ideology and subsequent policies. They adopted it directly, or through implementing its procedures and requirements, consciously or unconsciously. They all believe that the idea of commercial benefit and the principle of profitability are what education should be governed. We will reveal the implications of economic globalization policies on higher education in general. Firstly, we cannot restrict the impacts of economic globalization on educational policies in different countries to only one general idea applies to everywhere; because education takes place in a wide space of changes [7]. Complexity and contradiction are the main prevailing characteristics of contemporary culture. Therefore, simple forms of explanatory theories are no longer sufficient. Accordingly, the aim of education, in the light of those policies, boils down to a great extent in: Preparation trained staff with capacity to create and innovate, quick, self and continuous learning, work in team and the flexibility to adapt job variables in order to meet the needs of labor market. Therefore, education seekers want to get a good job in the private sector [5] [11]. Consequently, higher education policies in many countries are just to cope with the demands of economic globalization, linked with labor market, employment, contract partnerships with major companies, and applying economic criteria on higher education. It has been viewed as a commodity that is used for productivity in a climate of competitiveness, profitability and efficiency [5] [7] [10].

In general, the policies of higher education is keen to impose standards of knowledge and used methodology in teaching and evaluation to facilitate, for the dominant political or economic class, to control what is offered to students at various stages of education. This may explain, to a large extent, the interest of national standards for curricula, examinations, evaluation, accreditation and quality in the state of neo-conservatives, who seek to spread overall quality culture under the pretext of raising educational outputs' efficiency. In fact, they have to play a strong role in the domination of state insti-

tutions merged in global economic system to serve the policies of neo-liberalism [7]. The standardization has become a main landmark in the fields of higher education and its research activities and organizations for evaluation of the performance of programs in academic disciplines increased. For example, OECD developed teams to assess the conditions of research universities in developing countries and granted them accreditation certificates.

Many other organizations also developed standards for evaluating the quality of performance in different fields, such as ABET in engineering and computer science, and CAPE in educational science [12]. In addition, global classifications of the best universities according to specific criteria have emerged, which is linked to the policies of economic globalization. For any university to have a high rating, it should be linked to the labor market, and focus on applied research that served it to get highest funding. Those policies have affected seriously on agenda of educational reform, which emerged in an excessive optimism global context of usefulness of new computer technology as an educational effective and flexible connector. This helped the occurrence of new developments in higher education appeared in so-called cross-cultural education, such as International Education, Higher Distance Education, Open Learning, which comes firstly, as a result of a new perspective assuming the possibility of one humanitarian nation has one global education (cosmopolitan). Secondly, it facilitates to serve marginalized communities and peripheral regions that seek access to knowledge within the framework of domination service centers. And thirdly, to benefit higher education institutions that adopt those methods of an important source of funding as a result of the enrollment of more versatile foreign students, enabling them to receive education and knowledge from high-level scientific experts. Fourthly, it aims at giving response to the global educational curricula regarding environment, business and technological sector etc. [7] [13] [14].

The impact of economic globalization on education policies turned out to be the largest in advanced capitalist societies as well as in poor, developing in debt societies to international organizations, such as World Bank. Accordingly, there is no choice, but to adapt the policies of the powers of state to build educational policies, which stems from its reality to reinforce equality, justice, freedom, and national independence in research and development. Organizations, such as UNESCO and World Bank, play a large role in formulation of educational policies of those countries, serving fiscal austerity policy and economic structural reforms, such as removal of subsidies on essential goods and services to liberalize the economy under the supervision and intervention of those organizations. We have identified the most important properties of economic construction of globalization, and its impacts and repercussions on educational agenda and the policies of countries affected by this economy and supporting organizations.

### **3.3. Implications of Global Economic System on Saudi Higher Education Policy and the Extent of Awareness**

Saudi Arabia is one of the most developing countries growing in population, where the

rate was 2.5%. Youth forms the largest percentage, with an age structure from zero - 14 years (40%), 15 - 24 years (22%), 25 - 64 years (34%), and 65 years and above (4%). The number of secondary school graduates has doubled by 400% between 1993 and 2008 [1]. The vast geographical area forms a wide gap between supply and demand, especially before the expansion to establish more universities to cover that area, and raising the economic level in light of great challenge that lies in a one-sided economy that depends on oil resource by more than 90% of total national income. In the context of global changes, the emergence of a knowledge society, and evolution of the roles of service sectors, the Saudi higher education affected by these changes and work to keep up with these changes. The function of higher education and its roles have evolved in rehabilitation of competencies and investment knowledge for the benefit of Saudi economy by adopting the philosophy to link with the labor market. In response, the Ministry of Higher Education has developed its policies, increased the number of Saudi universities to raise the capacity of admission, developed its structure by unifying the oversight body of Saudi higher education institutions, and created supportive agencies, deanships and departments. This new approach pays too much attention to quality and academic accreditation, projects and business incubators, and departments of international cooperation. Saudi universities also proceeded to the expansion of open education programs, and distance learning depending on massive development in telecommunications and information technology. Hence, it has been assessed that Saudi universities and institutions of higher education worked to diversify their sources of funding [1] [15]. Following is a detailed profile about most important development procedures and policies in the system of Saudi higher education referred here, which came in response to the stated philosophy of seeking to harmonize its outputs and labor market needs.

One of the most important procedures is raising the admissions capacity of universities and colleges, in order to meet the market requirements. Al Ohali and Al Aqili [1] mentioned that supervising higher education institutions raised the number of seats in public and private universities and colleges from 68,000 seats in 2004 to nearly 250,000 seats in 2008. The expansion to develop the universities keeps on continuing, until the number of public and private universities reached 43 in 2015 to cover all thirteen regions of the Kingdom [16]. The number of technical colleges reached 36 for boys and 18 for girls [17]. There is no doubt that this has clearly contributed to absorbing increased numbers to study in higher education institutions. In the same context, administrative and organizational structures of institutions of higher education have been rebuilt and developed. One of the most important procedures was unifying the oversight of Saudi higher education, because they were multiple. The Ministry of Higher Education supervised universities, Ministry of Health supervised the health colleges, the Ministry of Education supervised teachers' colleges and faculties of education for girls, and Technical and Vocational Training Corporation supervised technical colleges. This represented a difficult challenge to deal with these institutions with varied administrative backgrounds. This problem was solved in 2009, and except technical colleges, all of

the institutions came under the umbrella of Ministry of Higher Education. Then in 2015, the ministries of education and higher education were merged to become a single ministry, which is the Ministry of Education.

In addition, a set of programs, disciplines and colleges restructured in the context of a package aimed to reduce, cancel, or limit admissions to post graduate studies in some sections and programs. This has been aimed due to the lack of need for their outputs in labor market, such as psychology, history, geography, and other social and humanitarian disciplines in many Saudi universities. On the other hand, to integrate some programs and departments or separate them into more than one specialization, as in the business administration and some engineering disciplines programs. In the same context, opening of new colleges and programs is limited to the disciplines needed by labor market [1]. The universities and colleges interacted with those shifts by developing their organizational structures by adding the University Deanship for Development and Quality. There is no Saudi public or private university devoid of such deanship, including the subsequent deanships for quality and development and academic accreditation to establish standards of national and international bodies in the academic system. Moreover, some large research universities, such as King Abdulaziz University and King Saud, have developed a deanship called 'knowledge creation' and business incubators projects concerned with the knowledge and innovations, in order to invest the knowledge generated by university as a think tank [18] [19] [20].

Accreditation and quality theme, enriched by national and international standards, is considered one of the most important themes adopted by Saudi higher education system in the context of responding to the requirements of new global economy and the knowledge society that has been generated. Given that the economic growth theories confirmed that human capital is the key to economic development, for it enriches the quality of workforce, the higher education has become an essential investment in order to improve the overall quality of life. Besides this, it also improves the link between economy and education, as they relate to productivity and financing, has become stronger. Accordingly, organizers of higher education in the Kingdom adopted the principle of total quality as a management system, but as a philosophy to promote change in higher educational institutions. Of the critical issues are the cultural and organizational transformation, and the identification of beneficiary (the customer) along the lines of business organizations [21]. This theme includes a number of indicators including the revision and development of plans, curricula, and programs to link education to outputs and their suitability to the needs of labor market [18]. Therefore, universities' deanships for quality depended upon the standards of National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment for evaluating programmatic and institutional performance at the university. Since 2009, universities have been working continuously to accomplish those standards to have accreditation certificates from that body. It did not stop at this point, the Saudi Ministry of Education has encouraged universities and colleges, especially scientific, engineering, health, and business to get accreditation from international organizations such as American Association for adoption of

engineering and computer programs [22] and others in medicine, education, and business management. Indeed, some of engineering and medical faculties and the community college in a number of Saudi universities have those certificates.

One of the important themes in which a significant shift in Saudi higher education policy occurred and came within the context of knowledge economy is: a) the call for diversification of funding sources to include government and non-government spending, b) the adoption of the concept of productive university and self-development resources of universities, such as endowments and consulting firms represented in some research and consultancy institutes and centers providing scientific and research services with financial returns [16] [18]. This led to pay attention to the scientific research. The universities implemented a number of developing procedures and policies for scientific research system along with the growing rate of total spending year after year, which amounted to 24,400 million riyals in 2014, 16.600 million of which are governmental support. Of the most important achievements in this theme, the establishment of institutes focused on contractual research, such as Institute of Research and Consulting Studies, for the development of research process and marketing of the university experience. The establishment of varied research centers and chairs, excellence research centers, centers for nanotechnology research and advanced materials, and the technique valleys. Most of excellence and nanotechnology and the technique valleys centers have been concentrated in four major research universities, which were dominated by medical, technological and biotechnological aspects, amid the absence of social and humanitarian aspects ([23], p. 59; [24], pp. 222-223). To raise the level of scientific research in Saudi universities, they have contracted with some distinguished professors and scientists Nobel laureates, in order to raise the level of Saudi universities in international classifications [16].

The above themes represent the most significant development procedures in Saudi higher education policies during 2006-2014, according to documents, reports and policies issued by the ministry, universities and institutions of Saudi higher education in the context of its response to the requirements of new global economy. This new global economy has led Saudi higher education to adopt a philosophy of harmonization between the outputs of these institutions and requirements of Saudi labor market.

### **3.4. Effects of Policies in Actual Reality of the Saudi Higher Education**

To explore the actual reality of the effects of those policies in higher education, different significant themes have been analyzed and discussed. The most important theme is the reality of Saudi labor market and its impact on educational process as a whole, and especially its goals, standardized quality, evaluation of performance of programs and personnel, and knowledge and human outputs. Moreover, the actual reality of labor market has also been monitored along with some subsequent issues by reference to official statistics, reports, documents and interviews with a number of teaching and research staff members. These members have been selected from the higher educational institutions of Saudi Arabia.

### Saudi Labor Market

The basic function of Saudi higher education is to meet the requirements of labor market in the context of responding to the needs of knowledge society, which is dependent on knowledge and information in the creation of a strong knowledge-based economy. This philosophy leads to analyze the specifications of Saudi labor market and its needs of capabilities and skills to judge the extent of this philosophy correctness. Abuelmaatti [25] stated that ‘most of the institutions and companies in developing countries are not interested in R&D process. They are just the provider or service provider, who get high-tech from third party (advanced market), instead of participating in manufacturing or production. Therefore, the skills required in Saudi industrial enterprises can be classified as a mere implementation and maintenance plans’ ([25], p. 46). The labor market in a developing country is a consumer market for most part of what was produced by another advanced market. This is confirmed by that the production of 22 Arab countries combined (all are developing countries) does not reach the level and quality of production of one European state, such as Spain.

If we look at the labor market through statistical reports released by the General Authority of Statistics [26], which describe the workforce in Saudi Arabia and workers in the Saudi market, we shall find that the total number of workers reached 11,067,673, nearly 87% males. The number of Saudis is about 4,926,184 (44.5% of the total employees), most of them are males (about 84%). Given the statistical tables of workers by educational status and major groups of occupations (see Table 35-Table 38), we can get some important points, see [26]:

- Individuals, who obtained a certificate of secondary education or its equivalent, represent the highest percentage of workers in Saudi labor market. They are about 2,870,395 (26% of total workers), 43% of whom work in the services sector, with a male proportion of nearly 94%, while Saudis ratio amounts to 62.5% mostly of males (94% of the total Saudis in this category).
- The second highest percentage of workers in Saudi market is of the individuals who obtained a bachelor’s degree. Their number are about 2,562,250 (nearly 23% of the total employees), 46% of them are in scientific, technical and humanitarian fields, and the ratio of men in this category is nearly 77%, and the proportion of Saudis in this category is nearly 57% mostly male. This means a relative increase in number of female workers in this category, as compared to other categories.
- The third highest percentage is of employed individuals, who obtain the intermediate certificate, for nearly 18.5% of the total number of workers. Most of them work in the service sector and in basic and assistance engineering professions sector. It is noted in this category that the number of workers decreased to 28.6%, the overwhelming majority of males (96%).
- Overall, the number of workers in Saudi market, which have secondary certificates or less (middle or primary, literate, illiterate), amounted 7,453,441, and is equivalent to almost 67% of workers. Most of them are working in service occupations, and in basic and assistance engineering professions (such as construction, carpentry, me-

chanics, etc.), 90% male and 39% of them are Saudis, overwhelming majority of males (95%).

- In contrast, the lowest proportion of workers in Saudi labor market holds graduate degrees (master's and doctoral degrees). The number of workers is about 284.617, and the proportion of males is 84.5%. The percentage of Saudis is close to 37% of the total employees in this category, and most Saudis are males (78%). This group comprised of employees, who are working in scientific, technical and humanitarian fields. If we add diploma holders and bachelors, it would amount about 33% of total number of employees.
- Overall, most of the workers in Saudi labor market have minimum qualifications (high school or less). Their proportion in the basic and assistance engineering professions is 97%, the professions of industrial, chemical and food operations is 95.6%, the professions of agriculture, animal and bird husbandry and fishing is 98.5%, sales occupations is 85%, and clerical occupations is 65%.
- Most of the workers in other three major sets of occupations are highly qualified, with a proportion of specialists in scientific, technical and humanitarian fields is 99.9%, and in technicians group in the same fields is about 88%.

With regard to fields where workers are concentrated in Saudi labor market, it has been observed from a review of statistical tables of 'labor force survey bulletin', for 2014 that:

- The Saudi workers mostly are in the activity of public administration, defense, and social security by nearly 39%. There are almost 23.6% workers in education, forming the total of about 63% in two fields. As for the Saudi women, they form 71.2% in the field of education and 13.2% in human health and social services.
- Because most of the Saudi men and women do not accept work in many service and professional fields that require a lot of physical effort and time for a weak payoff, the business and services sector have resorted to fill that need by cheap foreign labor. Therefore, most Saudis concentrated in government jobs that guarantee a reasonable income. Most of them involved in the administrative and educational jobs. However, these types of jobs cannot accommodate the increased outputs from universities. Therefore, we find that the official unemployment rate has reached 11.7%, the highest percentage of unemployed Saudis is among 25 - 29 years age group at a rate of 38.9%, and the proportion of unemployed females in this category has reached 43.3% of the total unemployed Saudi women.
- The highest percentage of unemployed Saudis having bachelor's degree is 50.1% for males, and nearly 70% for females (see: 26, Tables 35 and 56, [www.cdsi.gov.sa](http://www.cdsi.gov.sa)).

The above is an explanation of some of the important activities of Saudi labor market and an indication of employees, according to qualifications needed by those occupations. This principle affected the educational process as a whole, goals, functions, programs and evaluation standards of performance quality, which affected the quality of human and knowledge outputs. Of the important themes that have been affected by that philosophy are the main objectives of higher education and academic programs,

the accreditation and quality in institutions and academic programs, the performance of students and professors, and scientific research.

#### a) Objectives of Higher Education

According to a researcher of Humanities Research Center at Najran University, the primary objective of higher education has been illustrated as:

*“The preparation and production of professional individuals, who are experienced and have sufficient training in applied scientific disciplines in particular. There is some kind of neglect of human and psychological fields in light of the adoption of the concepts and values of the labor market adopted by the Third World countries on the basis that it is the ‘civilization’. Therefore, the ideological dimension that the global market imposed is the perfect model in the eyes of our educational policies makers.” (Expert in HRC, Feb. 12, 2016)*

Hence, there is an issue of dependency and simulation. Perhaps, there is a utilitarian side for dominant class of capital in our Arab countries, and the wheel goes on, as the expert of HRC says, and supported by researcher by virtue of his experience and observation, that:

*“Any scholar, thinker or who has a different vision wants to talk about, critique and reveal the political, cultural and economic backgrounds of the objectives of education, has been denounced by the majority, because this perception has become commonplace agreed in the developed world that we aspire to reach.” (Expert in HRC, Feb. 12, 2016)*

This opinion is confirmed by most of the Arab studies, which concerns with the subject of economic globalization and higher education, did not address the criticism of ideological and moral influence of the contents of new globalized economy in higher education system. They did not earnestly seek to expose deep roots and influencing elements. However, their primary emphasize is on the weak awareness of students and faculty members at universities of those contents, and how the Saudi and the Arab World’s higher education system has responded to its requirements. These requirements are related to its objectives, which stress the importance of linking work, investment knowledge, and improving efficiency and productivity. It is also figured out by taking advantage of communications and information technology and the development of open and continuous learning methods. These studies did not try to critique nor uncover the roots of that phenomenon and their possible impacts. Most of them tried to emphasize the strong link between education and economy, in order to build a knowledge society, and that education is primary tool to bring change. It supports building a society, where knowledge is grown and generated by skilled and trained labor that had been produced by this efficient education, which in turn leads to economic development. Therefore, many Saudi and Arab studies confirm the weakness of higher education system in the fulfillment of transition requirements towards a knowledge economy. Some of them try to identify the individuals’ attitudes towards economic globalization and its implications, the extent of response of higher education institutions to these requirements in, and facing the challenges posed largely by that vision [1] [27]-[33]. According to an expert of HRC from Najran University, it has been reported

regarding globalization that:

*“Tied to cultural aspects stem from intellectual and philosophical ideology governing the contemporary societies. We, however, see those in charge of higher education policies in Saudi Arabia and the Arab World follow it without the lookout for the values, ideas and beliefs associated with this ideology arguing that they want to combine authenticity and modernity. We, however, have not maintained our authenticity nor achieved something new. Just our system of values has broken down.” (Expert in HRC, Feb. 12, 2016)*

#### b) Quality of Higher Education Programs and Institutions

Murad Ali [21] says:

*“The globalization of higher education services has become a main dimension of many countries in the WTO scenario. This requires a qualitative leap in terms of governance and service delivery. Recognizing the importance of higher education, innovative experiments have been made to improve performance in this sector. Applying total quality management concepts is one of these procedures measures, which will revolutionize the higher education system because the efficiency is the sole criterion in performance evaluation in any advanced higher education system. The total quality is the strategy pursued by the institutions of higher education in its attempt to meet the wishes of the beneficiaries, whether they are students, parents, society or business sector, etc.” (p. 53)*

Because the quality of higher education represents a major challenge for policy makers, the total quality approach is an essential technique to develop fundamental changes and finding effective mechanisms for accomplishment of aspirations. From this point, Saudi Arabia’s higher education system paid attention over the past seven years, to quality and academic accreditation. It has been observed through personal experience that the quality system in Saudi colleges and universities is following this system as an effective approach to establish the quality of university education. The primary emphasis for adopting this approach is to obtain the accreditation of academy, whether by National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment, or specialized international bodies. This fact has also been confirmed by most of the people. The Professor of Educational Administration and Planning (EAP) and Engineer Professor provided their views with respect to the quality of higher educational programs. It has been said by the Professor of Educational Administration and Planning (EAP):

*“All what we need is a paper says that we have quality, but we do not care about the ‘actual quality’.”*

According to Engineer Professor:

*“All our work in the Faculty of Engineering is directed to get the accreditation from ABET, as well as from the National Commission for Accreditation and Assessment, knowing that all our programs are newly established. Some of which have not had any graduates yet. However, we are asked to complete the paperwork, forms, reports and statistics necessary to have a completed paper quality file, to obtain easily the accreditation certificate. And accordingly, it can be said that we have an educational quality.”*

(Eng. Prof., Feb. 18, 2016)

This running behind formal accreditation certificate has led to constant requests from the leaders of faculties, departments and university addressed to teaching staff to complete the paperwork and reports requested by various committees of quality and development. The greater these papers are available before quality advisers visits University for inspection; the higher is satisfaction of faculty member who is responsible for these papers. In the case of absence of evidence, reports and minutes of meetings required to “quality file”, teaching staff, which has been noticed by Engineering Professor. The Engineering Professor repeatedly noticed that:

*“Fabricate’ such papers, including meetings’ minutes of departments, commissions and others, in older dates. The reports, which are called ‘improving reports’ in the curriculum file, contribute negatively in raising the rates of success in the following semester, even if the students do not deserve, because ‘improvement’ is one of the main requirements of the quality. If the success rate was 75%, for example, you will need a few ‘improving’ procedures in the following semester to raise this ratio. Because the academic levels of students are already low, raising the ratio more than it was is difficult but unfairly. Large number of faculty members, however, increase student scores so the success rate would be up to 80%, for example, to be able to announce the success of the alleged improvement plan quantitatively.”* (Eng. Prof., Feb. 18, 2016).

Moreover, the students as LEA also shared their viewpoint

*“...became in a valley and we as members of the faculty in another, because we live in constant pressure from the university to carry out quality work, so the student becomes a last of our concerns.”*

Being the head of Department of Education, I also noticed the pressure on faculty members because of quality work. Most of the faculty members were forced to miss their classes for accomplishment of paper work. The biggest problem is that some of the paperwork that the teaching staff are asked to perform require guidance and training. This was often done incorrectly, demanding them to redo many of those works perhaps several times, and this is very dangerous. This has led to the formation of negative attitudes towards quality, and they no longer believe in its usefulness, but they stress it as one of the biggest obstacles in achievement of real quality. It has been reported by the Professor of Engineering:

*“We are in an urgent need to discuss our situation and establish genuine solutions to improve the reality of our education. The adoption of standards of advanced countries to raise the level of quality in our country will not get us a real quality. Our problems are too deep to be solved by standards stemmed of business field. It is necessary to re-explore the basic background; a student comes to university, with low abilities, does not possess the minimum requirements for success in engineering disciplines. I have noticed through the teaching of most of the students of the Faculty of Engineering that most of them are not qualified to attend such faculty that requires understanding and creativity, not conservation and memorization. This scientific filed relies on the high potential in math, while most students do not differentiate between decimals and nor-*

*mal fractions. Therefore, the reform and qualification of such individuals are a real dilemma, unless establishing other compensative preparation stages before attendance. This may contribute to increase the level of students' abilities.”* (Eng. Prof., Feb. 18, 2016)

According to the Dean of Scientific Research Deanship:

*“The educational system is not established at the early stages on true cognitively or morally basis. The university education in Saudi and the Arab world in general, based on rote memorization. I was shocked a lot when I saw students in our Faculty of Education, and Faculty of Arts and Sciences still need to be re-qualified largely in reading and writing. Their writings are illegible and filled with spelling mistakes, not to mention the weakness of their writing ability.”* (DSRD, Feb. 22, 2016)

The researcher supported what his colleagues said. The level of the basic skills of a significant number of university students is very weak. For instance, they have very limited writing capabilities, which does not fit any student at this level. Moreover, they make spelling mistakes, have weak grammar, and possess no ability to express their concepts in oral or writing. On the contrary, this matter is even worse for mathematics and science. This complaint of the weakness of University inputs invites us to look urgently at the level of teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia, while the universities try seriously to meet labor market requirements. After the exploitation of teacher preparation programs in Arab World, it has been identified that these programs possess professional and high quality capabilities to diversify teaching methods and use technology and communication methods. The candidates are trained to follow national standards for teaching and evaluation of various disciplines. According to the Humanities Research Center (HRC) of Najran University:

*“The use of standardization originally borrowed from business and industry fields in the academic and scientific disciplines led to a tragedy situation. The individual has become a component of the production line, just like a material product. Providing the teacher with those skills and standards that are supposed to be followed has shifted her/his role from a thinker has a certain message to the owner of a profession. The argument is that the labor market requires a qualified teacher in a particular style to be able to be accepted in the teaching profession. Therefore, the calls for the imposition of education license are increasing. This license has to be renewed every period of years after passing certain tests capabilities. That, in my opinion, enables policy-makers and the dominant groups to impose their vision on the educational system and dominate it.”* (Expert in HRC, Feb. 12, 2016)

The requirements of this required license to stay in educational profession focus on the technical aspects and skills of teaching and evaluation. They do not concern with aspects of thought, the philosophical and intellectual topics, as all of the interviewed persons confirmed, are largely absent. Students graduate of this teaching program were unaware of the existence of different visions of philosophical concepts related to issues, such as human rights, democracy, intellectual freedom, or other rights. Thus, we can affirm that the theoretical, conscious, and criticism ideas disappeared intentionally

from those programs, even what have been affixed to curricula of modern concepts, have been dealt with incomplete understanding, such as post-modernism concept. DSRD also shared his perspective regarding the weaknesses of students. According to DSRD, the weaknesses of students are judged as:

*“... of public education who attend our University, and perhaps also explains the level of teaching staff in the faculties of education. A lot of them has very poor political, economic, social, intellectual and philosophical awareness. They have been prepared in purely technical and weak methods.”* (DSRD., Feb. 22, 2016).

#### c) Scientific Research

Attention to scientific research tends to be facial throughout the Arab World Countries. HRC also shared its perspective regarding scientific research. With respect to scientific research, HRC reported that:

*“Because I have worked in some major research centers in Egypt, Kuwait, and finally in Saudi Arabia, I can judge that the relationship between the politics and scientific research based on the exploitation of propaganda. Politicians always keen on to write in their reports and official statements some paragraphs indicate that they are interested in scientific research, and that the state spends a large sum of the national income. However, the fact that I believe in, based on over 30 years working in these centers and universities, is that it is nothing more than propaganda. The Arab governments do not generally believe in the importance of scientific research, and the announced budgets are either not true or not utilized properly. The spending of this money is full of a lot of financial waste and corruption, and therefore there is not research returns in line with those announced budgets.”* (Expert in HRC, Feb. 12, 2016).

Besides this, it has been believed that the outcomes of research remain trapped in drawers; rarely reach the decision-maker, because the decision-maker does not feel their importance. However, many of them claim in their political statements that their decisions are always based on scientific studies conducted by research centers. It has been said by HRC as an example:

*“Once upon a time, the Minister of Education, of one Arab country, said to justify one of his decisions, ‘It was based on a scientific study conducted by the National Research Center’ of that State. I was one of this center researchers at that time, and my colleagues and I knew this decision when it was published in newspaper! The center did not conduct any study of this kind in that period.”* (Expert in HRC, Feb. 12, 2016)

Therefore, annual published reported regarding research on budgets and published research matters to politicians, leaders of universities, and research institutions in Saudi Arabia and Arab World. Therefore, majority universities of Saudi Arabia have been keen to enhance the budget as well as government spending on scientific research to raise their ranks in most important world rankings bodies, such as Shanghai, American US News, and British QS. Of the most important initiatives were ‘Distinguished Scientist Fellowship Program’ and ‘Visiting Professor Program’ at King Saud University. These programs aimed to increase the number of most cited researchers in top journals citations to be among the members of King Saud University. The University paid for

every research co-authored by one of the employees of University and published in those journals, so the number of research published by some Saudi researchers increased from 5 per year to 39 [34].

It has been asserted by the Engineering Professor:

*“Failure to choose university leaders properly has become a dominant feature in the universities. We can see that most leaders are often the least sincerity, honesty and experience. The poor choice of leaders led to a poor choice of a faculty member who, if properly chosen, would be better than many of the quality control procedures and the like.”* (Eng. Prof., Feb. 18, 2016)

*“Interest in scientific research has been placed in some applied fields, such as the technology of advanced materials, nanotechnology, biotechnology, and others, with a large neglect of the humanitarian fields. Our criticism of the policy of scientific research does not mean that there was no benefit of the large movement during those years, but what we mean is that benefit was not broad or deep. It was at minimum level because it depended on some leased minds largely. This is not, of course, a defect in itself if the local researchers could take advantages of, but if the objective is limited to advancing the ranking of the universities only, and not for knowledge transfer, nor indigenization and gain experience that is shameful. Otherwise how can we explain the return to the situation before 2006, after the oil prices had dropped again in 2016, and where is the payoff of scientific research for the Universities?”* (DSRD., Feb. 22, 2016).

The EAP confirmed that:

*“Effective scientific research is absent. Teaching staff think in research just to get the upgrade, not to find solutions, establish plans, or innovations. We can get ‘everything’ and ‘anything’ from abroad.”* (EAP., Feb. 5, 2016)

Generally, social and humanitarian research is weak, due to the lack of interest. The evidence is that there is no single theory in social and humanitarian fields based on an Arab vision, or explanation of any Arabic reality stemming from Arab culture and environment. Furthermore, there is no interest in outcomes of research. The decision-maker in Najran University, like others, has never benefited from the results of any search supported by the center. It can be said that such state of apathy frustrated researchers, as observed from their poor efforts of exploring the research issues, in inquiring, reading, methodology, or ethics of scientific research. They know that the final place of their researches is the ‘shelves’.

#### 4. Conclusions

The main objective of Saudi higher education institutions represents the main philosophy, like their counterparts in the developed world to meet the labor market needs of human competency and advanced knowledge. Given the Saudi economic system, it depends on oil as it is nearly the sole source of income; whereas political system concepts, such as democracy, freedoms, and human rights are completely absent. Majority of the jobs and professions in Saudi Arabia do not require knowledge or high-skill. It means that the percentage of secondary education workers is less than 67% of total workforce

in 2014. The workers having a bachelor's degree are observed to work in education and public administration departments. Accordingly, we have seen cheap foreign labor that earns low wages and can spend more hours at work, thus maximizing the margin profits of employer, especially in light of the lack of strict regulations defining the minimum wage, and daily working hours. Therefore, it is difficult to find a young Saudi, who wants to stabilize and have a family, can be satisfied with this level of wages, which is insufficient for his personal expenses in light of increasing price day after day.

It can be concluded that the ideal objectives are absent as a result of political system. The vocational objective did not succeed. Unemployment increases, especially in the major dynamics disciplines of the thought of individuals, societies and awareness. The Saudi market is not in need of large numbers of workers in engineering and technical fields, because it is a non-productive market. In addition, the weaknesses of inputs that join the university produce weak outputs in most areas. All this confirms the fact that the desire to have the power that dominates the policies of educational system is that human remains framed by thought, awareness and behaviors within guiding government circles, does not possess the ability of critique, nor political or economic consciousness.

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