

**THE ROLE OF CONFLICTING VALUES IN THE  
TEACHING EXPERIENCES OF SOUTH  
AFRICAN EDUCATORS IN SAUDI ARABIAN  
SCHOOLS**

by

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## Abstract

Many South African educators seek employment in Saudi Arabian schools, drawn by monetary incentives and better working conditions. However, little consideration is given to differences in cultural and educational values synonymous with the two entities. This research deals with the role of conflicting values in the teaching experiences of South African educators in Saudi Arabian schools by means of a literature study and empirical investigation. Qualitative data collection was done by in-depth personal interviews and personal narratives, written and sourced via e-mail. Findings revealed that the preconceived educational values of the South African educators sometimes acted as a barrier to teaching, restricting the educators from fully optimising their educational experiences. However, positive features of the Saudi education system were highlighted. The implications indicate a need for better orientation for South African educators working or planning to work in Saudi Arabia with emphasis on societal norms, customs and values.

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# Chapter 1

## Orientation to study

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Education in Saudi Arabia has experienced dramatic growth over the last fifty years and has made tremendous strides in providing quality education to the nation. The country has realised the importance of the influence of underlying values on the ongoing discourses in society as well as the ability to pinpoint the effect of such underpinnings on educational dispensations within a broader societal context.

The researcher has been working in the Saudi Arabian education system for four years and has frequently experienced frustration when endeavouring to implement certain commonly accepted educational values emanating from the South African education system. By way of illustration, the researcher instructed a student to pick up a paper that he had littered. The student replied that it was not his responsibility to pick up the paper as his parents pay people to clean up after him, a view endorsed by the school principal.

According to the researcher's experiences as a foreign teacher in Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabian parents place unfair pressure on their children to achieve academically and do not tolerate weak grades. For example, parents forced the school to implement a minimum mark of 75% for all English subjects on the basis that English is a second language. Parents regularly contact the school and demand that their children's marks be inflated to compare favorably with the marks obtained by other children within the family or the children of neighbors. Thus, competitiveness (as far as high marks are concerned) is a value accepted by both parents and educators. Although this is not part of the official policy of the school, the teachers deem it acceptable practice.

Even the implementation of a basic value, such as respect and appreciation for books, becomes increasingly difficult as educators are forced to censor literature deemed inappropriate by the Ministry of Education. Annually educators are instructed to remove all references from textbooks to other religions, pigs, music and Western traditions, such as

birthdays and anniversaries, before these books are distributed to students. Educators who refuse to participate in this practice are subsequently threatened with termination of service. Thus, it is difficult to teach students not to deface books when prevented from leading by example.

Stalinsky (2002:12) states, "The Saudi government maintains control of every aspect of educational material: 'The government shall be concerned with the control of all books coming into the Kingdom from abroad or going out of the Kingdom to the outside world. No books shall be allowed for use unless they are consistent with Islam, the intellectual trends and educational aims of the Kingdom'". Government policy states: "All books should fulfill the aims of education and be devoid of anything conflicting with Islam." Students also learn "how to face misleading rumors, destructive doctrines, and alien thoughts." The Saudi education authorities insist, "The school textbooks should be in line with Islamic requirements."

After the September 11 bombings in the United States of America, educators at the researcher's former institution encouraged students to idolise the perpetrators, labeling them as heroes and role models. The Western world blames the curriculum implemented in Saudi Arabian schools for the extremist ideologies portrayed by supporters of terrorists groups within the country and abroad. Rashid (1995:4) reports that ten of the 26 terrorists whose names appeared on the most wanted list are graduates of one of their famous universities and that a leader of the terrorist group arrested recently in Taif served as an education supervisor. Rashid poses the following questions: "Are we really aware of what it means to have a terrorist working as education supervisor? How did the authorities fail to take notice of something like this? These questions must be addressed." Rashid (1995:4) adds that another terrorist was a teacher before joining the group. He was subsequently arrested in connection with the acts of violence that rocked the country's capital. "Imagine having two educationist-turned-terrorists working at our schools and among our children for years influencing the youngsters without anyone taking notice. Is supervision and control at our schools that lax? We willingly give our enemies a free hand to do whatever they wanted and influence our children without their actions raising any suspicion."

Examples of values are legion: honesty, professional conduct, frugality, self-discipline, respect for human beings and nature, tolerance for different viewpoints and punctuality are all examples of values which underpin people's behavior. A value is a general, normative orientation of action in a social system. It is an emotionally anchored commitment to

pursue and support certain directions of types of actions (Pilch & Malina 1993: xviii). The word 'value' describes some general quality and direction of life that human beings are expected to embody in their behavior. Official values are symbolic values such as policy values and non-official values are more personal as in how people act in their everyday lives. These values underlie people's daily actions and behavior. This study examines both official and non-official values.

According to Al Dohyan, Ghimlas and Al-Shabanat (2001:13), education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is implemented in compliance with the guidelines drawn up in the Educational Policy. This policy teaches the individual to perform his or her duties towards Allah and his or her religion, and to fulfill the needs of society in order to achieve the aspirations of the nation. Educational policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is derived from the morals and judgments of Islam, which constitutes the religion of the entire nation and which is considered to be an integrated system of life. Thus, Saudi Arabian society can be classified as a theocracy based on the beliefs and judgments of the Islam faith.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Knowledge of the history leading to the formation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and in particular, of its cultural background, is essential for an understanding of the principles which have guided the Kingdom's development. When the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932, opportunities for education were not widely available, being mainly limited to religious teaching and basic literacy conducted in mosques. In the 1930s, King Abdul Aziz initiated a programme of formal primary education in the Kingdom. This program was given added impetus in 1949-1950 (1369-1370 AH) with the personal support of the then Prince Faisal and the encouragement of Prince Fahd bin Abdul Aziz, who later became Minister of Education and President of the Saudi Higher Council of Education, the highest educational authority in the Kingdom. The latter is now the King. The Ministry of Education, with the then Prince Fahd bin Abdul Aziz at its head, was founded in 1954 (Abd-El Wassie & Wahab 1970.)

Mindful of the need to ensure that the Kingdom's population should be equal to the challenges of development, the government has devoted vast resources to a programme covering primary, secondary and higher levels of education. All the Kingdom's

Development Plans have taken into account the educational aspirations of the Saudi people, providing free education to all (Abd-El Wassie & Wahab 1970.)

The education system has been continuously and systematically expanded to accommodate the ever-growing demand for educational services. Through this investment, the Kingdom has been able to guarantee equality of opportunity for all and to ensure that the Kingdom's need for an educated and trained national workforce to carry forward the Kingdom's future development can be fulfilled.

Most international schools in Saudi Arabia follow an American, Australian, British, or modified American/international curriculum. With little prior expertise in modern education, the education system in Saudi Arabia basically adopted the curricula of other Arab countries especially that of Egypt, adding a heavier emphasis on religious subjects (Findlay 1997:34). While working in the education system of Saudi Arabia, the researcher became interested in both the official values enshrined in the education policy of the country and the role non-official values play in the teaching experiences of South African educators in Saudi Arabian educational institutions.

According to Torsten and Postlewaite (1994: 5148), the speed with which educational endeavours have expanded in Saudi Arabia has resulted in shortages in qualified personnel. This has led to the recruitment of foreign personnel to deal with the shortage. Schools in Saudi Arabia have embarked on the recruitment of foreign personnel and South African educators feature high on their lists. The South African embassy in Saudi Arabia acknowledges that there are currently hundreds of qualified South African educators working in private and international schools in Saudi Arabia. The exact number cannot be verified, as most South Africans do not bother to register with the embassy.

The researcher has found that South African educators work in private national as well as private international schools in Saudi Arabia. Interestingly, no South African educators are currently working in public national schools as the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education regulates appointments in government schools. Most South African educators questioned by the researcher during the last four years claim to struggle initially to adapt to the discrepancies in the Saudi Arabian education system, but are forced to toe the line in order to receive the higher compensation offered by most schools in the country. With strikes

and mass action outlawed in Saudi Arabian society, South African educators have little to no recourse to settle labour disputes, a right common in South Africa.

Al-Zaid, (1982:35-36) contends that the policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on Islam which is embraced by the nation as a creed, a system of observances, a code of ethics, legislation, a law and a complete way of life. Salloom (1995:99) notes that the curricula used throughout the education system in Saudi Arabia undergo a process of change and improvement in response to social and economic developments in the Kingdom, as well as international developments in technology.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

A private Saudi Arabian school recruited the researcher together with eighteen other qualified South African educators in 2001. The school implemented an American-style English curriculum and settled on South African qualified educators to pilot the new programme because of the good reviews of South African educators received by the school. This was an excellent opportunity for the educators as they had an opportunity to test their mettle in an international educational arena.

Within the first three months, six teachers had resigned and returned home, citing the application of educational values and the indifference of the school's management to their concerns as the major reasons. At the end of the first year, only three teachers remained. The school then recruited five more South African educators. During the first three months, all the new educators complained of the same problems experienced by their predecessors.

Thus, the researcher became interested in educational values and their influence on the teaching experiences of South African educators in Saudi Arabian schools. Since 1994, the new South African democracy has reflected values in stark contrast to the recent developments in Saudi Arabian values. This drew the researcher's attention to how clashes in value systems in a totally different society shape teaching experiences.

The main research problem is formulated as follows: **What are the teaching experiences of South African teachers in Saudi Arabian schools? How do underlying value clashes in the classroom situation shape these teachers' experiences?**

## 1.4 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Since the September 11 incident, in which thousands of mostly Americans were killed, the American government has incessantly questioned the values imparted in Saudi Arabian education. This is corroborated by the following: US Senator Charles Schumer (2002) introduced a resolution calling on the Saudi Arabian government to review its education curriculum after recent studies by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace found that Saudi Arabian textbooks promote anti-Semitic, anti-American, and anti-Western views. Schumer (2002) states that the Saudi government is suffering from the Yasir Arafat Syndrome. While the government continues to present itself as an ally in the war on terrorism, it teaches its young people to hate the West. The ideas in school textbooks form the foundation of hatred that has led to many innocent children growing into terrorists as adults. Schumer (2002) adds that if terrorism is to be eliminated, it is critical that the values taught in Saudi Arabia's schools promote tolerance, not hatred. The Saudi government controls and regulates all forms of education in public as well as in private schools and is responsible for all of the content in school textbooks. The religious curriculum is written, monitored and taught by followers of the Wahhabi sect of Islam, the only religious doctrine Saudi Arabia allows to be taught.

John Loftus (2002), a former US federal prosecutor, supports the above notion and contends, "The southern faction of Saudi Arabia is the center of popular support for Al Qaeda and the Taliban, because it is the home of the most extreme Muslim sect, the Wahhabis. Ninety-nine percent of the Muslim world rejects the Wahhabi religious tenets as utterly repugnant to the teachings and examples of the Prophet as written down in the Hadith. Since most Wahhabis are functionally illiterate, they cannot read about this conflict on their own. Typically, they memorize a few passages of the Koran taken out of context, and never read the accompanying Hadith for explanation. For example, the Wahhabis are taught by rote that Jews are subhuman who should be killed as a religious duty. In contrast, the Hadith explains that the prophet Mohammed honored Jews, married a Jewish wife, forbade forced conversions of Jews, always bowed in respect when a Jewish funeral passed, and promised that good and faithful Jews would go to Paradise just as good Muslims and Christians would. Illiteracy is a weapon of oppression. The Saudis, and their Wahhabis, the Taliban, have decreed that women cannot work or even sit in the front seat of a car. In contrast, the Hadith records that the Prophet worked for his wife, and that she drove her own caravans in international commerce."

Recently, Tariq A. Al-Maeena of Arab News remarks, "Saudi society today is rapidly evolving, but we are yet unsure as to the direction it will take. Old customs are fading rapidly as an expanding youth culture embraces the new. While our faith remains a constant, everything else is game for improvement or change. In the field of education, many have been calling for an overhaul of a syllabus that hasn't changed significantly for over two decades. Nor has the method of teaching varied dramatically. The emphasis remains more on memorization than understanding, leaving many with very little insight into what they had been exposed to in classrooms for so many years" (Arab News 04 June 2005:5).

In addition, Schumer (2002) contends that the Saudi textbooks are from the same mould as the extremist teachings of the madrassahs (Islamic religious schools) that preach hatred throughout the Middle East and are funded by the Saudi government. He contends that while Islam is a peaceful religion, the madrassahs distort this message by preaching hate, violence and intolerance toward the Judeo-Christian world. Schumer (2002) states, "These teachings indoctrinate thousands of young Saudis with the idea that terrorism is an acceptable way to articulate their Islamic beliefs. Fifteen of the 19 September 11 hijackers were Saudi Arabian nationals. Recently the government clamped down on this phenomenon by relieving hundreds of imams (preachers) from their duties in the mosques on the basis of inciting followers to commit acts of violence."

Schumer (2002) lists several examples of hate rhetoric that appear in Saudi textbooks:

- "There is no doubt that the Muslims' power irritates the infidels and spreads envy in the hearts of the enemies of Islam-Christians, Jews and others...a malicious Crusader-Jewish alliance [is] striving to eliminate Islam from all continents. (Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8 (1994) pg 32)
- "The abundance of the suicide cases in Western societies is surely because of their [great] distance for the true divine source. (Islamic Jurisprudence, Grade 10, (2001) p.19)
- "Now it [Palestine] is occupied by the Jews, a people of treachery and betrayal, who have gathered there from every place: from Poland, Spain, America and elsewhere. Their end, by God's will, is perdition. (Dictation, Grade 8 pt 1 (2000) p. 24)

- "All Muslims stand together for the realization of their common goals, such as [the following ones]: Purification of Jerusalem from the filth of Zionism and the liberation of Palestine. (Geography of the Muslim World, Grade 8, [1994] p. 37)
- Jihad in God's cause is the path to victory and to strength in this world, as well as to attaining Paradise in the hereafter. ([Qur'an] Commentary, Grade 9 (2000) p. 90)

Stalinsky (2002) strengthens the above argument by providing the following translations from Saudi schoolbooks:

### ***Jihad***

From an early age, schoolchildren are taught about *Jihad* for the Sake of Allah (*Al-Jihad fi sabil Allah*). In a textbook for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, a *Hadith* is introduced about a companion of the Prophet Muhammad who asked the Prophet: "What labor is most favored by Allah? He [the Prophet] answered: Prayers on time; he then asked: what next? The Prophet answered: love thy parents. He then asked: what else: The Prophet answered: *Jihad* for the sake of Allah." The textbook interprets the conversation between the Prophet and his companion as follows: the most important activity is *Jihad* for the sake of Allah and the convocation of Allah's religion on this earth.

A textbook entitled, "Pictures from the Lives of the Companions," states that after the battle of Badr (the first victory of Muslims over the disbelievers) a new chapter in the Koran descended on the Prophet which raised, in the eyes of Allah, the status of the *mujahideen* (*Jihad* warrior) and confirmed their preference over those who sit still. The chapter challenges the *mujahid* to *Jihad*, and discourages those who sit still.

### **Jews and Christians – Cursed by Allah and Turned into Apes and Pigs**

A textbook for 8<sup>th</sup> Grade students explains why Jews and Christians were cursed by Allah and turned into apes and pigs. Quoting *Surat Al-Maida*, Verse 60, the lesson explains that Jews and Christians have sinned by accepting polytheism and therefore, have incurred Allah's wrath. To punish them, Allah has turned them into apes and pigs.



## **The Whole World Should Convert to Islam and Leave Their False Religions Lest Their Fate Will Be Hell**

A schoolbook for the 5th Grade instructs the students: "The religions which people follow on this earth are many, but the only true religion is the religion of Islam. As for the other religions, they are false as mentioned in the Koran (the *Sura of Aal 'Umran* Verse 85): 'And whoever follows a religion that is not Islam, it will not be accepted from him and in the Hereafter he will be of the losers.' 'The religion of Islam we know from the Koran and the *Hadiths* about the Prophet. The whole world should convert to Islam and leave its false religions lest their fate will be hell. As mentioned in the Koran (the *Sura of Al-Nihal* Verse 125): '[I swear] by Him who holds Muhammad's soul in his hand that not one Jew or Christian who had heard me and did not believe in the message that I was sent with shall die without being one of those whose fate is hell.'"

After this, students are asked to answer "yes" or "no" to the following questions:

- \* "The Islamic religion is the road to heaven..."
- \* "Other religions bestow eternal damnation on their adherents..."

### **"There is a Jew Behind Me, Come and Kill Him!"**

A schoolbook for the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade on *Hadith* introduces a famous narration known by the name, "The Promise of the Stone and the Tree." It tells the story of Abu Hurayra, one of the Prophet's companions who quoted the Prophet as saying: "The hour [the Day of Judgment] will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them. A Jew will [then] hide behind a rock or a tree, and the rock or tree will call upon the Muslim: 'O Muslim, O slave of Allah! There is a Jew behind me, come and kill him!' - except for the *gharqad* tree, for it is one of the trees of the Jews." The *Hadith* is accompanied by a number of statements:

1. "It is Allah's wisdom that the struggle between Muslims and Jews shall continue until the Day of Judgment."
2. "The *Hadith* brings forth the glad tidings about the ultimate victory, with Allah's help, of Muslims over Jews."

3. "The Jews and the Christians are the enemies of the believers. They will not be favorably disposed toward Muslims and it is necessary to be cautious [in dealing with them]."

The book asks questions for class discussion:

1. "Who will be victorious in the Day of Judgment?"
2. "With what types of weapons should Muslims arm themselves against the Jews?"
3. "Name four factors leading to the victory of Muslims over their enemies."

### **Jewish Treachery**

A textbook for the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade on the "History of the Islamic State" instructs students that the Prophet Muhammad concluded an agreement with the Jewish tribes in Medina so that they would not commit treacheries against Muslims. "The Jews (then) broke their promise because they were known for treachery, and the Prophet had expelled them from Medina to their relatives in Khaibar where they started plotting (again)." Consequently, the Prophet decided to invade them, destroy their fortifications and bring them under submission.

A subject of discussion in the classroom is the case of Abdullah bin Saba, a "hypocrite Jew" who converted to Islam fraudulently and caused sedition among Muslims which resulted in the martyrdom of the third Khalifa, Othman ibn 'Affan.

### **Jesus is Not the Son of God**

Islam acknowledges Jesus, the son of Miriam, as a prophet. In the book, "Interpretation of the Oneness of God (*Tawheed*)," for first-year high school students it is related that God sent Jesus to order the Jews to worship the oneness of God. The book states: "He [Jesus] is the messenger of God, not his son as the Christians claim."

The Schumer resolution, co-sponsored by Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR), calls for the Saudi Arabian government to make a thorough review of its education curriculum and to reform it in a manner that promotes tolerance of all religious ideas and respect of differing world views. The resolution also calls upon the United States (UN) Representative of UNESCO to urge that the UN body take up the textbook issue and monitor reform of the education curriculum in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Arabian royal family has taken these

recommendations to heart and has appointed a task team to look at the content of all schoolbooks in the education system.

As part of its educational reform plans, the Kingdom has introduced a portion of its new curriculum. The aim of the reforms by the Ministry of Education is to revise controversial chapters. "A new contract with a major publishing company will shortly be signed for the printing of a series of books in different subjects including social science, mathematics and science," said Dr. Khaled Al-Awwad, deputy minister of education, at the Swiss Education Fair in Riyadh. Asked about the revision of the curriculum, Dr. Al-Awwad commented that various committees had been assigned to write different books and that there was at least one special committee working on each subject (Arab News 15 February 2004:3).

The deputy minister said the policy to change the education system was unrelated to the war on terrorism. Many factors have stimulated change including rapid social development, the changing world order, the terrorist attacks and subsequent global changes. The Kingdom has spent some SR240 billion on education over the last 25 years. Its expenditure on education is one of the highest in the world — over 9 % of GDP compared to the world average of only 5.08 %. Some 400 000 teachers have been involved in the reform process. The ministry has issued instructions that the old curriculum is to be phased out and the new one implemented as soon as it is ready (Arab News 15 February 2004:3).

As a South African educator who has experienced transition to a new democratic era and the concomitant new policies, the researcher's underlying expectations and value preferences have shaped his abilities and attitudes as a professional teacher. The researcher became interested in how a South African educator would cope in an entirely different society, namely a theocracy based on fundamentalist Islamic ideals. Moreover, his interest in the way values embedded in his and other South African teachers' teaching might clash and shape their teaching experiences in Saudi Arabia forms the backbone of the study. Consequently, the researcher studied the official values within formal Saudi Arabian education and South African educational policies and investigated the role of non-official values in the personal teaching experiences of South African teachers in a Saudi Arabian educational institution. Both systems of education were examined within a broad societal context in order to understand the South African teachers' experiences.

## **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide insight into the role of conflicting values in the teaching experiences of South African educators working in Saudi Arabia. It calls attention to the existing problems currently experienced in Saudi Arabian education and points to a better understanding of the official values. The study could also be used as groundwork for future research into the status of educational values in developing countries. If value systems which influence formal education can be identified and analysed, they can provide a better understanding of what is taking place in schools. This understanding can motivate teachers, community leaders, parents and learners to become positively involved in the transformation of their own teaching and thus influence the education system (Van Niekerk 2003:3).

## **1.6 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the research is to explore the role of conflicting values in the teaching experiences of South African educators in Saudi Arabian schools and to make recommendations for the improvement of teaching and the ability to cope in a foreign society on the basis of the research findings. This investigation also highlights the official educational values adopted by the post-apartheid South African administration and examines the current educational dispensation in the country.

## **1.7 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This dissertation intends to achieve the following objectives:

- To analyse the official values in Saudi Arabian education.
- To discuss the socio, political and historical background of Saudi Arabian education.
- To investigate the role of conflicting values in the teaching experiences of South African educators in the Saudi Arabian education system.
- To sharpen understanding of the underpinning role of values in shaping the experiences of educators in order to inform others who teach in a foreign context.

## 1.8 METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted by means of a literature review and an empirical investigation. A thorough overview of the official values contained in the policy documents of the South African and Saudi Arabian education systems was carried out. This was augmented with current critical issues in the two education systems to portray the non-official viewpoint.

An empirical investigation using a qualitative approach was conducted. Data were obtained by sending e-mails to South African educators working in Saudi Arabia at that time requiring them to write about their personal teaching histories in Saudi Arabia. The participants came from both private national and private international schools in Riyadh. This method proved to be of limited success as only one returned e-mail was deemed to be useful and another participant submitted a hand-written narrative. It was then decided to make use of personal interviews on audiotape. This method proved to be more successful and in-depth interviews of between 20- 45 minutes were conducted with three South African educators. The participant who submitted the hand-written narrative was also used for the personal interviews.

Once the data was collected, comparisons were drawn between the responses of the participants in order to gauge the similarities and the differences. Their responses were presented in their original narrative format. Finally, a discussion of the results was presented drawn from the responses of the interviewees.

## 1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The study is arranged into separate chapters for the sake of logical exposition and presentation of data.

**Chapter 1** deals with the background to the study, the statement of the research problem, motivation for the study, significance, aims and objectives of the study.

**Chapter 2** deals with the literature on values in education as an issue in Comparative and International Education. Prominence is given to values in South African education and how they have changed after the demise of apartheid. Both positive and negative practices are highlighted as well as the issue of conflicting values within a foreign context.

**Chapter 3** focuses the socio, political and historical factors which led to the official documents on values in education of Saudi Arabia by means of a literature study.

**Chapter 4** deals with the qualitative research design which is used to explore individual classroom experiences of South African educators currently working in a Saudi Arabian educational institution.

**Chapter 5** is an analysis of the data gathered during the empirical research and a discussion of the findings.

**Chapter 6** provides a summary of the chapters, synthesis of findings and conclusions, as well as recommendations for future education planning.

### **1.10 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

**Values** – The principles and beliefs that influence the behavior and way of life of a particular group or community (Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners 2002.)

**Teaching experiences** - Refer to the knowledge, skills and practices an educator has acquired and implements in his/her everyday educational environment.

**South African educator** – A person who obtained at least a three-year teaching qualification from a tertiary institution recognised by the South African Department of Education.

**Saudi Arabian educational institution** – Any institution in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that provides education with accreditation from the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education.

### **1.11 DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The scope of this study was delimited as follows:

1. The study focused mainly on official educational values in Saudi Arabia rather than on other policies and practices.
2. The empirical investigation was limited to the perceptions of selected South African educators who have worked or are currently working in a teaching capacity in Saudi Arabia. Students' perceptions were not included. Both males and females were utilized for the investigation.
3. There were limitations to the conduct of this study concerning access to information. For this reason the literature study (see ch 2) was limited to newspaper articles. Because of the social constraints in the country that prohibits interaction between non-related males and females, it was increasingly difficult to conduct interviews with female South African educators.

4. Only qualified South African educators working in Riyadh, the capital city, were considered for this study.

## **1.12 CONCLUSION**

This chapter served as an orientation to the study and dealt with issues such as the background to the study, the statement of the research problem, motivation for the study, significance, aims and objectives of the study. It gives a brief background to the educational situation experienced in the classroom and the country.

The following chapter deals with literature on values in education as an issue in Comparative and international education. Prominence will be given to values in South African education and how they have changed after apartheid. Both positive and negative practices are highlighted.

# Chapter 2

## Values in Education

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to deal with the analytical formation of comparative and international education and the effect values have on the education system in South Africa. The focus is on official values found in various policy documents in South African education and the changes that took place after the abolition of apartheid. It also deals with significant current issues in South African education.

Van Niekerk (2003:3) contends that it is necessary to think about the main purpose of a system of formal education in order to detect a dominant value system. If we reflect on schooling worldwide, it is astonishing that schools are so similar while the cultural contexts of societies in which they occur are so different. Various communities worldwide have a differing school ethos with regard to matters such as discipline, social class, codes of behavior and those camouflaged by various forms of rhetoric. This is particularly relevant when comparing discipline in schools as practised in countries like Japan and South Korea, renowned for their impeccable adherence to rules and regulations, as opposed to countries like America and England where greater access to freedom has created critical thinking and where students are prepared to defend what they believe in.

According to Holmes (in Noah 1984:551), the nineteenth-century pioneers or precursors of comparative education were men whose task was to develop their own national system of education. Almost without exception they were members of a new class of officials appointed to take a special interest in education. As administrators they wanted to know if anything of practical value could be learned from the study of foreign systems of education. Some were prepared to take over from foreign systems those features that would benefit but not harm their own education systems. Today comparative and international education can be of assistance to policy makers and administrators and can form the most valuable part of the education of teachers (Noah 1984:551).



Kelly, Altbach and Arnove (1982:508) assert, "Comparative education has traditionally served educational planners, policy-makers, and others involved with the applied aspects of educational policymaking. Much of the database in the field has been developed with the interests of such groups in mind. Comparative education serves as a means to provide information on policy options in planning educational reform and a benchmark to compare the effectiveness of educational practices." Kelly et al (1982:508) further add, "Planners and administrators who use comparative knowledge are for the most part in ministries of education, international agencies, aid organizations, and to some extent in school systems. Although relatively few of these individuals are "producers" of knowledge in the field, they are important in applying research, sponsoring studies, and determining the shape of comparative education through their funding of research."

Epstein (1994: 399) contends, "...that comparative education tends to draw its inspiration from the social sciences. In doing so it makes certain assumptions about schooling. For one thing, the field views schools as integral parts of culture, as never inert but susceptible to social change. However, the universal basic aim of the school in general remains the preparation of children for their economic future, taking cognizance of a variety of aspects involved in such a future. The predicament of schools lies in the fact that they cannot accurately anticipate the future for which they have to prepare the learners. This is where it becomes relevant for educationists to reflect on perennial, core values essential for humanity and its survival on the globe, which will remain the same, although circumstances may change." Nyberg (1990:295) states, "educators are important transmitters of values: neither teachers nor parents can avoid teaching values through their own words and actions. The dilemma in the current South African education system lies in the differing backgrounds of educators, what they perceive to be core values, and what values should be imparted to students. A case in point is where black students attend former Model C schools and struggle to bridge the cultural divide in order to gain acceptance from their peers. A black student in a Model C school may be frowned upon when sporting a traditional hairstyle accepted in most township schools."

According to Hunter (in Badenhorst 1998: 56-58), "the contemporary school originates from two sources, namely Christian pastoral guidance and monitorial schools where the state controlled teaching methods and content. In general, the education movement emphasized the optimal realization of the potential of the individual, prosperity of the state and a material view of the world." For example, the difference between official and non-official value systems should be noted: The post-apartheid era in South Africa saw

numerous positive legislative measures to redress educational imbalances in the South African education system. Amongst these, White Paper 1 (1995) proposed a new set of values and principles for the education and training policy for the education system. The Department of Education adopted the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* in 2001 to serve as the norm for values in all schools under its jurisdiction. Van Dyk (in Badenhorst 1993) describes normative values as official values, often included in school policy documents. However, these official values are usually unrealistic, as they do not always accommodate the current social and economic conditions in the country.

## **2.2 VALUES IN EDUCATION AS A COMPARATIVE AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION ISSUE**

Masemann (in Arnove & Torres 2003:116) describes culture as all aspects of life, including the mental, social, linguistic and physical forms of culture and maintains, "A fundamental characteristic of culture is that it expresses the value system(s) of a particular society or group."

In her classic work on dominant and variant value orientations, Florence Kluckhohn (in Arnove & Torres 2003:117-118) states, "There is a systematic variation in the realm of cultural phenomena which is both as definite and as essential as the demonstrated systematic variation in physical and biological phenomena." She links her argument to a defense of the concept of cultural relativism and explores the range of value systems that answers five basic questions common to all human groups. She questions the character of the innate human nature, the relation of human beings to nature, the temporal focus of human life, the values modality of human activity and people's relationship with each other.

Kluckhohn (in Arnove & Torres 2003:118) further argues, "These dominant and variant value orientations could coexist and were complementary and they would shift under external pressure to a varying extent." She saw values as "...not the individual psychological attitudes of an individual but as socially structured orientations that were patterned in relation to the structures of the society in which people played out their roles."

In any community, two sets of values are usually apparent, namely what ought to be (the norm) and what is (facts of real life) (Van Dyk in Badenhorst 1993). The normative represents the official values, often included in school policy documents; the values deduced from real-life observations represent the non-official values.

A South African example can be found in the claims made by conservative Afrikaner leaders who strongly emphasise the Christian values of their group as their official values. However, Joubert (1992:257-260) points out that if these values are closely examined, they are linked to ethnicity and individual privilege based on capitalism. He questions whether these values are not removed from biblical, Christian values, which have more to do with love, communality and sharing. The case of Christian National Education (CNE) illustrates this point. The CNE promulgated all white schools in 1967. The official values stated in the policy documents of the Department of Education were stated as Christian, yet distinctly different from those of black or Indian schools, in order to justify separate systems to fit the apartheid ideology. In the democratic dispensation, South African schools have to proportion equal status to all accepted religions in the country. This causes problems for many Christian educators who only feel comfortable with their religious practices and who are now exposed to other religions. If a staunch Christian teacher has to teach Islamic religious practices to students, there may be no guarantee that Islam will be fairly portrayed.

South Africa's democratic government inherited a divided and unequal system of education. Under apartheid, South Africa had nineteen different educational departments separated by race, geography and ideology. This education system prepared children in different ways for the positions they were expected to occupy in social, economic and political life under apartheid. In each, the curriculum played a powerful role in reinforcing inequality. What, how and whether children were taught differed according to the expectations of their roles in the wider society.

### **2.3 TEACHER IDENTITIES: THE ROLE OF CULTURAL VALUES, EXPERIENCES AND ENVIRONMENT**

It is important to this study to explain what role cultural values; experiences and environment play in how teacher identities are formed. Although the objectives of education should be universal, teachers from different countries obviously have different educational outlooks. The different policies adopted by each country, the cultural background of the teachers and values ingrained in every teacher make it increasingly difficult for teachers from one country to work effectively in another country's education system.

The researcher grew up in South Africa, graduated from a South African educational institution and taught in various schools throughout South Africa before

moving to pursue a teaching career in Saudi Arabia. During his tenure in South Africa, the researcher naturally adopted many of the various educational values pertaining to South Africa.

From an early age the researcher was taught to respect teachers by virtue of their profession. The values imparted by these teachers played an integral part in shaping the educational values of the researcher. For example, during Grade 1 the teacher would routinely take the entire class to the bathroom every morning to teach them to brush and floss their teeth correctly. When the researcher became a teacher, he would always encourage students of all ages to brush their teeth twice a day and floss regularly. Another instance was when teachers forced the researcher's class to pick up litter after every school interval, thereby instilling a sense of responsibility in most students to refrain from littering. The researcher methodically taught his students about the dangers of litter and pollution and the importance of protecting the environment, thus passing on this value to his students. Other values embraced and transmitted by the researcher include punctuality, respect for others, humility, assertiveness when necessary, honesty, professional conduct and tolerance for other viewpoints.

Conflict arose during the researcher's first year of teaching in Saudi Arabia with regards to litter (cf. 1.1). Students in Saudi Arabia are taught from an early age that they should not involve themselves in menial duties like picking up papers as it is a task reserved for workers from developing countries. They believe that all things in life can be purchased and they can merely do the bare minimum, views with which the researcher disagreed. As a result, students' parents called the school on many occasions to request the researcher to refrain from instilling "Western values and ideologies" in their children. Surprisingly, most parents agreed with the researcher's values, but asked the researcher to understand and be sensitive to the social customs prevalent in the Saudi society.

Ignorance about values, customs and norms in other countries always abounds and it is important for teachers who plan to work in another country to familiarise themselves as best as they can with the non-official values they will encounter in the foreign country. Two educators, Michelle Commeyras from USA and Bontshetse Mazile from Botswana, shared their cross-continental experiences after teaching in each other's countries. Commeyras and Mazile (s.a.: 10) relays "Having lived and worked in Botswana I am more aware of my ignorance of the continent where archeologists think we all originate from." She further

notes “I find myself wondering if creating more communication between teachers and students across continents might lead us to a better way of healing the racial and ethnic strife that is paralyzing progress toward a just and equitable U.S. society and that leads to Eurocentric views of the rest of the world. I learned more about racism and U.S. dominance by being away from it during my year in Botswana”.

From his perspective, Bontshetshe Mazile (in Commeyras & Mazile s.a.:8) writes the following about American students’ views of Africa: “It was evident from the essays written by Michelle’s students that their view of Africa was primarily based on the negative discourse perpetrated by the US media. I and other students used to yearn for some positive presentation of Africa... to see something apart from wildlife and safari adventures. Instead we watched the dominant discourse of famine, uncivilized, wild and warring tribes (Blacks killing Blacks).” Mazile (s.a.:9) continues: “It was common for African students to be asked questions such as: How did you get here? Do you have houses in Africa? How does a lion look in real life? Where did you learn to speak English? Do you have many brothers and sisters? Do people in Africa drive cars? From the ignorant to the absurd- since you live in trees and trees look alike, how do you know which one is yours?”

Based on the researcher’s experiences in Saudi Arabia, it becomes increasingly difficult for teachers from other countries to gain respect from students especially if they are perceived as coming from a so-called “Third World” country. On the other hand, the reverse is true for teachers coming from well-resourced countries having to teach in developing countries with minimal resources. Even coming from a different cultural or social background and teaching in one’s own country can be problematic if the teacher or students made no effort to familiarise themselves with the intricacies of the other’s background.

Fox in Arnove & Torres (2002:136) states, “Educational research, as well as educational planning in “developing” world settings, tended to be dictated by European perceptions of what was good for the Other. In more recent times, the subtleties of linguistic and philosophical dilemmas of translation are often confused with a binary process of substituting one set of meanings for another.” She further claims that in education, the complex process of intercultural interaction has been analyzed by Western educators as a one-way adaptation and integration of the Other into the dominant educational norm.”

An illustrative case is that of the ‘silent Indian’ stereotype that emerged in earlier literature on the experiences of Native Americans in schools set up by, and usually taught by, the

dominant white minority in the United States (Fox in Arnove & Torres 2002:139). In this instance Native Americans chose silence as a restraint discourse, “a political retreat into a separate cultural space and identity far from the white world”. Similarly ‘ethnic’ Australians has been stereotyped as nonparticipative, possibly dull witted and unimaginative by their teachers in a study done by Fox in 1994. Similarly, in a study of the experiences of Spanish-speaking students from Uruguayan, Chilean and Spanish families in New South Wales, Arnove & Torres 2002:139 reported, that a girl described by teachers as “not interested in the subjects and unmotivated to try to move up to a higher level” maintained that it was not much use to participate in class because of a general sense of negativity by teachers toward her and her friends, most of whom were classified as ‘wogs’ or ‘ethnics’.

Generally, South African teachers arrive in Saudi Arabia expecting poorly developed educational conditions and assume a sense of superiority that they try and enforce on native students of the country. Discussions with many South African teachers working in the capital city, Riyadh, show that this is normally the overriding reason why many South African teachers struggle to adapt. This also contributes to the high number of these teachers exiting the Saudi education system.

## **2.4 SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION AFTER APARTHEID**

### **2.4.1 Introduction**

Curriculum change in post-apartheid South Africa started immediately after the elections in 1994 when the National Education and Training Forum began a process of syllabus revision and subject rationalisation. The purpose of this process was mainly to lay the foundations for a single national core syllabus. In addition to the rationalization and consolidation of existing syllabi, the National Education and Training Forum curriculum developers removed overtly racist and insensitive language from existing syllabi. For the first time curriculum decisions were made in a participatory and representative manner. But the National Education and Training Forum process was not, nor did it intend to be, a curriculum development process.

Smit (2002:17) remarks that 27 April 1994 marked a turning point in South African history with the birth of the first democratic state. This metamorphosis also hailed a shift in political discourse from a context of resistance and domination to reconciliation and democracy. The enactment of the South African Schools Act in October 1996 sowed the seeds of the transformation of the country’s education system. For the first time in the

history of South Africa, South Africa had one unitary education system, a schooling system compulsory to all children between the ages of six and fifteen and open to all children regardless of racial background. These reforms initiated a process of desegregated schooling.

On 13 January 2000, the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, launched a nine-point education mobilisation campaign as part of the Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service (COLTS) campaign (Department of Education, 1999:2-4). The aims of the COLTS campaign were the following: to instill discipline, dedication and motivation in educators, learners, principals and other stakeholders; to create safe teaching and learning institutions; to provide basic resources for effective teaching and learning; to develop an education charter that expresses education values and aspirations of all citizens and to establish democratically elected, well-trained and effective school governing bodies. Tirisano was launched when the Department of Education identified the following problems in schools, especially disadvantaged schools in South Africa (Department of Education, 1999:2-4): rampant inequalities, low educator morale, failures of government and management and poor quality of learning. Though the Department of Education has made a valiant effort to improve some of these problems, poor conditions still exist, for example, learners receiving classes under trees.

#### **2.4.2 Values and principles of the Education and Training Policy**

It is necessary to identify the values and principles, which, in the view of the Ministry of Education, should drive national policy for the reconstruction and development of education and training. The following are taken from Chapter Four of the White Paper 1 (1995:21-23):

Education and training are *basic human rights*. The state has an obligation to protect and advance these rights, so that all citizens irrespective of race, class, gender, creed or age, have the opportunity to develop their capabilities and potential, and make their full contribution to society.

Parents or guardians have the primary responsibility for the education of their children, and have the right to be consulted by the state authorities with respect to the form that education should take and to take part in its governance. *Parents have an inalienable right to choose* the form of education which is best for their children, particularly in the early years of schooling, whether provided by the state or not, subject to reasonable safeguards

which may be required by law. The parents' right to choose includes choice of the language, cultural or religious basis of the child's education, with due regard for the rights of others and the rights of choice of the growing child.

Since countless South African families are fragmented by such factors as past unjust laws, migratory labor practices and marital breakdown, and handicapped by illiteracy from participating fully in the education of their children, the state has an obligation to provide advice and counseling on education services by all practicable means, and render or support *appropriate care and educational services for parents, especially mothers and young children* within the community.

The over-arching goal of policy must be to enable all individuals to value, have access to, and succeed in *lifelong education and training of good quality*. Educational and management processes must therefore put the learners first, recognizing and building on their knowledge and experience and responding to their needs. An integrated approach to education and training will increase access, mobility and quality in the national learning system.

The system must increasingly open access to education and training opportunity of good quality, to all children, youth and adults, and provide the means for learners to move easily from one learning context to another, so that the possibilities for lifelong learning are enhanced.

The Constitution guarantees equal access to basic education for all. The satisfaction of this guarantee must be the basis of policy. It goes well beyond the provision of schooling. It must provide an increasing range of learning possibilities, offering learners greater flexibility in choosing what, where, when, how and at what pace they learn.

In achieving this goal, there must be special emphasis on the *redress* of educational inequalities among those sections of our people who have suffered particular disadvantages, or who are especially vulnerable, including street children, out-of-school youth, the disabled and citizens with special educational needs, illiterate women, rural communities, squatter communities and communities damaged by violence.

The state's resources must be deployed according to the principle of *equity*, so that they are used to provide essentially the same quality of learning opportunities for all citizens. This is an inescapable duty upon government in the light of this country's history and its



legacy of inequality and it is a constitutional requirement. There must be purposeful strategies for ensuring that the system protects the rights of teachers and students to equitable treatment. Fair opportunities for training and advancement in the education service, including an affirmative action policy, are essential, in order to ensure an effective leadership cadre which is broadly representative of the population they serve. The representation of women in leadership positions must be drastically increased.

The improvement of the *quality* of education and training services is essential. In many of the schools and colleges serving the majority of the population there has been a precipitous decline in the quality of educational performance, which must be reversed. But quality is required across the board. It is linked to the capacity and commitment of the teacher, the appropriateness of the curriculum, and the way standards are set and assessed. A national qualification framework is the scaffolding on which new levels of quality will be built. Other quality assurance mechanisms will ensure the success of the learning process.

The years of turmoil took a heavy toll on the infrastructure of the South African education and training system. The relationship between schools and many communities they are expected to serve has been disrupted and distorted by the crisis of legitimacy. The *rehabilitation* of the schools and colleges must go hand in hand with the restoration of the ownership of these institutions to their communities through the establishment and empowerment of legitimate, representative governance bodies.

The principle of *democratic governance* should increasingly be reflected in every level of the system, by the involvement in consultation and appropriate forms of decision-making of elected representatives of the main stakeholders, interest groups and role players.

This requires a commitment by education authorities at all levels to share all relevant information with stakeholder groups, and to treat them genuinely as partners. This is the only guaranteed way to infuse new social energy into the institutions and structures of the education and training system, dispel the chronic alienation of large sectors of society from the educational process, and reduce the power of government administration to intervene where it should not. Representative governance structures do not exclude the importance of governments and institutions calling upon expert advice to supplement their own professional resources.

The restoration of the culture of teaching, learning and management involves the creation of a culture of *accountability*. This means the development of a common purpose or mission among students, teachers, principals and governing bodies, with clear, mutually agreed and understood responsibilities, and lines of cooperation and accountability.

The realization of *democracy, liberty, equality, justice and peace* are necessary conditions for the full pursuit and enjoyment of lifelong learning. It should be a goal of education and training policy to enable a democratic, free, equal, just and peaceful society to take root and prosper in our land, on the basis that all South Africans without exception share the same inalienable rights, equal citizenship, and common national destiny, and that all forms of bias (especially racial, ethnic and gender) are dehumanizing.

This requires the active involvement of *mutual respect for our people's diverse religious, cultural and language traditions*, their right to enjoy and practice these in peace and without hindrance, and the recognition that these are a source of strength for their own communities and the unity of the nation.

Education in the arts, and the opportunity to *learn, participate and excel in dance, music, theatre, art and crafts* must become increasingly available to all communities on an equitable basis, drawing on and sharing the rich traditions of our varied cultural heritage and contemporary practice.

The education system must *counter the legacy of violence* by promoting the values underlying the democratic process and the charter of fundamental rights, the importance of due process and the charter of fundamental rights, the importance of due process of law and the exercise of civic responsibility, and by teaching values and skills for conflict management and conflict resolution, the importance of meditation and the benefits of toleration and cooperation. Thus peace and stability will become the normal condition of our schools and colleges, and citizens will be empowered to participate confidently and constructively in social and civic life.

The curriculum, teaching methods and textbooks at all levels and in all programmes of education and training, should encourage *independent and critical thought*, the capacity to question, enquire, reason, weigh evidence and form judgments, achieve understanding, recognize the provisional and incomplete nature of most human knowledge and communicate clearly.

*Curriculum choice*, especially in the post-compulsory period, must be diversified in order to prepare increasing numbers of young people and adults with the education and skills required by the economy and for further learning and career development.

*An appropriate mathematics, science and technology education initiative* is essential to stem the waste of talent, and make up the chronic national deficit, in these fields of learning, which are crucial to human understanding and to economic advancement.

Environmental education, involving an inter-disciplinary, integrated and active approach to learning, must be a vital element of all levels and programmes of the education and training system, in order to create *environmentally literate and active citizens* and ensure that all South Africans, present and future, enjoy a decent quality of life through the sustainable use of resources.

Two operational principles- sustainability and productivity- are given strong emphasis in the Reconstruction and Development Programme. They need to be upheld in the development of plans and programmes for the reconstruction and development of the education and training system.

The expansion of the education and training system must meet the test of *sustainability*. The education and training system has not been given an open cheque book by the government.

Development needs to be planned for, and balanced across the full range of needs, from early childhood to postgraduate study. Unsustainable development is not development at all, but a kind of fraud practiced on the people. However, sustainability is not just a financial concept. True sustainability occurs when the people concerned claim ownership of educational and training services and are continuously involved in their planning, governance and implementation.

The system of education and training, taken overall, has developed many areas of inefficiency, where funds are wasted and staff is not well employed. The productivity of the system- what it produces in terms of personal learning, marketable skills, and examination results, in relation to what it has cost- is very low in much of the system. *Improving efficiency and productivity is essential* in order to justify the cost of the system, to secure more funds for development when they are needed, to raise the quality of performance across the system, and thus improve the life chances of the learners.

### **2.4.3 Curriculum 2005**

Curriculum 2005 was the first major curriculum statement of a democratic South Africa. Deliberately intended to simultaneously overturn the legacy of apartheid education and catapult South Africa into the 21st century, it was an innovation both bold and revolutionary in its magnitude and conception. It signaled a dramatic break from the past.

No longer would curriculum shape and be shaped by narrow visions, concerns and identities. No longer would it reproduce the limited interests of any one particular grouping at the expense of another. It would bridge all, and encompass all. It introduced new skills, knowledge, values and attitudes for all South Africans and stands as the most significant educational reform in South African education of the previous century.

Introduced into schools in 1998, Curriculum 2005 was reviewed in 2000 to assess its structure and design, accompanying teacher development processes, learning materials developed to support the curriculum, provincial support to teachers in schools and implementation timeframes. The Ministerial Review Committee presented its Report on 31 May 2000. The Review Committee recommended that strengthening the curriculum required streamlining its design features and simplifying its language through the production of an amended National Curriculum Statement. In addition, it recommended improving teacher orientation and training, learning support materials and provincial support. It also recommended relaxation of timeframes for implementation.

In June 2000, the Council of Education Ministers accepted the curriculum recommendations of the Review Committee. In July 2000, Cabinet resolved that:

The development of a National Curriculum Statement, which must deal in clear and simple language with the curriculum requirements at various levels and phases, must begin immediately. Such a statement must also address the concerns around curriculum overload and must give a clear description of the kind of learner in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that is expected at the end of the GET band.

The values of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) provide the basis for curriculum transformation and development in contemporary South Africa. The preamble to the Constitution states that the aims of the Constitution are to:

- Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.
- Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person.
- Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law.
- Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

The Constitution expresses South Africa's social values and its expectations of the roles, rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic South Africa. The Bill of Rights places pre-eminent value on equality, human dignity, life, and freedom and security of persons. These and other rights to freedom of religion and belief, expression and association, exist side-by-side with socio-economic rights. Each person has a right to freedom from poverty, homelessness, poor health and hunger.

The Constitution and national education policies are reflected in the Revised National Curriculum Statement. In this regard the approaches to religion in education and learners with special needs accord with national policy. Post apartheid education is premised on these goals and values. They are distinctly different from the values that shaped the expectations of children under apartheid. They are also opposed to values and practices that endorse continued social inequality and poverty.

The call for a reassertion of values in education is often linked with efforts to restore traditional authoritarian values. By contrast, the challenge for the National Curriculum Statement is how the goals and values of social justice, equity and democracy can be infused across the curriculum.

The promotion of values is important not only for the sake of personal development, but also to ensure that a national South African identity is built on values very different from those that underpinned apartheid education. The kind of learner who is envisaged is one who will accordingly be imbued with the values and act in the interests of a society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice.

The eight Learning Area Statements in the General Education and Training band are the core of the National Curriculum Statement. The kind of learner envisaged in them will:

- Be equipped with the linguistic skills and the aesthetic and cultural awareness to function effectively and sensitively in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural society;
  - Display a developed spirit of curiosity to enable creative and scientific discovery and display an awareness of health promotion;
  - Adapt to an ever-changing environment, recognizing that human understanding is constantly challenged and hence changes and grows;
  - Use effectively a variety of problem-solving techniques that reflect different ways of thinking, recognizing that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation;
  - Use effectively a variety of ways to gather, analyze, organize and evaluate numerical and non-numerical information, and then communicate it effectively to a variety of audiences and models;
  - Make informed decisions and accept accountability as responsible citizens in an increasingly complex and technological society;
- 
- Display the skills necessary to work effectively with others and organize and manage oneself, one's own activities and one's leisure time responsibly and effectively;
  - Understand and show respect for the basic principles of human rights, recognizing the inter-dependence of members of society and the environment;
  - Are equipped to deal with the spiritual, physical, emotional, material and intellectual demands in society;
  - Have an understanding of and be equipped to deal with the social, political and economic demands made of a South African as a member of a democratic society, in the local and global context.

According to Jansen (1999:9), there is confusion about what is meant by Curriculum 2005. To many teachers interviewed it meant a deadline: the year by which all General Education grades (1-7) would have been introduced to OBE; to many department officials, C2005 and OBE are the same thing; to some academics, C2005 is a model for teaching effectiveness; to others, OBE is a means of achieving learning efficiency; to others, C2005 outlines the goals of a broad and progressive approach to education, within which OBE is simply a vehicle for expressing the methodology for achieving the goals stipulated by 2005. Moreover, when OBE was introduced in South African schools, several teachers

opted to leave the teaching profession, take early retirement or simply refused to implement OBE, as they could not see any value in it. During OBE workshops presented by the Department of Education, most educators only attended in order to receive the certificate issued for compulsory attendance. The workshops were poorly presented and contributed to the uncertainty still lingering in the minds of educators.

With regard to problems of curriculum implementation, Morrow (1996:153) comments on the limited resources and burgeoning numbers of learners in schools. This problem is exacerbated by decreasing budgets and the allocation of the largest slice of the budget (between 75% and 90%) of developing countries to teachers' salaries. OBE expects educators and learners to make use of local resources relevant to the community. However, many educators from the previous educational dispensation have become complacent over the years and are used to relying on handouts from the school. These educators simply do not have the capacity to prepare lessons relevant to their communities. Furthermore, these educators blame the Department of Education for not providing them with adequate resources and facilities and use this argument to justify their low morale.

#### **2.4.4 Constitutional values: rooting South African values in the Constitution**

In his famous 1995 judgment reaffirming the abolition of the death penalty, the late Chief Justice Ismail Mahomed - a member of the Constitutional Court – wrote that all Constitutions seek to articulate, with differing degrees of intensity and detail, the shared aspirations of a nation; the values which bind its people and which discipline its government and its national institutions; the basic premises upon which judicial, legislative and executive power is to be wielded; the constitutional limits and the conditions upon which that power is to be exercised; the national ethos which defines and regulates that exercise; and the moral and ethical direction which the nation has identified for its future (South Africa 2001).

In an elaboration on this learned exposition, Constitutional Court Justice Kate O'Regan sketched for delegates at the Saamtrek conference her own conception of the Constitution as a bright and shining vision of a different society based on equity, justice and freedom for all. But, rather than being a description of our society as it exists, it was a document that compels transformation. The Constitution, she said, recognises that for its vision to be attained the deep patterns of inequality which scar our society and which are the legacy of

apartheid and colonialism need urgently to be addressed. Nowhere, she added, are these scars more marked or more painful than in the educational sector (South Africa 2001).

The Constitution is a call to action to all South Africans to seek to build a just and free democratic society in which the potential of each person is freed. The importance of meeting this call is clear to educators. It can be asked what the values are, entrenched in the Constitution that should drive transformation. There are ten: Democracy, Social Justice and Equity, Equality, Non-racism and Non-sexism, Ubuntu (Human Dignity), An Open Society, Accountability, The Rule of Law, Respect, and Reconciliation (South Africa 2001). These values are discussed in paragraph 2.4.5 which derived from the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (South Africa 2001)

## **2.4.5 The ten fundamental values of the Constitution and their relevance in education**

### **2.4.5.1 Democracy**

More than merely adult enfranchisement, or an expression of popular sentiment, democracy is at heart a society's means to engage critically with itself. But critical engagement is not an automatic consequence of democratic institutions.

The Constitution commits citizens to the establishment of a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights, and defines South Africa as a sovereign, democratic state founded upon the value of universal adult suffrage, a national common voters roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of government. In this, it means that government is based on the will of the people; that we are responsible for our own destinies since, through the electoral process, we run our country and our public institutions. This is an inalienable right, but a demanding one that carries immense responsibility. On their own, the Constitution and the country's democratic institutions offer no guarantee that we will match this responsibility. Education is the key because it empowers us to exercise our democratic rights, and shape our destiny, by giving us the tools to participate in public life, to think critically, and to act responsibly.



### **2.4.5.2 Social justice and equity**

Emancipation of the mind and spirit is a noble achievement, but without freedom from the material straits of poverty, liberty is essentially unfulfilled. And without the implementation of social justice to correct the injustices of the past, reconciliation will be impossible to achieve.

So, while the Constitution grants inalienable rights to freedom of expression and choice, it also establishes as a right the access to adequate housing, health-care services, sufficient food and water, social security, and, of course, a basic education. Children, specifically, enjoy the inalienable right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health-care services and social services, and to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation. These rights apply to everyone under the age of eighteen - and that means the majority of learners in our schools.

The social justice clauses in the Constitution have profound implications for education because they commit the state to ensuring that all South Africans have equal access to schooling and that they have access to such schooling in their mother tongue if they so desire.

### **2.4.5.3 Equality**

One of the greatest challenges in making fair law is ensuring that it is fairly applied. The goal of providing all South Africans with access to schooling goes hand in hand with making sure such access is equal.

The Constitution is unequivocal on equality, stating that everyone is equal before the law and may not be unfairly discriminated against on the basis of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.

The implications of what is known as the "Equality Clause" on schooling have been expounded in the South African Schools Act of 1996: all children must obtain equal education, and the state must strive towards giving all students - whether they are in suburban schools, township schools or farm schools - the same access to resources and to personnel, and the same opportunities to realise their fullest potential. No child may be denied access to education because of an inability to pay.

But the "Equality Clause" does not govern only the state's relationship with its citizens; it governs our relationships with each other, too. Just as the state may not discriminate against any of us, so we may not discriminate against each other. Understanding the value of equality and the practice of non-discrimination means not only understanding that you have these rights, as an educator or as a learner, but that others have them as well.

It is out of the Equality Clause in the Constitution that the values of tolerance and respect for others stem. It is also because of the Equality Clause that we value linguistic diversity, for we may not discriminate against each other on the basis of language. This means, ideally, that we need to be able not only to provide education to all South Africans in their mother tongue, but also to learn one another's languages so that we can communicate as equals.

#### **2.4.5.4 Non-racism and non-sexism**

The history of humanity's march to liberty shows there is a significant difference between treating everyone as equals, and their being equal. This is the essence of the Constitution's emphasis on the value of non-racism and non-sexism. It outlines the challenge as being to strive towards practices that treat everybody as equal - and that work, specifically, towards redressing the imbalances of the past where people were oppressed or devalued because of their race or their gender. It is out of this value that the policies of affirmative action flow.

Practising the values of non-racialism and non-sexism in education means not only making sure that previously disadvantaged students get equal access to education, but also that black students and teachers attain equality with their white peers, and that girls at school attain equality with boys. Non-sexism also means, specifically, that female teachers and students are not victims of sexual abuse or harassment in schools, and that as female students they are not discouraged from completing their schooling because of abuse, harassment or pregnancy.

For the values of non-racialism and non-sexism to be applied effectively, all places of learning have to be safe for students and teachers, and all places of learning have to be safe for female students and teachers. And for these values to have any meaning, black students and female students have to be afforded the same opportunities to develop their potential as white students and male students.

#### **2.4.5.5 Ubuntu (Human dignity)**

Out of the political tumult of the early 1990s, the peacemakers and negotiators creating the framework of the free state extracted a vital sentiment that would become part of the defining vision of the democracy that would emerge at the conclusion of their work.

That sentiment - contained in the postscript of the Interim Constitution of 1993, which framed the values to which the final Constitution had to adhere was that there was a need in South Africa for understanding not for vengeance, a need for reparation not for retaliation, a need for ubuntu not for victimization. In the final Constitution, the drafters applied the notion of ubuntu by asserting that the South African state was founded, before anything else, upon the value of 'Human dignity'. Ubuntu has a particularly important place in our value system for it derives specifically from African mores: I am human because you are human.

Out of the values of ubuntu and human dignity flow the practices of compassion, kindness, altruism and respect which are at the very core of making schools places where the culture of teaching and the culture of learning thrive; of making them dynamic hubs of industry and achievement rather than places of conflict and pain.

Equality might require us to put up with people who are different, non-sexism and non-racism might require us to rectify the inequities of the past, but ubuntu goes much further: it embodies the concept of mutual understanding and the active appreciation of the value of human difference.

It requires you to know others if you are to know yourself, and if you are to understand your place - and others within a multicultural environment. Ultimately, ubuntu requires you to respect others if you are to respect yourself.

#### **2.4.5.6 An open society**

In the history are records of abuse by governments and by tyrants, perpetrated under the conditions of secrecy and fear, which have rendered societies powerless. Such abuse is inimical to an open society, where power is vested in the will of all the people, and fear has no place. The South African Constitution, as the supreme law, lays the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people. In this sense, democracy and openness are interchangeable and interdependent values, and the

Constitution itself is the route to an open society: we have the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion; the right to freedom of expression; to freedom of the press; to freedom of artistic creativity; to academic freedom and freedom of scientific research; to freedom of assembly; and to freedom of association.

But as with all the values contained in the Constitution, rights are accompanied by certain responsibilities: we may not exercise our rights to openness if they have the intention of inciting violence, propagandising war, or advocating hatred based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion. The value of openness is at the core of the South African curriculum, which cherishes debate, discussion and critical thought, for it is understood that a society that knows how to talk and how to listen does not need to resort to violence.

Being a democrat in an open society means being a participant rather than an observer: it means talking and listening and assessing all the time. It implies being empowered to read and to think, it means being given the opportunity to create artistically. It means being given access to as wide a range of information as possible through as wide a range of media as possible and also being given the tools to process this information critically and intelligently.

In particular, a culture of dialogue and debate that is often absent or discouraged in our schools should be promoted, a culture of discussion out of which values and priorities are perpetually being evaluated and reassessed.

#### **2.4.5.7 Accountability (Responsibility)**

If voting is the right of citizens to grant power, the need to hold the powerful to account is the responsibility that gives that right meaning. The provision of democratic tools in the Constitution, such as the vote, is to confirm and reinforce the values of accountability, responsiveness and openness. More specifically, the Constitution says that public administration - which includes the public school system - must be governed by the values and principles of professionalism, efficiency, equity, transparency, representivity and accountability.

One of the reasons why education is such a hotly debated feature of social policy is that everyone in society holds a stake in it, in one way or another. Places of learning will only survive - let alone prosper - if communities take responsibility for them. Accountability in the education system means institutionalising this responsibility according to codes of conduct

and the meeting of formal expectations. Learners are the responsibility, within school hours, of teachers, who are in turn accountable to school governing bodies and the educational authorities, which are accountable to the broader community and to the citizens of the democratic society.

Accountability means ensuring that all school governing bodies in public schools become legitimate and working institutions of civil society, irrespective of their individual capacities and resources. But accountability means, more than anything else, that we are all responsible for the advancement of our nation through education and through our schools and that we are all responsible to others in our society, for our individual behavior. There can be no rights without responsibilities - whether as parents, administrators, educators or learners.

#### **2.4.5.8 The rule of law**

Without commonly accepted codes, the notion of accountability would lose meaning, and the light of the open society would fade: the rule of law is as fundamental to the constitutional state as adherence to the Constitution itself.

As a state, South Africa is founded on the value of the supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law. This means, literally, that the law is supreme; that there is a consensus of rules and regulations we must obey - and that we understand that if we do not, we are breaking the law of the land, and that the State is thus entitled to punish us.

Within schools, the rule of law is the guarantor of accountability, for it holds us all to a common code of appropriate behavior - not just because we know we should, but because we understand that if we do not, we will be disciplined by those to whom we are accountable.

All participants within the education system are subject to the law of the land. Administrators may not defraud school budgets for personal gain, teachers may not physically or sexually abuse their students, and learners may not carry illegal weapons, possess illegal narcotics, trash school property or intimidate teachers. Non-violence is a value that flows out of the constitutional principles of ubuntu, equality and openness, but it is also one that is upheld by the rule of law.

Places of learning also have their own internal rules of law - the codes of conduct for educators and learners that must be adhered to. The custodians of the rule of law at a place of learning are the authorities, and they are required to apply it even-handedly, fairly and proportionately - for if they do not, then they, too, are in contravention of the rule of law.

#### **2.4.5.9 Respect**

In the great contest of ideas that best symbolises enlightened humanity, respect, in addition to intelligence or wit, is probably the essential quality. As a value, respect is not explicitly defined in the Constitution, but it is implicit in the way the Bill of Rights governs not just the State's relationship with citizens, but citizens' relationships with each other: how can I respect you if you do not respect me?

School-based research on values and education conducted for the Department of Education shows that the two values people feel are most lacking in schools are respect and dialogue. Respect is an essential precondition for communication, teamwork and productivity. Schools cannot function if there is no mutual respect between educators and parents; learning cannot happen if there is no mutual respect between educators and learners. In some of the most important international declarations that South Africa has ratified - they are therefore legally binding on our country - we have committed ourselves to the values of respect and responsibility.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Convention of the Rights of the Child goes further: it calls for education to be directed to strengthening the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own. Education must also direct itself to the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sex, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.

#### **2.4.5.10 Reconciliation**

Healing and reconciling past differences remain a difficult challenge in South Africa. More than merely being a question of saying sorry, it requires redress in other, even material, ways, too. These include social justice. But few doubt that a stable, dignified, esteemed future depends on it. This is just as the drafters of the Interim Constitution saw it when they prescribed that the pursuit of national unity, the well being of all South African citizens and peace be based on reconciliation between the people of South Africa and the reconstruction of society.

The Constitution itself calls upon us to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights. It is a conception that is bound up in South Africa's official motto, "i ke e: /xarra //ke" - which means Unity in Diversity. It means accepting each other through learning about interacting with each other - and through the study of how we have interacted with each other in the past. Reconciliation values difference and diversity as the basis for unity; it means accepting that South Africa is made up of people and communities with very different cultures and traditions, and with very different experiences of what it means to be South African, experiences which have often been violent and conflictual.

Reconciliation is impossible without the acknowledgement and understanding of this complex, difficult but rich history. The conditions of peace, of well-being and of unity - adhering to a common identity, a common notion of South-Africanness - flow naturally from the value of reconciliation.

But, as the postscript of the Interim Constitution makes clear, they also stem from active engagement in the reconstruction of society, for, as President Mbeki has often said, there can be no reconciliation without transformation. In this way, the value of reconciliation is inextricably woven into the value of equality.

Degenaar (1990:8) poses the question if national building should be the main focus. He maintains whether a better and more realistic endeavour is to inculcate democratic values such as tolerance. The issue of nation building eventually became one of former President Nelson Mandela's main concerns. It is still fondly remembered how he supported and motivated the South African rugby team to win the Rugby World Cup in 1995. One single incident conspired to unite South Africans in a way previously unknown.

Morrow (1995:56) states that contemporary South African education is confronted with a widespread collapse of what has been called a culture of teaching and learning. Many schools and universities are close to a point of breakdown. A symptom of this malaise is the lack of regular attendance at places of learning by both learners and educators. According to the researcher's personal experience, in a Pretoria school female staff drew up an unofficial calendar of absence that would not cause too much disruption at the school. Most of the teachers underwent hysterectomy operations in order to gain sick leave for one term. In some cases these operations were not even required. This example reflects the unprofessional attitude of some South African educators towards education.

## **2.5 CRITICAL ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION**

### **2.5.1 Statistics**

According to the Statistical Yearbook (2003/2004:224) the following statistics are prevalent in South African education:

- Overcrowding has decreased with the average number of learners in a classroom reduced from 42 in 1996 to 35 in 2000;
- Classroom shortages decreased from 49% in 1996 to 40% in 2000;
- In 1996, 40% of all schools had no access to water compared to 34 % in 2000;
- There was a 68% improvement in the provision of sanitation, although 16.6% of learners remained without toilet facilities;
- The number of buildings in good condition declined from 9 000 to 4 000 with at least 12 000 school buildings in need of repair;
- Some 3 750 classrooms were built in 2002/2003 while 4 330 were to be built by the end of the 2003/2004 financial year.

### **2.5.2 Underperformance in mathematics and science**

Bolewana (*Pretoria News*, 15 December 2004:1) reports that South African pupils are the worst at mathematics and science, according to a survey of 20 countries by the International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement. The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study rated the scores of 9 000 Grade 8 learners tested in South Africa as the poorest among those tested in the 20 countries which participated.



South Africa scored an average of 264 in maths, far below the international average of 467. Ghanaian pupils scored an average of 276. The South African science average was not any better at 244, compared to an international average of 474.

The study, administered in South Africa by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), also revealed that learners in Ghana, Botswana, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco rated better than local learners. In 1999, South Africa scored 275 in maths against an international average of 487 and the science score was 243, well below the international average of 488. The study also showed that learners from former white schools outperformed those at former African schools by 456 to 227 in maths, and 468 to 200 in science.

Education Minister Naledi Pandor said the department was "extremely concerned" about the results. The department was planning to increase specialist maths and science schools, Dinaledi Schools, from 102 to 1 000 in the next five years, she said. (Pretoria News. December 15 2004:1)

### **2.5.3 Effects of HIV/AIDS on South African education**

A report recently released by UNAIDS (2000) suggests that South Africa has the fastest growing HIV/AIDS epidemic in the world, with more people infected than in any other country in the world. The report mentioned that over four million South Africans (about one in every eight adults) are HIV-positive. Prevalence rates are highest among young people, especially teenage girls (Fourteenth Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, 2000:45). Currently no statistics are available to estimate accurately the direct and indirect consequences of HIV/AIDS on school attendance. However, dropout rates due to poverty, illness, lack of motivation and trauma are likely to increase. Absenteeism among children who are caregivers or heads of households, those who help to supplement family income and those who are ill is bound to rise according to the report.

The report further contends that HIV/AIDS is likely to slow down the population growth rate and alter the structure of the population. As the proportion of potential parents (those in the age group 20-40 years) declines, numbers of orphaned children increase and poverty deepens, school enrolment rates will decline and dropout rates rise. There may be negative growth rate in some places. The report further maintains that inconclusive data exists about the prevalence about HIV/AIDS among teachers. Available figures from Abt

Associates (June 2000) suggest that 12% of teachers are infected. Others like UNDP (1998) suggest that this figure might be higher as teachers are mobile, educated and relatively affluent and thus fall into a population category that has been shown to be especially at risk. The impact of HIV/AIDS is profound. Educators may be ill, absent, terminal or preoccupied with family crises. As professional, educators will often be required to take on responsibility for orphans within the extended family. As well as managers, the system will lose experienced teacher mentors and teacher educators in universities and colleges whose career experiences cannot be replaced. Younger and less experienced educators will invariably take their place, but this may impact on the quality of educator education.

#### **2.5.4 Effects of Outcomes-based Education on South African education**

Outcomes-based Education (OBE), introduced by the Department of Education in the mid 1990s has led to several problems for teachers in South Africa. Jansen (1999:7-9) lists the following striking features of the early implementation of OBE in the South African education system:

- The sudden emergence of OBE brought ordinary teachers into contact with a curriculum discourse completely foreign to their understanding and practices;
- The lack of conceptual connection between the proposal for OBE and the early integration and competency debates caused confusion about the meaning of these different frameworks and approaches in so far they laid claim to an integrated approach to education and training;
- The development of OBE for schools appeared distinct from discussions of OBE in the workplace or from OBE in higher education.
- The heavy reliance on OBE was the justificatory framework for an outcomes-based approach in South Africa. Furthermore, the national Education Department was influenced by foreign experts from Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, England and the United States of America, most who do not even offer OBE in their own countries.
- There was a constant shift in language, such as from 'competencies' to 'outcomes' which showed that insufficient thought had gone into the transformation to OBE. This caused further confusion amongst teachers;

- The introduction of a new, complex and voluminous terminology to describe OBE led to the introduction of more than 100 new words into the field of curriculum. This intimidating new discourse faced teachers as they started to implement the new policy within their classrooms;
- The introduction of Curriculum 2005 was 'weakly coupled' to OBE in official documents and discourses and this caused confusion that is still apparent.

### **2.5.5 Grade R**

Smetherham (*Daily News*, December 17 2004:9) reports that the introduction of a reception year (Grade R) is expected to rescue young children from failing in the early grades, but Grade R education is failing "abysmally". This is also the verdict of researchers at the Institution for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) who conducted an in-depth study into the scope and quality of current Grade R schooling (Wildeman & Nomdo 2004). Grade R classes receive one-eleventh of the money allocated to other grades and some provinces expect that their Grade R learners will be learning in shacks and under trees in future.

Research has shown that good Grade R classes could stop large numbers of children, even those with illiterate parents, from failing in Grades 1 to 3. The government and education experts believe that Grade R is essential and the Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development states that the classes should be available to all five-year-olds, or children who turn five by the middle of the year by 2010 (Wildeman & Nomdo 2004).

According to the IDASA report (Wildeman & Nomdo 2004), almost half the classes in the country fall below the national poverty line, which means they have inadequate sanitation, buildings or other infrastructure. In the Western Cape the proportion below the poverty line is 23%. The Eastern Cape - the country's second poorest province - is worst off, with 69 % of all classes below the poverty line. Currently, there are Grade R classes for about half of all learners in the Western Cape and Free State. Most provinces provide Grade R classes to a smaller proportion of children.

The Education White Paper 1 states that 85 % of all Grade R classes should be at public primary schools and the remaining 15% in community centres. By the end of this financial year, the national Education Department is expected to publish guidelines on Grade R.

However, the government will be unable to enforce standards because provinces will have to pay for and regulate the classes. Wildeman and Nomdo (2004) stated that the education department seems to believe that properly qualified educators are not needed at this level, arguing that educators in the Grade R sector are passionate. However, passion alone is insufficient. Wildeman and Nomdo (2004) further predict that funding or teacher qualifications will not dramatically improve in coming years. Middle-class parents may be able to top up funding and improve the quality of their children's classes, but the poorest children will suffer.

Thus, Wildeman and Nomdo (2004) argue that the old difference between affluent and poor schools will be exacerbated.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter dealt with the theoretical framework of comparative and international education and indicated which values influence the education system in South Africa. It included the values embodied in policy documents in South African education and demonstrates how they have changed after the apartheid period. The discussion also deals with critical issues prevalent in South African education today. The South African education system has made tremendous progress over the last decade but current social and educational problems, such as HIV/AIDS, poor teacher morale and ongoing restructuring impedes the country from a competitive place in the global scenario.

The following chapter deals with a literature review of Saudi Arabian education focusing on the socio-historical-political context in order to provide a better understanding of Saudi Arabian education and the values attached to their society.

## Chapter 3

# Socio, political and historical factors in the education system of Saudi Arabia

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this chapter is to provide a social, political and historical background of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in order to get a better understanding of its education system prevailing. The emphasis is on the development of education in Saudi Arabia focusing especially on the aims and principles as well as current critical issues in Saudi Arabian education. This provides a background for the study of South African teachers' experiences and value clashes in educational institutions in Saudi Arabia.

#### **3.1.1 Geography**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (see figure 3.1) is a vast land occupying an area of about 2.23 million square kilometers. It is approximately equal to the size of the United States of America east of the Mississippi River or roughly equal to all of Western Europe. Most of the land is arid desert with steep mountains near Taif. Its coastline is 1 899 kilometers on the Red Sea and 549 kilometers on the Arabian Gulf. The Kingdom is bordered by the Red Sea on the west and the Arabian Gulf on the east. In the north, it is bordered by Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait (Rashid & Shaheen 2002:1).

Goodwin (2001:9) remarks that it would be incorrect to assume that this ancient land consists solely of inhospitable deserts. Within modern Saudi Arabia are bustling cities, cool mountain resorts, clustered tents of nomads, villages surrounded by date groves, seaports sheltered by coral reefs and gravel plains overlying the world's richest oil deposits. Cavendish (1993:7) adds that there are no lakes, no permanent rivers, no big forests and that Saudi Arabia is probably the driest large country on the face of the earth. It derives its

weather mainly from the north and west: climatically it is linked to the eastern Mediterranean and adjacent lands, in that it has a long, hot and almost totally dry summer, with a short, cool winter season during which little rain falls. This is because air masses reaching Arabia have been largely exhausted of their moisture (Facey 1979:17).

Figure 3.1: Map of Saudi Arabia

### Saudi Arabia



#### 3.1.2 History

In prehistoric times, Stone Age hunter-gatherers drifted out of eastern Africa into the Arabian Peninsula, which was then lush and well watered. About 15 000 years ago, the weather grew warmer and the deserts began to spread. Some of the inhabitants became nomads herding camels, goats and sheep. Others settled in small villages around oases or along the seacoasts and supported themselves by agriculture and trade (Cavendish 1993:19).

Arabia was the heartbeat for the flourishing civilizations between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Its history goes far back into the year 7 000 B.C., where people in the Eastern Region

were known to the Greeks and the Romans as 'Arabia Felix' or 'Happy Arabia' – a prosperous region considered a major source of frankincense and myrrh. The region was also a focal point for the trade in silk, ivory, spices for flavoring as well preserving food and other goods on their way to the Mediterranean countries (Rashid & Shaheen 2002:10).

When the desert kingdom of Saudi Arabia sprang into existence in 1932, Ibn Saud, its founder and first king, ruled a land with few known resources and a people who were mostly poor and uneducated. The country had few cities and virtually no industries. Although the sacred shrines of Islam generated income from the religious people who visited them every year, this revenue was not enough to lift the people of Saudi Arabia out of poverty (Goodwin 2001:6).

Goodwin (2001) further adds that all this changed in the late 1930s when geologists from the United States discovered oil under the flat gravel plains in the eastern part of the country. Saudi Arabia's oil deposits proved to be the largest on earth; in a single generation, the wealth that flowed from the wells transformed the poor kingdom into a prosperous and influential nation.

### **3.1.3 Culture**

Facey (1979:114) states, "The truest culture of Arabia rests not in things, but in words in the language. The Holy Book, the Qur'an is the fount of his culture as it is of his faith and the verbal richness of the Qur'an is without parallel. As Islam became established throughout Arabia, the followers of the Prophet drew on the heritage of Arab tribal thought. Adherence to the Holy Law constituted the primary act of faith. No part of a man's daily life, or his thought, lay outside his religion."

All cultural and political expression in Saudi Arabia is guided- and restricted- by the kingdom's strict Islam-based laws and by a monarchy determined to maintain absolute control over its citizens. Art, music, literature and even architecture reflect the strong influence of the styles and forms described in Islam's most holy book, the Qur'an. Strict censorship of the news has been practised since the kingdom's founding. Special ministers appointed by the royal family oversee all news reporting, television programming, book publishing and information available over the Internet (Goodwin 2001:70).

### **3.1.4 Politics**

Political expression in Saudi Arabia is guided- and restricted- by the kingdom's strict Islam-based laws and by the monarchy. Public behavior, political commentary and news reporting comes under the close scrutiny and tight control of the nation's leaders, who believe political action should arise from the deeply conservative religious principles of Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi Islam. Political opposition is unwelcome in Saudi Arabia (Goodwin 2001:71). Since its founding in 1932 the absolute monarchy of Saudi Arabia has been a force for conservative politics that has never provided any opportunity for representative government- no elections, no political parties, no freedom of speech (Goodwin 2001:90). During the writing of this report, Saudi Arabia conducted its first municipal elections as part of its reform programme.

### **3.1.5 Economy**

Saudi Arabia is one of the top five Non-Organization for Economic Co-Operation Development (non-OECD) economies. It is the world's leading oil exporter, the Arab world's largest economy and the biggest consumer of foreign goods between Western Europe and Southeast Asia (O'Sullivan 1993:59).

Originally based on subsistence agriculture and funds brought in by pilgrims, the economic structure of Saudi Arabia was completely transformed by the rapid rise in oil prices in the 1970s. The Kingdom's revenue from the sale of its oil has allowed Saudi Arabia to design and finance ambitious projects that have set world records in terms of size and cost. Because Saudi Arabia has so few other resources and is the world's leading oil exporter, the petroleum sector is still the mainspring of the economy, contributing two-thirds of government revenues and 90% of the country's export earnings (Cavendish 1993:19).

This allows the Saudi government to spend an increasing amount on all sectors of their budget (see Table 3.1).



**Table 3.1 Saudi Arabia: Budgets 1991-1992**

Saudi Arabia: Budgets 1991-92 (SR Million)		
	<b>1992</b>	<b>1991</b>
Defense & Security	61636	54300
Education	34093	31100
Health & Social Development	14087	12200
Transport & Communications	9078	8300
Economic Resource Development	8930	8000
Domestic Subsidies	9167	7100
Municipal Services & Water Authorities	6980	6300
Infrastructure	2095	2100
Residual Allocations	50884	51600
Total		
Revenue	196950	181000
Deficit (implied)	169150	151000
	27800	30000

(Source: Ministry of Finance & National Economy)

### **3.1.6 Religion**

The pilgrims who come to the holy city of Mecca are Mohammedans, followers of the prophet Mohammed who lived in the sixth century. He founded one of the world's greatest religions called Islam, which means submission to the will of God. Another name for Mohammedans is Moslems (Leipold 1981:125).

According to Rashid (1995:105), "Islam is one of the greatest religions of the world. After its birth, it spread like wildfire. Today there are more than one billion Moslems around the world. The word 'Islam' means "submission" that is submission to God, 'Allah' in Arabic." Rashid further adds that Islam is the cornerstone of Saudi society and the focal point for all Moslems of the world, who must face Mecca, in their prayers, five times a day. O' Sullivan (1993:30-31) adds, "Each Moslem must fulfill the five pillars (arkan) of Islam during a lifetime. These are: *Shahadah* or profession of faith; *Salah* or performance of prayer; *Zakat* or the payment of two and a half % of one's net worth; *Sawm Ramadan* or fasting during the holy month and *Hajj* or pilgrimage to be undertaken by every capable Moslem at least once in his/her lifetime."

Cavendish (1993:12) espouses that it would be very hard to exaggerate the importance of religion in Saudi Arabia today. The opening words of all official government documents are the opening words of the Qur'an: "In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful." The very flag of the Kingdom bears the Moslem's declaration of faith, "there is no god but God; Mohammed is the Messenger of God." Cavendish (1993:12) concludes that no religion but Islam may be openly practiced in Saudi Arabia.

## **3.2 EDUCATION IN SAUDI ARABIA**

### **3.2.1 Introduction**

Al Dohyan et al (2001:13-31) point out that the Ministry of Education was established in 1373H (1953) to supervise all schools and institutions. In 1344H (1924), it was known under the name of Directorate of Education, which stood as the first stone in the modern system of education in the Kingdom. The task entrusted to it expanded to include supervising all educational affairs except for military education. The establishment of the Ministry of Education came as a result of the expansion of the functions of the Directorate of Education. It also came as the number of schools was increasing so rapidly that the directorate was no longer able to meet all the requirements of modern education in the Kingdom, and at the same time pursue its rapid development.

Al Dohyan, et al (2001) continues, "Since Saudi people were eager for education, the officials found it necessary to create a larger system to meet the requirements of all activities of education. This resulted in a remarkable expansion in all educational affairs. As a result, the title 'Directorate of Education' changed to the 'Ministry of Education' to supervise the various issues of education in the Kingdom. By this great historical resolution, education in the Kingdom came under the supervision of an organized ministry with a larger structure, which treats education as a great benefit to the nation in the past, present and future."

Al Dohyan, et al (2001) further contends, "King Fahad bin Abdul Aziz, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, was the first minister for this Ministry. He did his best to set up the first basis for education. Since then, full support to education has been rendered and still is. At each district, the Ministry of Education established a general directorate for education that included a number of departments in accordance with the 'Administrative Division' of the

provinces in the Kingdom. The function of the General Directorates is to supervise the educational plans and programs attested. This is done in accordance with the educational rules, regulations and policies applicable. Now, the Educational Directorates have reached forty-two, scattered all over the Kingdom.”

Today the Ministry of Education has seen remarkable developments in all fields including the development of the organisational structure. This organisational structure of the Ministry of Education issued in 1418H (1998) shows the huge development achieved in this system, whether in activities, or in the increasing number of students, schools and educational districts. New directorates and departments have been established as well as a growing number of teaching and administrative jobs. The Ministry of Education is deemed now as one of the largest ministries in its organising system (Al Dohyan et al 2001:21-22).

### **3.2.2 General principles**

Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is in progress in compliance with the guidelines drawn up in the Educational Policy. This policy teaches the individual to perform his/her duties towards Allah and his/her religion, and to fulfill the needs of his/her society, in order to achieve the aspirations of the nation. Educational Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is derived from the morals and judgments of Islam, which the whole nation believes in as a religion and worships, and which is considered as an integrated system of life.

The following are taken from the Al Dohyan, et al about Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia prepared for the General Directorate for Educational Research by Al Dohyan et al (2001:13-15):

#### **3.2.2.1 Educational aims**

The purpose of education is to have the student understand Islam in a correct comprehensive manner, to plant and spread the Islamic creed, to furnish the student with values, teachings and ideals of Islam, to equip him with the various skills and knowledge, to develop his conduct in constructive directions, to develop the society economically, socially and culturally, and to prepare the individual to become a useful member in building his community.

The policy of Education in the Kingdom has drawn on the general objectives of Islam through which the purposes of education are attainable. The most important of which are, also taken from the Al Dohyan, et al about Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Al Dohyan et al 2001:15-17):

- Promoting the spirit of loyalty to Islamic law by denouncing any system or theory that conflicts with this law, and by behaving honestly and in conformity with the general provisions of this law.
- Preaching the Book of Allah (Quran) and the law of his prophet by safeguarding them, abiding by their teachings and acting in compliance with their commands.
- Supplying the individual with the necessary ideas, feelings and powers that will enable him to carry the message of Islam.
- Enforcing Quranic morality in Muslims and emphasizing moral restraints for the use of knowledge. (As the Prophet Mohammed said: I was sent to complete moral values).
- Educating the faithful citizens to be a sound brick in the construction of this nation, and to let them feel the responsibility of serving and defending their country.
- Providing the student with the necessary information and various skills that enable him to be an active member in his society.
- Strengthening the student's feelings about the cultural, economic and social problems of his society and prepare him to contribute in their solution.
- Stressing the dignity of the individual and offering him equal opportunities to develop his skills so that he can contribute to the progress of his nation.
- Studying all the great and strange things in this large universe and discovering the secrets of the Creator to profit there from, and put them in the service of Islam and the dignity of the Islamic nation.
- Demonstrating the full harmony between science and religion in the Islamic law, as Islam is a combination of religion and life, and the Islamic thought meets all the human needs in their highest form and in all ages.
- Encouraging and promoting the spirit of scientific thinking and research, strengthening the faculty of observation and meditation, and enlightening the student about Allah's miracles in the universe and Allah's wisdom in his creatures to enable the individual to fulfill an active role in building society and in steering it in the right direction.

- Giving great interest to the world achievements done in the fields of science, literature and liberal arts, demonstrating that progress of science is the outcome of the combined efforts of all mankind, exposing the contribution of Moslem scientists in this respect, acquainting the new generation with the leaders of Islamic thought and the projection of original aspects in their thinking and accomplishments in the scientific and practical fields.
- Promoting linguistic ability in all ways that strengthen the Arabic language and help the individual to like Arabic, and to appreciate the beauty of its style and ideas.
- Teaching history in a systematic way in order to learn from, pointing out the viewpoint of Islam if a conflict there is, and projecting the eternal stands in the history of Islam and in the civilization of the Islamic nation in order to be an example for our Moslem generations, thus creating in them confidence and positivism.
- Acquainting the students with the great Islamic glory of their country, its deep-rooted world civilization, its geographic, natural and economic characteristics and its important position among the nations of the world.
- Understanding the environment in all forms, broadening the horizons of students by introducing them to the different parts of the world and natural resources and products that characterize each country, with emphasis on the wealth and raw resources of our country, its geographical location of their country and the economic position and political role our country plays in safeguarding Islam and working for the solidarity of the Islamic Nation.
- Furnishing the students with at least one of the living languages, in addition to their native language, to enable them acquire knowledge, arts and useful inventions, transfer our knowledge and sciences to other communities and participate in the spreading of Islam and serving humanity.
- Keeping pace with characteristics of each phase of the psychological growth of young people, helping the individual to grow spiritually, mentally, emotionally and socially in a sound way, and emphasizing the spiritual Islamic aspects so that it will be the main guideline of private and public behavior for the individual and the society.
- Giving mentally and physically retarded students' special education and care in accordance with the teachings of Islam that make education a common right for all members of the nations.

- Making great efforts to discover talented persons, giving them special attention, and providing them with various opportunities to develop their talents within the framework of general programs, in addition to those additional programs set up especially for them.
- Planting the zeal of work in the hearts of students, commending work in all its forms, urging individuals to excel in their work and emphasizing the role of work in the construction of the nation.
- Establishing strong relations which exist among Muslims and which make them united.

Through these general aims and principles, the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education has laid a foundation for the entire educational sector to perform their duties towards Allah and their religion, and to fulfill the needs of their society, in order to achieve the aspirations of the nation. Foreign teachers entering the education system are thus able to gauge exactly what is required of them in order to carry out their teaching duties effectively and in line with the Ministry's regulations.

### **3.2.3 Girls' education**

The Educational Policy in the Kingdom gives much concern to girls' education, which can be seen through the following articles contained in the Al Dohyan, et al (Al Dohyan et al 2001:17-18):

- The aim of girls' education is to bring her up in a sound Islamic way so that she can fulfill her role in life as an ideal wife and good mother, and to prepare her for other activities that suit her nature such as teaching, nursing and medicine.
- The Kingdom takes interest in education girls', providing necessary and possible facilities to accommodate all those who reach school age, and giving them the opportunity to fill teaching posts that suit their nature and meet the needs of the country.
- Co-education is prohibited in all stages of education with the exception of nurseries and kindergartens.
- This kind of education is conducted in a proper sense of decorum and propriety, complying in all its forms with the provisions of Islam.

- Girls' Colleges are established in as much as possible to meet the country's needs in their fields of specialization and in accordance with Islamic Law.

Therefore, the above-mentioned articles indicate the pivots upon which the General Presidency of Girls' Education is depend on. Thus, the most prominent tasks for this presidency are as follows:

- To execute the Educational Policy in respect of girls' education.
- To supervise and spread girls' education among Saudi girls to prepare them in accordance to their nature and to satisfy the needs of the country in an atmosphere characterized with the proper sense of decorum and propriety complying in all its forms with the provisions of Islam.
- To draw up the plans, programs and curricula necessary for all the stages of girls' education.
- To supervise Girls' Colleges and to draw up programs, plans and curricula that help in finding specialties suitable for woman (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:18).

Because schools in Saudi Arabia are segregated according to gender, the General Presidency of Girls' Education has put structures in place to cater specifically for the needs of girls from Kindergarten to tertiary level, providing education free of charge.

#### **3.2.4. Free education and its publicity**

Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia starts from kindergarten, proceeds through the elementary, intermediate and secondary stages, and ends with higher education (university). It is free of charge at all stages including university, adult, special technical and vocational education.

Further, the government pays monthly financial rewards to students of universities, teachers colleges, and Female Teachers Training Institutions and Specialized Institutions and Training Centers. In addition, the government gives opportunities for higher studies abroad through offering scholarships for Master and Doctorate degrees and other scholarships for undergraduate work in certain rare specializations (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:18).

At the researchers' workplace, students study free of charge in addition to receiving a monthly stipend and free accommodation is provided to students living outside the city. Teaching assistants (university graduates) only have to work at the institution for one year before qualifying for an all-inclusive scholarship at any university in the world that accepts their applications.

### 3.2.5 Educational ladder

The educational ladder in the Kingdom follows the pattern of 6-3-3. The pupil joins elementary school at the age of six, where he stays for six years. Then, he moves to intermediate school where he studies for three years. After that, he spends another three years at secondary school. The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (1999:282) reports that enrolment rates for children up to year 5-level reached 94% in Saudi Arabia, among the highest in the Arab world (see Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2: Quantitative Development of Elementary Education within the Last Five Years (1996 – 2000)**

School Year	Schools		Classes		Students		Teachers		Admini- strators	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>1996</b>	5707	5164	56381	47306	1135545	1033092	80198	80734	1663	616
<b>1997</b>	5838	5379	58091	49649	1178716	1069526	83060	86260	1805	5535
<b>1998</b>	5933	5576	58547	51140	1174411	1081774	84790	90668	1928	5659
<b>1999</b>	6011	5847	58758	52626	1165378	1078235	86252	96282	2240	5892
<b>2000</b>	6148	6086	59545	54034	1175556	1084293	88481	00527	2286	5991

(Source: Al Dohyan, et al 2001:68)

There is some sort of variety after elementary school, but the choice widens after completing intermediate school. The students may have the chance to choose any technical and vocational institution. The Educational Ladder shown in the following diagram (Table 3.3) illustrates special education institutions for the boys and girls who are prevented from joining regular schools because of visual or mental disabilities. There are also tailoring institutions for training girls who are interested in practicing this profession.



**Table 3.3: Quantitative Development of Special Education within the Last Five Years (1996 – 2000)**

School Year	Institutions		Classes		Students		Teachers		Administrators	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>1996</b>	48	18	580	305	5201	2600	1135	578	229	173
<b>1997</b>	50	20	627	327	5560	2749	1204	658	237	189
<b>1998</b>	69	21	703	293	6166	2853	1359	867	254	238
<b>1999</b>	95	25	828	412	7040	3132	1538	878	238	239
<b>2000</b>	118	25	909	412	7597	3397	1834	1018	231	257

(Source: Al Dohyan, et al 2001:83)

For a country that only introduced education about eighty years ago, Saudi Arabia has done exceptionally well in setting up their educational structures as well as pushing the drive to eradicate illiteracy in their society. Judging from Table 3.3, the country has also made great strides in providing access to education for students with special needs.

### **3.2.6 Financing education**

The Kingdom bears all costs of education at all stages and for all majors. Article No (233) of Educational Policy states that education is free of charge in all its types and stages, and no fees are imposed for this advantageous service. Moreover, the government decided to give incentive rewards for both boys and girls studying in higher education. These rewards are also given to foreign students who come from other countries to study in the Kingdom. Students of Universities and Higher Institutions are offered other privileges like tickets, low-price meals, accommodation, medical care and others. Article No (229) of the Educational Policy in the Kingdom states that manpower is considered as the springboard to the utilization of all other resources and the development of this power can be done through education and cultivation, which are the basis of general development.

Allocations given to education in the budget in the last years since the beginning of the first five-year plan reflect the interest given to the development of education (see Table 3.4). There were great leaps in the education budget throughout the developmental plans.

**Table 3.4: Budget Allocations for Saudi Arabian Education (Five-year Plans 1976-1999)**

<b>Five Year Plan No.</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Amount in Million Riyals</b>	<b>Budget Percentage</b>
1	1976-1980	9401	9.5
2	1981-1985	73386	11.8
3	1986-1990	135830	9.9
4	1991-1995	17011	14.4
5	1996-2000	183494	21.5

(Source: Al Dohyan, et al 2001:20)

Certain items of educational allocations were supported with more funds according to the needs that might arise depending on the circumstances and in accordance with the requirements needed by the different educational institutions. The government was keen on increasing the allocations for education to satisfy the increasing need for education. This was exactly stated in Article No.230 of the Educational Policy.

It is worth mentioning that article No. 54 of the Higher Education Council Act, issued vide the Royal Decree No. 8, dated 4/6/1414H (1994) stated that universities may offer scientific services to Saudi authorities against payment, and the revenues of these studies and services can be deposited in a separate account to be used in purposes determined by the Higher Education Council.

The University Council is also entitled to accept donations, gifts, or special endowments for the university. It may also accept donations that are associated with conditions or specified for some purposes, but are not to contradict the mission of the university. These donations must be deposited in a separate account to be used for relevant purposes, and in accordance with rules drawn up by the Council of High Education.

Abu Ras (1979:9) adds that the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia is annually spending nearly 120 million Riyals (approximately \$ 34,000,000 at the current exchange rate) for the acquisition of audiovisual materials to be used in the schools throughout the country.

The above figures indicate the financial commitment the Saudi Arabian government made and is still making in order to resource education in the country. There has been a steady increase in the budget allocation of education over the last few years showcasing the

seriousness and support given to education in Saudi Arabia, something that must be envied by many developed countries.

### **3.2.7 Authorities supervising education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

At first, the Education system in the Kingdom developed gradually through a series of stages. Such gradual development took place as a result of the existence of effective educational institutions that played an important role in the development. In the early years of the education system, when the Directorate of Education was established in 1344H (1924), and the first educational council was established two years later, i.e. in 1346H (1926). The official task entrusted to the council was to set up a comprehensive education system to unify and generalize education among citizens. The council was also entrusted to set up an educational ladder consisting of four stages, starting from the elementary stage up to university. (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:21)

According to the Al Dohyan et al (2001:21), "The general framework of the education system was present from the early beginning yet the process of crystallizing and developing it was in progress. The Directorate of Education took the responsibility of promoting and developing the system of education in the Kingdom till the establishment of the Ministry of Education in 1373H (1953). After that, it branched out into the General Presidency of Girls Education 1380H (1960), Ministry of Higher Education 1395H (1975) and the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Teaching 1400H (1980). They are now the four educational authorities supervising education in the Kingdom. There are also some other educational authorities that provide education for their employees and their sons such as: Ministry of Defense and Aviation, Headquarter of the National Guard, and Ministry of Interior. They all adhere to the educational ladder; plans and curriculums prescribed in the general education for male and female, whether in the Ministry of Education.

Following are the basic sectors supervising education:

- Ministry of Education
- General Presidency of Girls' Education
- General Organization of Technical Education and Vocational Training
- Ministry of Higher Education

### **3.2.7.1 Ministry of Education**

The Ministry of Education was established in 1373H (1953) to supervise all schools and institutions. In 1344H (1924), it was known under the name of Directorate of Education, which stood as the first building block in the modern system of education in the Kingdom. The task entrusted to it expanded to include supervising all educational affairs except for military education (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:21.)

The establishment of the Ministry of Education came as a result of the expansion of the functions of the Directorate of Education. It also came as the number of schools was increasing so rapidly that the directorate was no longer able to meet all the requirements of modern education in the Kingdom, and at the same time pursue its rapid development (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:22.)

Since Saudi people were greedy for education, the officials found it necessary to create a larger system to meet the requirements of all activities of education. This resulted in a remarkable expansion in all educational affairs. As a result, the title Directorate of Education changed to the Ministry of Education to supervise the various issues of education in the Kingdom. By this great historical resolution, education in the Kingdom came under the supervision of an organised ministry with a larger structure, which treats education as a great benefit to the nation in the past, present and future (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:22.)

King Fahad bin Abdul Aziz, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, was the first minister for this Ministry. He did his best to set up the first basis for education. Since then, full support to education has been rendered and still is. At each district, the Ministry of Education established a general directorate for education that included a number of departments in accordance with the Administrative Division of the provinces in the Kingdom. The function of the General Directorates is to supervise the educational plans and programs attested. This is done in accordance with the educational rules, regulations, and policies applicable. Now, the number Educational Directorates have reached forty-two, scattered all over the Kingdom. (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:22.)

According to Al Dohyan et al (2001:22-23), "Nowadays, the Ministry of Education witnesses remarkable development in all fields including the development of the

organizational structure.” The organizational structure of the Ministry of Education issued in 1418H (1998) reflects the massive development achieved in this system, whether in activities, or in the increasing number of students, schools and educational districts. New directorates and departments were also established; this was in addition to the increasing number in teaching and administrative jobs. The Ministry of Education is deemed now as one of the largest ministries in its organizing system. The function of the General Directorates is to supervise the educational plans and programs attested. This is done in accordance with the educational rules, regulations, and policies applicable. Now, the number of Educational Directorates has reached forty-two, scattered all over the Kingdom. The function of the General Directorates is to supervise the educational plans and programs attested. This is done in accordance with the educational rules, regulations, and policies applicable.

The Ministry now supervises a diversified number of educational levels and stages of male education, as follows:

- Public Education (Elementary - Intermediate - Secondary)
- Quranic Recitation Schools
- Special Education that includes Al-Amal Institution, Al-Nour Institution and Intellectual Education
- Adult Education and Eradication of Illiteracy, which includes Eradication of Illiteracy Centers and Evening Schools
- Teachers' Colleges (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:23)

### **3.2.7.2 General Presidency for Girls' Education**

Al Dohyan et al (2001:22) further adds that the government has paid much attention to the education of girls and has given great support to private schools involved in the process of education. It gave permission for opening new private schools. For example, Al-Anjal School was opened in 1371H(1951) and in 1372(1952) Al Karimat Institution was also opened. The government went on supporting females' education. In 1380H (1960), the General Presidency for Girls' Education was established to take the responsibility of setting plans and designing the curriculum that can be a base for girls' education in the Kingdom. This was a response to the ambitions of the society to find regular education for the Saudi girl, so that she can make use of every knowledge and culture that will lead her to a happy life in accordance with the principles of her religion. This was a changing point

towards a rapid growth in girls' education. Since the first year of establishing the General Presidency of Girls' Education, the authority supervising the activities carried out by the Presidency started to arrange work, to create different departments to supervise and follow up educational activities everywhere in the Kingdom. This has led to the following:

- Lightening the burden of work entrusted to the Presidency's Headquarter.
- Accelerating decision-making in some important matters that need quick solutions
- Encouraging the employees towards a better performance in their work.

As girls' education spread to all Saudi cities, towns and villages, the process of supervising education and following it up everywhere in the Kingdom became very difficult for the Presidency alone. Thus, administrative and supervising units close to these centers were created to follow them and to satisfy their needs and to help fulfill the different programs and plans drawn by the Presidency (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:24.)

Therefore, from the first year of its establishment, the Presidency started to open sub-departments when necessary, to break the centralisation in administration to facilitate procedures, and to support the supervising systems which sponsor education affairs.

Massialas (1983:247) mention that all levels of schooling are open to Saudi women. Women who cannot attend regular classes may study through correspondence courses. While subjects associated with teaching and business administration are commonly pursued at the university level, recent official enrolments projections indicate that Saudi women are expected to enter other fields as well.

Al Dohyan, et al (2001:24) adds that the category of a department is to be determined in accordance with the amount of services it renders, and to the district or the province it belongs to. This is based on the number of schools, classes, and students included in the department. Organizational structures were drawn up to determine the objectives, functions, and affiliated units of each kind of these departments. This, with its three categories, became effective in all educational departments in the middle of the fifth five-year plan.

Some sections were established to render services such as:

- Paying the dues for male and female employees working in schools.

- Following up teachers and students' affairs.
- Following up maintenance and supervision.
- Handling some emergent affairs in education.
- Introducing school needs to the educational department.

The General Presidency for Girls' Education now supervises girls' education at a number of different stages and levels, as follows:

- Pre-school Stage, which includes kindergartens and nurseries for both boys and girls.
- General Education Stage, which includes Elementary, Intermediate and - Secondary.
- Holy Quran Recitation Schools for Girls.
- Female Teachers Training Stage, which includes: Female Teachers Training, Junior Colleges and University Colleges
- Education and Vocational Training, which include: Vocational Training Centers, and Secondary Vocational Institutions
- Special Education, which includes: Al-Amal Institutions for the Deaf and Dumb, Al-Nour Institutions for the Blind and Intellectual Education Institutions for the Mentally Retarded
- Adult Education and Eradication of Illiteracy
- Private Education for Girls (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:26.)

### **3.2.7.3 General Organisation of Technical Education and Vocational Training**

Hariri (1982: 5) states that in 1972-1973 there were four secondary industrial training schools in operation with a total enrolment of 765 students and three secondary commercial schools with an enrolment of 134 students. In 1975- 1980 the number of students in these vocational schools reached 6224 and thirty schools were in operation. The first agricultural school was established in 1977-1978 in Buraidah with an enrolment of 136.

Technical Education and Vocational Training has received great attention from the Saudi Government. It stands as a foundation stone, which helps a lot in preparing well-trained and qualified nationals able to lead the country's economy towards an industrial advance in accordance with the elaborate plans drawn up. Technical Education Programs with their

three branches (Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural) were all affiliated with the Ministry of Education. Similarly, Vocational Training was affiliated with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:26.)

After elaborate and comprehensive studies were made, the officials realized that the best way to develop technical education and vocational training programs was to establish a general organization to be responsible for executing Manpower Development Plans. Thus, the General Organisation of Technical Education and Vocational Training (GOTEVOT) was established in 1/8/1400H (1980). The Royal Decree issued in this regard stated that the task for executing manpower development plans would include the following fields:

- Any field closely connected to Technical Education, whether industrial, agricultural or commercial.
- Any field closely connected to vocational training like adult vocational training, vocational training, vocational preparation, in-service training and others. Centers established by other concerned government authorities, or the ones, which will be established in the future, *vide* a resolution of Manpower Council, are excluded.
- Conducting technical and vocational researches and studies to develop performance and productive efficiency of national manpower (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:26.)

The General Organisation for Technical Education and Vocational Training witnessed a great development during the last ten years in programs, equipment and facilities. This happened so as to match the recent developments occurring in marketplace technology in the Kingdom. Within this period, the programs and activities of the organisation were characterized with reliable indicators that provided better levels of performance in Technical Colleges, Technical Education and Vocational Training (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:27.)

The Organisation has established some educational and training units including Junior Technical Colleges, Technical Industrial, Commercial, Agricultural and Architectural Institutions and Vocational Training Centers. All of them follow the semester system. The period of study is two years for a Diploma and three years for a Bachelor degree. Other two semesters are added, one for an intensive English course and the other for field training. The period of study in the secondary institutions lasts three years, but it is only for two semesters in vocational training centers, and for four semesters in most of the fields.



As for evening training programs, they are held for only one semester. A large number of training and Educational Units (Colleges, Secondary Institutions, Training Centers) have been established in selected areas according to comprehensive studies about their locations so as to contribute to preparation of technical manpower, to satisfy the needs of development, and to work as an alternative to university studies (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:29.)

#### **3.2.7.4 Ministry of Higher Education**

The higher education degree is the minimum level that can be accepted for all intermediate and secondary school teachers. Therefore, a major objective for establishing colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia (especially in the beginning) is to replace non-Saudi teachers with qualified Saudi graduates, or at least to reduce the high percentages of non-Saudi teachers in intermediate and secondary schools (Adwani 1981:30).

Due to the rapid development in the higher education sector, the Government decided to establish an authority to supervise all higher educational affairs. This authority is responsible for all affairs of higher education related to the process of management, planning, researches and studies that guarantee the development of this type of education (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:29).

In 1382H (1962), a Supreme Council for colleges was formed. The Minister of Education headed it. The council was responsible for planning and developing colleges and solving all their relevant problems. The council made a remarkable achievement in 15/4/1394H (1974) by establishing a Supreme Council for the Universities. Then, the Ministry of Higher Education was established vide a Royal decree issued in this regard in 8/10/1395H (1975). In 20/8/1396H(1976), a Royal approval on the resolution taken by the Supreme Committee for Administrative Reformation was issued. The resolution stated the following:

First: the Ministry of Higher Education will be responsible for executing higher education policy in the Kingdom whether through the existing universities or other ones, which will be established later.

Second: Approving the organization of the Ministry of Higher Education and its structure

Third: The Ministry of Higher Education will be the authority supervising universities (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:30).

After a series of developments, the higher education policy in the Kingdom was issued, whereby it included a number of articles regulating the matters concerned with planning, responsibilities, and coordination in higher education, of which:

- Higher Education starts after the General Secondary Stage or its equivalent.
- Higher education, public or private, will be under the supervision of the Supreme Council of Universities.
- Higher education among colleges will be coordinated in a way that balances the country's needs.
- Co-operation will be sought between the Saudi universities and other universities worldwide in the fields of scientific research, discoveries and inventions and the exchange of the most up-to-date research will be encouraged (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:31).

These points are very similar to the ones regulating higher education in other countries having educational expertise. Most national efforts in the field of planning for higher education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were effected through the third five-year development plan (1400/1405) (1980/1985) when the first plan for higher education was set. This plan included the following strategic objectives:

- Developing the academic programs on the light of the country's needs of human resources in various specialties such as engineering, medicine, commerce and administration.
- Increasing the number of university graduates holding Bachelor degrees by improving the quality of training programs rendered, and by decreasing failure and "drop-out" rates.
- Supporting the administration and planning systems in universities and in the Ministry of Higher Education.
- Improving the quality of the educational programs.
- Raising the Number of Saudi teachers, administrators and technicians.
- Establishing buildings for accommodation and for universities.
- Opening additional Colleges for different specializations in the different branches of universities (Al Dohyan et al 2001:31).

Entrance to the universities depends on grades achieved in the secondary examinations. Those with the highest marks (75% or more) may select the faculty of their choice; those with lower marks are excluded from the medical and engineering faculties. (Cameron, Cowan, Holmes, Hurst & McLean 1983: 76)

Scientific councils have been established as a part of the general policy applied in higher education. Each council is responsible for handling educational and administrative affairs of the university. Such councils are considered the highest authority in charge of implementing of the higher education Policy approved by the government (Al Dohyan, et al 2001:31.)

The above breakdown of the different authorities supervising education in Saudi Arabia shows that the country has measures in place to provide access to education to students at all levels of education and access is open to any citizen who wishes to pursue education in the country or abroad if they meet the requirements. The different levels of education have subsequently been divided into specialised departments/authorities in order to ensure the smooth running of each.

### **3.3 CURRENT CRITICAL ISSUES IN SAUDI ARABIAN EDUCATION AND ITS EFFECT ON TEACHERS**

#### **3.3.1 Curriculum**

Al-Daood (1983: 2-3.) states that during its history, Saudi Arabian education has faced many difficulties. Abd-El Wassie, the Deputy Minister of Education in 1970, articulated some of the most pressing problems in the areas of curriculum and instruction. According to Abd-El Wassie:

- The students' needs and abilities, as well as the educational atmosphere are not reinforced by the curriculum.
- The social and economic needs of the students were not taken into consideration when the curriculum was constructed.
- The curriculum content has not been revised periodically to conform to current states of knowledge and technology.

- Because students adopt mostly passive roles of listening, memorizing, etc. and because teachers adopt mostly active roles, the learning process is not as effective as it could be.
- The objective of most instruction is to ensure that students pass tests; that children learn practical skills and master the learning process itself is not considered important.
- Very little attention is paid to the affective and psychomotor domains. The cognitive domain is emphasized to the exclusion of the others.

Al-Daood (1983:2-3.) further adds, “These problems diminish the efficacy of the educational process as a whole. Teacher preparation institutions, which play a major role in the education process, must look at these problems and resolve them.”

Ali Khan (in Saudi Gazette 31 July 2004:3) reports that as part of its educational reform plans, the Kingdom has introduced a portion of its new curriculum. The aim of the reforms by the Ministry of Education is to revise controversial chapters. “A new contract with a major publishing company will be signed shortly for printing a series of books in different subjects including social science, mathematics and science,” said Dr. Khaled Al-Awwad, deputy minister of education, at the Swiss Education Fair in Riyadh. Asked about the revision of the curriculum, Dr. Al-Awwad said various committees had been assigned to write different books and that there was at least one special committee working on each subject (*Arab News* 15 February 2004:3).

The deputy minister said the policy to change the education system was unrelated to the war on terrorism. Many things are involved in the change including rapid social development, the changing world order, the terrorist attacks and subsequent global changes. Some 400 000 teachers have been involved in the reform process. The ministry has issued instructions that the old curriculum is to be phased out and the new one implemented as soon as it is ready (*Arab News* 15 February 2004:3).

The Kingdom has spent some SR240 billion on education over the last 25 years. Its expenditure on education is one of the highest in the world — over 9 % of GDP compared to the world average of only 5.08 % (*Arab News* 15 February 2004:3). Thus, education is valued very highly.

From the above extracts the Saudi Arabian government have identified deficiencies in the current curriculum and committed themselves to revising portions of it to meet

internationally accepted standards and keep up with modern trends. This will hopefully make it easier for foreign teachers to identify with a curriculum that is universally practiced as opposed to one that is more theocratic in nature.

### **3.3.2 Women's rights**

*Arab News* (15 June 2004:2) mentions that the Third National Dialogue Forum wrapped up three days of session in Madinah amid heated arguments about previously taboo topics. Participants also called for more subjects for women to study. One delegate, writer Yahya Al-Amir, brandished a copy of a textbook on Islamic culture for second-year secondary school students saying the text spoke of women as weak creatures who need a guardian to lead them to the right path, because if allowed to act without guidance they may end up being corrupted and corrupting others. He asked how the curriculum could allow children to view women as a potential source for corruption.

*Arab News* (15 June 2004:2) further contends that delegates were concerned with improving the quality and standard of women's education and for women to hold higher administrative positions and participate in the decision-making process. The degrading opinion of women, the misinterpretation of Qur'an verses and Hadiths and the domination of tradition is what is preventing women from the rights given by Islam. She finds that the most important changes should be in the curriculum, the judicial system and labour laws (*Arab News* 15 June 2004:2).

With the changes in the modern society forcing many Saudi women to enter the job market, it becomes imperative for women in Saudi Arabia to empower themselves to compete with their male counterparts. Women in Saudi Arabia are increasingly entering job fields frowned upon previously and Saudi Arabia recently awarded the first pilot's license to a woman to show their commitment to empower women in the country. These days, almost on a daily basis, there are calls in the local press for women to drive or explore new empowerment ventures.

### **3.3.3 Reforms**

*Arab News* (5 December 2003:1) reports that the reform of Saudi Arabia's education system aims to promote moderation and tolerance of other opinions and to meet the needs of the job market, according to Prince Sultan, second deputy premier and Minister of Defence and Aviation. He said the reforms would also strengthen the students'

understanding of Islam and retain the emphasis on religious subjects as the basis for the country's education system.

Furthermore, (*Arab News* 5 December 2003:1) adds that a committee of prominent scholars completed its study of the matter and forwarded its findings to the higher authorities. The reforms aim to strengthen morality, flexibility, openness to dialogue and respect of other opinions while retaining religious subjects as the basis of the education system. The issue of educational reforms was raised before the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington when officials highlighted the need to meet the growing needs of the labor market.

*Arab News* (5 December 2003:1) claims, in addition, that although educational reform gained greater urgency after September 11, Prince Sultan said the reforms were being carried out at the initiative of the government and not in response to pressure from abroad. In November 2003 the government allocated SR3.7 billion to train 100 000 young Saudis and announced the establishment of 20 new technical colleges for 60 000 students and of 39 technical training institutions for 40 000 students. The prince (in *Arab News* 5 December 2003:1) is quoted as saying, "The review aimed to reform the entire system in line with the needs of the job market. This will provide employment opportunities for our sons and daughters... whether in the public or private sector".

Critics of the current system say it is weighed so heavily toward theoretical studies that many students are ill qualified and ill-equipped for work. Saudi Arabia has talented and qualified citizens who acquired extensive experience in the Kingdom or abroad. The committee has sought the expertise of many of them in such areas as the Shariah, social and physical studies and compiling of textbooks (*Arab News* 5 December 2003:1).

A week after the new king was sworn in August 2005, he pardoned a number of citizens imprisoned for publicly calling for reforms. This move is widely seen by many as the first step to opening dialogue for further reform programs the Kingdom is currently pursuing. There is an unwritten law among foreign teachers not to discuss social, religious and cultural issues with Saudi students, as these topics are considered controversial and land the teachers in trouble with management, parents and even the authorities.

### **3.3.4 Changes in higher education**

*Arab News* (5 December 2003:2) outlines that the government has endorsed a new education strategy that will steer the country's education system toward meeting the requirements of the local job market. According to the new strategy, the academic, technical and vocational sectors will be examined to reflect the country's future economic, social and educational needs. The aim is to produce graduates of universities and vocational training centers who can successfully compete in a job market dominated by foreigners who were recruited for their experience.

*Arab News* (5 December 2003:2) further outlines that the authorities are struggling to deal with unemployment problems among Saudis at a time when some six million foreign workers, mostly in the private sector, are working in the Kingdom. Details of the strategy, drawn up by a ministerial committee entrusted with bringing the education system in line with job market requirements and laying down mechanisms to ensure implementation of the strategy were published by *Okaz* Arabic newspaper.

*Arab News* (5 December 2003:3) states that the strategy calls for expanding the base of technical education through the establishment of more technical colleges. In addition, the private sector will be encouraged to play a more visible and active role. The country can also benefit from the experience of others who are considered successful in the job market. The recommendations by the ministerial committee called for ensuring more job opportunities for women and asked the Civil Service Council, Manpower Council and the Human Resource Development Fund to draw up the necessary plans and studies. The actual need for employing women in conformity with Islamic teachings as well as providing necessary training for them must be determined.

The new strategy calls for adopting new teaching alternatives in higher education, including the introduction of electronic education, distant learning, evening classes and part-time classes. Emphasis has also been placed on linking the recruitment of foreign labor with Saudization policies and thus ensuring that future recruitment be confined only to those specialties and skills the country lacks. A permanent committee will monitor and improve opportunities for jobseekers, especially those entering the job market for the first time (*Arab News* 5 December 2003:2).

In future, technical colleges will be required to offer courses only in subjects for which there is a demand in the job market. The General Organization for Technical Education

and Vocational Training has been asked to increase the intake of the technical colleges and vocational training institutions and to open more centers in various parts of the Kingdom.

The strategy calls for drawing up a long-term plan for secondary education. This plan will cover the next 25 years and identify needs and the means of financing them. It also includes continuous review and evaluation of the subjects being studied in universities and the creation of new subjects to avoid duplication and ensure that graduates are prepared to fulfill market requirements (*Arab News* 5 December 2003:2).

It also called for a comprehensive study on the causes of examination failure and student dropouts and recommendations for solutions. More emphasis is being placed on student guidance programs to educate and advise students on job market requirements. A recent study indicates that by 2010 the Kingdom will have 1.8 million students seeking admission to government universities that will be able to accommodate only 60 % of that number. The remaining 40 % will have no chance of university admission (*Arab News* 5 December 2003:2).

*Arab News* (8 April 2004:2) quoted the study as saying that some 120 000 young women are on the Ministry of Civil Service waiting lists of Saudis looking for jobs. The study suggested that these graduates be trained to take up jobs in various areas in conformity with religious teachings

According to the experiences of the researcher during interactions with Saudi students, most Saudis are seeking jobs in government departments and will not indulge in any career where they may have to perform manual labor. They tend to enroll for studies that will eventually lead to careers that will provide white-collar jobs. Many Saudi males confess that to get married, they should have a respectable job to impress their future fathers-in-law. Lowly jobs are frowned upon by the girls' family and can lead to a life of solitude. This situation can sometimes cause conflict between foreign teachers and Saudi teachers, as the former endorse the concept of pride associated with having a job and earning one's own money.



### 3.3.5 Islamic Studies

Al-Wahda (*Saudi Gazette* 28 August 2004:2) states that in a controversial proposal, a Saudi educationalist, Al-Bakr, has called for the integration of the six Islamic subjects in primary schools into one unified subject called Islamic studies. The paper, which looked at the readiness of the Saudi education system for the challenges of globalisation, revealed that a massive 32 % of the educational plan studied by primary students is allocated for Islamic studies, while Arabic studies take about 27 % of student time. "The curriculum allocates 6 % for science and 14 % for mathematics", Al-Wahda (*Saudi Gazette* 28 August 2004:2) said.

Al-Wahda (*Saudi Gazette* 28 August 2004:2) further adds that the six separate Islamic subjects Saudi children study are: Qur'an, Tafseer (interpretations of the Qur'an), Tajweed (phonetic rules of Qur'anic recitation), Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and Hadith (sayings of the Prophet). Al-Bakr has also called for bringing together the various Arabic subjects into one integrated subject called Arabic Studies instead of the existing separate six subjects. In addition, Al-Wahda (*Saudi Gazette* 28 August 2004:2) states that the Arabic subjects currently are grammar, reading, handwriting, composition, dictation, and literary texts. Al-Bakr criticized texts used in Islamic studies that do not suit the age and interests of young learners. "Students are asked to memorize difficult texts that are written in an old-fashioned style," she said.

Al-Bakr (*Arab News* 23 April 2004:2) also recently criticised a new system for promoting students to higher grades recently implemented by the Ministry of Education. According to the new scheme, students in the first three elementary grades will pass on to the next grade without appearing for any formal tests. Students of the upper three grades at the primary stage and the subsequent intermediate and secondary stages are allowed to succeed to the next stage even if they fail mathematics and science. As long as students do not fail Islamic and Arabic studies, they are allowed to move to the next stage. The document also ignores the role of women in Saudi society (*Arab News* 23 April 2004:2).

Most schools require foreign teachers to accompany Muslim students to prayers as part of their normal teaching duties irrespective of whether they are Muslim or not. Although this can be seen as a violation of the teacher's religious or human rights, non-compliance can sometimes lead to dismissal and repatriation.

### 3.3.6 Code of Conduct for Girls

*Arab News* (23 April 2004:2) relates that the Girls' Education Administration at the Ministry of Education is asking parents to sign to a strict new code of conduct for girls' schools. The regulations deal with both attendance and behavior and specify punishment for transgressors. Under the code, students are given 100 points per semester — 200 for the year — from which points are deducted for violations. The final mark out of 200 is added to the students' grade and becomes a part of the Grade Point Average (GPA).

The attendance regulations include deductions for absence and tardiness without acceptable excuses; if absences exceed 20 % of classes, the student is barred from the final examination. The majority of the code deals with students' behavior at school and the deductions for each violation. It details desirable behavior for girls, including praying on time, wearing hijab and the appropriate school uniform, punctuality and good manners. Violations are divided into five categories with the fifth mandating temporary expulsion (*Arab News* 23 April 2004:2.)

Girls will be expelled for disrespectful and blasphemous conduct and beliefs; magic; failure to pray; possessing, taking or selling drugs; deviant behavior; dating and having unlawful relations with men or leading others to this behavior; causing permanent injury to members of the school staff; possessing and using weapons and other dangerous items; and if their presence "becomes a danger to the school" (*Arab News* 23 April 2004:2).

Violations that make girls liable to point deductions include, in the first category, sleeping in class and using makeup; in the fourth category smoking, making threats and verbal and physical abuse of school staff. Students will receive the full 200 points if they commit no violations; they can regain lost points if their behavior improves (*Arab News* 23 April 2004:2).

In an interview with *Arab News* (24 February 2004), Hayat Al-Mutawe, director of the students' guidance and advice department at the Girls' Administration said, "These are guidelines for regulating students' behavior and attendance. They are mandatory and will be enforced. The goal is to improve and develop the education process based on Islamic principles. Teachers will not deduct points. Rather, there will be a committee in each school, headed by the principal, which will be responsible for applying the regulations case by case and following procedure. We will conduct intensive awareness campaigns for parents before these regulations are applied".

Many teachers, principals, mothers and students approve of the regulations. In the same article in the *Arab News* (24 February 2004) a mother commented, "As a mother, I respect this step." Although she has confidence in her daughters, she worries about them being exposed to bad influences at school. "A good student has nothing to fear, and I'm not concerned about a teacher abusing her power," said the mother of a 14-year-old. Her daughter is also happy because, as she said, some of the girls are "really scary." Teachers feel they will now be able to get the attention of parents who see how their daughter's grades are affected by her behavior. The regulations will be reviewed after a certain period and report made on the positives and negatives. A similar code for boys' schools was introduced in 2004 (*Arab News* 24 February 2004:2).

Most South African and foreign teachers received the implications of the above-mentioned code of conduct positively. Hope was expressed that discipline in Saudi Arabian schools would improve, but many had reservations about the actual implementation of the code of conduct. Some teachers feared a backlash by students not used to being curtailed by disciplinary measures.

### **3.3.7 Learners with Special Educational Needs**

Iman Al- Ahmad (*Arab News* 7 January 2004:2) points out that many have recently had much to say about women's rights but few seem to show interest in discussing the suffering women continue to endure. Al-Ahmad was referring particularly to the rights of deaf women to lead a normal life and integrate into mainstream society instead of remaining a marginalised and neglected segment of Saudi society.

Being herself a deaf woman, Al-Ahmad (*Arab News* 7 January 2004:2) believes that to a large extent this group of women has been ignored by a society that has little concern for their vulnerability. This vulnerability is reflected in an inability to communicate easily with others. Because the deaf can only communicate through sign language, even this is seen by some as a privilege, and they insist the deaf should learn how to read and write like others. These people tend to ignore the fact that even among the physically sound; there are many who do not depend on reading and writing to communicate with others. Because they have not been denied the blessing of hearing, these people cannot imagine the difficulties that face the deaf who are trying to integrate into society.

Al-Ahmad continues that Saudi Arabian public places lack the necessary signs and hearing aids that would help the deaf who suffer when traveling or going from one place to

another. Hospitals, schools and airports are examples. At airports the deaf do not hear their names or any announcements about their flights. At hospitals they do not hear their children's names being called when their turn comes to see the doctor. At markets and shops, they find difficulty trying to explain to the salesmen what they want because they cannot understand them. Al-Ahmad hopes that the public will appreciate and understand their situation and help them to get their basic rights (*Arab News* 7 January 2004:2).

Many students with special needs are currently studying in mainstream schools and teachers working with these particular students face more or less the same difficulties as they would in other countries. A problem some foreign teachers faced was having no training or experience working with learners with special needs.

### **3.3.8 Schools of Hate**

Jahwar (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:3) reports that Saudi schools do not instill hatred of Christianity and Judaism in students, rather their philosophy is based primarily on Islamic teachings that tolerate other religions and consider believing in them a requirement for the completion of one's faith. "Those claims about our textbooks are nothing but misinterpretation of quotations taken out of context by people who aim to characterize us as terrorists", said Muhammad Al-Masri, head of curriculum development department at the Ministry of Education, Makkah region.

Saudi Arabia's Islamic-based school curricula have come under scrutiny since the events of September 11, 2001. Recently an article in the *Saudi Gazette* (26 June 2004:3) reported that the London-based daily newspaper, The Guardian, had accused Saudi schools of teaching first-grade students to have contempt for Christians and Jews. According to the article a lesson for 6-year olds reads: All religions other than Islam are false. A note for teachers says they should ensure to explain this point. The newspaper report also cites a Washington-based reform group as saying that there was no evidence the pilot programmes had taken place in the newly revised textbooks. The group noted that the Saudi Monotheism and Fiqh books still have the same authors and the same ideas but different language even following the revision.

In an article in *Saudi Gazette* (26 June 2004:2) Al-Masri defended Saudi textbooks saying that what they focus on at the first stage is teaching students reading, writing, reasoning and maths skills. At the same time schools implant the basics of Islam and this is done in any school that teaches religion as part of its curriculum. He said that since Islam is their

religion, students are taught that it is the only way of salvation and their road to heaven accordingly.

Al-Masri (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:2) further adds that religion is part of the person's own freedom, so to enhance the teachings of Islam and emphasise them to the students is their right. This does not imply breeding hatred or rejection to other religions. On the contrary believing in Christianity and Judaism is part of the teaching of Islam that Saudis believe in and teach at schools. Islamic scholars say that there is a verse in the Quar'an that says that those who seek another religion other than Islam will not be accepted. It refers to the original Islam that is the religion of Abraham, the father of all prophets, including Jesus Christ and Moses. There also is a clear verse in the Quar'an that characterises Abraham and the rest of the prophets as Muslim. In addition, under the original Islam, which includes Christianity and Judaism, followers worship one God and submit to Him.

Al-Masri (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:2) dispels this by clarifying that Islam believes in differences in religions as part of the universal law. Yet it calls for unity among people by asking followers to submit to the innate religions of the past messengers who were all calling for worshipping one single God. For instance, students are taught that Christianity and Judaism are both real religions, but students are not to follow them. Students must know that although Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was the last messenger. God sent others, including Moses and Jesus, and that denying any of them will make them un-Islamic.

But Al-Masri (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:2) questioned if students in the West are taught anything about Islam and the messenger, Muhammad. Religion has no place in American public schools, except only in a brief historical context before the US Supreme Court ruled in 1948 that offering religious instruction on public school property during the school day was unconstitutional.

Islamic scholars acknowledge that Saudi curricula have weaknesses, and improvements must be made. The Saudi school system does not claim perfection. Textbooks have some questionable areas, especially in subjects of history. But educators paid attention to those areas and included them in the school system's development plan (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:2). Al-Masri (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:2) observed, for example, that history books emphasise the bloody face of Islamic history without explaining the surrounding environment and the need for wars. It shows the followers of Islam as sword holders rather

than scholars and inventors. It does not show the civilization of Muslims nor make it clear that those wars and violence were requirements for a specific era.

Al-Masri (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:2) also acknowledges the great responsibility of teachers and notes that some teachers are to be blamed for not teaching the accomplishments of Islamic civilization. He said that some teachers do not accept the concept of being different, especially in religion. But education administrators are working to contain them and broaden their thinking with seminars and training sessions. Administrators do not want to reject or fight these teachers to avoid creating unhealthy environment inside schools. By offering training school officials hope to deal with the teachers by demonstrating Islam's tolerance and teaching the students pluralism.

Wajdi Ghazawi, in the same article, (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:2) agrees with Al Masri and further strengthens his argument by stating that an educator and a director of Al-Fajjer Islamic satellite channel said that the Saudi curriculum teaches students not to bear grudge or prejudice against those who follows different religions. He said that it teaches students that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) paid visits to his Jewish neighbors and maintained a peaceful neighborhood with them. He warned against doing them injustice, reducing their rights or exploiting them. "We yearly teach our students and children the importance of fasting Ashoura'a. We also explain to them that this is the day when God saved the honest Jewish followers of Moses and that we have to thank God for that. Is that hatred or anti-Semitism" asked Ghazawi (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:2).

Citing a verse from the Holy Qur'an, Ghazawi (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:2) said that Islam does not prohibit a Muslim man from marrying a Christian or a Jewish woman despite the holiness of marriage in Islam as well as other religions. Spending one's life with a non-Muslim and choosing her over a Muslim as a partner and a mother for his children means that a husband must tolerate her and establish a good relationship with her family. Ghazawi also affirms that a Muslim husband is not only asked to pay his non-Muslim wife all her rights, but he is also asked to allow her abide by her religion and to go to church or temple if she wants. These specific issues are taught and explained to Saudi students as part of the curriculum.

Abdul Rahaman Muhammad, an elementary school religion teacher, said that he wonders if those who issued the report have an idea about Islam or the education system in Saudi Arabia. The problem is that Western readers take it as a fact and act accordingly. This spreads hatred and causes religion and cultural clashes. If anyone believes that there is

another religion that is better than or even as good as his own, he would have followed it instead (*Saudi Gazette* 28 August, 2004:2). Muhammad (*Saudi Gazette* 28 August, 2004:2) said he does not think that those who make accusations against the Kingdom's education system expect Saudis to stop teaching Islam or to stop telling students that it is the religion that God has chosen for them. He also said that Saudi schools have been teaching the same curriculum for many years, but is puzzled why Saudis have not been accused of instilling hatred until recently. He suggested that history must be revisited and this will show that current world events are neither condoned in textbooks or schools (*Saudi Gazette* 28 August, 2004:2).

The above issue is probably the biggest concern facing especially non-Muslim teachers in Saudi Arabia. From personal discussions with South African teachers many non-Muslim teachers report incidents of students trying to either convert them to Islam or pointing out the dangers of not being Muslim. In extreme cases, some parents even refuse to allow their children to be taught by non-Muslim teachers citing fears that their children might be in danger of being 'brainwashed'. Non-Muslim teachers further complained that they have no recourse to address these concerns, as they usually receive no support from school management.

### **3.3.9 Patriotism**

High school teacher Fahad Al-Olaian (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:3) wonders whether teaching patriotism to students will ever accomplish the task of instilling national pride and unqualified love for the Kingdom. He (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:2) says, "Patriotism as a subject became part of school curriculum just four years ago, but many Saudi educators say the curriculum itself is responsible for the lack of awareness and patriotism among youth. With an emphasis on memorization and transmission of pure scientific information, the nuances of faith in one's country and the concept of patriotic values are lost."

Al-Olaian (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:2) further contends, "Images of patriotism are easily found. King Fahad, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and HRH Crown Prince Abdullah are easily identified as patriots. The first American president, George Washington, was a patriot. Many view Al-Arabiya television a patriotic arm for the Arab world. Documentary filmmaker Michael Moore, who harshly criticized President Bush in his movie Fahrenheit 9/11, can be considered a patriot. Patriots come in all social and political stripes."

But instilling patriotism, something that is so personal, is a Herculean task for Saudi educators. Teaching patriotism as a subject at school that has no grading scores would never help the Saudi government to achieve that high level of patriotism that they are seeking among youths. This would never match the powerful outcome of spending five minutes even weekly in teaching patriotism's value through experience (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:3).

Saudi educators' definition of patriotism varies from the absolute love of their country to placing faith in their government's ability to make better decisions for them and work for their good. They all agree that many Saudi youths need more practical lessons on patriotism based on experience.

Azza Al-Qadi, head of the Directing and Guidance Department at the Ministry of Education in Madina, defines patriotism as being loyal to the place where you were born and bred regardless of the practices of the people who are on authority. "The government consists of people who are us and we are all full of mistakes. So, it's totally wrong to cause instability and expose the whole country to danger just because some people believe that the government or whoever has devastated them", stated Azza Al-Qadi (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:3). The education system's goal should be to instill love and loyalty to the land, people and possessions of the country. At the same time, education should focus on teaching students how to express that love through actions, create a sense of shared destiny, and how to be willing to sacrifice one's self for the public good.

Wafaa Al-Yafi, head of Public Administration and Law Department at King Abdul Aziz University, believes that the country's love should also be accompanied by actions and practices that clearly reflect it. "Correcting wrong practices is also love, but it should be done in a manner that goes along with the extent of the action itself and does not conflict with the public interests. Violence definitely is not among those proper ways we are talking about," stated Al-Yafi (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:3).

Most of the educators, however, believe that the Saudi curriculum is severely lacking when it comes to advancing national pride. Saudi education promotes jobs opportunities without paying much attention to enabling students to gain more faith and pride of their own country. "Our schools' role has been limited to practices like singing the national anthem in the morning and teaching patriotism as a scientific subject. It does not supply them with the required experience nor give them opportunities to be involved in more civic work,"



said Abdullah Hafiz, deputy dean of Taiba University (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:3) in Madina.

Hassan Al-Nemi, a professor of Arabic Literature at King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah, believes that teaching patriotism should be done through both experience and exposure. He said that students should be exposed to more situations where they learn how to appreciate their own country and express that in a good way. "We have to teach our students how to get rid of the present single mindedness and indoctrinate pluralism. They have to learn that the other side might be also correct and have their own goodness," commented Al-Nemi (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:3). Al-Nemi believes that Saudi students have been spoon-fed with information that enhanced their feelings of greatness to an extent that pushed them to consider any different viewpoint as unacceptable. He cited the subject of history as an example in which students are given information that makes them either overwhelmed with victories or disappointed with defeat. "We have been doing fine in the area of theoretical sciences, but they also have to be taught how to accept the fact that many countries have exceeded us in practical sciences and act accordingly", Al-Nemi said. Al-Nemi (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:3) traced that back to 1979 when the Islamic world was shocked when Muslim extremists seized control of the Grand Mosque in Makkah. It took the Saudi authorities several days to regain control of the Mosque. More than 200 troops and fundamentalists were killed in operation and nearly 60 extremists were publicly beheaded. Following that event, Saudi society could have eliminated extremists but instead adopted their ideology. Since then Saudis categorise people as conservatives, seculars, liberals and other political and social leanings. "If we want to go back to the same right track, we have to let our society grow naturally like the rest without either interference or discrimination", al-Nemi (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:3) said. In other words, it is necessary to take society back to the 70s when it was more tolerant and open-minded. Al-Nemi characterized the Saudi education system as a failure. Many students graduate from high schools having no feelings of patriotism or even the required high spirit and pride towards their homeland. Saudi youth, however, still have an instinctive love of Makkah and Madina. Schools must derive a benefit out of that natural love to ensure they see Saudi Arabia as a grand land that extends from the Arabian Gulf east to the Red Sea in the west. Education should also help the country in making the flag as a symbol of patriotism and part of that instinctual love (*Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:3). Wafaa Al-Yafi believes that they have the required feeling deep inside their hearts, but schools and parents must teach them to express that love through actions. Young people, on the other hand, do not hold education solely responsible for any lack of patriotism.

Ala A, a 19-year-old high school student, said that youngsters like him are disappointed in the Saudi system. He believes that the social and educational practices in Saudi Arabia do not inspire real loyalty and patriotism. He said that in many cities in the Kingdom single youngsters like him are not allowed to mix. They have no entertainment or sports clubs. They are also not allowed to enter malls, especially those that are allocated only for families. "We cannot even play songs by the roads without being caught or chased by the religious police. We have no creativity centers or even jobs, what can we do with our spare time? Tell me", said Ala (in *Saudi Gazette* 26 June 2004:3) He also said that the government promises to improve the quality of their lives and to offer more education and job opportunities have not materialized. Those unfulfilled promises have made his generation disappointed and act carelessly. This is why they are not classified as patriots.

The article in the *Saudi Gazette* (26 June 2004:2) categorised youth into two groups: those who are fortunate to jobs and education and act accordingly, and those who lack both and simply do not care as a result. Some educators believe that the outpouring of patriotism and cooperation that some citizens displayed reflects youth's untapped patriotism in an unprecedented way in the history of Saudi Arabia. One such example was an incident in 2004 when hundreds of Saudis burst into applause when security forces in Riyadh removed some dead and wounded suspected terrorists from a neighborhood. But some educators say more work must be done. "Even following those waged campaigns against our country, they (Saudi youth) were still careless," said Taiba University's Abdullah Hafiz. It seems that it was not effective at all.

Against the above background, it is clear that the cultural, social and political background of foreign teachers plays a key role when the issue of patriotism arises in the classroom. An African-American teacher, who had converted to Islam, worked with the researcher and frequently voiced his objection to American foreign policy to any prepared to listen. Inevitably he discussed his views with his students who subsequently adopted his way of thinking and began questioning social practices in their own country. This led to the teacher's eventual dismissal as it was felt that he negatively influenced the patriotic ideals of the country. It is also increasingly difficult for foreign teachers to instill a sense of patriotism in Saudi students, as they do not always agree with what has to be inculcated.

### **3.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter dealt with socio, political and historical factors in Saudi Arabian education and gave an overview of the structure and functioning of the education system. The Saudi Arabian government allocates a substantial amount of money towards education in the country, which alleviates the worldwide problem of facilities and resources. While they are waging a determined campaign to improve basic infrastructure and access to education much work needs to be done to improve the actual situation in the classrooms. With education intertwined with religion, more will have to be done to impart values to students and create a curriculum that will produce critical thinkers instead of practiced repeaters of religious material if students are to become part of a global market.

This chapter also dealt with current critical issues in education under discussion in the media and the researcher's views of how this affects foreign teachers working in Saudi Arabia. This provides an understanding of the dominant value system prevalent in the country. The insight gained from the data in this chapter provides an in-depth look at the prevailing value system in Saudi Arabia and is important in explaining the discrepancy between both official and non-official values in Saudi society. Thus, South African and other foreign teachers who are considering pursuing a career in Saudi Arabia should familiarise themselves with both the official and non-official values pertaining to education in Saudi Arabia. Foreign teachers cannot expect that they can merely transmit their own values and perceptions gained from working in their own countries in another country. Foreign teachers have to be flexible and open to the social norms, values, culture and educational practices prevalent in the host country in order to be successful. They are but guests in a foreign country and have to be prepared to make a paradigm shift in order to adapt to what is required and practised in the host country.

The next chapter will deal with research design using a qualitative methodology.

# Chapter 4

## Research design

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of conflicting values in the teaching experiences of South African educators in Saudi Arabian schools. This chapter contains an explanation of the procedure used in gathering and reporting data for the study. A qualitative research design was followed where, described by Schumacher and McMillan (1997:39-40) “specific procedures are identified during the research rather than specified ahead of time and each step depends on prior information collected during the study”.

The following topics are included: data collection in qualitative research; selection of the sample group; methods of data collection and the role of the researcher.

### **4.2 DATA COLLECTION IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Schumacher and McMillan (1993:391) describe qualitative research as naturalistic inquiry, the use of non-interfering data collection strategies to discover the natural flow of events and processes and how participants interpret them. They further add that qualitative researchers collect data by interacting with purposefully selected persons in their setting (field research) who are considered rich sources of information and by obtaining relevant documents. Since context plays such an important role in qualitative research, a thorough explanation is given.

Qualitative researchers study small, distinct groups, such as all the pupils in a particular class involved in a certain programme or the staff members of an innovative school. This kind of research is known as a case study design and was followed in this study.

### 4.3 SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE GROUP

Schumacher and McMillan (1997:393) state that in a case study design the data analysis focuses on one phenomenon, which the researcher selects to understand in depth regardless of the number of sites, participants, or documents for a study. The 'one' group in this study refers to the group of South African educators working in various Saudi Arabian schools. Le Compte and Preissle (1993:56) notes that selecting samples involve defining what kinds of people and how many of them can be studied, as well as when, where and under which circumstances they are studied.

Le Compte (1993:56) adds that sampling involves selecting a smaller subset from the original population to assure the representativeness, to generalise from a group of key informants to the large population, or to reduce the size of the group under study. Once the original population was identified, it was decided to narrow it down by using the following criteria:

- Participants were qualified South African educators. South African educators working in Saudi Arabian schools were chosen for several reasons. Because of the teaching experience gained in Saudi Arabian schools by these educators over the years, they would be best suited to comply with the study. These participants qualified for **purposeful sampling** described by Cohen and Manion (1980:77) as sampling where the researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of a judgment of their typicality. Schumacher and McMillan (1997:397) describe purposeful sampling as “the search for information-rich key participants”.
- Second, all teachers earmarked as participants, worked in the South African education system prior to moving to Saudi Arabia and therefore had an idea of the values prevalent in South African education. This feature lent credibility to the responses, as the selected participants were best suited to give information rich data on the topic in an interview.
- Henning (2003) describes a case study as “ a format for design characterized by the focus on a phenomenon that has identifiable boundaries and that data that are not applicable to the case are not utilized”. Thus issues like race, gender and religion were not considered in selecting participants.

Data collection for this study was carried out at various sites that included private national schools, private international schools and a tertiary institution in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

#### **4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Qualitative techniques collect data in the form of words rather than numbers (Schumacher & McMillan 1993:47). Because of a scarcity of literature on South African educators working in Saudi Arabian educational institutions, a variety of data collection strategies were employed to garner information about their teaching experiences in Saudi Arabia. Data collection for this study began at the end of 2004. The researcher made use of biographical questions, personal narratives and personal interviews as data collection strategies.

##### **4.4.1 Biographical questions**

Radina (s.a.) describes the biographic method as “the most popular research instrument of qualitative sociology and can also be circumscribed as the method of using “histories of life” (biographic oral histories)”. Biographical questions were posed to all participants in order to get a picture of the background of each.

The following questions were asked of participants:

- What is the highest degree you earned?
- How long have you worked as a teacher in South Africa?
- How long have you worked in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
- What is your current position at school?
- Type of school

##### **4.4.2 Personal narratives**

Connelly and Clandinin (in Keeves & Lakomski 1999:132) remark, “Narrativists believe that one of the best ways to study human beings is to come to grips with the storied quality of human experience, to record stories of educational experience and to write still other interpretative stories of educational experience”. As it was difficult to make personal contact with most of the educators, especially the women, a general e-mail (Appendix A) was sent to seven selected candidates whom the researcher interacted with while working in Saudi Arabia. In this e-mail participants were asked to write a personal narrative about both their positive and negative teaching experiences while teaching in Saudi Arabian schools. Schumacher and McMillan (1993:413) state, “A good narrative is one that may be

read and lived vicariously by others". They further contend, "Plausible narratives provide meanings that make sense and shape readers' thinking and practices". Of all the e-mails sent, only three e-mails were returned. Only one of the returned e-mails was deemed relevant to the study. The other two e-mails were too short and the researcher felt that the participants had not made an effort to answer the questions posed.

One participant hand-delivered his personal narrative, citing his inability to use a computer. The researcher accepted this narrative as it was felt that it would add value to the study. This participant was also used for the interviews conducted on audiotape, as his narrative required elaboration.

The rapid emergence of new telecommunications technologies throughout society has seen the emergence of electronic mail (e-mail) as an increasingly pervasive means of communication. Throughout the 1990s, due to its relative simplicity and effectiveness, e-mail has quickly been integrated into business and commerce as well as being widely adopted by private individuals and the academic community. Yet, given its growing importance as a medium of communication, discussion of e-mail as an academic research tool has, to date, been scarce (Selwyn & Robson 1998).

#### **4.4.2.1 Advantages of e-mail/Internet interviews**

Denzin and Lincoln (2000:667) note that the interviewer has more time to phrase follow-up questions or probes properly. Selwyn and Robson (1998) state that using e-mail as a research tool potentially offers researchers many advantages such as easy access to world-wide samples, low administration costs (both financially and temporally) and it is unobtrusive and 'friendly' to participants. They further add that response rates to e-mail questionnaires appear favorable as does the ease of distribution and response times. Selwyn and Robson (1998) also mention that using e-mail as an interview tool eschews the conventional constraints of spatial and temporal proximity between interviewer and participant and offers the considerable practical advantage of providing 'ready-transcribed' data.

Foster (1994) points out that interviewing by electronic mail is not constrained by geographical location or time-zone; the need for proximity between the interviewer and interviewee is no longer an issue. As Spender (1995) argues the concepts of race, gender, age and sexuality do not necessarily apply when communicating electronically.

Furthermore, the potential for asynchronous communication that e-mail offers is attractive feature when considering its use as a research tool (Thach 1995). Subjects are not constrained to synchronous communication but can respond when and how they feel comfortable. In short, e-mail's primary advantage is its 'friendliness' to the participant.

#### **4.4.2.2 Disadvantages of e-mail/Internet interviews**

Denzin and Lincoln (2000:667) report that electronic interviews take longer than their traditional counterparts, their responses are less in depth and it is virtually impossible to preserve anonymity in e-mail research responses. Selwyn and Robson (1998) state that e-mail's application as a research tool is constrained by its, as yet, limited and biased population of users (in terms of age, income, gender and race). Selwyn and Robson (1998) add that e-mail interviews suffer from a lack of tacit communication.

As King (1996) reasons, non-verbal communication and active listening are integral elements of the effective interview. Although 'netiquette' makes clumsy attempts to substitute paralinguistic and non-linguistic cues with emoticons (e.g., typing :- ) after a sentence denotes humor, multiple vowels indicate rising intonation, such as 'sooooo'), e-mail's lack of verbal interaction is an obvious limitation to its use as an interviewing tool.

In this study seven participants were approached on e-mail of which three replied and only one was used for the study. The other narrative accepted for the study was hand written by the participant.

#### **4.4.3 Personal interviews**

The researcher then proceeded to conduct semi-structured interviews with three South African teachers as "an aspect of the experience world of the participant needs to be explored and understood and can only be done if the participants are allowed to say it in their own words (Kvale, 1983:174; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:26). Du Plessis (1998:40) describes an interview as a conversation between two people where one person asks questions of another person with the aim of getting specific information. This narrow viewpoint, however, does not allow for the active participation of both the interviewer and the participant in the quest for validity of the process. Bergum (1991:61) and Holstein and Gubrium (1995:4) agree that in order to attain validity to the study, there has to be a process of collaboration. This view fits in with the qualitative approach of research.



Phenomenological interviews were chosen as "... you can understand and experience and reconstruct events in which you did not participate" (Rubin & Rubin 1995:1). There are different ways in which the interviews can be conducted, ranging from structured close-ended questions to unstructured with open-ended questions.

In the initial planning of the research provision was made for three contact sessions. The first was to make contact with participants, get their permission to conduct interviews and discuss possible problems. The second was to conduct the actual interview via tape recording. The third was to confirm with participants if the information gathered after analysing the transcripts was correct and ask if they wanted to add or omit something.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three participants and an open-ended question was posed. Schumacher and McMillan (1997:265) define semi-structured questions as "an open-ended question but is fairly specific in its intent". A tape recorder was used to record the interviews so that it could be transcribed verbatim. To ensure consistency, both interviews followed the same pattern. Ethical guidelines, like confidentiality and anonymity, were mentioned to participants. The main questions of the study were repeated:

1. What are your teaching experiences, negative and positive, as a South African educator teaching in Saudi Arabia?
2. What values did you try to teach in your classes?
3. Did you succeed/ fail?
4. What value clashes made it difficult for you to teach these values?

Specific questions that followed stemmed from the descriptions provided by the participants in their own words about their teaching experiences. These questions were posed to elicit clarity and a broader understanding of the participants' experience, feelings and thoughts. Questions such as "Can you give me an example?" or "Explain what you mean by that" were used. Other strategies the researcher employed were summarising and paraphrasing to make sure he understood the participants.

All three participants admitted to feeling nervous about being recorded on audiotape and though they were quite comfortable during the actual interview, they still displayed signs of nervousness as the interview progressed.

After listening to the verbatim transcripts of the audiotapes it was decided to revisit the first participant to obtain clarity on a few issues raised during the interview. Then after reviewing the data gained from the personal narratives and the interviews, it was decided that sufficient data had been obtained to ensure validity. Thus, the researcher concluded data collection and an analysis of the data is presented in the next chapter.

#### **4.5 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

According to Fox (1958:284) in Gephart and Ingle (1969:423) “The value of a particular piece of research is not so much that it fits the reader’s already preconceived prejudices, but rather that it meets certain criteria that indicate that the results may be depended upon”. In this section the researcher declares his status, preferences, experiences and biases to provide the reader with his background to understand what ‘excess baggage’ the researcher may bring to this study.

Schumacher and McMillan (1997:392) note, “Qualitative researchers become “immersed” in the situation and the phenomenon studied. Researchers assume interactive social roles in which they record observations and interactions with participants in many situations”. This scenario has the potential to jeopardise the validity and reliability of the study if the researcher conducts the research with preconceived notions or tries to manipulate research to suit his/her outlook.

The researcher was influenced by several factors leading up to this study, which are expounded in the following paragraphs.

##### **4.5.1 Language**

The researcher completed a bachelor’s degree majoring in Afrikaans and Psychology. The greater part of the researcher’s teaching career in South Africa was spent teaching Afrikaans as First or Second Language or subjects in Afrikaans. Getting a teaching position as an English teacher teaching English as a first language in a foreign country was a challenge. The first year of teaching in Saudi Arabia was a learning curve and the researcher had to acquire certain language skills. Fortunately the researcher started teaching Grade 6 and the concepts were very elementary. A refresher course on the basic grammatical components was done before classes began.

The style of English used was essentially North American English, which differs from British standard English used in South Africa. Pronunciation of certain words like 'aluminum', 'potato' and 'tomato' proved problematic initially, but the researcher eventually managed to adapt. Punctuation discrepancies were dealt with. Spelling of words like 'color' (American) and 'colour' (British) were quickly grasped and explained to students.

Because the researcher used only American- based resources the conversion was made to teach, converse, think and write American English. Other American concepts the researcher had to come to grips with include expressions like prairie, coyote, quilt, spelling bees and gas station (petrol station). Students and fellow teachers would always comment on the flat South African accent and the researcher made a concerted effort to correct this situation in his daily speech patterns.

Because the researcher was so acutely aware of the dynamics involving speech as mentioned above, the researcher made notes about the language usage of the participants. Some of the participants were second language English speakers, and like the researcher, had to make the change to teaching English as a first language when they came to Saudi Arabia. The researcher noticed common grammatical mistakes such as errors of concord errors and word order during the personal interview process. These issues gave the researcher a sense of superiority and he had to restrain himself from correcting the participants during the interviews.

#### **4.5.2 Gender**

Being male and teaching in a boys-only school was another culture shock for which the researcher was not prepared. Because of the segregationist nature of the schools, no interaction is allowed between boys and girls in Saudi schools. Teachers were specifically instructed not to talk to the boys about girls and all references and images related to girls had to be censored. Naturally, the boys always asked questions about girls and it was difficult to restrain oneself and steer them away from the topic. The researcher believes that teachers have a social responsibility as well and should make students aware of the differences and similarities between boys and girls. However, the fact that addressing the topic could lead to termination of contract and deportation restrained the researcher.

While conducting one of the interviews at the home of a female South African teacher, the researcher was surprised that the teacher appeared wearing the 'hijab' (traditional Islamic

dress covering the entire body) and leaving only her face uncovered. The researcher had met this teacher a few years earlier and she wore Western clothing. To compound matters, the teacher's husband would constantly walk past, as if to keep an eye on the process. This made the researcher feel very apprehensive and it was decided not to make eye contact with or sit too close to the teacher to avoid causing offence. The researcher felt that the teacher and her family had been in the country for too long and had started to adopt the conservative ways of the inhabitants.

### **4.5.3 Religion**

The researcher confesses to being a practising Christian who tries to lead his life according to general Christian principles and guidelines. Being a teacher has always provided the researcher the opportunity to impart certain Christian values to students or refer to the life of Jesus as a means of moulding students' characters. Working in a Muslim country that propagates only one religion, causes many conflicts. The researcher's contract states specifically that he may not promote any other religion than Islam. In the researcher's first job at a private school, the custom was to escort the students to afternoon prayers and ensure that they practised all the rituals of prayer before escorting them back to class. Some students refused to pray with the rest of the school and the researcher had to force these students to conform and participate in the prayer ritual. This was a matter of inner conflict. The school's defense was that it was a duty all teachers had to fulfill. The researcher could never completely commit himself to these tasks and avoided further involvement in this regard. This task created resentment in the researcher which was exacerbated when the students invited the researcher to pray with them.

Students, parents and other teachers would not let an opportunity pass to ask the researcher to convert to Islam. Ironically the researcher could not even mention Christianity or any other religion even if it came up in a lesson. The researcher remembers once using the expression 'speak of the devil' when a colleague walked in the room and severely chastised him for referring to a Muslim as 'devil'. This expression is commonly used around the world to refer to someone who appears when spoken about.

Students were taught that all non-Muslims would burn in hell one day and when confronted with this statement, the researcher could not offer an alternative viewpoint for fear of repercussions. So imparting certain values to students was almost impossible for the researcher due to the religious restrictions placed on him.

During the interviews the researcher had to be careful not to transgress the religious boundaries set between Muslims and non-Muslims. Two participants are South African Muslims and the researcher paid special attention to their views about religion in Saudi Arabian schools and in general. The researcher was also hesitant to ask the Muslim participants for any elaboration on the issue of religion.

#### **4.5.4 Race**

The researcher comes from what is considered a 'coloured' background in South Africa and has experienced preferential treatment of 'white' South Africans. During the interview process, preference was given to 'white' teachers and the numbers were made up by 'coloured' teachers. The school bluntly refused to hire Indian and black South Africans stating that students and parents would not accept them. The researcher always felt that he make extra effort to surpass the performance of 'white' colleagues in order to be recognised. This caused some animosity when the school appointed 'white' teachers to head committees and task teams and promoted them. The researcher believes in merit as the only valid criterion, but also realises that confronting this issue in another country would be redundant. It was ironical to encounter racial discrimination in a foreign country given the history of South Africa. On another occasion, 'white' South African teachers were given the option of moving to more secure accommodation after unrest. When the 'non-white' teachers queried this, we were told that only 'whites' were in danger and targeted by terrorists. These incidents prevented the researcher from fully integrating into Saudi society.

Only one of the participants who returned the e-mail was a 'white' South African. The researcher resided with this teacher for two years in the same accommodation and had no problems relating with the participant on a personal and social level. The common bond, that is both are expatriate South Africa teachers who had arrived in Saudi Arabia at the same time, worked and lived together, created empathy. This made it easy for the participant to speak freely and share her intimate thoughts about teaching in Saudi Arabia. Issues of race never featured in the narrative received from this specific participant.

#### **4.5.5 Validity and trustworthiness of data**

In order to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data, a number of actions were taken. From the outset of the data gathering process, it was made clear to all participants that the information given by them would be strictly anonymous. The researcher also made use of member checking, that is, to send a draft of the data analysis to all the participants to show that their information had not been misrepresented. Moreover, participants were free to request the deletion of anything they were not comfortable with. A number of research methods were used to ensure validity, such as personal histories (narratives and e-mail) and interviews, all of which were transcribed verbatim. Schumacher and Macmillan (1993:404-406) state, "Qualitative researchers typically use as many strategies as possible to insure the validity of the design."

The researcher worked with two of the participants in Saudi Arabia and knowing them personally made the participants comfortable with the researcher and they confided easily in him. The researcher's personal teaching experiences in Saudi Arabia are described in Appendix B to provide additional insight into the study.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter dealt with the research methodology employed for the study. It gave an in-depth explanation of data collection and sampling, focusing in particular on three data collection techniques used by the researcher. Finally, the researcher described his own life world by relaying his own experiences under the topic, role of the researcher. Hereby the researcher exposed his background and motivation for choosing the particular research problem.

Chapter five deals with the analysis and discussion of the data.

# Chapter 5

## Presentation of findings

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the results from the data collected in interviews and personal narratives from the selected participants, that is, South African educators working in Saudi Arabian schools. The scope of these findings reflects the opinions and status of individual participants. Firstly, a report on the biographical details and educational careers of the participants is given. The perceptions of the participants are presented in narrative form. Then comparisons are drawn between the responses of the four participants to determine the similarities and differences. Special attention is paid to the conflicting values they tried to implement in classes and the value clashes they encountered.

Schumacher and McMillan (1993:501) describe qualitative data analysis as primarily an inductive process of organizing the data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among the categories. Data analysis is the beginning of a process that involves the systematical and analytical search for meaning in all the gathered data. Maykut and Morehouse (1994:121) explain it as follows: "The process of qualitative data analyses... is fundamentally a non-mathematical analytical procedure that involves examining the meaning of people's words and actions". An inductive approach to data analysis is used where a large quantity of data is reduced to various themes and categories. The literature describes many ways in which inductive data analysis can be done (Tesch, in Creswell, 1994:155; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992:165; Giorgi, in Omery, 1983:57) but it was decided to make use of the constant comparative method of Maykut and Morehouse (1994). The process of analysis is simplified by dividing it into specific steps. The steps are as follow: preparation of the data, inductive category coding, refining of the categories and the results of the data analysis. These steps are discussed in the chapter.

## 5.2 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

For the purposes of this study the following meanings will be attached to the following concepts:

**Respect** – regard for others' rights and wishes (*Oxford English Minidictionary* 2003:438).

**Punctuality** - arriving/happening at exactly the time that has been arranged (*Longman Advanced American Dictionary* 2000:1166).

**Accountability** – required or expected to give an explanation of one's actions (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* s.a.:8)

**Responsibility** – a moral obligation or duty (*Webster's Universal Dictionary* 2002:441)

**Equality** – regarding or affecting all objects in the same way (*Webster's Universal Dictionary* 2002:184)

**Religious tolerance** – willingness to allow people to practise their religion without punishing or criticising them.

**Lesson plans** – An educational tool used by teachers to document proposed lessons.

**Culture of learning/teaching** – Activities relating to learning and teaching.

**Promotion of critical thinking** – The activity of developing skills to form an opinion about something that's not obvious.

**Quality of education** – The standard of education offered at the institution.

## 5.3 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA AND BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS

The biographical data and background of the four selected participants is clarified to sketch a clearer picture of their responses. For the purposes of anonymity, each participant is given a code that serves as reference for the rest of the study. The code for the first participant will be R1, the second, R2, et cetera.

R1 is a 49-year old female educator who had taught for 25 years in South Africa. She worked as an English teacher in a private national school in Riyadh for two years. She possesses a BA degree and a teaching diploma. She has since returned to South Africa at the end of her two-year contract citing family commitments in South Africa and an inability to adapt to Saudi Arabian education as her motivation for leaving. She responded by e-mail

R2 is a 35-year old male educator who taught in South Africa for nine years. He is currently in his third year as a teacher in a private national school in Riyadh where he



teaches English to Grades 6 to 8. He holds a four-year Senior Diploma in Education. He also works part-time at an English language institution and did private tutoring for two years. He submitted a hand written personal narrative and was also interviewed.

R3 is the only Muslim male in the group. He is 31 years old and worked as an English teacher at a private international school in Riyadh for three years where he held the position of Head of the English Department for two years. He has a four-year Higher Diploma in Education and is currently working as an English language instructor at a tertiary institution in the capital city. He previously taught in South Africa for three and a half years. He was interviewed.

R4 is a 30-year old Muslim female who taught in South Africa for three years. She has been in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for four years. She worked as an English teacher at a private international school for two years and then took a year's maternity leave. During this period she also did private tutoring and has just joined a private national school in Riyadh where she teaches English to Grades 7 and 8. She holds a Final Diploma in Education (FDE). She was interviewed.

## **5.4 DATA ANALYSIS**

### **5.4.1 Preparation of the data**

The data was prepared for analysis by carefully listening to the views of the participants on audiotape and reading the personal narratives, searching for components to include under different categories. Each participant's response was classified under a heading to get an understanding of the underlying meaning. Here the researcher tried to stay objective by setting aside any preconceptions and judgments. The data was read and listened to for a second time to ensure accuracy and ascertain if the researcher had really captured what the participants meant.

### **5.4.2 Inductive categorizing**

Categories were developed to supply an acceptable reconstruction of the collected data. As previously mentioned, the inductive categorization method was combined with a comparison of all the different headings broken down and divided during analysis.

Grouping similar headings together after all the transcripts were broken down and placed under certain headings allowed for comparison.

### **5.4.3 Refining of the categories**

Six main categories were decided upon. The first category deals with the teacher's experiences in Saudi Arabian classrooms. Under this category several sub-categories emerged, for example, all the participants' remarks about punctuality and respect for others were grouped together. The fifth category deals with the value clashes experienced by these teachers. Once again, various sub-categories emerged such as discipline and littering. Some sub-categories appeared in more than one category, such as accountability, discipline and respect.

### **5.4.4 Results of the data analysis**

#### **5.4.4.1 Categories of responses**

As previously stated, six main categories were identified to make the data presentable. These categories will be discussed in-depth in the following sections.

#### **a. Teacher's experiences in Saudi classrooms**

- **Respect for teachers and students**

Two participants felt that respect (see section 2.4.2) was not duly given to educators and students.

R1: The children had very little respect for teachers; especially the English teachers-maybe because they knew it was not compulsory to pass the subject!

R2: There's no respect for the teacher as such, he is treated as an inferior human being due to the fact that these people are very wealthy.

One participant felt discriminated against on the basis of his religion and nationality.

R2: Respect is a dual path and has to be earned by both parties. At the school this is somewhat evident with the exception of a few cases. However, the fact of being non-Muslim, African and teaching 'the dreaded subject', English, has had its side effects.

**Discussion:** From the reports of the teachers, it appears that respect (see section 3.2.2.1) is not automatically afforded to teachers. Rather, it appears to be based on nationality, class and religion. It should be made clear that this phenomenon is in contrast with the general principles of Saudi Arabian education (see section 3.2.2).

- **Punctuality**

Of the four participants, only one felt that punctuality was a problem at school.

R1: Punctuality was not one of their strong points- there were efforts made by the administrative section to try and get the girls to arrive on time- but there were still many who arrived a half to three quarters of an hour late for school. When it came to mother's evenings or concert time- these never started on time- it was definitely a case of Arab time.

R2: The school operates on a strict time keeping schedule. Teachers are to sign in on arrival and out on departure from the school. The school day begins at 6.45 a.m. taken into the climate of the desert. Pupils are generally punctual as well.

**Discussion:** According to the participants, the enforcement of punctuality seems to depend on the different schools. Some schools are strictly policing punctuality for both teachers and students, while other schools are more relaxed in their enforcement.

## **Lesson plans**

Three participants were not impressed with the system of lesson plans. One participant compared lesson planning to her college days in South Africa.

R1: The weekly forecast (Appendix C) must be handed in two weeks in advance- it must be handed in on the Sunday. This proved to be ridiculous for the following reason: it is very difficult to know what you would be able to cover in two weeks time- in South Africa the weekly forecasts are done at the end of the week for the following week- a term forecast has been done in advance so one has goals in mind- but weekly forecasts were weekly- anything not completed during that week could be carried over to the following week. In Saudi I would do this in practice, but in theory I was doing something else each week.

R2: Apart from lesson plans changing regularly, they are laborious and long-winded. Some of the aspects are repetitive and not clearly defined. Lesson plans (Appendix D) have to be prepared for two weeks in advance, which is time-consuming and leads to backtracking continuously. An evaluation of each lesson has to be done daily. Lesson prep consumes

too much time and allows the teacher less time to concentrate on the real job of imparting information or working on real problems, which all students seem to have.

R4: Drawing up lessons, objectives, introduction, conclusion, how much time it takes, what teaching aids you're going to use, what evaluation you're going to use (Appendix E). I found it pretty tiresome; you had to do it to every lesson, every day; so if you had four grades and four different subjects you had to all of those for every single day.

**Discussion:** Almost all the participants complained about the rigidity of lesson plans. They felt that it was too time consuming and that they would have preferred to focus on actual teaching and problem solving in the classroom.

- **Equality**

Three participants are very concerned with issues of equality at their schools. Some feel that South African teachers are over-worked and not treated the same as their Arab counterparts.

R1: I taught 39 out of the 45 lessons per week. The Arab teachers-English or Arabic-taught 22 to 24 lessons per week. If they taught more, they were paid overtime.

One participant touched on the issue of regular teachers being denied say in the day-to-day affairs of the school or issues affecting them directly. He felt that the management system at the school was top-down.

R2: The school is headed by several people: a Principal (Saudi national), Lebanese director, an Educational Consultants and several Heads of Departments. All these people have their own visions and ways of implementing strategies, hence the calamity at times. Teachers are not allowed into any decision-making. They are handed instructions and should unquestioningly follow them.

R3: The status of South African teachers wasn't recognised in the Kingdom when I came in 2001. I think that many people preferred to get American and British teachers, but I feel that South African teachers are (held) in good stead all over the world.

**Discussion:** With all the participants having taught in South Africa during the new dispensation after 1994, it is no surprise that the participants would be acutely aware of issues of equality (see sections 2.4.2 and 2.4.5.2). However, they were all frustrated as labour unions or industrial action is not allowed in Saudi Arabia (see section 1.2).

- **Private tutoring**

One participant felt that private tutors were seen as a necessary addition to the schooling of most children in Saudi Arabia and that private tutoring can be rewarding and enjoyable.

R4: Most of them have a personal tutor; I did private tutoring for a year. The student would come to me every day for an hour; I'd start off with some reading and do whatever homework has to be done; I'd review whatever the teacher had done and give him a short quiz; I found tutoring to be very enjoyable and convenient.

One of the participants added a negative perspective to the issue of private tutors.

R1: This was supposedly done to allow the tutors to revise the work for the coming week so that the child was one up on the others.

R2: Private tutoring was very rewarding because it's more one on one and you actually get to know a person, what makes them tick; the simple fact that somebody doesn't know the alphabet and after a week he knows all 26 letters- that is very rewarding; able to put letters together to form a word; able to put words together to form a sentence; able to put sentences together to form a paragraph and write something creative and I feel maybe education should go that way in the beginning stages; the student who is taking a private tutor, he's also got to pay for that; so his attitude is more receptive to learning.

**Discussion:** The participants who did private tutoring part-time felt that it was one of the positive aspects of teaching in Saudi Arabia. They found it rewarding both financially as well as in terms of satisfaction gained by making a difference in the academic lives of the students. The other participant did not engage in private tutoring herself and that might explain her attitude towards it.

- **Adult education**

R2 is the only participant who also worked in the adult education sector and found this to be a very rewarding and enjoyable experience

R2: Here my experiences were somewhat more fruitful, enjoyable and more relaxed. I found the students to be more polite, more enthusiastic because, one, they were paying large sums of money towards the course they were taking and, two, if they failed the course, they would be kicked out of their jobs; so they took their jobs very seriously; I found the students to be more friendly, maybe because of the age groups that I was working with; they were more dedicated to their work, more honest- so that was a good experience for me; they completed exercises, they always asked stuff besides what we

were discussing in classroom situations- stuff related to life and how it correlates to what we are studying in the classroom. I always was enthusiastic to give more, to do extra for them, to check up on the Internet, to ask people if I didn't know something and I enjoyed my experience with them tremendously.

**Discussion:** Not much can be deduced from the view of the participant who worked with adult students in the education sector. This participant felt that their positive attitudes towards learning were probably a result of the fact that they were paid for their studies and stood to gain incentives in the workplace. This singular view is, however, not representative of the sample population.

b. Learners' behaviour

- **Discipline**

Three participants experienced problems with discipline in the classroom.

R1: The discipline in the school was not good- the children were extremely noisy, called out in class, moved around when they wanted and seldom did homework. The only recourse the teachers had was to report the child to the admin section and if there were too many complaints about a certain child, the parents were called in- all very well in theory, but seldom happened in practice. We were not supposed to raise our voices or put a child on time out and as is here – not allowed to lay a hand on the child.

R4: Because I am so obsessed with discipline it was very difficult for me at the beginning. The children had no structure; they could do what they wanted; this is what they're used to, even at home- they have maids at home that raise them- their mothers are either out shopping or working- with this result- the children usually get away with anything; they get to do what they want to- if they don't want to do their homework, the nanny does it for them or when the mother gets home they will help the child or the child just doesn't do it and doesn't hand it in and that's how it is it.

R2: We tried to instill a very strong discipline in the students. As a disciplinarian coming from South Africa, you come into a classroom, they'd respect you, there'd be silence in the classroom, everybody would cooperate. Coming to Saudi Arabia, you find that that is not very much the case.

R3: Discipline was controlled, but many teachers did not implement the discipline policy of the school on a regular basis.

One participant stressed that it was difficult to instill discipline (see section 3.3.6) in some students because of their backgrounds and personal circumstances.

R4: It was a little bit hard because you don't know what the teacher has done before you in the other classes, but what I found was that if I set a routine at the beginning, the kids would follow and I kept to it throughout the year, so I felt I was successful with discipline, where homework was concerned and manners; You do find that one or two individuals are completely lost, they're not going to do anything; A lot of these students- you're not sure what's happening at home or even if the parents are at home, because in many cases you find that the maids are raising them and they've got that kind of anger in them or they have their own issues, so they come to school and you're not always sure how to deal with them; I found that with just a little bit of a stare, I didn't have to raise my voice, they'd calm down quickly.

**Discussion:** Most of the participants feel that discipline (see section 3.3.6) is not effectively maintained in their schools. According to them the problem stems from the fact that the students are paying extremely high school fees and feel that they are thus exempted from any other responsibilities other than attending classes. They also feel that teachers are not offered any protection and have no recourse in their daily dealings with students (see section 2.4.2).

- **Religious tolerance**

Two of the participants touched on the issue and concluded that religious freedom/tolerance (see section 3.2.2.1) is not practised in schools in Saudi Arabia and that religion influences the level of respect one is afforded.

R2: There is religious tolerance between the Muslims and few non-Muslims at school. However, suggestions of converting to their religion have always presented themselves. They wouldn't respect a teacher who is not of the same religion as they are, with the result that I always had comments that are very derogatory, insulting and things like that. We were strictly advised not to talk about religion or politics and so I rarely deviated from that.

R3: Celebrations in the Gregorian calendar is not celebrated in Saudi Arabia. For example, if you had something about dances or birthdays or Christmas or Jesus, it is completely frowned upon because of the religious notion of people.

**Discussion:** In their policy documents, Saudi Arabia states that no other religion except Islam will be promoted in the country (see section 3.1.7). This explains the problems non-Muslims encounter in Saudi Arabian schools.

c. Culture of teaching and learning

- **System of teaching**

All the participants expressed reservations about the culture of learning and teaching at school.

R1: Weekly plans were handed out a week in advance. This was supposedly to allow the parents or tutors (most of the girls had tutors) to revise the work for the following week so that the child was one up on the others. This caused a problem in that personally I often taught different work to that on the forecast- parents would complain and I would be told to make sure I did what was scheduled. The fact that I had not completed work was not an issue- I had to teach what was scheduled.

R2: From a teaching point of view, non-flexibility and no freedom stifle the teacher.”; “culturally it’s perceived that English is the language of “Westerners” and will corrupt the beliefs of the Muslims. This is a barrier teachers are faced with before entering the classroom. In the classroom, no teaching aids stimulate the learners’ minds, as all material has to be censored before given/shown to the students.

R3: It was clear that as long as parents paid the school fees, their kids would pass; there was no follow-up on kids doing badly and kids were never reprimanded for their lack of discipline.

R4: I was asked just to help out for two weeks until the teacher comes; the supervisor said they’re incorporating math and science for the first time... she asked me to teach just the concepts of science and just threw me into the classroom; I was like, O my God; I needed to recap, I didn’t see the textbooks yet, I didn’t know what was going on; fortunately for me, it was familiar concepts; at the end of the lesson, I went back to the staffroom and the supervisor told me they stopped doing math and science in Grade 3; I found it so weird.

**Discussion:** Most participants felt that they were hampered by the rigidity caused by the weekly plan system, which does not allow any flexibility. The participants also cited the problem of students’ indifference to learning English and lack of resources at some schools. The participants also felt that money plays a big part in the running of the schools and that schools tried to satisfy their ‘customers’ at the expense of teachers. One participant was taken aback at being sent to teach a class on her first day at a new school without a proper orientation.



- **Quality of education**

All the participants agreed that the curriculum offered at their schools was of a very high standard and above the level of the students.

R1: The material used was American for first language speakers. As far as I was concerned this was way above the level of the girls- but the parents wanted this and the powers that be would do anything to please the parents. The girls were taught math, science and the various parts of English (comprehension, spelling, phonics, grammar, and writing) from this American system.

R2: Material taught (American course: Scott Foresman/ Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich) is of high standard and good quality. However, this seems to be way above the heads of these students.

R3: The level of work at the school, in terms of books they were using, I felt was beyond the ability of the students for example, the books used for students as a first language were not ideal for Arab students; I think that the Arab culture is important to the students and the books and customs portrayed in books are not relevant to kids in Saudi Arabia.

R4: The books were first language English books from America and I found it was very difficult at the beginning to bring anything across to the children because they are Arabic first language speakers and to top it off, most of them couldn't speak a word of English.

One of the participants was worried about the qualifications and suitability of teachers.

R1: As far as teachers were concerned- no one had to have a teaching degree or diploma to teach English- the only criteria was a degree taken in English. The math and science teachers were pharmacists and the others had degrees in literature or other forms of English- but no teaching qualification. This was okay for the higher grades, but the powers that be has this odd notion that if one had never taught before, one was given grade 1, 2 or 3. They did not realize that these had to be taught by specialists in this area. As a result the girls were lacking in basic phonic and spelling knowledge. Reading was also weak. Oral English was fair as most of the girls spoke English to their Filipino nannies, had a parent that spoke good English or had traveled extensively and could thus communicate adequately.

One participant felt that Saudi Arabia has the structures in place to provide quality education but they are hampered by the business concepts applied in schools.

R3: Education is run as a business here and the welfare of the students is not always a priority for many people.

One participant was concerned about the ministerial regulations requiring offensive material to be removed from books (see section 1.1).

R2: Books have to be defaced before entering the classroom i.e. pictures of certain things blackened, pages cut out or sometimes a complete story removed. This is due to Ministry of Education regulations.

Another participant was very impressed with parental involvement (see section 2.4.2) at her school.

R4: Mothers are at home and their lives are centered around the child and what's happening at school, especially when it comes to exam time, everybody wants their child to get 100%; they (parents) are interested in helping in any way they can; the parents are very involved in the children's school work; the parents, everything, their whole lives revolve around the children.

One participant touched on the point of the limited help available to weak students.

R4: The bad thing is that the students who did not progress as well as the others, they were left behind. There's no side curriculum or extra curriculum to help those students who are suffering, everyone is (expected to be) on the same level; I just felt sorry for those students cause the levels of the books were just too high for them.

One participant described the students at her current school as very competitive, bordering on obsessed with success.

R4: These girls, they are even more driven than the school I was before; they are perfectionist in every way; if they can't get something right, they get frustrated, they cry, they're really emotional; they panic that they are not going to pass; even a simple pop quiz in the class gives them stress levels you will not believe; this is the concern I have about these kids, that they're gonna have a nervous breakdown; they are so paranoid; they're scared they not going to come first, scared they're not going to perfect whatever work they have to do.

**Discussion:** The participants agreed unanimously that the standards of the resource material and the level of English used are too high for the intended students (see section 3.3.1). Schools are also not selective about the calibre and qualifications of teachers. It seems that none of the schools have any effective structures to deal with learners with special educational needs (see section 3.3.7). Other issues of concern to participants were the competitiveness of the students (see section 1.1) and the business model pursued by

the schools at the detriment of the students and teachers. One participant highlighted the positive and helpful attitude of most parents at her schools.

- **Accountability/responsibility**

There were some concerns about the issue of accountability (see section 2.4.2) encountered by two participants.

R1: I had no freedom in presenting lessons and teachers would be punished for the silliest mistakes; I found that as a teacher there was no incentive to teach a different way to get the children to understand or sense of satisfaction that the children had worked to the best of their ability. At one stage when I did take another approach to make the children think, I was hauled over the coals and then taken out of the classroom and transferred to the remedial section.

R2 felt that only teachers at the school are expected to be accountable (see section 2.4.2) and that students are allowed to get away with most misbehaviour.

R2: Teachers are expected to account for everything including the key to the bathroom. A signature has to be attached to everything including all resource materials. Pupils on the other hand are less accountable for themselves or their education, coming from the wealthy backgrounds some of them do. Their work is presented in any fashion if and when completed; the students are regarded as “customers” and the theory of “the customer is always right” prevails. The students know this and therefore teaching has become almost a business. Pupils never take any responsibility for their work or actions. The teacher will always be at fault. Management supports the student and **NOT** the teacher in all aspects.

**Discussion:** The participants found it extremely difficult to function in the school system as they are used to the principles of accountability and responsibility (see section 2.4.2). They complained that only teachers are expected to be accountable and students are allowed to get away with almost anything. No assistance was offered by the management of the schools, which led to further frustration for the teachers.

- **Promotion of critical thinking**

Two participants agree that their school does not promote critical thinking amongst the students. The general feeling is that teachers are responsible for students' marks and should do whatever is necessary to get students to pass.

R1: The mark system was really different to South African schools- all tests were out of 15 for midterm exams and 30 for end of year exams. The true marks were seldom reflected on the reports. We were not allowed to give less than 10 out of 15 or 20 out of 30. So the

marks were changed to reflect this- in other words- if a child got 3 out of 15 for a test- the parent would see 10 out of 15!!! No one was allowed to fail and at the end of the year every one passed. I found this extremely frustrating, as the girls were never allowed to realize their shortcomings and be given the opportunity to improve or acknowledge the fact that certain areas needed extra work or understanding. The approach to teaching is rote, memory and regurgitation with no promotion of critical thinking.

R2: Pupils are not thinkers at all. They rely solely on the teacher in the classroom or the private tutor at home. For testing purposes, pupils are to be given a pre-test before the actual test. This is for examinations likewise. Many if not all of these students will die with their brains sealed and unused.

**Discussion:** The system of rote-learning and boosting marks of non-deserving students was a major problem for the participants. Schools are concerned with producing good results at any cost probably to attract prospective students. This is in stark contrast with the values espoused in South African policy documents (see section 2.4.2).

d. Teacher's relationships with others

- **Dealings with management**

Two of the participants did not portray management favorably at their schools.

R3: I also felt that the administration was not really approachable. If you had an issue that needed to be straightened out, you would get lots of opposition from the administration and obviously this would affect you later on in the year in terms of contract renewal and your status at the school.

R2: I was called on several occasions because of a timetable clash... the person responsible for drawing up the timetable always got me mixed up with another teacher. So, there were times when I had to be in a class or not be in a class- if I wasn't in a class, I would be called into the administration department and given a severe warning or scolding.

One participant described management as helpful and efficient.

R4 (laughing): They have lots and lots of secretaries running around, doing everything, drawing up your reports, they type out letters, they do photocopying, you basically don't do much, but teach and prepare your lesson.

**Discussion:** Mixed responses were elicited about management. It appeared the ‘luck of the draw’ in terms of the school in which an individual worked when it came to the relationship with management. Two participants had great difficulties with the management at their schools while one has almost no problems.

- **Working conditions**

Mixed responses were elicited regarding working conditions as all participants worked in different kinds of schools.

R2: It’s much more relaxed, teachers aren’t really pressured into doing things and obviously the hours are much shorter than in South Africa.

R3: ...very tense and people were unsure if they would pass the three-month probation period; I felt that the supervisor was constantly bombarding people and checking up on them.

R4: The school where I currently work is “beautiful”; it looks like Club Mykynos. I’d go in the morning at 8h15 and I’d end at 12h00... just teach two classes; for English, they didn’t have periods, they just had a set time of an hour and a half in which you could cover whatever you liked.

**Discussion:** Working conditions such as shorter hours, relaxed atmosphere and ample resources depended on the respective schools. One participant focused on negative issues like job insecurity and constant scrutiny from management that threatened human dignity (see section 2.4.5.5).

- **Interaction with teachers from other countries**

Here a variety of opinions were expressed.

R4: They are so dedicated, they spend their whole lives at school, evenings, afternoons etc. They don’t mind spending their own money to make worksheets, charts, all of it; it’s a pleasure for them to be teaching and most of them do it to get out of the house and it’s not just something they have to do, they want to do it; I found my relationship with these people amazing, I love it.

R3: They were from Egypt, Jordan, Sudan and many of them studied in renowned countries like the States and the UK: there were some problems; there was a language barrier because many of them could only speak Arabic. On the other hand there were those who were bilingual in English and Arabic, but you tend to get along with them and I really enjoyed the company, the time, I spent with them.

R2: Most teachers from other countries in my school are not happy in their positions; most of my colleagues are not very motivated and just see this as another job.

**Discussion:** Most participants experienced their international colleagues in a positive manner. They are reported to be hard-working and dedicated by some of the participants despite the language barrier. One participant, however, described his colleagues as lacking job satisfaction.

- **Attitudes towards English**

One participant was gratified with the commitment and appreciation the students have shown towards learning English.

R3: The kids appreciate what you are doing for them and they are always in a positive frame of mind to learn, especially English.

Another participant feels that the school was sufficiently serious about studying English.

R1: The children from Grade 1 to 12 were at school from 6:30 a.m. to 1:50 p.m. This was really a long time for the grades 1 to 3- they were "finished" by the last three lessons- and this was usually the allocated for English!

Another participant commented that students in the adult education sector were more driven by incentives to perform than students still at school.

R2: He would stand a chance of losing his job; people there took their work more seriously and the attitude towards learning English was more serious; it also opened up more opportunities for better positions in the company if they took English courses; so these are all the things that really inspired the students at SAMBA to really be serious about learning English.

Another participant found the students were very competitive and this might lead to psychological problems later in their lives.

R4: The children themselves, they strive for excellence, there's nothing about coming second; it's just about they need to be first all the time; because English is such an important thing in the Arab society, they want to have their English language perfect, they want to be able to speak fluently; they're somehow not doing it in the right fashion... it's more of a competitive thing; they argue and get upset over little things.

**Discussion:** Even when schools do prioritise the study of English, the students, particularly the adult students, are very aware of the importance of English. However, some students are too concerned and too competitive in their quest to master English.

e. Value clashes

In this section, participants were asked to respond to specific questions. The following questions were posed to them:

1. What values did you try to instill in your students?
2. Did you fail/succeed?
3. What value clashes made it difficult for you to teach certain values?

The responses were as follows:

- **Respect /Equality**

R3 experienced that students in Saudi Arabia tend to base the degree of respect on the nationality of individuals. He found that many students had a problem with people from Asian or even African backgrounds.

R3: Students would often disrespect the teacher and the people from Asian backgrounds would sometimes feel intimidated by students; The amount of students disrespecting the teachers, I found was very alarming, it wouldn't be something you would tolerate in South African society; and I tried to inculcate into students that if you respect someone the person would respect them and I also tried to create a situation in the classroom where I treated all the students the same; so I would come into the class and greet all the students and treat them the same in terms of doing their work, coming to class on time, all the day to day things they needed to do in class and I wouldn't be lenient on students depending on where he came from or if I knew his father or anything and hopefully the students would follow my example; I know in most cases it is the job of , not the teacher so much, but the job of the parents because usually this respect comes from the home; trying to teach them the respect you wanted them to practice would probably be overstepping the parameters, where the parents should be taking the lead and instill those values; I was successful to a certain extent because students started speaking to each other in the classroom and what I often did in my group work was mix Arab and Asian students, just to... give them the opportunity to work with someone from another culture; to a certain extent this worked well, but I found that many of the students would become aggressive if they were dominated by other students.

R3 continues: I also found that in many of the workplaces people were being mistreated in certain situations. You would find a person doing a job in a bank, for example, who was

not from Saudi Arabia although these people are doing a job that is considered not that important, they would be treated like dirt and basically bossed around as often as they could be bossed around; Many of them would be forced to stay here cause they wouldn't have anything better to go back home to; They couldn't express themselves as to how they were being mistreated and this I think infiltrated into the schools where you found a cleaner at the school being overpowered by young students who have some form of status in society, his father maybe knows someone or his father is from royal background. In many cases these people couldn't challenge the young students.

R3 adds: Teachers in the Middle East are powerless when it comes to instilling certain values in students. Students often overpower teachers in the classroom and teachers don't have a leg to stand on cause we are not at liberty to probably discuss situations that don't affect us, for example, respect for your parents or respect for your fellow student; Some students would consider respecting other cultures as not that important, but me as a teacher, who see everybody as equal, consider respect as very important because I think you have to earn someone's respect, it's not a matter of, let's say for example, I'm from England and you're from Pakistan and now we don't have to respect each other; Very often students think that when you reprimand them about things like this, they think they can run to their parents or administrators and speak to people about this and probably force you into saying you were wrong, you acted inappropriately; I don't consider this as acting inappropriately, I think that respect is fundamental in a classroom situation, in a work situation, I think in all forms of life it's important and I don't think I'll back off from this.

At her current school, R4 discovered that she was teaching only princesses directly related to the King of Saudi Arabia and was unsure how to handle the situation at first.

R4: I was really nervous and I thought, "Do I really wanna do this?" because I heard through other people that these children, they're spoiled, they don't have any respect, they're rude, if they don't feel like coming to school, they don't, if they don't do their work, there's nothing you can do; I felt very nervous and I thought, "No, I'm not gonna do it." I went to the principal and asked her to tell me more about the students and what the discipline is like at the school; she was adamant... she said none of their books indicate that they are from the Saud family; their names are only on the books and not the surnames cause they don't want the students to feel like they are superior; so they try and establish that everybody is equal; after we got that cleared up and I told them there would be no favoritism, you clean up your mess, you pick up your garbage... this is all what the school is about, trying to teach them to be whole, not to be spoiled cause all of them have their personal nannies; and when I mean personal nannies, I see them personally coming



into the classrooms to take the children's books to the car; these girls do nothing, they don't pick up their pens, but in my class obviously it's different; at the last parents meeting, I got a very positive response from the parents; they said the students like me, they were treated the same, it didn't matter from what family they were; for some reason, I don't know why, but that's working for me.

**Discussion:** The participants all agreed that respect (see section 2.4.2) had to be earned with effort. They were dismayed by the notion that nationality and class were intricately linked with respect (see section 1.1). They all noted that there is little equality (see section 2.4.5.2) among students and that both parents and school administrators did little to address the issue.

- **Responsibility**

R2 claimed that he tried to teach students responsibility (see section 2.4.2), but got poor results.

R2: ...being responsible for your work, being responsible for yourself, being responsible for your actions. I tried to teach them that they needed to do an exercise, whether it's class work or homework and if they don't complete it, give a valid reason as to why it was not completed on time. Copying and cheating for tests and examinations- that is one aspect that these children really, really master very well. I tried to instill in them the value of being honest, because at the end of the day, when you go out into the world, if you take a test, you are not gonna be able to copy; some of them would come and mess up the classroom, deface the school, deface the classroom. We strongly, strongly discipline them for actions like that.

R4 fought a losing battle to instill a sense of responsibility in her students (see section 2.4.5.7) in certain areas.

R4: One thing I can't get them to do is carry their own books; I tried my luck and said, "You guys have two hands, you know, carry your books to the door!" and they were laughing and said, "No, teacher, that's why the nannies are there." and when I asked them about their nannies, they said the nannies were with them from birth, so these are like their mothers.

**Discussion:** From all accounts, the participants face a losing battle in trying to teach responsibility (see section 2.4.5.7) and are defeated by the prevalent social norms (see section 3.2.2.1). A participant's carefree attitude towards enforcing students to do things

for themselves demonstrates how teachers have resigned themselves to the fact that certain values will not be successfully instilled in students.

- **Littering**

R3 tried to instill the value of not littering (see section 1.1) to his students with mixed results.

R3: They would just tell you that it's not their jobs to pick up any papers, "I have someone to do it for me, I don't have to do it." and they wouldn't realize that littering is what you could say... sinful. They don't learn the value of using the garbage bins, they don't learn the value of respecting places that they walk in or play in; to them it's an issue of I'm not supposed to do it.

R4 has the following to say about littering.

R4: They would dump the garbage on the floor, they wouldn't pick it up, even though the bin was right next to them, they'd throw it on the floor; once I went to a student and said, "You need to pick this up, you know there are no slaves around here and he looked at me and said, "Yes, there are maids." I said to him, "Well, you are going to pick that up." He said, "No, that's what they're here for, I'm not picking it up." I made him stand on the playground the whole break and wouldn't let him play and eventually he picked it up and threw it in the garbage; then I started the cleaning up sessions at the school where every class would get a turn to pick up garbage during break; I think it's a matter of enforcing these things, they don't know about it, they really don't know any better; they're used to having people doing things for them and yet after a while they actually started wanting to do it, they'd look forward to their break time cleaning duties; they wanted that responsibility; they wanted to know that I'm watching them and I'm praising them.

**Discussion:** Mixed results were forthcoming when trying to get students to pick up litter or avoid littering. Societal norms and pride make the students reluctant to pick up their litter, but they can be coached into the practice by incentive/s.

- **Accountability**

R3 experienced that many parents did not want to be accountable for the behavior of their children.

R3: Very often, parents, I think, they don't have the time to inculcate values into the kids; and when parents get to hear about these things, they often turn a blind eye, they tell you, "Is this really my child, how could you say something like this; especially in Saudi Arabia,

it's very difficult to strike a balance about confronting the parent about their child and about the things they do and trying to keep everybody else happy at the same time.

R2 had the following experience to relay on the issue of accountability.

R2: Now that I am in a more supervisory position, I had clashes with the staff that are reporting to me- they don't report to work on time and I have to take the blame for that; so it is never ever their fault, it is always somebody else's fault, shifting responsibility and the work that's allocated to them.

**Discussion:** Accountability appears to be a major problem among students, parents and managers. Everyone is keen to transfer the responsibility to others (see section 2.4.2).

- **Discipline**

R2 described the following disciplinary experience to illustrate the double standards applied at the school.

R2: One of the students did not know English very well, but I guess 'sit down' is a very common expression used in the school, so he should understand that by Grade 6. And I had a problem with him not being able to sit down during that particular lesson, so after 3, 4, 5 warnings I physically went to him and put him down in his chair. It wasn't an aggressive approach; I touched him on his shoulder and let him sit down. The following day I was called into the principal's office with my immediate supervisor and given a paper to sign whereby a SR 500 (about R750) would be deducted from my salary, that was not negotiable, I was told that they would shield me from the Education Ministry and the parents.

On another occasion R2 separated two students who were fighting. Afterwards he claims:

R2: There was another deduction from my salary because I put my hands on a student after I was warned not to touch a student. I think I did the right thing by separating them, but laying my hands on them got me a salary deduction; how you separate two students who are fighting without laying your hands on them, that's debatable.

R4 described a disciplinary incident she experienced on her first teaching day in Saudi Arabia.

R4: The first day I walked into class, there were a few girls sitting in the front and the last little boy to enter the classroom...he was very assertive; he walked into the class and said to the girl, "You are a girl, get up and go and sit at the back." I looked at him and said, "You

go sit at the back, you just got here, and he looked at me and asked, “Who are you?” I said, I am your new teacher and he said, “Well, I’m a boy and I have to sit in front.” I explained to him that he came in late and should sit at the back and we’ll arrange the seats every week and do a rotation and everyone will get a chance to sit in front; he just started crying, “My mother said I should sit in front, I need to sit in front, I must sit in front!” and he just threw the biggest tantrum I’ve ever seen in my life; eventually towards the end of the day I called him aside and explained to him that we are all equal, you need to treat people with respect; he looked at me like he didn’t understand anything and repeated, “ But I am a man.” I said to him, “No, You are a child and I am a teacher and you need to learn to respect everyone in the class.” After three or four days he got the picture because every day it would be the same thing, he came into the class and wanted to sit in front and whoever was in his seat, especially if it was a girl, had to move. Eventually I spoke to his mother and she said, “You know, in the Arab culture, the men are the leaders in the family and the smaller children act out what’s happening at home.

**Discussion:** Culture seems to play a major part in approaches to discipline in the Saudi Arabian society (see section 3.1.4). Men are the leaders and women are expected to take a back seat to men in important matters (see section 3.3.2).

- **Religion**

R2 relates the following experience about religion.

R2: I am Christian and predominantly I am teaching a Muslim people. The Muslim teachers, who teach Religious Instruction, usually incited the children not to listen to Christian teachers, secondly, not to listen to the English teachers, because it is taught that we are bringing Western values to the system which is against their religion.” R2 continues, “Many times students would try to convert me and ask me to say a couple of lines, which they call ‘suras’ in their religious terminology and I would therefore become a Muslim.

**Discussion:** Interestingly, the Muslim participants made almost no references to religion during the interview phase. Participants found students very religious and they made concerted efforts to try to convert non-Muslims (see section 4.5.3).

- **Wastefulness/Appreciation**

R3 describe students in Saudi Arabia as very wasteful and not really appreciative of possessions. He relayed the following experience.

R3: I found that whenever there was a party or function or celebration of some sorts, many students would waste lots of food and there would be such an abundance of food that the workers or people that worked with me, we would eat some of the food, but obviously we couldn't consume all the food and in many cases I know the food was thrown away.

R3 continues: You try to inculcate into students that they shouldn't waste, that there are other people who are less fortunate than us, but they don't take heed of things like this; on another occasion they would just waste more food; I found even at restaurants little kids would order such a big meal that they wouldn't be able to consume and eventually they would leave the restaurant and half of their plates would still be untouched; I found that this was a serious problem with the kids and it really saddens me to see that people waste food like this, they don't think of the next person.

R4 is currently trying to get the older girls in her class to appreciate the protectiveness of the society they live in.

R4: I'm teaching princesses and students that are in a higher class bracket and their fun and entertainment is traveling to different locations and staying in hotels for months, etc; I was telling the girls about an incident I had at one of my school that involved abuse- and they looked at me and said "Teacher, your life is like a movie," and I said to them "No, your lives are like fairy tales, my life is the reality; This is what happens around the world; You get all sorts of problems at home, at school where children are exposed to different things in the environment; to them, they don't understand any of it because their lives are so sheltered here.

R4: They see things from a different point of view, they're exposed to the outside; The teachers they had were either from this country and they themselves don't know what's going on around them, but being an outsider or foreigner and showing them that not everything is a bed of roses; it just makes them aware of the world around them.

**Discussion:** According to the responses, the students appear to be extremely wasteful and have no sense of appreciation of what they have. They appear ignorant of their benefits and take them for granted. According to one teacher, they are also out of touch with the reality the rest of the world has to face because of their sheltered lives.

f. Comparison with South African education

One participant felt that school fees in Saudi Arabia are very expensive in comparison to South Africa.

R3: If I think of a school in South Africa where you pay 30 to 40000 rand, here in Saudi Arabia that would be for a very low-class school.

Another participant touched on the disparity in the standards of education between the two countries.

R4: Students in Saudi Arabia are literally more advanced than their peers in South Africa; I found that their first grade reading syllabus is equivalent to the fourth grade syllabus in South Africa; their math, their science, even their arts syllabus is far more advanced than South Africa's; I found that at the end of the year most of my Grade 1 students could read; I think easier than back home, our classes aren't so big; I mean compared to 30 or 40 students in a class to 20 and going to eight students in a classroom, really, you have that individual attention with them which I think is also a bonus. Because the classes are so small, you have that one-on-one." I feel if South Africa's education system could work that out, it would be a lot easier; I wonder what would happen if we pushed our own children back home to the levels that's happening here.

The last participant made the following comparison about the two countries.

R1: My experience in this school made me realize that although we have many problems in South Africa in our education system- we are still giving our children a broader and fairer education than these girls are getting.

**Discussion:** There are obvious differences and similarities between the two countries and their education systems (see chapters 2 & 3). The participants touched on some issues, such as the difference in school fees and the teacher: pupil ratio. It is felt that classes are more intimate and students receive more individual attention in Saudi Arabian schools. However, as can be gathered from the last participant, this does not guarantee that students in Saudi Arabia receive a better education than their counterparts in South Africa (see section 2.4.2).

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

The general opinion gathered from the responses of the participants' reveals that most are not impressed with the values and system of education prevailing at their schools. Most participants are concerned about the system of lesson plans implemented in their schools, the quality of education and a lack of critical thinking in their students.

Most participants feel that their students have very little sense of responsibility, are not accountable for their actions and respect between teachers and students leaves much to be desired. The participants also reported that religious tolerance is virtually non-existent in Saudi Arabian schools.

The study further revealed that punctuality does not appear to be a major problem in Saudi Arabian schools. Discipline is the biggest problem experienced by the participants while no one experienced any problems with private tutoring and adult education.

Dealings with management and interacting with teachers from other countries drew mixed responses from the participants. The working conditions at schools also showed variety. Half the participants felt that schools were not really serious about teaching while others felt that students were making a concerted effort to succeed.

The final chapter provides a summary of key patterns, which emerged from the findings.

# Chapter 6

## Conclusions and recommendations

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

As a South African educator who has just experienced a new democratic dispensation and its concomitant new policies, my underlying expectations and value preferences shaped my abilities and attitudes as a professional teacher.

I became interested in how a South African educator would cope in a totally different society, namely a theocracy based on fundamentalist Islamic ideals. How values embedded in my and other South African teachers' teaching might clash and shape our foreign teaching experiences in Saudi Arabia formed the backbone of the study.

A thorough overview of the official values contained in the policy documents of the South African and Saudi Arabian education systems was used as a point of reference for the study. This was augmented with current critical issues in the two education systems to portray the non-official viewpoint. The main problem of the study was: **What are the teaching experiences of South African teachers in Saudi Arabian schools? How do underlying value clashes in the classroom situation shape these teachers' experiences?**

An empirical investigation using a qualitative approach was conducted. Data was obtained by sending e-mails to South African educators working in Saudi Arabia at that time requiring them to write about their personal teaching histories in Saudi Arabia.. The participants came from both private national and private international schools in Riyadh. This method proved to be of limited success as only one returned e-mail was deemed to be useful and another participant submitted a hand-written narrative. It was then decided to make use of personal interviews on audiotape. This method proved to be more successful and in-depth interviews of between 20- 45 minutes were conducted with three South African educators. The participant who submitted the hand-written narrative was also used for the personal interviews.



Once the data was collected, comparisons were drawn between the responses of the participants in order to gauge the similarities and the differences. Their responses were presented in their original narrative format. Finally, a discussion of the results was presented drawn from the responses of the interviewees.

The data obtained from the narratives and interviews by the participants, as well as the range of issues identified in this dissertation's review of the literature, raise a number of concerns regarding the experiences of South African educators in Saudi Arabian schools. In this final chapter, some of the chief implications from this research are discussed and suggestions for further study are provided.

### **6.1.1 Conclusions**

Chapter 1 of the study served as an orientation and dealt with the background to the study, the statement of the research problem, motivation, aims, significance and objectives of the study.

Chapter 2 focused on the theoretical framework of comparative and international education and how values influence the education system in South Africa. The policy documents on values prevalent in South African education were included in this section as well as education in South Africa after the dismantling of apartheid.

Chapter 3 comprised a literature study on Saudi Arabian education focusing on the socio, political and historical aspects. It also included a discussion of current critical issues in their education system.

Chapter 4 dealt with the methodology or procedures used in gathering data for the study. It focused on the sources for the study, how the interview questions were developed and how the sample group for the study was selected.

Chapter 5 focused on the findings from the data collected drawing a comparison of the similarities and differences of participants' opinions.

## **6.2 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS**

The main patterns emanating from the research follow.

### **6.2.1 Domination of businesslike values by educational values**

The management of the various schools seems to place a lot more emphasis on the business model of the school than on educational principles. As long as school fees are paid, students can 'make and break' as they please. Schools are reluctant to act against errant students at the risk of losing 'customers'. Teachers were not properly orientated when joining schools and expected to perform at optimum level at all times.

### **6.2.2 Non-official values vs. official values**

The study reveals that values like respect for others, equality, being open to other languages and caring for the environment, enshrined in the Saudi Education Policy (see section 3.2.2.1) are not practised in Saudi classrooms. Students appear to follow the norms they experience in society and are not always open to entertaining values foreign to them.

### **6.2.3 Rigidity of management**

Management of the various schools seems inflexible to innovative ideas and foreign teaching strategies. Although most teachers are unhappy with lesson plans, weekly plans and the curriculum, school managers rarely deviate from what has been prescribed. They appear to be only content with producing results at any cost. Responsibility, accountability and promotion of critical thinking seem to be of little significance.

### **6.2.4 Foreign relations**

Teachers from other countries were experienced as hardworking and dedicated although many of them were not happy in their jobs. South African teachers do not seem to have many problems interacting with teachers from other countries despite a language barrier at times. Students were not always experienced in a positive manner by the South African educators. Discipline or the lack thereof seems to be the main cause of this weak bond.

### **6.2.5 Bridging the cultural divide**

Intercultural relations made it difficult initially for South African educators to adapt to their new environment, which also led to so many teachers exiting the Saudi education after only a short stint. Preconceived notions and education values led to many misunderstandings between South African educators and managers, students, colleagues and parents.

### **6.2.6 Positive issues**

Many positive aspects of the Saudi education system also came to light. Active parental involvement, private tutoring, a mostly favorable working environment and adult education were some of the issues that make teaching in Saudi Arabia attractive. Access to free education from elementary to tertiary level should also be mentioned.

## **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.3.1 Recommendations for South African educators currently working in Saudi Arabia**

- South African educators currently working in Saudi Arabia should be more cooperative in sharing their experiences with their countrymen. They have already experienced the pitfalls of Saudi Arabian education and can serve as advisors to prospective educators.
- They should also accept the value system and various programmes prevalent in Saudi Arabian schools. Their experiences of the Saudi system can be beneficial to the country on so many levels.

### **6.3.2 Recommendations for South African educators planning to work in Saudi Arabia.**

- South African educators working or planning to work in Saudi Arabia should familiarise themselves with the education system before taking up a position.

- They should thoroughly investigate the school they are opting for as this can make the difference between an enriching teaching experience and a poor one.
- They should also realise that the values currently associated with South African education do not prevail in Saudi Arabian schools.
- It is suggested that they contact educators currently working in Saudi Arabia in order to understand exactly what is expected of them.

### **6.3.3 Recommendations for the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education**

- The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education should conduct orientation programmes or at least provide an information booklet for educators from foreign countries. This will make it easier for educators to adjust to the educational set up in schools.
- The Ministry of Education should look at the current system of teacher qualification criteria and insist on teachers having at least a teaching diploma.
- Studies should be conducted on the performance of foreign teachers to ascertain their problems.
- The curricula used by both private national and private international schools should be looked at and a model more suitable to the needs of the students in a particular school should be found.
- The out-dated system of rote learning and memorisation should be addressed.
- Teachers' unions to look after the needs of educators should be formed.
- The system of promotions in schools should be formalised to reflect merit.
- A standardised, shorter form of lesson plans should be created that does not consume so much of teachers' time.

### **6.3.4 Recommendations for the South African Department of Education**

- An effort should be made to orientate prospective educators at the South African Embassy in Saudi Arabia. Special attention should be lent to curricula, conditions of employment and local customs. The expertise of educators who previously worked in Saudi Arabia could be sought.
- More research on the phenomenon of South African educators working in Saudi Arabia should be encouraged.
- The embassies should form an educational desk that can also serve as a database for all South African educators in Saudi Arabia.

- Positive aspects like smaller classrooms and free education at all levels from the Saudi Arabian education system should be examined.

#### **6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

- Since this research deals only with educators in one city in Saudi Arabia, a similar study should be done in other cities.
- The focus of this study was the role of values in the experiences of educators. Further study can be conducted on issues like the experiences of South African students in Saudi Arabian schools.
- This current study is not exhaustive and should be conducted again in a few years time to see if any changes have occurred.
- Another area of study could be the attitudes and experiences of Saudi and other foreign educators working with South African educators.
- A comparative study involving a South African school and a Saudi Arabian school can also be pursued.

#### **6.5 CONCLUSION**

This research investigated the role of conflicting values in the teaching experiences of South African educators in Saudi Arabian educational institutions. It provided a sense of appreciation for the opportunity to work in a multicultural educational environment. It is hoped that South African teachers and other foreign teachers working in an education system other than their own will benefit from the insights portrayed by this study.

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## Appendix A: Letter of Permission

Dear Fellow South African:

This letter asks you kindly to participate and cooperate in this study through answering the enclosed open-ended question and information sheet. Participation in this study will be confidential to the highest extent.

This study is to fulfill the Masters requirements in Comparative and International Education at the University of South Africa. The study aims to discover the role of values in the teaching experiences of South African educators in Saudi Arabian schools.

Finally, your participation and answers will be essential to complete my research.

Please complete the following details:

1. Gender: Male  Female
2. What is the highest degree you earned? Bachelor   
Master   
Doctorate
3. How long have you worked as a teacher in South Africa? (..... years)
4. How long have you worked in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia? (..... years)
5. Current Position held at school: Teacher   
Head of Department
6. Type of school: Private National  Private International

Please return to: Keith Arnolds- E-mail: [arnoldsk@ipa.edu.sa](mailto:arnoldsk@ipa.edu.sa) or [kiddoinsaudi@yahoo.com](mailto:kiddoinsaudi@yahoo.com)

Question: What is your experience as a South African educator teaching in a Saudi Arabian school?

This is an open-ended question and I would appreciate both positive and negative experiences. You may answer this question from angle you choose.

## **Appendix B: My Personal Teaching History in Saudi Arabia**

I was recruited to work for a private Saudi national school in 2001. The school is situated in the capital city, Riyadh. During the interview process, the management of the school made numerous attractive promises in order to lure teachers to the school. They admitted that they were interested in acquiring highly qualified teachers at a fraction of what they paid teachers from other Anglophonic countries. What was disturbing about the interview process was that they rejected all applications from black and Indian South African teachers, irrespective of their qualifications or experience. Preference was given to white teachers with “coloured” teachers further down the pecking order. This left a bad taste with most of the teachers recruited especially after experiencing the newfound democratic practices in South Africa (see 2.4.2).

I did not expect much before departing to Saudi Arabia. Visions of endless deserts, oilfields and substandard facilities were expected. Surprisingly, Riyadh was filled with skyscrapers, modern technology, massive shopping malls that catered for all tastes and thousands and thousand of “American-style” cars. On arrival in Saudi Arabia, all the female teachers were taken to an “interrogation room” and kept there until they were eventually released into the care of the owner of the school. All teachers were subsequently taken to a hotel for the night where we would be moved eventually to “villas” as stated in our contracts. We ended up staying in the hotel for three months. The school, in the meantime, built one big villa where each teacher got one room with shared bathroom and kitchen facilities. This arrangement contravenes the laws of the country as single males and females may not share the same accommodation and single Muslim female teachers may not live in the same establishment as males.

The contracts we signed in South Africa were then nullified and we had to sign new contracts with different stipulations than earlier agreed to. I was initially offered a family contract that provided for the school to cover travel, housing and accommodation cost. The new contract offered single status with the option of bringing family over at my own expense. Many teachers were affected by the new stipulations and true to our South African roots; a delegation was formed with a list of grievances to be presented to the management of the school. This measure proved to be unsuccessful as the management made it clear, in no uncertain terms, that protest action is not allowed in Saudi Arabia. An escape clause was offered to unhappy teachers that included reimbursing the school for all visa costs incurred, working for one month without pay and paying your own way back



to South Africa. These incidents proved to be demoralizing to most teachers who then vowed to stay only until the end of the academic year.

Schooling in Saudi Arabia is completely different from South Africa. While South African schools generally occupy a lot of space, Saudi schools look like apartment buildings. The confined space doesn't allow room for sporting facilities like soccer/rugby fields etc. Classrooms are relatively small and usually only accommodating about twenty students. The school we worked in was an Arabic-medium school that offered an American English course. It took most teachers a while to make the switch from South African English, which is essentially British-based, to American English.

The students provided the next culture shock. As Saudi Arabia is seen as the cradle of Islam, we expected students to be very conservative. Instead, we might just as well have walked into a local school in the United States. Most students refused to wear the traditional prescribed Saudi uniform and were rather sporting the latest fashions found in major American and European cities. The students were extremely Western-like in the manner, speech and even outlook on life. They were up to date with the latest fashion trends, music, movies and cultures of especially the United States. Most students spent some time in either the US, UK, Canada or Australia, which helped the South African teachers make the adaptation to teaching in the school easier. Students appeared eager to learn more about Western culture and did not really show any interest in their own Arab culture.

The whole scenario changed after September 11 with students cheering the attacks in the US and singing praises to the suicide bombers. The researcher was completely taken aback by this move and after talking to a few students, discovered that the Islamic instructors at school influenced them. The researcher noticed that some students became aloof and withdrawn and tried to minimize their contact with the South African teachers. Things came to a head when some parents asked the school to remove their children from English classes offered by Non-Muslim South African teachers.

Most schools in Saudi Arabia are fairly well resourced and it was a bonus to work in a school where every possible teaching aid was provided. Students appeared eager to improve their knowledge of English, but are, in the estimation of the researcher, not prepared to work too hard to attain knowledge. Most of the students at the school came from rich families and just being registered at our school was seen as a status symbol.

Students had Asian personal drivers ferrying them to and from school and everywhere else they needed to be. These drivers would always carry the students' bags to and from classrooms. This brought the researcher in conflict with some students who, when confronted with the phenomenon, retorted that this is the practice in the country and it is seen as demeaning for a Saudi student to carry his own bag.

Learning in the classroom was restricted to rote learning and teachers were told by management not to deviate from the teaching methods provided by the school. Before exams, teachers had to compile review sheets molded on the actual exams for students in order to ensure no one fails. Even then, the lowest grade assigned to students was 75%. The researcher felt that students were not being adequately prepared for the future, but could not do anything to change this paradigm. The school seemed only interested in receiving school fees from students and was not prepared to do anything that would jeopardize the status quo. Ill-discipline was a marked feature of the school. Teachers were respected on the basis of their nationality and this led to a sense of really low morale amongst teachers from Asian and Arab countries. Frequent complaints to the management about the disciplinary problems at the school were met with indifference. Teachers were told to come up with their own mechanisms to improve discipline in the classrooms. On one occasion, a colleague assaulted a student and was docked half his pay. On another occasion, a colleague was summarily dismissed and repatriated to his home country. Students latched onto this scenario and would routinely threaten teachers that they would report them to management if the teachers came down too hard on them.

Students showed absolutely no regard for responsibility, authority and punctuality. They came to school whenever they wanted and always looked for ways to avoid doing work. They knew the system at the school and also how to use it to their own advantage. Teachers came to school every morning expecting it to be their last day. Not surprisingly, most South African teachers left at the end of the first contract year.

As an educator, it would be preferable to teach students respect for books and learning material. This value becomes difficult to instill as the schools in Saudi Arabia tell teachers to deface books by either ripping out, crossing out or obscuring any references regarded as Un-Islamic. To the researcher, defacing learning material is tantamount to selling your soul. Thus, it becomes increasingly difficult to instill certain values in students when management and parents discourage you. Students should be taught certain life and social skills made nearly impossible in a country where the sexes may not mix. In a sense,

the researcher admits to not being open-minded enough to accept some of the customs practiced in the country and feels that certain aspects of society need to be revamped.

One positive aspect of the school was a feature of the administration system. Teachers had to prepare weekly plans informing parents and students what will be taught the coming week. Teachers experienced this feature both negative and positive. Some teachers felt it was restrictive and made no allowances for any eventualities. The researcher saw it as an effective way to monitor what teachers were doing in class and allowing parents privilege to exactly what their children were learning or not.

The researcher then moved to one of the government tertiary institutions where he presently teaches English to Saudi adult males. This institution is in marked contrast to the previous school where the researcher taught. Education has now become more specialized and disciplinary problems almost completely disappeared, largely due to the institution's zero-tolerance policy on ill discipline. Education is provided free of charge and the government pays a monthly stipend to all registered students. Defaulting students are barred from registering at any other tertiary institution in Saudi Arabia. This policy allows for instructors to focus essentially on the core business of teaching.

The institution also makes no discrimination on the basis of nationality and rewards teachers on the basis of merit only. The country should be commended for their tertiary education set up as thousand of Saudis attain accredited qualifications every year.

After four years in Saudi Arabia, the researcher declares that he still feels that Saudi Arabia a long way to go to meet international education standards. The rote learning system they employ renders adults who are not really able to solve problems or develop critical-thinking skills. On numerous occasions the researcher would see adult students not doing work in during a particular session. They normally respond that they do not have a pen. It appears if a lot of them do not possess the skills to solve a small problem like that. Their insistence to be given special treatment is another area of concern. They do not allow someone from a third world country to challenge them and immediately assumes an air of superiority when dealing with citizens from Asian and other Arab countries. They also do not easily accept no as an answer and if they do not get their way via haggling, they normally get an influential person to mediate on their behalf.

## Appendix C: Copy of Weekly Plan Form

### WEEKLY PLAN

Week:

Date:

Term:

Grade:

Days of the week/sub	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Note</i>
English for Saudi Arabia						
Reading, comprehension and vocabulary						
Grammar						
Writing						
Dictation & spelling						
Phonics/ TOEFL						
Math						
Science						
Homework						

T.C.L. = Take class look

V = Vocabulary

W.F.D = Words for dictation

Comp = Composition

T.B. = Teacher Book

H.W. = Homework

Par=Paragraph

Dict= Dictation

SWB = Spelling work book    GWB = Grammar work book

Rev. =Review

Ch. = Chapter

P = Page

Gr = Grammar

Pb = practice book

Compr= Comprehension

T.R. = Teacher Resource

Ev = Evaluation

Sec. = Section

W.Sh = Worksheet

R. =Reading

Re. = Revision

S.F.D. = Sentences for dictation

Sc = Science

T.F.D. = Text for dictation

**Appendix D: Copy of Lesson Plan Sheet**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>AL GHAD SCHOOL</b> <b>English Language Department</b></p>
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**Lesson Plan Sheet**

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Period: \_\_\_\_\_

**TOPIC:**

**SKILLS:**

**Objectives**-----  
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**Teaching Aids**-----  
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**Methods/Presentation**-----  
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**Follow-up (Applications); Homework**-----

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**Evaluation/Comments** -----

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**Appendix E: Copy of Lesson Plan Sheet**

**Al Rowad Schools**

Lesson Plan Sheet

(English Language Department)

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Period: \_\_\_\_\_

**TOPIC:** \_\_\_\_\_

**OBJECTIVES**

1. **EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. **PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**TEACHING AIDS** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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**SCHEME** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**SKILLS** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**POTENTIAL PROBLEMS** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**WARM-UP** -----  
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**PRESENTATION** -----  
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**CONTROLLED PRACTICE** -----  
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**FREER PRACTICE** -----  
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**FOLLOW-UP**  
**WORKSHEETS:** -----  
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**PROJECTS:** -----  
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**OTHERS:**-----  
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**SESSION EVALUATION** -----  
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