

# Building the Future (How Self-Managed Schools Can Benefit Saudi Arabia's Education)

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## ABSTRACT

Traditional public schools face significant challenges in the 21st century due to various factors, including the need for quick adaptation to technological advancements and the development of modern skills. In response to these challenges, educational decision-makers in Saudi Arabia are encouraged to study the experiences of other countries in improving K-12 education. One avenue of exploration is the development of self-managed schools, also known as charter schools in the United States of America. This study, conducted with meticulous attention to detail, aims to discover the development of fully government-funded self-managed schools in four countries: the United States of America, the United Kingdom, El Salvador, and Canada. The study also sought to find out ways to benefit from charter schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study used the documentary approach to obtain answers to the study questions.

**Keywords:** Self-managed schools, alternative schools, educational options, charter schools, educational administration.

## Introduction

In recent decades, countries have placed great importance on developing their capabilities and human resources, as these human resources are the most valuable wealth they have. Educational institutions are considered the most important entities capable of developing the capabilities and skills of future generations. Therefore, governments do not hesitate to allocate significant amounts of their budgets for education. Expectations from schools have changed; when public schools first started, the primary goal was to teach children local culture, reading, writing and arithmetic. These days, expectations from schools have become greater and more complex than before.

Providing educational services is no longer the sole concern for many governments around the world, as the provision of educational services has been taken for granted in many countries. However, what concerns many interested parties, including officials, is the quality of schools and their outcomes in the midst of fierce economic and technological competition between the different nations. In light of technological advancement, cultural and economic openness, and globalization, the economic, security, and scientific competition between countries has become the hallmark of the era. Comparisons between educational outcomes have become an inevitable matter that affects the course of education. For example, as a result of Soviet superiority in space in the second half of the last century, the National Defense Education Act was issued in the United States in 1958 to support educational institutions, including schools, in developing their scientific programs to meet the expectations. One of the factors affecting education policies around the world in recent years are the results of international tests, as these results have become the main indicators of the quality of educational outcomes. It is easy to compare the performance of students from different countries in these standardized tests. Therefore, we often notice many changes in regulations and systems to try to improve students' scores in international tests. This is because some specialists believe that an improvement in students' scores indicates there has been an improvement in the quality of education, though other specialists maintain that there is no relation between the two (Al-Beshir, 2023).

Comparing educational outcomes between countries, especially in the context of the widespread application of international tests, has led to an increase in criticisms and doubts about the validity of traditional educational systems, their schools and their ability to keep up with the rapid changes the world is witnessing. In 1983, the U.S. government issued the report "A Nation at Risk", a lengthy report that clarified that traditional schools and their outcomes in the United States were failing and were in need of reform. The report also questioned the ability of traditional educational systems and schools to improve. Regardless of the credibility of the information in the report, it succeeded in mobilizing many of those interested in the educational field as well as parents to speak out against traditional neighborhood schools. One of the fruits of this report was that it paved the way for a new form of schools in the United States and the world in general: charter or self-managed schools. Such schools enjoy a degree of independence and flexibility in managing their affairs and are fully government-funded, just like traditional schools (Ravitch, 2016; Lackney, 2015).

School self-management is an administrative style based on the principles of decentralization and community participation in the light of continuous evaluation. It grants school management members the authority, independence and freedom to make and take decisions that align with the school's goals and available capabilities, enabling them to perform their tasks effectively and efficiently (Al-Sisi, 2014). Independent management is one of the modern concepts in administration that directs bodies and institutions to participate with stakeholders in decision-making, relying on the distribution of power to achieve the desired goals (Saleem, 2015). Self-management is considered a modern administrative approach based on the idea that the educational institution is an independent administrative unit in itself, enjoying the freedom to manage its affairs by promoting decentralization in various work areas. However, the educational institution is committed to an effective system of accountability, where the quality of the educational outcomes it provides is evaluated (Al-Ajami, 2005).

The importance of school self-management lies in its ability to develop the school environment, which helps to enhance administrative efficiency and improve educational outcomes by ensuring transparency in dealings between members of the educational institution and the local community. This is achieved through their collaboration in decision-making, which reflects positively on improving job satisfaction among employees and the speed of completing school work. Self-management also contributes to providing more flexibility and freedom for the school, resulting in quicker decision-making and appropriate actions to address educational challenges. Self-management aims to eliminate administrative bureaucracy, work on the principles of delegating authority and accountability, and contribute to the application of self-management principles in promoting self-monitoring among school employees and encouraging self-evaluation within the school (Mu'adhin, 2017).

## Study Problem

Educational reform is necessary for public education institutions to keep up with their mission in a rapidly changing world. Among the initiatives undertaken by some countries are the reduction of centralization in education and the limitation of administrative bureaucracy, granting more space and authority to school principals to make decisions that serve the public interest. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been experiencing rapid movement and development in all fields since the launch of the Vision 2030, including the education sector, which is witnessing many updates and improvements. In light of the creative initiatives currently taking place in the education sector in the Kingdom, it is time to look for free educational alternatives alongside traditional government schools to enhance healthy competition between publicly funded general education institutions. One of the most important forms of free schools in the world, which has proven its role in effectively developing educational outcomes, is charter schools. Therefore, it is of great importance to study the possibility of establishing this type of schools in Saudi Arabia in the coming phase. This is likely to improve the situation of general education and create

competitiveness between traditional schools and charter schools, which will positively reflect on the beneficiaries of the educational services. In addition, it will have a significant impact on the development and prosperity of the country's human resources.

### Study Questions

- What is the reality of charter (self-managed) schools in the following countries: the United States, El Salvador, England and Canada?
- How can the experiences of countries with charter schools be leveraged in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

### Study Objectives

The study aimed to:

- Understand the concepts and characteristics of charter schools.
- Explore the reality of charter schools in the United States of America.
- Explore the reality of charter schools in England.
- Explore the reality of charter schools in the Republic of El Salvador.
- Explore the reality of charter schools in Canada.
- Determine the possibility of benefiting from the self-management experiences of schools in the United States, England, El Salvador and Canada in the public schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

### Research Methodology

The researchers used a descriptive documentary approach to answer the study's questions. They carefully and meticulously reviewed studies and official statistics published in peer-reviewed and reliable scientific sources to gather information that will contribute to conclusions answering the questions framed by this research. This methodology was used because it suits the research's objectives and questions.

### Study Importance

This study coincides with the reformative changes currently adopted by the government of the Kingdom in line with the Vision 2030, which supports its journey towards reform and development in various fields, including education. Therefore, a model of non-traditional schools, namely charter or self-managed schools, is presented in the study. These charter schools have been adopted in a large number of countries as a way to reform education and provide additional options for free basic education, ensuring greater fairness in the field of schooling. The research derives its importance from the information and recommendations expected to result from the study based on the reality of charter schools in several countries. The results of this research are important for officials and decision-makers in the educational sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as there are significant opportunities for success that charter schools may achieve if implemented in the Kingdom. Moreover, this study

serves as a reference for charter schools in a number of countries that, to the researchers' knowledge, have not been previously presented in published scientific articles, adding further importance to the study.

## Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

### First: The Theoretical Framework

Characteristics and Advantages of Self-Management:

The approach of school self-management is based on a set of attributes and characteristics that support it and distinguish it from other administrative approaches. The attributes and characteristics of school self-management include the following (Mu'adhin, 2017, pp. 91-92):

1. It represents a type of administrative reform in education, based on the principles of participation, freedom, independence, decentralization and accountability.
2. It acts as a strategy that outlines policies, sets goals, and designs school work plans and programs to be implemented by the school's administrative councils, ensuring the achievement of a clear and advanced educational mission.
3. It strives to achieve the general objectives that the school sets in light of environmental analysis and evaluate how they are implemented, thus ensuring the strength of the management by objectives model.
4. It can use its available resources effectively and more efficiently due to the freedom and independence it enjoys, (especially) in light of environmental analysis and, more generally, strategic planning processes.
5. It conducts comprehensive and interconnected analyses, including performance evaluation of individuals, groups, and the school as a whole, aiming to tighten control and improve and enhance overall school performance.
6. It adopts decentralization as a procedural style in making decisions based on the principle of participation among leaders, teachers, parents and even students.
7. It is described as having a multi-level humanistic, educational and technical leadership, with its leader making educational decisions and responding to participants' initiatives.
8. It grants the school legitimacy in decision-making and applies the principle of accountability to ensure greater effectiveness and productivity.
9. It relies on the effectiveness of a multi-level and multi-outcome approach when studying performance evaluation, which considers “academic achievement” as just one of these outcomes and “evaluation” as a continuous process for school development.
10. It pays attention to environmental variables and educational and training needs and is aware of external and internal pressures and ways to overcome them to improve school performance.

11. It increases the effectiveness of school leadership by granting authority to teachers, parents, local community members and business owners, involving them in making educational decisions at the school.
12. It allows for the easy and smooth application of educational policies and programs in the school due to administrative flexibility, delegation of authority, and fostering a spirit of cooperation among all school employees and the surrounding local community.
13. It permits good time management and investment, which reflects on the return on capital investment in terms of teaching and learning arrangements, the optimal use of educational buildings, devices and equipment, and increased learning time.

Additionally, the most prominent characteristics of self-management include encouraging self-learning, giving parents an active and positive role in monitoring and developing the educational process, providing qualified human resources through continuous training, and representing a type of administrative reform in school management based on participation, freedom, administrative decentralization, policy formulation, goal setting and designing school plans and programs (Al-Fayyad, p. 31, 2012).

Self-management is also characterized by some of the following features (Caldwell, 42, 204), being:

- Purposeful: It relies on identifying goals that guide work and foster the development of plans that can achieve these goals.
- Procedural: It depends on conducting comprehensive and interconnected analyses, including performance evaluation processes of individuals and workgroups, with the aim of identifying strengths and weaknesses in school performance and attempting to address such shortcomings and weaknesses.
- Flexible: It allows for the easy application of educational policies and programs due to administrative flexibility, reducing authorities and organizational levels, delegating authority and fostering a spirit of cooperation among school staff.
- Participatory: Participation is the central foundation upon which self-management is built, as it provides everyone with a sense of organizational ownership.
- Future-oriented: Self-management depends on the school principal's ability to envision the school's future direction; as he has to possess strategic leadership skills, rely on future planning, and have a clear vision through which he can shape the school's future and achieve its aspirations.

The characteristics of implementing self-management in schools (Rizk, 2011) include the following:

1. It views the school as a primary unit for decision-making.
2. It represents a shift in power towards decentralization.
3. It fosters participation among students and teaching members.
4. It emphasizes the flexible use of time.

5. It increases personal responsibility for the school's work along with an increased climate of trust within the school.
6. It increases the sense of fairness and equity.
7. Through self-management, the school is led by multi-level humanistic, educational and technical leaders, with the director possessing knowledge and modern management techniques and continuing his learning and professional development.
8. It introduces new ways to integrate parents and the local community into schoolwork, sharing responsibility with the school while the school actively and positively works to understand parents' interests and meet their needs.
9. A self-management school redesigns its schedules to allow teacher-student interaction during the school day, in addition to self-directed activities provided by the school that align with its nature and meet its needs.
10. Self-management organizes the school as a place of involvement for students, teachers and administrators, recognizing the right of each to further his development.
11. It bases the evaluation of school performance on an approach that studies the effectiveness of the outcomes, with student academic achievement being one of these outcomes and evaluation being a continuous process aimed at developing the school.

### Previous Studies

Al-Ghamdi and Al-Alfi (2019) conducted a study in Arabic titled “*The Degree the School Leaders in the Al-Baha Region Practice Self-Management and Its Relationship with Teachers' Participation in Decision-Making from Their Perspective*”. This study aimed to identify the degree to which school leaders in the Al-Baha region practice self-management and its relationship with teachers' participation in decision-making, from their perspective. The study sample consisted of (342) teachers with the researchers using a descriptive correlational method as well as a questionnaire to collect data from the study sample. Several conclusions were reached, most notably: the degree of the practice of self-management by school leaders in the Al-Baha region, from the teachers' perspective, was high. Moreover, the results showed that the degree of teachers' participation in decision-making, from their perspective, was also high; the study found a statistically significant correlation between the degree of the practice of self-management by school leaders in the Al-Baha region and the degree of teachers' participation in decision-making. Several recommendations were suggested, including: granting school leaders more powers necessary for making and taking appropriate educational decisions and involving school leaders in the decision-making process at the level of educational administrations, which supports the success of the decision.

Al-Dawsari (2019) published a study in Arabic titled “*A Proposed Vision for Developing Administrative Operations for Secondary School Leaders in Riyadh Using Self-Management*”. This study aimed to identify the extent to which secondary school

leaders in Riyadh apply the principles of self-management in planning, organizing, decision-making and the evaluation processes. The study used a questionnaire applied to a random sample of 410 school principals, educational supervisors and teachers in secondary schools in Riyadh. The results showed that school leaders indeed apply the principles of self-management in these processes and that there were statistically significant differences between the sample members in favor of educational supervisors. Based on these results, the study proposed a vision for developing selected administrative operations among school leaders in secondary schools using the principles of self-management.

Al-Shaqeefi (2020) conducted a study in Arabic titled “*Developing the Administrative Skills of Secondary School Leaders in Al-Qunfudhah Governorate in Light of the Self-Management Approach*”. The study sought to determine the possibility of developing the administrative skills of secondary school leaders in Al-Qunfudhah Governorate in light of the self-management approach by identifying the reality concerning the practice of administrative skills by secondary school leaders in Al-Qunfudhah Governorate in light of the self-management approach. The study used a descriptive analytical method, and a questionnaire was used as a tool to collect data and information from the research community. The sample size was (44) secondary school leaders in Al-Qunfudhah. The study found that the degree of performance of administrative self-skills by secondary school leaders in Al-Qunfudhah was high. Several recommendations were presented by the researcher, the most important of which include the necessity of: (1) benefiting from the study results in determining the priorities for developing the administrative skills of school leaders; (2) paying attention to diagnosing the reality concerning administrative skills of school leaders and determining their performance level continuously, such points being a starting point for future developmental policies; (3) benefiting from the list of mechanisms for developing the administrative skills of school leaders to benefit from planning and implementing development processes directed at them; (4) providing a suitable climate for applying self-management by developing the administrative skills of school leaders with the aim of improving performance and achieving the desired goals; (5) reducing the intensity of centralization; (6) encouraging the application of decentralization in school management; and (7) intensifying training courses for school leaders to enable them to manage schools autonomously.

Al-Nizami (2020) conducted a study in Arabic titled “*Proposed Administrative Mechanisms for Developing the Self-Management of Public and Private Schools in Jerash Governorate from the Perspective of Their Directors*”. The study aimed to propose administrative mechanisms for developing the self-management of public and private schools in Jerash Governorate from the perspective of their directors. The descriptive survey method was used in this study, and a questionnaire was used as a tool for the study. The study sample was randomly selected from the capital governorate, totaling (162) directors. The results showed that the degree of administrative mechanisms for developing the self-management of public and private schools was moderate, with the variables wavering between high and low. They were arranged in a descending manner as follows: (curricula, financial budget, educational

facilities, and the delegation of powers). Additionally, the study concluded that there were no statistically significant differences attributed to the variables of gender, years of experience or academic qualification. The researcher suggested granting more powers to school directors to activate self-management practices. The researcher also recommended enacting the necessary legislation to involve the school community in many matters, including curricula, activities and goals.

Ibrahim and Al-Shahoumi (2021) conducted a study in Arabic titled “*Self-Management of Schools in Mexico, Brazil and Ecuador and the Possibility of Benefiting from This in the Sultanate of Oman*”. The research aimed to explore the self-management of schools in Mexico, Brazil and Ecuador and ways to benefit from the experience for public schools in the Sultanate of Oman. The descriptive method was used in this study, and data and information were collected through document analysis. The results revealed that the self-management of schools in the countries selected for the study was designed to enhance education through community participation, such as parent associations, school boards and advisory councils. In the Sultanate of Oman, the self-management of schools focused on granting school directors some administrative and financial powers in managing their schools. The researchers presented recommendations to enhance the experience of self-management of schools in the Sultanate of Oman, including: the necessity of activating the roles and responsibilities of student guardians' councils, especially in the areas of supervision, control and performance evaluation, and of increasing the number of parents and local community members in these councils for them to become the majority and have the powers and authority to make decisions in such schools.

Al-Otaibi (2022) conducted a study aimed at building a concept for the application of school self-management in public education schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. To achieve this, the Delphi method was used by 10 experts who have administrative experience in school management or educational supervision. The results revealed significant organizational obstacles in implementing self-management, such as the need for adoption by the Ministry of Education, weak administrative powers of educational administrations and school directors, and a weak organizational structure of the mechanism that supports decentralization in the education system. There were also notable financial obstacles, including limited school budgets and a lack of funding sources other than government funding. Furthermore, the study found a lack of competencies required for school directors to implement self-management.

The study concluded that the most prominent organizational requirements for applying self-management in public education schools in Saudi Arabia is the adoption of the concept of self-management by the leadership of the Ministry of Education and the development of the school's organizational structure in line with the concept of school self-management and its applications. Moreover, the most prominent material requirements were the need to increase school budgets in line with their independence, and the most important human requirements were the need to qualify and train members of the school community in administrative aspects.

The study conducted by Janadi and Haweil (2022) aimed to explore the experience of self-management in British schools and the possibility of applying it in schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, taking into account the various factors that may affect its implementation. The research used a comparative method with a descriptive and analytical framework, following George Bereday's four-step approach, which is: (description, interpretation, juxtaposition and comparison). The study revealed many important results, including that school management in England relies on the local management of schools, which allows for financial delegation, staff selection, and flexibility in decision-making. England's application of the self-management approach also depends on participation in decision-making by all parties involved in the educational process. However, the application of self-management in schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is still limited; although the Ministry of Education has delegated some of its powers to educational administrations, it is still centralized and not decentralized. Therefore, it is essential to adopt the self-management approach in public education schools in order to move away from traditional methods and meet the requirements of the current era. Based on the results obtained by the study, the researcher presented several recommendations to activate self-management in schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which included: the necessity of reviewing the educational administrative systems to align with the Saudi Vision 2030, granting local educational councils broader powers in making educational decisions, and making school management an independent entity where each school can develop its plan and program.

### **Benefits from Previous Studies**

The researchers have benefited from reviewing previous studies to deepen their knowledge and understanding of self-managed schools. The previous studies and papers also helped in examining as well as understanding a number of international models that have experiences with self-managed schools. Moreover, the researchers benefited from the results and recommendations of previous studies in answering the second question of the study. The current study is distinguished from previous studies in that it is based on the experiences of many countries that have expertise in non-traditional schools, which is likely to add new content to the Arabic literature on this topic.

### **Results**

#### **Firstly: The United States' Experience in School Self-Management**

##### *Independent Schools in the United States:*

In the United States, parents have educational options to choose the best type of educational services for their children. This includes the traditional public school, alternative educational types, such as homeschooling, as well as the increasingly popular option in recent decades of self-managed schools, also known as charter or independent schools (Bulkley & Fisler, 2003). The reputation of traditional public schools has begun to crumble among the American community, as the general

impression of the public school is that it is failing, outdated, and unable to keep up with contemporary reality. Educational researchers indicate that the main reason for this poor impression of public schools is the intervention in educational affairs by the central government in Washington in recent decades, after it had been completely distant from it since the country's independence in 1776. There is no text in the American Constitution that stipulates the rights of citizens or their children to education, but all fifty states guarantee the educational rights of citizens in their internal constitutions (Ravitch, 2014). One form of intervention by the central government in public education and public schools were the efforts of the late President Reagan and his government in 1983, when the report "A Nation at Risk" appeared. The report was strongly marketed by the late President Reagan, despite numerous criticisms from specialists that the report contains inaccurate information. This report contributed to changing the convictions of many Americans towards traditional schools, which later helped in the spread of charter or independent schools (Ravitch, 2014).

The idea of independent schools in the United States began with Dr. Ray Budde, a professor at the University of Massachusetts in the 1970s, and was later adopted by educator Albert Shanker, who had previously presided over the Federal Teachers Union. It seems that he observed the negative practices of the teachers' unions, which sought their own interests more than the public good. Independent schools were first launched in Minnesota in 1992 and quickly spread to most of the fifty states (43 states) and the District of Columbia, which is located in the capital, Washington. The government then began to support the establishment of independent schools with a law enacted in 1998 (Irwin & Others, 2023).

Independent schools in the United States are non-religious, self-operated schools with independent or private management and are funded by the government. The aim of this management style is to distance schooling from the traditional educational system, which is bound by several policies that prevent it from being creative and of a high-quality, according to supporters of private schools. In independent schools, there are no active unions defending the rights of non-performing teachers, as in traditional public schools, making it easy to dismiss teachers due to the absence of unions protecting their rights. Many American politicians believe that the presence of unions is the main reason for the deterioration of the education in the United States, and therefore independent schools are the bright future of education in the country (Sowell, 2020).

Many people in American society believe that independent schools are a very good idea because it provides a choice for poor families in educating their children, ensuring a form of social justice in education. One of the advantages of independent schools is that they are managed like private institutions, with strict oversight and accountability by the school owners. Due to the declining reputation of public schools, especially after the damning report "A Nation at Risk" that tarnished the image of the public schools in people's minds, there has been an increased interest from parents in enrolling their children in independent schools. However, there is a limited number of independent schools compared to traditional schools, and so some

independent schools in densely populated neighborhoods conducted lotteries among students who want to learn in their schools because they view regular schools as inadequate (Al-Beshir, 2023).

In recent years, many businessmen have exploited independent schools, deciding to enter the educational market and open independent schools to gain a profit. Businessmen give their teachers much lower wages than teachers in public schools (Ravitch, 2014). The teachers appointed in independent schools are not affiliated with any union that protects their rights, unlike their counterparts in traditional schools who are registered with the Teachers Union Federation; the Teachers Union Federation aims to protect teachers' rights and sometimes files lawsuits in public courts against the Board of Education. Education specialists have divergent views on independent schools; some say that independent schools create competition in education, forcing low-quality traditional schools to try to improve their conditions, a view that aligns with the perspective of politicians, especially those in the Republican Party. On the other hand, some educational scholars believe that independent schools will destroy education in the country, as when the goal of the school is to make money and be greedy, there will be no quality in education (Ravitch, 2016).

Independent schools are found in most states (43 out of the 50 states) and in the District of Columbia, which is located in the capital, Washington. Investors in independent schools are keen to open their schools in large urban cities to ensure a sufficient number of students for the operation of the school. The main reason for avoiding the establishment of independent schools in rural areas is the low number of students, which means higher operating costs for the school (fewer students per teacher). Most independent schools are concentrated in the southern and western United States, and the number of students in independent schools exceeds three million studying in about 7,500 independent schools compared to 49 million students in traditional schools, with the number continuously increasing. This is because independent schools are considered relatively new compared to the traditional public schools, which began to spread in the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century (Irwin & Others, 2023).

Due to the concentration of independent schools only in large cities, the demographics of students in independent schools differ significantly from traditional ones; city residents have different demographic characteristics than those in rural areas, who are predominantly white. We find that the proportion of students from Black and Mexican backgrounds is significantly higher in independent schools than in traditional ones.

The results of statistics and studies comparing student achievement in independent and traditional schools have varied. Some studies have found that students in independent schools score higher on standardized tests in mathematics and reading, while some researchers have indicated that the higher average scores of students in independent schools are due to the fact that independent schools select their students, unlike traditional schools, which find themselves obliged to accept all learners without discrimination (Cheng & Others, 2017; Clark & Others, 2015).

### **Secondly: El Salvador's Experience in School Self-Management**

During the 1990s, the Ministry of Education in El Salvador worked on improving and developing the educational process. It established a ten-year plan for educational development and conducted a survey study of the educational system to identify its strengths and weaknesses. The results highlighted the need to increase the number of learners, reduce dropout rates, and work on training and furthering the professional development of teachers. It also stressed the need to provide tools and equipment for basic education schools and focus on pre-school education. In 1991, the School Self-Management Program was implemented as part of the government reform program, which aimed to revitalize public services through decentralization and privatization in pre-school and primary education in rural areas. The program was based on decentralization with community involvement in the educational process, ensuring that students receive quality education.

To increase community awareness about the education development project, communication means, such as print, radio and television, were used and newly appointed individuals participated in the awareness process, acting as official spokespersons for the program. The Ministry of Education held many educational conferences targeting teachers and other educational stakeholders, all contributing to raising community awareness of the project and supporting school improvement and development processes.

The outcomes of implementing the self-management school plan included:

- From 1991 to 1996, the number of students enrolled in self-management schools increased from 8,416 to 168,928, the number of parent councils from 236 to 1,700, and the number of teachers from 263 to 3,884.
- In 2003, the number of schools reached 2,047 and the number of students reached 362,880.
- From 2005 to 2009, there was increased attention to qualifying teachers and their professional development, raising their salaries, allocating teacher incentives and rewards, and linking salary increases to teacher performance evaluation (Hossam Al-Deen, 2019).

### **Thirdly: England's Experience in School Self-Management**

School self-management in England experienced a qualitative shift. In 1993, the Education Act was issued, which stipulated the transition of schools to self-management. This gave schools autonomy in managing their affairs and delegated funding and resource management authority to the school board in exchange for accountability. The school board consists of (8–22) members, depending on the number of students in the school, in addition to the school leader, teachers, parents and community members who wish to participate in the school's management. The school board has extensive powers over the school's staff and plays an important role in school decision-making. Its tasks include:

- Fair distribution of the school's budget.
- Planning and accountability concerning the efficient use of resources and the budget in the school.
- Planning the development of the educational process in the school.

- Planning the professional development of teachers to enhance their skills and capabilities.
- Reviewing the current status of the school.
- Selecting teachers based on specific criteria, contracting with them, and imposing penalties or incentives for school staff, whether material or moral.
- Presenting reports on students' results and school performance as well as the quality of the schoolwork.

In British independent schools, parents have the freedom to choose to educate their children in the school they desire based on the programs offered by the school without being restricted by geographical distribution. Moreover, funding is linked to the number of students in the school (Mu'adhin, 2017: 99).

This is associated with the accountability and auditing of all independent schools by higher authorities and the local community, as well as parents through some mechanisms. These independent schools are distinguished by having supervisors who work directly with the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) to review annual reports on performance and student outcomes as well as reports and records related to the achievements of independent school management (Ahmed, 2015).

#### **Fourthly: Canada's Experience in School Self-Management**

Canada's experience with what is called independent or self-managed schools began in 1994 in the province of Alberta, the only province that has this type of school that allows for the self-leadership of school administrations. Alberta introduced public independent schools in 1994 with the aim of improving student learning through innovative educational curricula. The number of students in independent schools is about 10,000 learners, with independent schools witnessing an increase in enrollment rates over the past twenty years despite a decrease in the number of such schools. There are 15 independent bodies that oversee independent schools in the province.

It is known that Canada is a multicultural country, consisting of ten provinces and three territories. According to the constitution, each province is solely responsible for providing education within its political boundaries, and the absence of a central ministry concerned with public education and the development of its quality and policies has led to little consistency between regions regarding educational content, expectations and quality. The responsibility for education in Canada lies with the provincial governments, not the central government.

The public education system in Alberta consists of 68 public educational districts, each governed by an elected board of trustees. The Minister of Education, who is an elected member of the provincial cabinet, is responsible for ensuring that all educational districts implement the province's curriculum for grades one through twelve and comply with all accountability measures as directed. It is worth noting that Alberta is the only province in Canada that has special legislation for independent schools. Independent schools in Canada are public independent schools that offer innovative or enhanced educational programs designed to improve student learning. These schools have authority outside the local school boards and are led by their own board of trustees. They are responsible for following their charter or the commitments they have made to the educational authorities and fulfilling them. Many of the laws

and regulations that govern traditional public schools are not usually enforced on independent schools; they are not obliged to employ unionized teachers, may use non-traditional curricula or teaching methods, do not charge tuition fees and are usually fully funded to cover operational expenses.

Public independent schools in Canada are secular public schools that provide enhanced education to improve student learning and offer more educational choices for parents and students. It is expected that this type of schools will provide educational services different from what is available in local public schools and show potential for improving student learning. Independent schools can also serve as models for successful educational practices, which can be adopted by other public schools in the province of Alberta. Each independent school has a charter that defines its vision, educational approach, and student outcomes. It is expected that independent schools will provide an educational environment different from what is currently available in local schools. Charter councils enjoy the flexibility and independence to implement innovative educational services that enhance student learning. The curricula in public independent schools are determined by Alberta Education and must meet provincial standards. Students in public charter schools are required to write provincial assessments and other tests as determined by the Minister of Education in the province.

The Alberta Independent School Authority has set the following educational reform goals:

- Stimulating the development of improved and innovative programs within the public education system.
- Providing increasing opportunities for student education within the public education system.
- Giving parents and students greater choice within the public education system.
- Providing teachers with tools to create schools with improved and innovative methods for teaching, school structure and management.
- Encouraging the establishment of outcome-based educational programs (Alberta Education, 2011).

Independent schools in Alberta operate under an initial five-year performance contract, where an external evaluation team is appointed by the government. This team reviews the school at the end of the academic year to determine if it has complied with legal and financial requirements, consistently demonstrated quality and improvement in student achievement, fulfilled its declared charter goals, and fostered parental and community support (Bosetti, 2004).

The evaluation team then makes a recommendation to the provincial Minister of Education, who can renew the term or cancel the charter. The system allows existing independent schools with a record of achievement to apply to the minister for a 15-year license. It is important when seeking long-term renewal to present evidence and proof that the school adopts certain practices, including the following: providing professional development opportunities related to its innovative approach to the rest of the educational community in Alberta, achieving or exceeding appropriate goals as stipulated in the student outcomes accountability framework, producing student

achievement results that are good or better than the overall provincial results, achieving parent satisfaction results that are better than those in the province as a whole, sharing their research with the educational community, who evaluate the success of these innovative schools, and determining the reasons for that success with the government and teachers (Alberta Education, 2011).

Like other public schools, independent schools are required to appoint certified teachers, but these teachers are not allowed to be members of the Alberta Teachers' Association, the professional body responsible for collective bargaining and disciplinary matters in connection with public school teachers in the province. Independent schools are eligible to receive the same grants per student as other public schools, except for equitable funding for the inclusion of students with special needs. Several studies have indicated that student achievement in independent schools in Canada is higher than that in traditional public schools (Da Costa, 2002; Johnson, 2013; Ritchie, 2010).

### **Answering the Second Question**

How can the experiences of countries with charter schools be leveraged in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

Charter or self-managed schools have gained acceptance in many countries around the world, and many officials, educational experts, parents and community members have come to trust schools with administrative independence. Charter schools are considered a means to reduce the centralization of education and alleviate bureaucratic practices. After presenting models of the implementation of charter schools in the United States, England, El Salvador and Canada, it is time to propose a number of visions for charter schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in order to benefit from the experiences of these countries.

In light of the international experiences presented in the field of school self-management, the researchers suggest the establishment of an independent administration within the administrative organization of the Ministry of Education to study the feasibility of creating this type of school in the Kingdom. If the idea of charter schools is approved, it is proposed that this administration should have the authority to enact the necessary legislation for this type of schools. Furthermore, this administration would be responsible for licensing independent bodies that operate and monitor such schools. Each body or organization would oversee a group of charter schools and monitor their quality, being accountable for these schools to governmental and judicial authorities.

In addition, the researchers suggest that charter schools be licensed for a period of five years, extendable in cases of success, as the case in Canada. It is also proposed that one of the administration's tasks would be to coordinate between the independent bodies that the charter schools follow and the governmental agencies to obtain sufficient funding.

To give more powers to charter schools, each charter school should have a board of trustees responsible for the school, as the case with charter schools around the world. It should grant the school board of trustees the authority to appoint school staff,

including the school principal and teachers. It is also proposed that school principals be given sufficient powers to make decisions they believe are important for their school, as they are the primary responsible persons who know the details of their school and students.

Moreover, the researchers propose that innovators and businessmen be provided opportunities to support and fund programs for charter schools under clear terms and regulations issued by the Ministry of Education. Parents and community members should be integrated and involved in making various decisions in charter schools. Additionally, the study proposes that parents be provided opportunities to choose the most suitable educational option for their children, whether in charter schools or traditional schools.

The researchers also recommend encouraging colleges of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to operate charter schools, as these colleges possess scientific expertise that contributes to providing high-quality educational services.

## Recommendations

- The researchers suggest the gradual implementation of charter schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- The research proposes the formation of an independent administration within the Ministry of Education that will be responsible for monitoring and facilitating the work of bodies that operate and manage charter schools.
- The researchers recommend granting sufficient authority to the principals of charter schools, if they are approved in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- The research advises that parents and community members be involved in the decisions made by charter schools.
- The researchers propose conducting comparative studies between student achievement in charter schools and traditional schools in countries that have implemented this experience.
- The study suggests conducting qualitative and quantitative research by education officials in Saudi Arabia to explore ways and obstacles to starting the experiment of charter schools.

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