

Fachbereich Erziehungswissenschaft und Psychologie  
Der Freien Universität Berlin

**Studying in the Desert of Saudi Arabia:  
A Portrait of Aja Women in Hail**

Dissertation  
zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades  
Doktor(in) der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)  
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Zuzana Milfort

Berlin, 2014

Erstgutacher: Prof. Dr. Christop Wulf, Freie University Berlin

Zweitgutacherin: Prof. Dr. Petra Wieler, Freie University Berlin

Date of the viva voce/ defense: Berlin, 30. June 2014

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the people involved during the entire realization of this work. A special mention to my Doctoral Supervisor Professor Christoph Wulf, for allowing me this great opportunity and providing me with your guidance. Another special mention needs to go out to all my friends and family who constantly provided assistance and encouragement. After a number of years in Hail, I would like to thank all my past students and colleagues for allowing me the chance to experience your culture, life style, and ambitions. I wish I could personally thank each individual for his or her participation. I hope that one day all your hard work will allow your dreams to come true, or at very least pave the way for your daughters, their daughters, and generations to come.

## ABSTRACT

The grandparents of many female students at Hail University lived (and few still do) in traditional Bedouin tents eking out a harsh nomadic existence. Their children are striving for a better lifestyle, higher earning opportunities, and a more comfortable existence, such as running water and electricity, and this has interrupted the centuries-old way of life. Forty years on, the Bedouin mentality still remains with some of our University of Hail (UOH) students, while some are beginning to question this traditional way of life.

The problem is that even with the advent of rapid technological and media changes, the girls continue to maintain a Bedouin mind set, and are still seen by men as mere possessions, fourth on their list after the car, house and job. It remains a rarity for a woman's opinion to be sought, let alone listened to.

The objective of this study is to research female students at Hail University in order to understand the impact of a Westernized education system within their culture, and how this affects their lives.

The aim for this research is knowledge development. Obtaining and analysing the necessary information as ELC (English Learning Centre) director at Hail University could prove valuable in the development of this university and the general Saudi Arabian educational system.

With a high demand for foreign lecturers this information can be used to inform potential and new lecturers of the rapid change and development seen over the past few decades, as well as to provide more insight into the secret and protected private lives of the students.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter 2 Aims and objectives</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Objectives .....	13
<b>Chapter 3 Background Information</b> .....	<b>18</b>
3.1 Country And City Profile .....	20
3.2 The University Campus And Facilities .....	24
3.3 The Students and Teachers .....	31
3.4 Living Conditions .....	41
<b>Chapter 4 Literature Review</b> .....	<b>47</b>
4.1 Education .....	49
4.2 Segregation .....	59
4.3 Women in society .....	61
4.4 Marriage.....	66
4.5 Foreigners.....	68
4.6 Previous research.....	69
<b>Chapter 5 Methodology</b> .....	<b>70</b>
5.1 Research Design .....	72
5.2 Secondary Data .....	77
5.3 Primary Data .....	82
5.4 Method 1 – Questionnaire .....	83
5.5 Method 2 – Interview .....	96
5.6 Method 3 – Observation .....	103
5.7 Ethics In Research.....	105
<b>Chapter 6 Analysis and Findings</b> .....	<b>111</b>
6.1 The characteristics of the respondents.....	114
6.2 The characteristics of the respondents' families and friends .....	123

6.3 The reasons for the respondents going to university .....	130
6.4 The respondents' experiences at university .....	137
6.5 The respondents' perceptions of Western teachers .....	150
6.6 The respondents' interactions with teachers .....	155
6.7 The perceived influence of the teachers on the students .....	159
6.8 Respondents' beliefs about their future .....	165
6.9 What are the theoretical implications of the findings? .....	171
6.10 Can the findings be used to develop plans for future research? .....	179
6.11 Interview Analysis .....	182
6.12 Teachers' perspective.....	194
6.13 Observations.....	196
<b>Chapter 7 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>Chapter 8 Recommendations .....</b>	<b>213</b>
Recommendation for the students:.....	214
Recommendation for the teachers:.....	217
Recommendations for the compound:.....	219
<b>References .....</b>	<b>222</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. – Objectives and Research Questions.....	12
Table 2. – The Number of students at public schools.....	52
Table 3. – Qualitative Research Type.....	75
Table 4. – Socio-demographic and contextual characteristics of the respondents.....	114
Table 5. – Students at a Bachelor Level Hail University.....	116
Table 6. – Home responsibilities of the respondents.....	119
Table 7. – Characteristics of the respondents' families.....	124
Table 8. – Characteristics of the respondents' friends.....	128
Table 9. – Reasons why the respondents went to university.....	131
Table 10. – Respondents' experiences at university.....	137
Table 11. – Respondents' perceptions about the use of English.....	144
Table 12. – Respondents' experiences of absence from class.....	147
Table 13. – Respondents' perceptions of Western teachers.....	150
Table 14. – Respondents' perceived interactions with teachers.....	155
Table 15. – Teachers' perceived influence on students.....	159
Table 16. – Respondents' beliefs about their futures.....	165

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. – Map of Saudi Arabia.....	19
Figure 2. – Number of students by gender and education stage.....	21
Figure 3. – Hail City Roofline.....	23
Figure 4. – Hail City Suburbia.....	23
Figure 5. – Classroom in the old campus.....	26
Figure 6. – The new offices for teachers.....	28
Figure 7. – Courtyard inside the new campus where students can socialise.....	35
Figure 8. – The modern and new hallways that line the new campus.....	40
Figure 9. – The compound from the mountains.....	43
Figure 10. – The compound from the mountains with Hail City in the distance.....	43
Figure 11. – Accommodation for single teachers, with mountains in the background.....	46
Figure 12. – The view from one of the windows looking at the barbed-wired wall.....	46
Figure 13. – The new Hail campus, during the finishing stages of construction.....	58
Figure 14. – Women in Hail shopping and waiting between prayer times.....	107
Figure 15. – The compound from another vantage point.....	108
Figure 16. – The mountains after the rain with the compound in the foreground.....	108
Figure 17. – A Saudi student.....	109
Figure 18. – Another view of Hail.....	109
Figure 19. – A young boy sits behind the wheel waiting for his sister.....	110
Figure 20. – Another view of the boy waiting to drive his sister home.....	110
Figure 21. – Responsibilities if not studying.....	121
Figure 22. – Why The Participants Study.....	132
Figure 23. – Does anyone help you with your schoolwork and studies?.....	142
Figure 24. – Frequency distribution of the Perceptions of Western Teachers scale.....	154
Figure 25. – Frequency distribution of the Interactions with Teachers scale.....	158
Figure 26. – Frequency distribution of the Teachers' Influence on Students scale.....	164



## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has gone on a spending spree, investing billions of dollars to better educate the younger generations of Saudi Arabia. There are new universities being built throughout the Kingdom, with the aim of achieving international recognition as an academically emerging power.

The KSA, currently has approximately 28% of the population below the age of 15, this means there is a predicated bubble in the number of students who will attend university and other educational facilities. In order to manage and cope with all the students, a significant number of foreign academics and teachers are hired to assist in accomplishing this objective.

This investigation will aid in providing an insight, not only at an indigenous level, but more importantly to foreign teachers and other bodies, in helping to promote their understanding of what these young students are facing in their daily lives, as Saudi Arabia moves towards its aim of becoming a more educated, knowledge-based nation.

There are many problems and obstacles these young students must overcome in order to gain an education, and even after obtaining their degree there are even more challenges that they need to face and overcome. The research will address tribal and family issues as well as cultural obstacles which these students and young women must face every day.

The recent development for young women to gain a higher education has not been met with open arms. For a culture where women usually have a stay-at-home role, the new opportunity is changing these women's perception and ideals. Women who just cared about marriage are now trying to plan a career, and can see the importance of education not only for their generation but also for future generations.

These universities are where they will often experience their first and last encounter with someone from the west. With no prior knowledge and only using basic stereo-types, these women become very vulnerable as they are

unintentionally subject to Western speech, traditions, ideologies and behaviours. It is these foreigners that come to Saudi Arabia from all over the world to teach and earn an attractive tax-free salary.

They soon find themselves living in a harsh and unforgiving environment, confined to the walls of an international compound with a range of different nationalities. Just like any neighbourhood there is gossip and argument and all have skeletons in their closets. The compound houses all the international teachers and forms a small community behind its walls, where the standard of living is basic. For the single women their only escape is work.

Daily buses take these teachers to the university where all their so-called baggage from the compound follows, teachers bickering and complaining while the students sit there and struggle to get through another lesson. These female students who are working towards their university education are the first female generation in many of the households who have been given the opportunity to study under Western guidance.

It is this research that aims to understand how the introduction of education and Westerners are influencing these rural parts of Saudi Arabia and these young women. Are these changes and opportunities a threat to their society and culture or is it something that can be smoothly integrated? Will it benefit these women and their communities or will their degrees just collect dust and be a reminder of old dreams?

## CHAPTER 2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This chapter outlines the aims and objectives of this research. It states the aim, which is then broken down into different objectives and further research questions. This will act as guide ensuring that the focus remains on the task at hand. Each objective is then explained in a little more detail. By answering these objectives and questions the researcher will be able to gather and analyse the information to draw conclusions and recommendations.

The aim of this research is as follows:

To research female students at Hail University in order to better understand the impact and exposure of foreigners and a Western educational system, on their culture and to see how this further affects their lives.

This has been broken-down accordingly into the different objectives and the results can be seen in Table 1. on the following page.

**Table 1. Objectives and Research Questions**

Objectives	Research Questions
1. To understand the level and methods of teaching in Hail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What was the level of education before University of Hail opened?</li><li>• What is the level of education for females in Hail now?</li><li>• What educational alternatives are in Hail?</li><li>• The origin of the Western educational system</li><li>• The traditional educational system in Saudi Arabia before the establishment of Hail University</li><li>• The effects of Sharia Law on education for women</li><li>• When the educational system changed</li></ul>
2. The impact of educational opportunities for females	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why do they study?</li><li>• What does it mean for their future?</li><li>• What opportunities do they have for future generations?</li><li>• What would they have been doing if not studying?</li></ul>
3. The impact of foreigners on females in Hail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To understand the first time exposure</li><li>• Their expectations and outlook on life</li><li>• The way they present themselves</li></ul>
4. Understand the adolescent life of a young Saudi female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand their daily routine</li><li>• Interaction at school</li></ul>
5. Provide information about Muslim customs and traditions from a nonbiased position.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Insight into Sharia law</li><li>• Local customs</li></ul>

## OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: By understanding the level and methods of teaching in Hail the researcher will be able to compare and understand the influence of a more traditional, educational system over time.

The first objective focuses on understanding the various aspects of education in Hail that was delivered to previous and current generations. It aims to act as a foundation that will be built upon and used to draw conclusions and recommendations about the current systems and situation in the Hail region. To obtain relevant information that will help in this process several research questions have been formulated and paired with this objective, they can be found below with more detail.

The first research question: "What was the level of education before the Hail University opened?" aims to gain an understanding of the most common level of education achieved by women, it will also provide insight into what options were available. With this information we can examine and compare changes in the social structure and advancements in educational opportunities. This particular research question partners with the research question: "What was the traditional educational system in Saudi Arabia before the establishment of Hail University?" This allows us to see how the schooling system and educational path have evolved with the introduction of Hail University.

The next research question further develops the previous point. It looks at the current state and level of education currently being achieved by these young women. It will help illustrate if the introduction of Hail University has caused an increase in the number of female students attending university. Based on these results, we will be able to see how society has responded to this relatively new phenomenon.

Prior to the University of Hail opening there were number of alternatives for these young women to gain a higher level of education. The next research question: "What educational alternatives are in Hail?" focuses on the effect of

Hail University on the alternatives. This will show to what extent Hail University has affected higher education in the region.

By having some background information and history about Western educational systems, we can compare and gain insight into cultural differences and schooling models. It can also show where higher education stands in Saudi Arabia. This information is also crucial in understanding what Western elements are being brought into their society.

The research question that aims to examine the effects of Sharia Law on women's education is designed to see if there is a clear link between religion and education for women. It will provide information of educational structure and possibly shed some light on why this culture and society has not had a stronger focus on educating women.

The final research question will allow us to observe, and to see at what stage the system currently is. Further research should also reveal what events brought on this change in the educational system. This information will aid in drawing conclusions and recommendations about how to effectively improve on the current position.

It can be seen that this first objective generally focuses on establishing the educational framework currently in the Hail region. It will be used with the well-known fact that there is rapid change sweeping through The Kingdom, and can be used as a tool to monitor the direction in which things are moving.

Objective 2: By researching the impact of educational opportunities for females at Hail University we can understand their perception and direction in which this generation and the next are heading.

The researcher will further examine the impact of educational opportunities for females. One of the first questions asked would be the reason behind their



desire to study. The motivation and drive to succeed or even to understand the reason to attend one of the academic institutions.

As believed by the researcher, as early as two generations before these current students, a majority of Hail women did not complete secondary education let alone aim to study at a higher level.

Furthermore the researcher will try to find what the university education would bring for the female students in the future. How higher education would or can change their prospects in their daily life or in life in general. What enrichment, economical improvement or opportunities education can bring for their personal growth and also for their own future families and children.

This research will further look into the option of what would happen to these young women if the educational opportunities were not in place. Which direction would their lives take, such as the same path as their mothers and grandmothers or would there be another possibility?

Objective 3: With these students having little to no contact with the Western world the teachers are usually their first points of contact. By understanding their experience the researcher is able to determine if these foreigners live up to their perceived image portrayed by the media.

In this isolated region, it is at the university that most girls have their first encounter with a foreigner. As with any culture, an introduction of foreigners bring with them their own traits, beliefs and habits, all of which can influence the native population. It is through this objective that we focus on the impact of foreigners on the Saudi culture, and more specifically the direct and indirect daily interactions between students and teachers. Furthermore it will observe any social changes influencing these girls' opinions and the way they express themselves.

The first research question emphasizes the initial encounter between these two cultures. It aims to monitor and check whether or not the teachers live up to the students' expectations and perceived stereotypes. This, paired with other research questions, will help determine the overall influence.

Most of the influence comes from the time spent together in the classroom where teachers innocently share their life stories and experiences from abroad. How much information these students retain and the degree to which it allows them to influence their own ideas and cultures will be gathered and compared to the traditional view.

The final research question address the issue of how these young women present themselves after the influence and exposure to foreigners. With Saudi Arabia being a religious and conservative culture, the way these girls dress, do their make-up and carry themselves has also been influenced by Western cultures, but to what extent?

While we cannot determine the immediate impact of the lecturers on the students we should be aware that Western culture, beliefs and values are still leaking into the country via other media channels influencing these girls regardless. We can still try to gain an understanding of their interactions with foreigners.

Objective 4: Helps to establish what the students' social lives are like and their responsibilities to the family and home. It aids in comparing Western students, teenagers and university students. We can then see how university has altered traditional values and life styles.

Adolescent life in Saudi Arabia for young Saudi girls is not the same as teenagers' lives in the Western world. This research will take a closer look at what it takes to be a young Saudi female. What are their aims, dreams and priorities? How do these young ladies spend their study days, weekends or

holidays? What activities or relationships are they involved in regarding their family, relatives or friends.

By observing the daily routine we can gain insight into their cultural habits and their way of life. With this we can examine how university and the Western influence is transforming the traditional routines.

Furthermore the researcher will try to comprehend and explain the students' interaction between themselves and also with their Western teachers. We can then compare it to Western schools and how students interact. Is there bullying, are their social circles the same, is there a form of hierarchy amongst the students?

In what is generally considered a sheltered and conservative culture, understanding the adolescent life of these Saudi women will provide valuable information on how to interact and engage them.

Objective 5: This is one of the more sensitive topics as we explore the traditional culture and beliefs of Saudi women and society based on their strong religious followings. It will help to explain the impact and reason for some of the differences between cultures.

The final objective aims to educate people on what is generally an unknown and unfamiliar topic to a majority of the Western world, it will focus on introducing some local customs. It will examine how Sharia law, paired with customs, affects education and women in Saudi Arabia. Additionally the researcher will try to share a few local traditions through which the reader will gain a better understanding of the students' backgrounds and environment.

## CHAPTER 3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This chapter aims to provide insight into the various elements that make up the Saudi Arabia and Hail experience. It will deliver a country and city overview to better understand where in rural Arabia this research has taken place. It will then look at the students, teachers and housing. It will start to mention common themes and introduce different cultural and sociological aspects of life in the Middle East. It will provide some examples and personal experiences to help illustrate what it is really like.

Figure 1. – Map of Saudi Arabia



### 3.1 COUNTRY AND CITY PROFILE

The following country profile has been composed with information taken from both the CIA world fact book (2013) and the Central Department of Statistics and Information in Saudi Arabia (2013). It focuses on society and demographics as well as education.

Saudi Arabia, located in Middle East, is geographically the largest Arab country of the Arabian Peninsula covering nearly 2,250 million square kilometres; it has the Red Sea to the West and the Persian Gulf to the East. Even with such a coastline, the harsh hot and dry climate has caused Saudi Arabia to be known as a desert nation. It borders with United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen, Jordan, Iraq, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait. It has 13 provinces, which are made up of more than 6000 villages and towns. The major cities are Riyadh, Jeddah, Mecca, Dammam, Taif and Medina, with Riyadh being the capital. Ninety eight per cent of Saudis are Arabs, all following the religion of Islam and using Arabic as the national language. Its main resources are oil, which has stabilized the economy and aided the country greatly in delivering its wealth.

Country: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Capital City: Riyadh

Religion: Islamic monarchy where Islam is the official religion.

Population: 26,939,583 estimated July 2013.  
This ranks it 46<sup>th</sup> in the world, however of this figure it is estimated that 5,576,076 are non-nationals.

Population Summary:

0-14 years: 28.2% (male 3,890,771/female 3,703,725)  
15-24 years: 19.6% (male 2,823,458/female 2,450,629)  
25-54 years: 44.8% (male 6,927,445/female 5,148,565)  
55-64 years: 4.3% (male 639,051/female 524,058)  
65 years and over: 3.1% (male 429,951/female 401,930) (2013 est.)

Work Force: 8.012 million

This is just under a third of the population, of this figure 80% are non-nationals.

Work Force Sectors:

Agriculture: 6.7%  
 Industry: 21.4%  
 Services: 71.9% as of 2005

Saudi Arabia's oil based economy has strong government control over the major economic activities. It possesses about 17% of the world's oil reserves, and is the largest exporter of petroleum. The petroleum sector accounts for approximately 80% of the national budget, 45% of GDP and a massive 90% of export earnings. Currently Saudi Arabia is trying to encourage growth in the private sectors to help diversify the economy and increase employment of Saudi nationals.

The new move is to employ its youth population, who generally lack the education and skills needed by the private sector. Throughout the country spending on job training and education has increased, in Riyadh the King Abdallah University of Science and Technology was opened, starting a chain reaction in other major cities and regions. Figure 2. shows the number of young people, their genders and levels of education.

Figure 2. – Number of students by gender and education stage.

إجمالي الطلبة والطالبات حسب الجنس ومرحلة التعليم  
 Total Number of male and female students by Sex and education stage

السنين والجنس مرحلة التعليم	2007			2008			2009			2010			Stages of education	Years and Sex	
	ذكور Male	إناث Female	جملة Total	ذكور Male	إناث Female	جملة Total	ذكور Male	إناث Female	جملة Total	ذكور Male	إناث Female	جملة Total			
التعليم العام	ابتدائي	1626252	1547555	3E+06	1648592	2E+06	3211387	1671866	1583377	3255243	1691107	1629959	3321066	Elementary	Public Education
	المتوسط	730545	702060	1E+06	740508	709173	1449681	776581	741830	1518391	814654	780380	1595034	Intermediate	
	ثانوي	697391	616451	1E+06	711751	626662	1338413	728206	659854	1388060	766976	674428	1441404	Secondary	
المجموع	3054188	2866066	5920254	3100851	2898630	5999481	3176633	2985061	6161694	3272737	3084767	6357504	Total		

المصدر: - جدول بيانات الإحصاءات العامة والبيانات

Source: Central Department of Statistics & Information.

(source: <http://www.cdsi.gov.sa/>)

## HAIL CITY

The city of Hail is situated in the remote north-Western part of Saudi Arabia, in the beautiful Aja Mountains of the Najd desert, about 650 kilometres north of Riyadh. Hail province has a population of about 550 000 people and the city itself about 260 000. The remainder of the province's population is spread throughout smaller villages, farms and settlements. A small percentage of this remainder still live in the traditional Bedouin manner. This region is of high importance in the agricultural industry, as the majority of the Kingdom's wheat is produced here.

Hail University was officially established in June 2006, and to this day it is the only university in Hail province. This is the first time in this region that female students have had the chance to obtain a university education. The majority of subjects are taught in English, this includes all the examinations.

It is this city and university that will be the basis of this research, exploring the various aspects of daily life, culture and society. The social structure in Saudi Arabia is very important and its effects can be seen everywhere.

Saudi Arabia is one of the world's strongest and most stable economies, predominantly due to its rich oil reserves, its people still uphold the social and cultural systems that to some could more resemble those of the Middle Ages than modern times. It is a very closed society, which fearlessly guards its privacy. The hierarchy of loyalty starts at the top of the family, (in particular the father) then friends, closely followed by the commitment to the tribe, and finally the state. This can be seen not only through the students' approach to studying, but also in their own views on life. For example, a student's marriage into a different tribe remains unacceptable in this region. However, due to education and extended exposure to the outside world, intermarriages between superior and inferior tribes are less frowned upon in larger cities like Jeddah.



There are hundreds of tribes in Saudi Arabia. The main family grouping in Hail is the pastoral Al Shammary, which belongs to one of the largest tribes in Saudi Arabia, extending as far as Iraq and Syria. It includes the large Al Rashidy dynasty, which developed from, and is still part of, the Al Shammary tribe. Students at Hail University take great pride in being part of this tribe, and continue to increase its population through marriage.

Figure 3. – Hail City Roofline



Figure 4. – Hail City Suburbia



### 3.2 THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS AND FACILITIES

The university was first established and opened in time for the 2005/06 academic year. In 2006 the Preparatory Year facilities for the University of Hail were located on the opposite site of the city from the teachers' compound. It was a 30 to 35 minute journey by bus, between the compound and campus.

Recently a new campus was built and students and teachers have since relocated here after 3 years of waiting. It is important to understand how the university has changed and developed over its short life, with changes in equipment, facilities and standards. This will provide insight into what the students' and teachers' learning and working conditions were like. The new university will be discussed in section 3.2.2 The New University Campus.

Teachers generally work one of two possible shifts; early shift leaves the compound at 7am and the later shift at 9am, returning to the compound at 1pm and 2.30pm respectively. However, when teachers are not in the compound the campus is their home away from home.

The old campus had 3 main university buildings, which were all hidden behind the 5m tall concrete walls. Each building was a plain 3-story box, with frosted windows lining the sides to ensure privacy and obstruct any view to and from the outside world. Additionally inside the walls, there were 2 other smaller buildings.

One was a nursery/ kindergarten for the teachers' children. The second one a medical facility with the nurse's office, usually where teachers went to collect Panadol and where students would be dragged after fainting due to missing their breakfasts. Here they could recover and regain their strength.

## THE OLD CLASSROOMS

Classrooms that were designed to accommodate no more than 30 students used to be packed with 40 to 55 students, which in some semesters was considered a normal class. Classrooms were not just used to teach, some students decided to use it as an extension of the canteens, probably due to the lack of seating. Teachers teaching in the class after a break were welcomed by empty cans and potato chips bags that decorated the desks and floors.

The overcrowded rooms caused students sitting next to each other to sit squashed, elbow-to-elbow. Sometimes so close that their legs were no more than 1 metre from the whiteboard, with the teacher squeezed between the wall and students' shoes. The quality of teaching due to such large numbers and over packed classes was suffering. This brought on a need for more classrooms and more teachers, as the number of students was set to rise.

This increase came because the university deanship decided to make preparatory year compulsory for all university colleges (medicine, science and humanities) and the number of students dramatically increased. In the previous academic year the preparatory year reached nearly 1800 students, and in the most recent academic year reached over 3800 students. The logistics of this increase had many problems.

At this stage the new university premises were not completed on time so this large number of students were forced to use existing buildings (that were located on the other side of the city), which were not in a state to accommodate such a large number of students.

Safety issues were a concern to Western teachers not only in the classrooms but also the hallways and courtyards. These areas were crowded and in case of fire, could result in tragedy. The fire hydrants on each floor were

incomplete. Fire extinguishers were hanging on the walls but no one knew how to use them.

Figure 5. – Classroom in the old campus



## THE NEW UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

The new university was built only 10 minutes' drive from the teachers' compound and offered more space and feeling of movement. The University of Hail is situated on the edge of a new developing part of town called Aja with 25 thousand registered students. This new university was once a small city on its own, standing behind a 2.5km by 1.5 km concrete wall with 8 big metal entrances. Each entrance had a male security guard to ensure that no one (including the teachers) leaves the premises without a written permission from the vice dean. Once you entered there was a row of seats which were occupied by the female security guards checking students' bags and sometimes performing body searches to ensure students were not bringing in mobile phones with cameras, iPads and unsuitable photographs (males).

The campus comprised the college of arts, education, computer sciences, medicine and the university preparatory year. Colleges were clearly labelled with large numbers on each side of a building.

It even included a dormitory that will be able to house female students from distant villages; this was a new concept but the building was nearing completion. This decision was made after 12 girls had recently died in a tragic road accident on their way to school, from their small home village out of town. The tragedy affected many students including lecturers. One family lost 3 family members in this accident.

The university continues to expand with satellite colleges opening in outlying villages as far as 300 kilometres from Hail to offer educational opportunities to all female students in the region.

## THE NEW CLASSROOMS AND OFFICES

The new classrooms were light and spacious and overhead projectors were continuously being installed into each new class; labs were equipped with computers. And as more equipment and materials were slowly being delivered there was also a feeling of relief.

Even though in the beginning teachers had no computers, chairs or even desks to work on, it was all slowly happening and falling into place. Teachers still have to buy their own board markers and the classrooms are crowded due to a teacher shortage, but somehow it was functioning.

Figure 6. – The new offices for teachers



## THE CANTEEN

The old campus had 2 canteens that provided the deprived students of their morning sugar fix. The breakfast menu offered Kit-Kats, Snickers, Mars bars, jellybeans, ice cream and a large variety of colourful fizzy drinks to start the day. After receiving complaints for 4 years the canteen managed to improve the menu, providing students and staff with what was considered a healthy meal. We now had the ability to buy a cup of cooked corn with a lump of butter on top and a generous amount of salt. This trend has carried over to the new campus also.

The best thing that ever happened in either canteen was the arrival of a juice machine. Every day freshly squeezed orange juice was made on the premises. However, it was noted that the canteen worker was pouring sugar into each plastic cup before the fresh juice was added. After several discussions this was stopped on the teachers' request.

The new canteen had an increase in the number of service windows and a huge increase in seating. It now offers plenty of space for up to 300 sugar hungry students in a comfortable environment. Girls will sit outside where there are some tables and chairs and designated seating areas where they can socialise.

## THE NURSERY

Both campuses have had a nurseries built to accommodate large numbers of children from as young as 2 months to help all the faculty staff. The new university nursery was so popular it was seriously over-subscribed. It had a fine big building with plenty of preschool facilities. The nursery was very popular with staff because it had a high ratio of nurses to children, which provided a good environment.

## THE EXAMS

To test more than 3700 students takes two days. These exams took place in a big hall that can seat up to 900 students. Exam week and the beginning of a semester were normally the most stressful and demanding period. Not only for the teachers but also for the students. Cheating and doubles taking exams for their friends happened every time and is quite well-known among students and teachers.

To have a double (a friend or a relative) to sit for her exam was very easy, as girls here had no ID cards with photos. The student just comes to the hall, finds her section, signs her name (or her friend's name) on the class list and is handed an exam paper. After one hour or two the completed paper is collected and the student leaves the building. Because of this procedure it is very easy for anyone to pretend to be someone else.

In previous years teachers were encouraged during the exam time to walk through rows of seats to check if the participating students were really in sections and were actually their students. Sometimes it can be very difficult for the teacher to identify her own students as recently teachers have been moved a number of times due to the lack of teachers in the department.

However, the English department successfully caught four students pretending to be someone else. It is interesting to watch the "cheater's" reaction when caught. The culprits soon start to try to convince the teachers and the security staff that they are the named students and need to take the exam.

This was the old procedure, now since moving to the new campus, the 30 odd students take the exam in their classroom under the direct supervision of their teacher, at the same time the other students are in their classrooms with their teachers taking the same exam. This has resulted in a drop in cheating and the process is much easier to manage.



### 3.3 THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

#### THE STUDENTS

The female students at Hail University are unique. They are naive, unguarded, and impressionable young women. They are caught between ancient family and tribal rules. Their exposure to the Western world is increasing, firstly in the form of television, Internet and other such media. Secondly they now have the chance to witness and interact with Westerners, this new “channel” through which they can really experience, observe and scrutinize a little bit of this “forbidden and unknown” Western world. This comes in the form of the English teachers that they come into contact with through their studies.

These girls are likely to meet women with blue eyes, blond hair and fair skin. Contact with these foreigners and their different ideologies, behaviour, and clothing, can cause many problems and ethical issues for these women, particularly in relation to the strict control of their parents at home.

Families do not allow young ladies to live by themselves, away from their relatives, this is only possible if a brother, father or uncle lives in the selected area, and then the woman is allowed to join them for work or study.

The vast majority of female students at Hail University lives in villages surrounding Hail. Some of these villages are over 200 kilometres away from the university, resulting in a 400 kilometre return trip daily, over 2000 kilometres every week. Some of these students get up at 4am to reach the university by 7.30am, relying mostly on brothers, fathers, family drivers or bus drivers to drive them.

As these girls rely on their male counterparts, a large number of men also believe that they are facing problems, as more of their wives and daughters want to attend university to gain an education. These fathers and husbands

feel they are losing control and power over their daughters and wives who want an education or who want to work.

Family in Saudi culture is the most important institution. In Hail it is also crucial to mention that these students may have a large number of siblings, such as 9 sisters and 7 brothers, which is not unusual. These large families are due to practised polygyny.

Marriage is still very important in these young ladies' lives, but more recently as times change education is also becoming a valuable attribute, not only for the women but also for the future husbands. Although the women would like to be valued for their intellect and their employment skills, this is frequently not the case and they are seen merely as means of further income.

The university had quite a number of married students some of whom have children before the age of 21. There are students married at very young ages, some as young as fourteen, who already have a number of children.

The definition of family structure in Saudi Arabia is far broader than that of the west. The term family can include both immediate family i.e. parents, siblings and cousins etc. as well as tribal family members which can reach into the hundreds or more. To keep the tribal bond strong it is tradition for many tribes to gather annually at a chosen place within the Kingdom. As explained by a participant 4 who travels with her family every year:

*“Like in two days in a year, they have a duty to the family. In Eid Aladha and Eid Alfitr. And sometimes not often they pick in each Eid one city, like my tribe, they are from more than one city, so maybe the last year was in Al-Qaseem and the year before was in Hail, and some years it will be in Jeddah. Like this. They approve. They decide. They rent a big place where they speak together in one day, one whole day, they will have lunch together. They will have parents, daughters, and*

*granddaughters, many. A lot, lot of people. You may spend twenty minutes to say hi or ask do I know them. Like this". (Personal interview, 29 December 2012).*

Even though Saudi Arabia has been a nation for more than 80 years this shows that the importance of a tribe belonging is still very strong.

As further explained: although these family values can appear admirable, there is another side to this tribal "belonging". For example; should a person, male or female, become emotionally involved with someone outside of their tribe, this would be totally unacceptable due to the centuries-old tribal rivalry, which still exists today.

So how is it possible that in this age of globalization, technological advancement and cosmic exploration that these women are in many cases still treated as possessions and objects, not allowed to leave their homes or travel alone without written permission or being accompanied by a family member? What is stopping them from driving, working, and choosing their own husbands? How is it possible that men have such control over their lives? The answers to these questions lie well beyond the Quran, and a considerable way beyond the Islamic culture they are born into. Here on the edge of the Najd desert, life is still very much lived by customs that originated centuries ago. Even though Saudi Arabia is the cradle of Islam, and also of the prophet Mohammed, some students in this region are so superstitious that they believe that eating a date a day protects them from evil spirits.

There are three main reasons why these girls attend university. The first one is the 1050 Saudi Riyals (\$280) they receive every month from the government as a study allowance. Often this money was used to help support the family household; or sometimes the fathers or husbands kept it. Even though this type of behaviour was unacceptable by Islamic rules, it happened. A student explained that her father would not allow his daughter to marry, as he would lose the university payment as a regular source of income. Students

who travel hundreds of kilometres everyday pay a designated driver between 700 and 800 Riyals per month to drive them to university.

In the early years before the dress code was introduced the students spent this money on expensive makeup or clothes. Though students must be fully covered when travelling to the university, they are allowed to remove this covering once they are safely behind the university's walls. The niqab, the hijab and the abaya disappear, and then it is time to show off the latest fashion from the local outlets, ranging from cheap Chinese plastic shoes, to the latest of Riyadh's Gucci or Dior handbags. For these ladies, university means "party time"; time to show off their best shoes (the highest heels), their make-up (more is better), and their clothes (more cleavage showing is better). Some of the hairstyles and cleavages would have admirably suited the annual Vienna Ball.

The second reason that these girls attended university was the prospect of a higher value as a future bride-to-be. If she is educated her future husband will have to pay a higher dowry for her. She will receive more money as her wedding gift.

The third reason was their dream to have a successful career or having their own business. As already expressed by a number of students their idea of having a business is, for example, to own a laundry, to have a Bangladeshi female worker do all the manual work and she would do the accounts.

However in the last couple of years there was a gradual change, where students seriously wanted to pursue business or medical careers. With the nearly 5 million Saudis eligible to work 1 million of which are women and the unemployment figures standing at 12.2% the prospect of more women entering the workforce can be only seen as a positive step forward.

Another reason is a result of social circles, or lack of them. Normally these girls do not have girlfriends from outside the family circle, and even when the

students make friends, they are not allowed to visit each other, as the families are not related. This is also the best time to meet a girl that has a single brother looking for a bride. As this girl will go home and will talk about this new friend she met and how wonderful she is and that she is a prospective “bride to be” for her brother.

Figure 7. – Courtyard inside the new campus for students to socialise



## TEACHERS AND STAFF

Most of the Hail teachers are foreigners. During the early stages of the staffing process, many of the teachers had the bare minimum of academic qualifications and professional qualities. In the last few years the recruitment process was changed to ensure that only qualified staff are recruited. The majority of teachers at Hail University are either from Jordan, Egypt or Syria. There are relatively few Western teachers, but they are from a range of different countries around the world.

Not that long ago, applicants with dual passports, including British, Canadian, American, or Australian, would be offered a teaching position. Even if the applicant had a thick accent when speaking English, lack of proper qualifications, poor interview results, or unreliable references, they would still be considered and even presented with an offer. So, if a teacher was from a different country and held one of these passports, he or she would be treated as a near-native speaker. This benefits the applicant who could receive an above average salary. Furthermore, it appears irrelevant that this person would have never taught before and that his or her spelling be far from perfect. Many such people land themselves very cushy jobs for two years, as the university issues only two-year contracts. These salary differences were not fair on the other qualified, hard-working teachers who may not hold one of the more sought-after passports.

No matter how bad teachers are it is almost impossible for them to have their employment terminated. There are no consequences for unprofessional behaviour. Hail University is full of peculiar characters, some of whom would find it difficult to hold down jobs in the west. There are plans to remove government recruiting all together and replace it with a third party recruiting agency.

The difference between these teachers and teachers with Western standards of academic and professional behaviour is immense. There is also a big difference between Western professional standards and Middle Eastern standards. The latter tend to be more relaxed with regard to the academic performance of students.

However, there are exceptions. Teachers constituting these exceptions are often shut out by their Middle Eastern colleagues, who will question why such a person is working hard or performing extra duties without being asked to do so. They also tend to assume that the teacher must have given something to the head of department in order to be allowed to work closely with the coordinating and administrative team.

Out of 70 English teachers only a third could have been considered to have a good work ethic. The remainder of the staff were not as productive or motivated due to the rapid changes in university policy and their own expectations.

During the research time some startling teachers' mental breakdowns "due to the Hail isolation" or due to the personal baggage accompanying them, was witnessed. As separation from the outside world slowly sets in, the personal demons of these teachers became apparent. Not everyone was capable of being alone 24-7. By not being able to stroll down to the shop, go out for coffee with a friend, go window-shopping, or without being able to enjoy a bottle of wine these teachers were confined to the walls of the compound. There was nowhere to go and the 300m x 300m compound where almost all the Western teachers live became their life... and it was their only life.

Another semester had finished and with it arrived the long-anticipated summer break which to some saw the end of their two year contract and the return to their "real world", the return of "freedom". Freedom to drive, freedom to go to the movies, freedom to talk to men married or single and ability to sit in a restaurant with a nice glass of wine.

The behaviour of the teachers that made the decision not to renew their contract for another two years was quite noticeable. These teachers smiled a bit more, didn't bicker or complain as much and looked to the future as they whispered to each other secrets about their future plans.

The interesting part is that a fairly large number were searching for another job in Saudi Arabia, but in more metropolitan places such as Riyadh or Jeddah. They have understood and adjusted to the cultural way of life, but don't want to give up the nice monthly salary. Instead they just want to have more freedom in the form of large shopping malls, restaurants and private parties. Also the fear of being discovered by a gossiping teacher for doing something that clashes with local customs and beliefs is reduced.

There were three cases where a teacher was sent home. One particular teacher lasted only 8 months, due to her inability to cope with the lifestyle, not only in Hail but in Saudi Arabia. This was partnered with her own learning disability, teaching incompetence and instability. Students were refusing to attend her classes claiming she could not teach and was not covering the requested material. There was no alternative but to remove her from teaching duties. This caused problems with other staff who had to shoulder the extra work.

About three weeks before the end of the semester, this teacher tried to commit suicide twice. Once by taking an undisclosed quantity of tablets, that would later to be vomited out. The following day she made another attempt, as this time she placed a plastic bag over her head and tried to suffocate herself. After apparently running out of air she ripped the bag off and went to her closest neighbour.

An email "Urgent, please help" was sent to the dean asking for assistance and advice. The immediate reply was not to leave the teacher alone and wait for medical assistance.



Finally an ambulance arrived with about six men. One was a psychiatrist and the rest were male university employees from some unknown department. The psychiatrist was the only one who entered the “patient’s” apartment and seated himself on the couch to face her.

After seeing the whole assembly standing next to the big old shabby ambulance, she went hysterical. Shouting that everyone will now know that she is mad, she then started to throw rocks around, before running back to her house. After some time, thanks to the Egyptian doctor’s persuasion, she finally ventured out.

By now the ambulance was surrounded by nosy, whispering neighbours as well as the university men, which again unbalanced our patient into refusing to take a ride to the local hospital. As she got pushed into the back of the ambulance the metal door closed leaving the patient and the watchman, who was sitting by the back door making sure no one would not escape.

As the ambulance started to move the patient became hysterical, screaming; “I don’t want to be locked up” over and over again. After a few minutes her vocabulary slightly changed to; “Let me out, let me out...” this time her screaming was directed at the watchman. The driver was aware of commotion and in desperate plea to help his colleague he turned the siren on. The siren and the patient were now competing against each other, reaching the same high, unbearable, shrieking sound.

At last the ambulance came to a sharp stop and the back doors swung open. Our patient jumped out of the ambulance asking where she was.

None of the staff spoke English. They were not sure of the correct procedure as Saudi men are not allowed to touch unrelated women. But they were there to help but just didn’t know how.

Eventually a small, clean, windowless room in a ladies' section was allocated. After two hours of psychiatric assessment the doctors decided that there was definitely something amiss with this teacher and was given a couple of tablets to calm her. She went into a deep, restful sleep that was safeguarded from the end of her bed by Filipino nurses on a 24-hour suicide standby.

However, four days later the university authorities sent a male and female teachers to escort her that evening to Riyadh. Upon arrival two employees from her embassy were waiting to chaperone the teacher to the international airport terminal, where she departed safely.

This is just one of the experiences; it helps illustrate what the conditions and standards can do to someone if they are not prepared or willing to embrace it. This state of delusion can be attributed to a lack of, as outsiders would see it, normal and healthy socialising between the genders. These restraints imposed by culture and religion affect both genders but more so the single women. The loss of control over your life i.e. ability to make your own decisions, lack of general conversational skills due to time spent alone which can stretch to days without socializing after work. One can become excessively lonely if one does not find a person of similar interest. Also this can be made worse by the enforced lack of spontaneous freedom. This affects everyone in a different way.

Figure 8. – The modern and new hallways that line the new campus



### 3.4 LIVING CONDITIONS

#### THE COMPOUND

The compound is situated in the foothills of the beautiful Ajar Mountains. These barren, oddly shaped and sized clusters of rocks reach up to 1450m above sea level and surround the 5 meter high barbed wire and concrete walls of the compound. There is one entrance that consists of a large, sliding, metal gate with a boom barrier in front of it. Next to the gate is a small building that is occupied by bored security personnel, who change shifts twice a day. Once in the early morning and the other in the evening.

The guards park their cars next to the gate and sit in their “cubby house” next to the air conditioner during the scorching, hot summer or a heater when the cold northern winds blow through the mountains, or the occasional red dusty wall of a sandstorm, before it is time to go home. Sometimes, depending on the weather conditions, they walk around without their shoes. They wear washed-out dark blue uniforms, which hang loosely over their black army belts. But most of the time they would just pull a rope they have attached to the barrier to lift it for the outgoing or incoming traffic to avoid any extra movement. They do not create any sense of protection.

About 100 metres in front of this security gate is another security post (which I prefer to call a “camping ground”), where up to 6 soldiers camp all day long in front of another small house, consisting of one room. However, next to this post is parked a Dodge pickup with a machine gun mounted on its roof. The soldiers themselves lounged about in front of the entrance on a Persian carpet enjoying drinking Arabic coffee and chatting.

Occasionally, and invariably at night, gun sounds and mortar fire could be heard, often it was fireworks. This created an unpleasant feeling of vulnerability. Saudi men when celebrating would fire their pistols into the air.

The barbed wire on top of the concrete walls surrounding the compound and a few security cameras loosely hanging from metal poles overlook the compound borders. However, to get inside the compound is very easy. There are some holes and gaps in different parts of the concrete wall and anyone can get in, often stray wild cats and dogs. Should one just climb a few hundred meters up the rocks, you can see the whole compound below. However by the end of the research period the compound had been considerably tidied up. All of the security cameras were working efficiently and monitored at the entrance.

The compound was generally empty apart from the various types of houses. There was no shop and no other provisions for any activities apart from sleeping. One day after nearly six years of waiting the big day came and a small shop was opened by the entrance to the compound. However, the goods on sale resembled a western school canteen selling chocolates, Mars bars, fizzy drinks and different coloured chewing gum.

This shop was a great disappointment. The compound residents, especially the single ladies who were hoping that if they needed bottled drinking water or a loaf of bread, would be able to just walk few a metres down the road. This would have saved them calling a taxi, waiting for a few hours to get into the taxi and be driven to the local supermarket, which by the time they got there would be closed because of prayer time. This would result in waiting another half an hour before it opened again and finally after getting her hands on her loaf of bread she would be able call the taxi to come and pick her up. This could take again another thirty minutes to one hour. To sum it up, this activity would take easily three hours of your afternoon. So the disappointment was easily understandable.

Also a few years back there was a lovely in-ground swimming pool with crystal clean water. However, because the timetable had to accommodate each gender separately: (from 2pm – 3pm for men, from 3pm – 5pm for

families, from 6pm – 7pm for women, and from 7pm – 9pm for men), no one actually used the pool, except a very few!

Figure 9. – The compound from the mountains



Figure 10. – The compound from the mountains with Hail City in the distance



## THE HOUSES

What would one see in this area with small square brick and concrete boxes, that the people here call “homes”?

The people who maintained the compound grounds and homes were quite friendly and if the teacher was polite and respectful they would try to fix any small problem, sometimes on the same day or even immediately. However if teachers complained a lot to the housing department, they were stuck with the problem, from plumbing to faulty electricity until it was decided. This could take weeks even months in some cases. Some ‘tenants’ gave up waiting and left the country all together.

There are two categories of homes; two older types of buildings, the first that had a fenced garden with some green shrub growing around it. This was built mainly for larger families, it consisted of three bedrooms and two bathrooms.

The second type was a row of 8 semi-detached, single one-bedroom flats with no garden, no view and small windows causing the tenant to live almost in darkness. They were built about 15 years ago (1998).

The single bedroom places are often called the “kennels” because of their close resemblance to dog kennels. People in the old family houses had chickens and even goats that they personally slaughtered during their festive seasons. This was later banned as the Western teachers found these actions to be too barbaric.

The second category of living was a newer, but plain looking, ‘family’ box surrounded by a small piece of barren land enclosed by a metal fence.

And again there was a one-bedroom version that consisted of three U-shaped courtyards with 16 modern apartments. Included were a big brand new fridge, stove and a washing machine.

The newer houses also have industrial glass on their windows so that no one can see in, but the problem is that no one can see out either! All of the boxes are painted an orangey yellow, which blends in nicely with the ever-present sand surrounding them.

The insides of most of these 'homes' are usually spacious, furnished with comfortable made-in-China furniture à la Saudi style. There are metal bars on all the windows. What the casual observer doesn't see is that the electrical wiring is unsafe, the water not drinkable, and sometimes the Internet doesn't work for days.

Each can be made comfortable depending on the creativity and willingness of its current owner. A small number of homes could almost be eligible for publication in "House and Gardens" magazine but others resembled suspicious looking dwellings. This has also a lot to do with people's personalities and priorities, for example: hoarders or people with a slight obsessive-compulsive disorder. Also by the time people leave this compound and are looking for another career, some of them could apply for a handyman's job. Another career move could be a collector: when a teacher leaves the compound for good the other teachers strip the deserted house completely including the light bulbs.

The researcher visited a real Saudi farm with a small house built from mud brick. It had a hole in the ground for a toilet, 100 goats and 2 Afghani workers that had been working there since the 'beginning of time'. Apparently their wives were living somewhere in Afghanistan and they had not seen them or their children for over 6 years, and they were in no hurry to see them anytime soon.

The land belonging to this farm was flat, carpeted with clean yellow sand reaching all the way to the horizon on which stood metal posts with long, circling arms bringing moisture to the next crop of wheat. The silence was

broken by the sound of an old Volvo truck engine pumping water from the deep well.

In the evening Arabic coffee brewed on an open fire inside the small house and outside in the courtyard a big fire burned, cooking pieces of lamb. The courtyard was lined with old Persian carpets, and the sky was painted with millions of tiny lights.

Figure 11. – Accommodation for single teachers, with mountains in the background



Figure 11. – The view from one of the windows looking at the barbed-wired wall





## CHAPTER 4 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will examine and explain the theories and concepts that underline and relate to Saudi women. It will look at the educational systems in place and the changes that have occurred over time regarding women's education. It will try to provide insight and understanding into why males and females are segregated during their schooling stage of life. The section will also try to provide an overview of how women are perceived in such a culture, as well as a quick look at the Islamic Law system. Finally it will examine the first face-to-face interaction between foreigners and local Arabic women. All of these factors relate and overlap and contribute to how, what and why women study within the Kingdom.

## 4.1 EDUCATION

First we must understand that the concept of education can be traced back thousands of years. It is typically accepted that after the period of hunting and gathering societies had come to an end in around 10,000 B.C. a new era emerged that was built on pre-industrial and agricultural societies. By around 440 B.C. the Greek philosopher Socrates started to teach and lecture, his style would soon play a role in the modern educational system. Socrates believed that education is not only what we know, but also how we know and learnt it. His teaching method is still used today, and involves asking questions on top of questions. His work lived on through his students, Plato (428/427 B.C. – 348/347 B.C.) one of them then taught Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) who would eventually teach a young Alexander the Great. It was Aristotle's approach that then inspired the scientific method, even though he relied on pure reason and not the experiments. The concept of lectures was used throughout this period, and is still used in today's universities.

The idea of gaining a 'higher education' has been around for centuries, it originally focused on religious teachings. The oldest university according to both UNSECO and the Guinness book of records is Al-Karaouine located in Morocco, it was established in 895 A.D. It was originally a mosque established by a woman Fatima al-Fihri; this is interesting considering the role and place of Islamic women in today's Islamic society. Even though Al-Karaouine is claimed to be the oldest it does not mean that there were no other facilities that were established earlier, these are likely to have been destroyed and erased from history. This title may simply mean that it is the oldest university that is still granting degrees, regardless of this, it is a tribute to the Islamic system.

The second oldest is based in Egypt, the Al-Azhar university was established around 970 A.D. and has a strong connection to Arabic literature and Sunni Islamic learning. It focuses on the religious syllabus that relates to Quran sciences and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. Nowadays it also includes all the modern fields of science. Based on these two cases one can

clearly see that Islamic regions were once at the cutting edge of teaching, it was not until about a century later that the first university was established in the Western world.

In 1088 A.D. the University of Bologna, Italy was established and the term University was first used. Today this University is considered to be one of the leaders in the development of European university systems. Over the next two hundred years Europe saw a university 'boom' with universities being established in Paris, France (1096 A.D.), Oxford, United Kingdom (1096 A.D.), Montpellier, France (1150 A.D.), Cambridge, United Kingdom (1209 A.D.), and Salamanca, Spain (1218 A.D.). Before labelling themselves as universities and gaining more prestige, they were mainly independent colleges and groups of smaller colleges scattered around the country. How does this compare to Saudi Arabia?

As explained by the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC, once Saudi Arabia was established in 1932 so was the educational system. Prior to this, education was available for only a few of the privileged students living in the main cities. King Abdulaziz bin Abdelrahman Al-Saud was aware of the importance of education and around 1945, through his special program, schools started to be established throughout the Kingdom. In 1951 there were already approximately 29,889 students attending 226 schools nationwide.

Currently Saudi Arabia has five stages in education; kindergarten, primary school (elementary school), intermediate school (the equivalent of middle school) where upon completion they can attend vocational training. After intermediate school they may wish to continue on to high school and then finally choose a university education. During the entire educational journey male and female students are completely segregated from day one.

All elementary and secondary education is free for all Saudi students. Surprisingly the Saudi syllabus does not differ too much from other countries, however it still has a strong emphasis on Islamic studies.

The first stage on offer is kindergarten and nurseries, these are available for the younger children. However it is not compulsory and there is no need to attend. All children are eligible to enter the first year of Primary school without any prior schooling or examination.

The primary school consists of grades 1 through to 6 and starts at the age of 6 with students enrolling in the first grade. Here they are subject to the standard content; math, Arabic (reading and writing), science, history and Islamic studies. After completing grade 6 students must take a final exam and pass before being awarded an Elementary Certificate that enables them to continue studies and move on to the intermediate school.

Intermediate school starts from grade 7 to 9 and is often fused with high school being from grade 10 to grade 12. As stated by Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission:

*Students can choose between general secondary and technical schools after the intermediate level. In 9 the first year of general secondary school, students share a common curriculum. At the end of this year, they are divided into the scientific and literary tracks for the final two years. Students obtaining a score of 60% and above in all the first year subjects may choose between the literary and scientific track. Students obtaining a score of less than 60% must opt for the literary track.*

Students must complete and obtain their Intermediate School certificate, only when this is done can they be accepted into further educational programs. These specialized courses can focus on agricultural, commercial and industrial studies. After completing these courses, students are awarded secondary diplomas in their particular field. Another path would be a more technical field, which often involves a two-year course and can lead to work in

the building industry with basic engineering, drawing, construction road supervision (these students are then awarded the Certificate of Technical Assistant Institute) or alternatively a three-year nursing diploma.

This is similar to the educational system in Australia, where students can officially leave after the 10th year to pursue vocational training. Or alternatively complete the 12<sup>th</sup> grade and sit their school leaving exams before applying for university. In Saudi they have a high school diploma called Tawjihyah, which is also obtained after sitting a nationwide exam.

Table 2. – Number of students at public schools.

Number of Students in Saudi Public Schools, 2008 – 2009		
Elementary	Intermediate	Secondary
2,694,161	1,175,409	916,872

After completing high school students can contemplate the option of going to university. University education was originally offered only to Saudi citizens, recently some relaxation of this rule has been shown, for example at Hail University there were some students from; Syria, Somalia and other countries who had been accepted into programs. Saudi students are encouraged to study through the use of government stipends and allowances.

Saudi Arabia has been investing enormous amounts of money into the educational system, building new academic facilities for their students and introducing to female students more courses that were previously for male students only. This encourages even more female students to commit to higher education.

Higher education is offered from both public and private universities and offers all levels of education starting from four year Bachelor's Degrees (the exception is medicine, pharmacy, veterinary and engineering which are studied for five years), two year Master's Degree and finally the three year

Doctorate. Higher Education is overseen by Ministry of Higher Education as explained by the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission to the US as:

*The Ministry of Higher Education supervises the execution of the Kingdom's policy in the field of higher education, and it supervises the universities through the University Council. Most universities accept both men and women but the University of Petroleum and Minerals and the Islamic University admit only men. English is used as the language of instruction in technological and science fields and all other subjects are taught in Arabic.*

In addition Majed Alamri explained that even though Saudi Arabia is in the process of producing a large number of graduates, there is still a shortage of Saudi academic staff and workforce professionals. To solve this problem the King introduced a "King Abdullah Scholarship Program" which is currently educating 70,000 Saudi males and females studying abroad in countries such as Australia, US, Canada or the United Kingdom. Furthermore the Ministry of Higher Education explains that:

*Scholarships are now granted regardless of the gender of the student. However, Saudi female students in this case must be accompanied by a "Mahrram", immediate family member, which is a benefit as the living expenses for the family member are covered and they could be sponsored to study as well. Moreover, Saudi Arabia is also ranked by UNESCO the first in the world for the number of students studying abroad as a proportion of the population, a total of 0.03%.*

When we examine the academic staff most of the Saudi deans have been educated internationally in foreign countries. When they return to Saudi Arabia some of them lack the skills and knowledge to effectively manage and motivate the faculty staff. While they believe their international training has

given them greater power it has also caused them to establish a very bureaucratic environment. In such an environment any positive change and development is restricted or processed in a slow and inefficient manner. Furthermore most of the Western foreign staff seek work in Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries where they are attracted to an enticing tax-free salary. By contrast foreign staff from countries such as Pakistan, the Philippines, India or Jordan are financially disadvantaged due to their nationality. Even though they work harder and more efficiently than some of the local and Western employees, there is little room to grow and develop. (Source - personal communication with faculty members at the University of Hail). More information about the teachers' behaviours and attitudes can be found in section 3.4.

As mentioned several times the Saudi government is continually investing billions of Riyals annually to help improve and develop higher education and with this we hope to see an increase in standards. Currently the government is implementing changes, which are already having a positive impact on the future educational system. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) is a government body and is responsible for university level education and has also changed and developed its roles and responsibilities over time.

The MOHE was established in 1975, but the first established college in Saudi Arabia was the College of Sharia in 1949, which then became the Umm Al-Qura University in 1981. The first official university was the King Saud University which was opened in Riyadh in 1957. The reason for this late establishment of universities was due to scholars usually travelling abroad to gain a higher education, more commonly travelling to Egypt, where the facilities with Arabic and Islamic teaching had already been well established. While this is typical of male education, women were subject to a different system, under a different government body and were given a very limited chance to gain a higher education.



As stated by Hamdan (2005) the first women's elementary school was opened in the early 1960's in the capital city of Riyadh, prior to this most women and girls were home schooled. They were required to learn the correct religious customs and rituals as well as memorize the Quran. Some females were given the opportunity to memorize the Quran in special classrooms (kuttab) within mosques, this teaching failed to achieve much. Women were able to recite the Quran but there was no opportunity for them to learn to read or write. To this day this trend is still present. Eventually women were put on the path that would slowly lead them to gaining a better education but was much slower than the development of the males' education.

Women's education took a different path. Prior to all-girl universities, females were only offered the opportunity to study at a community college if they wished to gain a higher level of education. A special government department oversaw all levels of female education, from primary school to College. It is named the Department of Religious Guidance. Its impact on education was often criticized and both parents and students were not completely satisfied with its management. The tipping point was in 2002 when a tragic building fire caused the death of 15 young female students. The religious police acting as security guards did not allow the fire fighters to enter the building. This was because they knew the women would not be wearing their head-scarves (hijab), in the presence of unfamiliar males this is considered a sin and immoral. After great debate and consideration women's education was finally placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education, the same government body that deals with the education of Saudi Arabian males.

As stated by Khalid Al-Seghayer (p. 36, 2011, Hala print company, Riyadh). Education in the Kingdom is supervised by three ministries as follows:

- Ministry of Education – in charge of general education, teacher training, special, adult education and literacy
- Ministry of Higher Education – oversees university education

- General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training
  - developing technical and vocational programs depending on employment requirements

Now both men and women have a school year that consists of two semesters starting in September and finishing in June. The classes begin at 7.30a.m and the last class finishes at 2p.m. The school week begins on Saturday and finishes on Wednesday (the weekend has been recently brought into line with other Arab countries, Friday/Saturday). The duration of a class is 45 minutes and up to 7 classes are attended daily. Saudi Arabia is similar to other countries where the students have to sit their final exam to proceed to the next level. The examination system is developed by individual schools. Education is free and up to the age of 15 is compulsory. Khalid Al-Seghayer,p.36

Prior to being under the guidance of the MOHE, women had the chance to further study religious topics, or areas where males were not permitted. For example they could study to be a school teacher, as males are not permitted to teach females and vice-versa. This presents an opportunity for females to gain an education and pass on their knowledge, it also creates a small and limited job market. This also applies to nursing, where female nurses assist female patients. Even though this opportunity exists, many of the female nurses are from foreign countries, as local Saudi women are very rarely seen in the work force due to cultural differences. However, since the MOHE is now overlooking the young women's education they have been presented with more opportunities.

In 1932 the government of the modern Saudi Arabia recognized that a second language was needed to enable its people to connect with the rest of the world. With the arrival of the Arabian American Oil Company in 1968 they realized that to expand and advance internationally the use of English became a necessity to communicate with the experts and businessmen in fields of commerce and industry. English is generally considered a universal second language throughout the world.

Although English was introduced for the first time at elementary school level in 1928 (for 4 hours per week), it then took until 1959 for the English language to become a part of the official national curriculum. The weekly time allocated for this subject ranged between 12 hours in 1945 down to 4 hours in 1982. However the grade level at which English is taught has fluctuated over the years and is currently set at grade 6 for 2 hours a week (Khalid Al-Seghayer,p.1, 2011).

English is the only language taught in the Saudi public schools system. It is also taught in the Universities, colleges & private schools; it is a core subject. Recently the areas that are available to study have increased, women now have the chance not only to study teaching and nursing but also, science, computer & information sciences, business and administration, pharmacy, physical therapy, and languages and simultaneous interpretation. The large and rapid development of universities for women has cost billions of dollars.

In 2011 the Princess Nora Bint Abdulrahman University opened the world's largest women's campus with an area of 800 hectares or 8 square-kilometres and consisting of 32 colleges. The campus is equipped with state-of-the-art technology, computer labs, research labs, medical department, community centre, residential areas and mosques. This amazing institution is located on the outskirts of the capital city of Riyadh, but what about those who live in more rural areas?

As mentioned, it is the author's intention to focus heavily on the Hail region. The University of Hail was established in 2005, and offered males various degree programs such as Applied Electrical Engineering, Computer Science and Management Information Systems. According to the MOHE (2012) in 2007 the Teachers College and Girls Education College joined and became a part of the University of Hail. While the province of Hail has a population of only half a million, the university continues to grow and expand and so do its

enrolment figures. While this University has both male and female students, they remain segregated and are located on different campuses.

Figure 13. – The new Hail campus, during the finishing stages of construction



## 4.2 SEGREGATION

The reason for the segregation of male and female students has no simple origin. According to Muhammad bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Musnad (1996, pp.61) there are three main reasons for segregation, they are as follows. The first reason is based on adolescence and puberty, young male students going through these changes would be interacting with female students and teachers. Also some students start schooling at a later age and are already adolescent before they complete elementary school. In some Arabic countries boys aged 10 are considered adolescent, and in some case they are able to marry. These changes bring on a natural attraction to women, and by having mixed classrooms and the mixing of sexes it is believed that it will result in evil and harmful consequences.

The next reason is the preservation of the religion and culture, this is justifiable as national identity plays a large role in society. A newspaper article in the Al-Madinah published in 1976 claims that if school classes were mixed and interaction between males and females were permitted than this would raise the question of having mixed classes at all educational levels. This would very likely cause a huge social change and result in a similar situation to that in Western cultures, where young males and females develop attractions for one another. These attractions could lead to dating, pre marital intercourse, and refusal of arranged marriages and more, the resulting damage would have a huge impact on the Islamic culture.

The final reason comes for the Hadith, of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) saying;

*“Order your children to pray at the age of seven. And beat them [lightly] if they do not do so by the age of ten. And separate them in their bedding.”*

Muhammad bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Musnad Musnad (1996, p.63) claims that this has been authentically narrated, and Al-Syuti has given it a notation signifying that it is authentic. Here is a reference to the believed adolescent age of ten and also the segregation of children, how this is interpreted falls upon the Islamic Law scholars. Islamic law will be examined shortly, but before that we must understand where women stand within society. While change from a female's point of view might seem positive, it is the opinions of the males that are valued most in this society and culture.

### 4.3 WOMEN IN SOCIETY

Girls in Saudi Arabia appear to have a lovely childhood. They are adored by their parents and brought up to be very submissive to Islam. They appeared very accepting of their parents' wishes and so behave as good, practicing Muslims. The majority of students dressed modestly, their hair was usually long and black.

In Islamic culture women appear to be objectified. Prior to this educational revival their role was to simply create a suitable environment for their husbands and families.

Getting ready for marriage is quite intensive, in any culture. At the University one student was getting married in five months, and she took drastic measures. She did not know the man, had not seen him, and had no idea of his age. The one thing she knew was that he liked slim ladies however, she felt she was not slim enough. This student decided to have her mouth pinned together so she could only eat soup for 5 months. Also an intensive exercise regime began.

After all the excitement of marriage was over, the marriage celebrations were held over a weekend at a large marriage venue. The new wife then began life in a new house bought by her spouse for her, also she had numerous pieces of gold given to her & about 15,000 dollars in cash for her to spend as she wanted. Maybe here the life of a Princess changes after producing children, who were usually looked after by her in-laws or the maid.

The long days then needed to be filled; shopping, visits from relatives, cleaning and cooking became part of the daily routine. The husband would come home for a quick tea, and then disappear with his friends. If he did not do this he would be considered weak. After socializing and chatting with friends over tea in the desert, or a club, he would return home at about 11pm or later, see the children and then go to bed. So life for the wife is quite monotonous.

Many students complained about how boring their lives were, some admitted to being shocked when they met their husbands on the wedding night. Also the more academically inclined students wanted to go on studying after graduating with their Bachelors of Education, they wanted to go abroad and study for a Masters Degree, but this was frequently refused.

A student told one of the teachers: "It is lovely being a Saudi girl because you are treated like a Princess". Most of the students admitted they had total freedom to do what they liked, however life in Hail was pretty backward, as there were no shopping malls, the shops that were there had only a poor selection of clothes, often of poor quality too. However things were changing, the malls were beginning to be built and coffee shops were opening where there was no family section. However security would prevent young men going into the mall, they could only enter with their families.

Often after the semester and term breaks a few students would return with stories of trips to Paris, London, Kuwait and Dubai. They were enthusiastic about the fact they did not have to cover their faces, they could also shop non-stop, loving the opportunity to buy numerous branded handbags and clothes.

The students all appeared to have their own credit cards and bank accounts. The fathers gave them total freedom to spend money. Traditionally the girls were covered from 9 years to 15, some fathers seemed to have a more relaxed attitude. Girls were very proud of their fathers if they had just one wife.

The students attended High School, then after graduating began to attend University. After the student graduated then the girls had to stay at home until a suitable husband was found. Again the girls happily accepted this arrangement. They admitted that this was excessively boring as all they could do was sleep and eat; some took evening classes to improve their prospects of a better marriage.



The majority of girls felt their life was good, the prospect of marriage was very exciting and offered wonderful opportunities.

Sometimes teachers might be asked to tutor or provide private classes at the student's home. On one occasion the student was the second daughter of the second wife. The second was held in low esteem because she was a Syrian. Some Saudi women do not like Syrian women because they apparently do everything for their Saudi husbands. The first wife (traditionally chosen by the parents of the husband) had 7 daughters and one son, who was the second youngest. The first wife lived down in the main part of the house, which was quite palatial, whereas the second had a side entrance and accommodation at the top of the house. The children, two daughters and a young son were aware of their lower status. The second daughter of the second wife was the favorite, she travelled wherever she wanted to go, had unlimited money at her disposal and she chose to spend some of her allowance on English classes because she wanted to live abroad. The other seven daughters had a totally different relationship with the father.

Another student, the daughter of a policeman, was living in very poor conditions, but wanted to have extra classes; she had been attending an evening class and reached level eleven that was all grammar. She had no speaking experience, so when she tried to speak her vocabulary was old fashioned and sentences were stilted. All of the family money was going toward educating the son in America so he could become a pilot. The two daughters patiently accepted their fate.

According to AME Info (2010) Sharia law permits women to work within an appropriate environment, like nursing and teaching as mentioned above. The largest employer of Saudi Arabian women is the public sector, where 95% of the small number of working women can be broken down accordingly, 85% of women are employed in education, 6% in public health and 4% are in administrative positions. The remaining 5% work in the private sector in female banking. The number of women employed in the private sector has

seen an increase of over 27% during the past two years. This increase however does not mean that Hail women are leaving their mark in the workforce.

Based on AME Info (2010) the rural region of Hail has the highest unemployment in Saudi Arabia at 35%, but this high figure does not mean people are unwilling to work. It is a reflection of available opportunities and cultural traditions of the region. As previously mentioned women have the right to work, however due to a number of factors most women remain out of the workforce. The factors that aid in the prevention of working women include:

- the lack of transport to and from work, as women are unable to drive.
- the traditional values and beliefs held by the husbands, as they do not want their wives to work and:
- the level of education and training these young women receive, which is concerning.

An example of how some women are treated comes from one of my students, a 21 year-old, who was married at the age of 14 and now has 3 children. She is an exceptionally bright young lady and her dream is to become a doctor.

However, due to her family background (coming from Somalia) she has been refused the opportunity to achieve her goal. Country of birth also plays a large part in how you are treated by the locals, until as recent as 1962 slavery was still widely practiced in this country. Although slavery is no longer legal, many expatriates from Asian countries such as; Philippines, India and Bangladesh are still employed in situations not dissimilar to slavery. There are many stories from people about the treatment suffered by these people but more so by the women hired as maids. These women are physically and mentally used and abused by both male and female employers.

A teacher personally witnessed the abuse of a maid in which she was forced to secretly approach other women to supply her with food and also phone cards so she could call her children in the Philippines. Many of these maids

can end up in jail if they become pregnant following rape by male members of the family they work for.

Women in the Middle East are not allowed to drive or walk the streets alone. Usually women need to be accompanied by a male family member, whether it be husband, brother or son. To get around they are driven to the shops or malls where they are left until they call to be collected by their relatives or family drivers. In some cases the drivers can be their young sons, some as young as 10 can sometimes be seen driving their mothers around while their father is at work. Sometimes ladies can be seen on the streets but they are normally foreign workers such as Filipinos.

#### 4.4 MARRIAGE

It is known throughout the world that men in the Middle East often have multiple wives, this is the practice of polygamy. There are three forms of polygamy:

The first is polyandry; this is a practice of a woman having multiple husbands. This situation is now very rare and does not appear to be regarded by most women as a desirable situation. It is generally thought that this practice originated to allow men to concentrate on hunting and being warriors, thus producing offspring without bearing immediate responsibility for their upbringing.

The second form is polyamory; which is represented by a number of adults living together as one family. This arrangement is not considered by law to be illegal as it is seen simply as unmarried consenting adults living together.

The third and final form of polygamy is polygyny; this involves 1 husband having multiple wives. As this is still practiced in Saudi Arabia this is the area we will be focusing on.

Polygyny has been practiced for hundreds of years all over the world, and it is still widely accepted in a number of countries including Saudi Arabia. Although prior to Islam there were no restrictions on the number of wives permitted, the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed specified that no man should be married to more than four women at one time. This was because a man must have the financial, moral and physical qualities needed and also agree to full responsibility for more than one legal wife, and the children resulting from each marriage.

As stated in Quran:

'Marry woman of your choice in twos' threes' or fours' but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly, (with them), then only one' [Al-Qur'an 4:3]

Teachers were told that some Saudi women reluctantly accepted polygyny.

For a man to follow polygyny it is expected that all wives will be treated equally both financially and emotionally, as Surah Nisa verse 129 says in [Al-Qur'an (4:129)]: 'It is very difficult to be just and fair between women'.

#### 4.5 FOREIGNERS

The impact of Western culture and society has rapidly spread across the globe. For example look at the Czech Republic and other Eastern European countries; the Czech Republic was under a communist regime until 1989. Now McDonalds, KFC and Burger King fast food chains line many of the busy streets and shopping centres, people are wearing the newest NIKE, ADIDAS and other designer labels, and television stations are flooded with poorly dubbed American series and soap operas. The capital city is considered a tourist hot spot and several British, American, German and Australian visitors flock to Prague bringing with them more Western influences. Saudi Arabia and the Hail region in particular are a different story.

With a strict visa approval and very few, if any, tourists permitted (with the exception of Muslims on their Islamic pilgrimages) exposure to Western influences is kept to a minimum. Many of the locals in Hail have never had the opportunity to come face-to-face with a Westerner, let alone a Western woman. The only exposure to which these young females have had, are to heavily censored magazines, which blacken out, white out or even tear out any exposed skin or offensive pages. They also have well known British and American TV shows which provide these young and impressionable females with the media's perception of Western life, culture and attitudes. For most, if not all, young women who attend Hail University, their first physical and face-to-face interaction comes from their English lecturers. These lecturers come from a diverse range of backgrounds and are made of several nationalities including; American, Canadian, English, Australian, South African, German, Brazilian, and many more. It is these interactions and educational systems that make up the foundation of this research.

#### 4.6 PREVIOUS RESEARCH

There has been very little research on this particular topic. While there is sufficient information available about individual element that make up this work, there has yet to be any proper research conducted on the subject. The Saudi Arabian life from a woman's perspective has only been publicized through a small number of biographies. These are usually based on Arabic women who come from a financially stable family and are familiar with Western culture and societies. This is the first time that young women in Hail will be able to express some of their attitudes and feelings about their culture and their perception of Western society regarding their education.

## CHAPTER 5 METHODOLOGY



Chapter 5 will explain and explore the methods used throughout this research to gather and collect information. It will provide a brief description of the design and approach before looking at each method individually and review what was done and why. This study, which aims to better understand the impact of the Western educational system on female students at Hail University, Saudi Arabia, is underpinned by a social exploratory research design.

## 5.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

We cannot directly test the influence of Western culture and education on Saudi women, this influence will slowly reveal itself over time. However we can observe subtle behaviour changes within the confines of the university walls. Here over the last 6 years the researcher was able to directly and indirectly interact and observe the students' changes in attitude and outlook not only in the university environment but also towards society. This included examining their relationships to other peers and teachers, their short term and long term goals, both social and academic. This allowed the researcher to gain a foundation of knowledge that would later be built upon.

This design involves the collection and analysis of quantitative and/or qualitative data to answer research questions of all types (e.g. Who? Where? What? Why? How? How often, and How many?). Social exploratory research gains familiarity with, and insights into, the behaviours, perceptions, and experiences of a sample of participants, focusing on a social setting that has not been studied before (Schutt, 2006; Babbie, 2009).

This method was not used solely for its framework and application but because it allowed the researcher to take advantage of her position within this unique social setting.

Hypotheses can never be tested using social exploratory research, and it is not possible to generalize the findings from the sample to the population, so inferential statistics are not justified. The findings, however, may be interpreted inductively to generate new theory, or to generalize the existing theory and/or to develop plans for future research (Yin, 2009). As mentioned earlier the university environment differs from the traditional college setting as most of the courses are taught in English. This educational environment also contains the influence of Western society through its teachers and teaching practices, thus making it a social setting that has not been examined in great detail.

As mentioned above any results found in the sample of social exploratory research cannot be applied to the full population. This means that the results and opinions expressed by these young students do not necessarily represent all female students' views. However it is expected that there will be some common trends between the participants. This particular Hail region cannot be compared for example with Riyadh region as it is more modern and the views will differ slightly.

The research methods used were a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. As stated by John W. Creswell "Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches, p.37"

"Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes".

Livesey and Dawson (2008, p. 3) explain that qualitative data "...tries to capture ... the quality of people's behaviour" and tells us "how people experience the social world" and helps us "to understand the meanings people give to their own behaviour and that of others."

In this research the qualitative data consisted of interviews and observations, while quantitative data was provided via questionnaires and official statistics. Quantitative research is a research style that is limited in its approach to fixed numerical and measurable values. Livesey and Lawson explain (2008, p. 3):

Quantitative data is "...an attempt to quantify behaviour – to express it statistically or numerically."

In the context of this research, the qualitative research is concerned with questions how and why, while the quantitative research is solely concerned with the question of how many.

According to Saunders (2007, p. 146) the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods can be referred to as a 'mixed-method' research approach. This particular approach allowed quantitative data to be analysed using quantitative techniques and procedures while qualitative data was analysed using more relevant and appropriate techniques and procedures, such as tape recordings of interviews and the observation method.

This combination of methods was used, as most of the participants that made up the sample were unable to communicate very well in English. Because of the language issue, a simple quantitative method, in the form of a questionnaire, was used to gather basic information that would later be developed into qualitative methods. While both methods were used, the author favoured the qualitative approach because it is related to the most appropriate research philosophy and provided more detailed data.

Interpretive philosophy, also known as the qualitative approach, when broadly defined is "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). There are different types of interpretation, each one based on the relationship between the proposed questions. In this case there was a slight overlap between two of these types, which included both historical and ethnography. Each type achieved part of the overall research carried out by the author.

In the historical segment the researcher describes in the table 4. the two types and provides a description. As the table 3 illustrates, ethnography can focus on a particular community or social culture by means of observation. This allows the researcher to observe female students in their school environment,

and relate it to their culture based on historical events and changes. This first type carried most of the weight as the slight overlap of historical research focuses more on testing a hypothesis. The historical aspect aids the researcher who wanted to examine the past and present state of the educational system, as well as gain insight into the future of education in Hail and Saudi Arabia.

Table 3. - Qualitative Research Type

Ethnography	Focuses on the sociology of meaning through close field observation of sociocultural phenomena. Typically, the ethnographer focuses on a community.
Historical	Systematic collection and objective evaluation of data related to past occurrences in order to test hypotheses concerning causes, effects, or trends of these events that may help to explain present events and anticipate future events. (Gay, 1996)

J, Neil. (2006)

An inductive approach as stated by William M. K. Trochim (Research Methods Knowledge Based, 2006) is usually described as moving from the specific to general. This approach was used where the researcher made observations and took notes. These findings were examined to find patterns and gain an understanding, before being used to formulate a tentative hypothesis, which in this case revolved around the education of female students in a rural region of Saudi Arabia. Finally from this hypothesis a so-called theory or understanding could be developed. The results of these findings can be found in Chapter 6, Analysis and Chapter 7, Conclusion.

The research types as mentioned above (ethnology and historical) also provided the strategy. This strategy was used in conjunction with a mixed method approach. Using both qualitative and quantitative data would be the

best style based on the limited sample, environment and nature of the research. The limited sample was due to the difficulties the researcher faced in locating and accessing willing participants.

The main methods of qualitative data collection include; detailed interviews, written statements from participants, and observation of participants and communities. The researcher used two of these main methods to gather data, these can be found under the heading Primary Data Methods. Other methods and sources of information were used throughout the research process, which provides the structure for the remainder of this chapter. Methods will be examined and outlined in relation to their type whether they are primary or secondary sources.

## 5.2 SECONDARY DATA

According to Saunders et al (2007) secondary data includes both raw data and published summaries; it can also be qualitative as it is not limited to figures and statistics. The researcher used various secondary sources from which to glean information, these included; documentary, multiple-source and survey types of data.

Documentary forms often included newspaper articles from the local area, organizational websites and private emails. The researcher used multiple sources including: published biographies by women who had lived in Saudi Arabia; government publications regarding the Ministry of Higher education, both local and national; and even international reports focusing on Saudi Arabia.

Quantitative survey types of secondary data used were in the form of government censuses focusing on employment, population, labour markets, education and other general topics. A lot of these materials were accessed online, and whenever viewing information online, care was required to be taken to ensure that information was valid and reliable. Online articles and journals were viewed from credible websites and newspaper articles were found in online archives on their websites.

Newspapers, both hard copies and electronic versions, were used, their articles helping to develop a greater in-depth knowledge of the region and its social problems. Online newspapers were used due to the impossibility of obtaining a hard copy every day. Usually it was possible to get a local newspaper on a domestic flight that happened 2-3 times a year. Somewhere in the city was a possibility (not on an everyday basis) to obtain English Saudi Gazette newspapers, however they were usually sold out. In the 6 years of my stay the researcher managed to get there less than 10 times.

Just a note: even though the internet was used to gather a large amount of information it was not always possible to log on as the university connection

was sometimes cut off due to an unpaid bill. In some instances it would take literally weeks to get back online. Some residents bought from a local mobile company modems to allow them to get back online. However even here the internet was most of the time slow and many websites were blocked. These conditions made this research even more challenging.

Using newspapers as a secondary method has its positive and negative sides. The positive aspect of newspaper material is that as a secondary source it is easily accessible through the Internet where a large quantity of data is freely available without any extra cost. Search is fast if one has a specific topic in mind and saves time.

Considerations when using the internet included:

- The need to verify information with the actual original source if possible to make sure of the accuracy of the presented information. For example; through a different newspaper.
- The newspaper writer may present his personal opinion and the information will be written from a biased point of view and can be unsupported and misleading. The knowledge and understanding of journalists is notoriously shallow.
- There is also a possibility that the published information can be false in a hope to produce sensationalism with an aim to sell large number of papers and therefore increase companies' profits.
- Validity can be hindered by the date and age of the publication which if not noted can bring false conclusions and hinder the whole research.

The library is a good place to collect relevant data, especially if the librarian is knowledgeable. In this research there was no data collected from the university of Hail library because for the first 5 years the library consisted of 5 bookshelves with a small number of Longman dictionaries and a few English books related to handicrafts such as embroidery. However there were 2 shelves with Arabic books which I was not able to read and the students were provided every day with a new newspaper copy also in Arabic. The librarian



was a very lovely lady who made one of the best Arabic coffees but could not speak any English. So my searches for knowledge finished with a delicious cup of Arabian coffee but no information.

The other method used to collect statistics is through government data, like any method it had its strengths and weaknesses.

### Strengths

Some points of this research started with analysing government data and later elaborated further on the relevant topic. It helped the researcher to get a clearer image of the whole picture before focusing on detailed aspects of the research.

Most of the relevant government information such as graphs, population census, is usually considered reliable as large amount of sampling takes place. Its advantage is that it is available online. Through time, data can be compared and comparisons and trends can be detected.

- Time saving

There are number of advantages of secondary data. Timesaving is one of them as previously collected data can be utilized more efficiently. This was very helpful to the researcher as it allowed more time to focus on more pressing areas of research. Also the physical location of the researcher and accessibility were quite restricting. For these reasons the use of secondary data greatly benefited her.

- Easy to access via a range of different sources.

Secondary data provides a valuable base of information that can be utilized and incorporated into the area of research. The researcher was able to combine collected data and information found in a range of media (books, newspapers, online government publications, statistics and websites), without losing valuable time seeking required information directly. This said the researcher had no access to public

libraries and only a very poor Internet connection while in Saudi Arabia. This sometimes made it very difficult to research the subject.

- Provides a base for comparison when examining or comparing any change or development.

Once secondary data is collected it can provide a knowledge base, which can then be easily compared with the gathered primary data. In this particular research there was little data available to be used on its own. In this case the base was formed by the cultural variations, where the primary data gathered from students was then used to examine the changing situation.

- Secondary data may answer research questions

Secondary data may also provide answers to research questions and supporting information. In this particular research it was used to answer more basic questions and topics while also providing background information, again making the research more effective and efficient.

#### Weakness

The drawback is that sometimes the researcher needs the latest data and it is not available or updated. This is one negative aspect if government information is needed. This setback is due to the large sampling range especially if the information is coming from national or international government agencies, as it takes time to collect all relevant data.

- Incomplete/lack of information. Some of the information does not give detail. One of the weaknesses of secondary data is that it does not always provide comprehensive information, often missing valid and important details. In a subject that has not been thoroughly investigated it is essential to gather other important information. That is why the researcher used several means of collecting primary data, so that it could fill in the gaps.

- Data can be out-dated or inaccurate.

When collecting secondary data it is important to make sure everything is up to date and still valid, if this information is not valid it can jeopardize the validity of the research. The researcher tried to access the most recent and reliable information but with some publications there is also some lag, one example would be the MOHE statistics, which were sometimes out-dated, and the most recent being from 2011.

- Information that has already been collected can be more subjective and biased. In the case of secondary data there is always a possibility that not only the accuracy of available materials could be questioned but also the researcher's approach can be subjective and biased.

#### Tertiary data

In addition, online tertiary sources in the form of government statistics were used, especially relating to population and further geographical information. Also graphs and maps were used to gain more information.

To the present date there is just not enough material available to draw on with regard to Hail University because it is just a recent occurrence and no relevant in-depth analysis or material exists. This is not only because this is just a recent project but also the majority of teachers do not stay long enough to comprehend, observe, compare and study the environment, issues and its affect it has on their students. Because of the situation's novelty, primary data was heavily relied upon to complete this research.

### 5.3 PRIMARY DATA

Primary data is said to be raw data collected first hand for the sole purpose of this research. With this subject having little published data and information, the researcher needed to use various methods to gain as much information as possible and to ensure answers were found that were relevant to the research questions.

The research decided to use a combination of methods as mentioned earlier, this included; questionnaires, interviews and observation. Each method bringing valuable information from a different perspective in a different form. The methods used could be analysed on their own and also used in conjunction with one another. Each method and process that was undertaken follows this section, where a more detailed overview is provided.

## 5.4 METHOD 1 – QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire is a set of short, direct, closed questions, each with multiple-choice responses. Generally it is asked to a sample size of about 10% of the total number of the desired population. It is used when trying to find out specific data about a relatively large population. The list below shows both the strengths and weaknesses of this method.

### Strengths

- Direct answers. Using the questionnaire with closed questions provided direct answers, where the participants were not required to voice their own opinion, but instead could choose from the predefined responses. The direct answers could then be used to form a basic understanding of areas of interest while taking into consideration participants' language skills. Once the direct responses were collected the researcher could incorporate other research methods to gain more detailed information.
- Specific information being sought for can be easily obtained. Paired with the benefits of direct answers, specific information is easily obtained, as the researcher is able to ask relevant questions. In this research all questions were significant and of use, their individual justification can be seen later in this section. This specific information was then transformed into the basis of the other research methods.
- Easier to tabulate and analyse once received. By using closed answer questions the researcher can easily count, sort and tabulate quantitative information. The researcher was then able to view trends and patterns within the sample population; these figures were then analysed more efficiently.
- Easy to administer to people. By using questionnaires the researcher is able to ask more people in less time than conducting individual

interviews. Here the researcher could ask a full classroom of students to answer at the same time, as in an exam setting.

### Weaknesses

- Depending on the sample size, questionnaires can sometimes take a long time as participants are not always willing to participate, however this was not the case in this research. During this research all participants were willing. However, due to other factors, the questionnaire was administered three times causing the sample size to feel greater than it was. This then delayed the researcher from completing another tasks.
- With regard to the reliability of the data, some people might not be comfortable answering some questions, and give false or misleading results.
- The responses given in any questionnaire are not always reliable due to the reasons mentioned above. In our particular case participants did not fully understand the questions being asked due to the language barrier, which then led to unreliable and unusable data. The questionnaire was then translated and re-administered; the full process is mentioned bellow.
- There are limited responses, so people are forced to pick something that might not apply to them; therefore, resulting in false or misleading results, this makes a questionnaire a blunt tool.

Again taking the language barrier into consideration another weakness was that participants were limited by it to the predefined choices. Even though they were given an option to specify their own personal responses, they failed to do so. The results did not include accurate responses as a result, which could then be misrepresented during the analysis. That is why this method was not used on its own but paired with others.

The questionnaire gave more insight into the basic areas of interest concerning levels of education, the family impact on education, perception of the lecturers, and the students' general view of going to school. These insights acted as building blocks to further develop interview questions in order to better understand the responses.

Based on the low standard of English of the students constituting the sample, this quantitative data was used to begin with, in order to gain a general understanding of their current situation and beliefs. The findings acted as a basis for further development and exploration using another qualitative approach in the form of interviews.

The questionnaire was administered to female students attending Hail University English courses. The participants were aged in the range 19 to 21 years. It is believed that these young women have a fair understanding of their position and role in their society. Although this kind of information can prove challenging and difficult to obtain in Saudi Arabia, the researchers' position enabled her to gain access to the students. However, it cannot be said that the sample selection was random, it was based firstly on the ability to gain access to these students, and secondly it was based on the students' standard of English. Regarding the first issue, an approachable and trustworthy teacher needed to be found, before handing out the questionnaires. As mentioned earlier, fellow teachers were not always willing and helpful, so the wrong choice could have jeopardized the research. With the support of a trusted colleague the questionnaires were handed out to two other "reliable" teachers who would not intervene and be willing to distribute the questionnaires during their classes.

The questionnaire was handed out to 88 computer science students in three different classes. These classes were chosen due to their accessibility, meaning that the teachers were less likely to harm the research project due to the delicate nature of some of the questions (more information on teacher

behaviour can be found under the subheading 3.4 teachers and staff). The questionnaires were distributed during class time because students are unreachable after school hours (following local customs, students are picked up by male family members or by a family driver), and their free time during school hours is minimal. This enabled the researcher to collect the questionnaires and to answer questions from the participants.

Selections were not only based on which teachers could be trusted but also on the students' level of English. While this might appear biased it is still a fair selection method based on the principle of accessibility.

Despite the sample being partially based on the students' level of English, after administering the questionnaire in English and analysing the collected data, a number of discrepancies were immediately found. For example in some cases the question "Are you married?" was answered with "NO" and the following question "Does your husband support your studies?" was answered with "YES". It thus became evident that even though the questionnaire was written in very elementary English the sample had some problems understanding the questions and options.

After analysing the collected data, the conclusion was reached that to receive more accurate data the questionnaire had to be translated into Arabic. This slowed the process of information collection as an Arabic speaking person had to be found who could be trusted to complete the translation.

Having been translated, the questionnaire was finally submitted to the dean for approval due to the sensitivity of the information and possible leakage. The second questionnaire provided reasonable and accurate responses, as well as an appropriate range of sample answers.

The same lecturers were approached and asked to administer the questionnaires again, but this time to three different classes. This time the number of questionnaires was increased to eighty-nine, which constitutes just



over 10% of the eight hundred female students at the English Language Centre on the Aja Campus of the University of Hail. This was in accordance with the original plan of a sample size of 10 – 15% of the population, and is slightly over the 10% recommended by Sanders, Lewis and Thornhill (2006).

Below is the list of questions and justifications, which were asked of participants that made up the sample:

**1. Are you the first person in your family to go to university?**

This simple question is to establish the level of education in the family to see if attending university for these girls is something new to the family.

**1b. If you answered no, who went to university before you and their maximum level of education?**

This question goes hand in hand with question 1 to determine which generation went to university before them, this would reflect the level of education in the family.

**2. Why do you study?**

**2b. How is this money used?**

This question aims to reveal the motive behind the reason for going to school, a list of the most common and likely reasons were compiled. Typically one of the incentives is the allowance the government pays them, this leads to question 2b where this money can be used in various ways. The researcher has heard stories from students where this money was used in these different ways, this question will allow us to see what the common trend amongst families in this region is.

**3. Why did you choose to go to Hail University?**

Generally in Western culture we have the option to apply to different programs at different universities, this question help establish if this is the same regarding Hail.

**4. What are you studying?**

As mentioned previously, women were limited in what could be studied. Hail offers different programs; it is interesting to see what these women are choosing. Is there an emerging trend? Are they planning for the future?

**5. What does your family think about you going to school?**

Because it is a new concept for women to gain a higher education, the researcher wants to know what the older generation thinks of this. Are they encouraging or are they a little old fashioned and would rather not have their children go to university?

**6. What do your friends think about you studying at University?**

Being a new university and a new opportunity for young women, the question looks to understand if the concept of attending university holds some prestige or if it has become normal and accepted.

**7. What do your friends do?**

Building on question 6, this question aims to see what other women from the same social circle are doing. It allows us to compare the student life to what could have or would have been.

**8. Is studying at university difficult?**

For women it was normal to just finish the educational path after high school, with no need for a higher education. Were they prepared and are they ready and able to cope with the transition to university.

**9. Do you ever feel like giving up university?**

**9b. Why do you want to give up?**

In Western society people often change courses, drop out, and find other institutions more suitable and desirable. Do these girls have the same option, do they feel they can leave or are they under the impression that they must continue to go to school until they graduate. Following on from question 9,

what reasons would cause them to want to leave? A short list was created using more common and appropriate options.

**10. How many times have you repeated a semester?  
(English 001 or 002)**

This looks at how the girls are getting on with their English classes, the foundation, where they develop and build on their English skills preparing them for other classes and course work.

**11. Does anyone help you with your schoolwork and studies?  
11b. Who helps you the most?**

With previous generations of Saudi women not having the option to study at a university level it is interesting to see where they get help from, if any. The second part dives deeper into question 11 asking for the source of help. It will be interesting to see if the males with a higher level of education provide help or not.

**12. Would you like to have only Arabic teachers?**

They say when learning a language it is best to immerse oneself in the language and culture by interacting with native speakers. Here we ask if they would prefer to have Arabic teacher, this will be a good question to expand on in the interview process.

**13. Would you like to study in Arabic language not English?**

Similar to question 12 most would like to study in the easiest possible way, which includes their native language. Are the students able to see the benefits of studying in English or not.

**14. What do you want to do after receiving your degree?**

Traditionally very few graduates would enter the workforce, and women generally stayed at home, with more women studying are they changing their mind-set? What are their plans for the future?

**15. Are you married?**

The general purpose was to see how many of the students were married in order to further examine their relationship with males regarding their educational path and links to question 16.

**16. Does your husband support you in your studies?**

Males are considered the providers for the household, with women now seeking a degree and career. How does this affect them? Are they supportive in the partner's quest for education or do they want to keep traditional values and have a stay-at-home wife?

**17. Do you expect your future husband to support you in your studies when you get married?**

This question gives the unmarried women the opportunity to answer and state their opinions about their future partners and how they would potentially react. It will assist in examining the effect this change will have on society.

**18. How can you use your education in your home or village?**

As mentioned earlier women typically did not enter the work force, this question asks what other applications their degree can be used for in the home or local area. It helps to see why these women are choosing to study even though their society is not likely to employ them.

**19. Will you stay in your village after your studies?**

People often move away from home to go work in the bigger cities in Western culture, are these women also able to move away from their village to pursue a career or will this be dictated only by their male guardian or husband to be?

**20. When you have children do you want them to go to University?**

**21. If you have a daughter, do you want her to go to university?**

These questions go hand in hand and ask what these young women see for the future. At the moment male education is considered normal, they all want

to attend. This looks at how this generation will start to perceive the future generations and their education, indicating what they want for their children.

**22. If you had a daughter, do you want her to:**

Further developing questions 20 and 21 this asks more specifically what they want their daughters to achieve and pursue in society after studying. It may illustrate the shift in women's perceptions and desires.

**23. Why is studying in English important to you?**

While most students are having English forced upon them, they can still benefit from learning the English language, this question tries to unveil other reasons why students would be interested in learning English, whether it be for academic or social purposes.

**24. Do you watch T.V shows in English?**

This is a simple question to view their exposure to Western and English media. This would allow us to see what TV shows they are watching and being exposed to, these shows are one of few ways they are able to view Western life style and behaviour.

**25. Would you like to travel to an English speaking country?**

This question starts to examine if these young women would want to travel to a country with different culture, values and beliefs. It provides a sense of their willingness to try new things and explore, after so many generations before them were very limited in their ability to travel.

**26. Who drives you to school?**

Because of the strict customs women do not drive, this makes travelling to school a difficult task, there are different methods which families can use to get these women to school, and the options listed are the most common.

- 27. How many kilometres do you travel to get to university, from your house? (one way)**  
**28. How long does it take you to get/come to school?**

Being in the centre of a rural region, some of these girls travel long distances just to achieve an education. Some have reported having to wake up at 4am each day just to travel to school to make the 3hour journey. This leads to question 28 which builds on that.

- 29. Can you get to school if your driver, father or brother is sick or busy?**

As mentioned in question 26, transport to school can be a challenge, if one of the family members is sick and the student is more or less cut off, are there alternatives in place that would allow them attend school, or do they need to stay at home?

- 30. How often do you miss school?**  
**31. Why do you miss school? (Tick all that apply to you)**  
**32. Do you miss class because you have to look after your mother, sisters or family member?**

These three consecutive questions all build on school attendance. This is very important, as it can be used to determine if the student passes or fails a class. The questions look to see if there is a connection between the ability to get to school and the number of absences as well as the reasons involved. This would reflect how education is prioritised within households.

- 33. What were your responsibilities before you started school/ studying?**  
**34. What would your home responsibilities be if you weren't studying?**

With past generations being stay-at-home wives, this question aims to establish what a student's home life was like prior to studying. It then leads to question 34, which tries to determine the impact of going to university for the household. This is designed to shed light on the home lives of these women.

- 35. Has school taken you away from your home responsibilities?**
- 36. Do you still have to do chores and have other responsibilities in your home?**

How is the family affected by these women going to school, do they continue to help and assist the household, do their roles change and differ. Do the parents of these women allow them to focus purely on their studies or do they continue to help the family?

- 37. How many friends did you have before you studied at Hail University?**
- 38. How many friends have you made since you joined university?**

Questions 37 and 38 again work closely together to determine the impact of university on the women's social circles. Generally they do not have many opportunities to socialise with other women, these two questions look at their ability to make friends and expand their social circles with the aid of the university.

- 39. Do you socialize with your university friends outside of school?**

While students may form friendships at university, how strong are they? Are they able to interact and socialise outside of school or are these friendships confined to the university walls.

**40. Please complete the table as requested:**

Please tick the box that you think is most appropriate, for the following statements.

This relates to all non-Arabic lecturers that teach you.

	Always	Sometimes	Never
<b>Perceptions of Lecturers</b>			
1. Western teachers' behaviour is strange and confusing.			
2. Western teachers behave like people on T.V. and in Movies.			
3. Western teachers are ignorant about Saudi culture			
4. Western teachers are not shy and talk loudly			
5. Western teachers are arrogant			
<b>Interaction with Western Lecturers</b>			
1. I like most of my Western teachers			
2. Teachers are friendly and help me			
3. Teachers talk a lot about their culture and country			
4. I can approach teachers about personal issues			
5. I feel teachers respect our cultural differences			
<b>Lecturer's Influence on Students</b>			
1. I am more tolerant towards foreigners			
2. I am more open minded and want to try new things			
3. I want to be a teacher when I finish university			
4. I want to travel to different countries like my teachers			
5. I feel different about foreigners since studying at university			

This final question allows participants to explain their perceptions, interactions and influence that these encounters have on them. Each section has 5 questions that make it easier for them to answer, and touch on basic topics that are common to these types of relationships and environment. This aims to help the researcher understand the impact that Westerners have on the young women.



The results from the questionnaire were analysed by looking at the frequency and percentage of the results. This alone would not prove useful, and that is why it was used in conjunction with responses from the one-on-one interviews. These interviews provided a more in-depth response to what was a simple yes or no question and is further explored in the following section.

## 5.5 METHOD 2 – INTERVIEW

An interview is a discussion between two or more participants regarding certain topics. Interviews are used to gather more detailed and in-depth information, and because they involve open-ended questions, participants can elaborate and get their point across more easily. Many researchers such as Sanders, Lewis and Thornhill (2006), believe that interviews are a good source of reliable and detailed information.

On completion of the questionnaire analysis and obtaining a basic knowledge on specific topics relating to the sample, results were used as a springboard for the next stage, which was an interview. As quoted by Jackson (p.103): there are three different types of interviews, the standardized interview, the semi-standardized interview, and the unstandardized interview (Berg, 2009; Esterberg, 2002).

The type of interview that was used in this research was semi-standardized interview organised with the help of Agar M.H.(1980) that suggested strategies enabling the researcher to use pre-set questions in a form of the “5Ws and H”: who, what, where, when, why and how. The researcher also had a list of prompts and questions designed to help the participant express her view. These prompts and the interview style were used due to their suitability for accessing the students. This would allow the researcher to further develop and explore questions from the questionnaire, but like any method it does have its strengths and weakness.

### Strengths

- More in-depth information, such as experiences, needs and wants etc.
- The questionnaire was use as a base and then combined with the interview and observation method. It allowed the researcher to sit one-on-one with the participants and get more sensitive and personal information, to help understand and develop the questionnaire results.

- Focus on the 'Why?' aspect, as opposed to the 'What?'.
- Using the information from the quantitative data the researcher answered already the 'What' aspect of several research questions. Now the researcher was able to focus on asking participants 'Why', this allowed her to gain additional information, which helped move the researcher closer to the research questions' aims and objectives.
- Possibility of follow up questions to gain a further understanding.

After experiencing some confusion during the questionnaire portion of the research, by using an interview and follow up questions the researcher could make sure that both parties understood each other. This helps to make the research more reliable.

#### Weaknesses

- Time consuming, as one must meet and sit with the person to ask her a series of questions.
- When interviewing in this type of environment, care needs to be given when choosing a time, location and date. This is due to the cultural differences and the sensitivity of the information. This had a negative impact on the researcher, as travel arrangements, free time and access were difficult to arrange.
- People may hold back due to lack of trust, insecurity and this can affect them on a personal level.
- Again, due to the sensitivity of the topics, participants may not always share their true opinion and that is why the researcher approached each individual in such a way as to establish an environment in which each participant would feel comfortable. During the interview process the participants may not answer immediately and may try to avoid the question by providing a lot of irrelevant information.

- The ability to break down and analyse the responses is more challenging and time consuming as there is a lot of irrelevant data that needs to be filtered out.

Any type of qualitative data must be analysed with care. With all the irrelevant data this can be a time-consuming task as the researcher needs to read and categorize the responses. Not only is this time-consuming but it is also challenging, as the context and tone in which the responses were given need to be taken into consideration when presenting the participant's true response. Also as some of the participants were unable to express their ideas clearly it makes the task difficult.

A structured interview is a qualitative method of collecting data. In this research semi-structured interviews provide us with qualitative information, which was used with the quantitative to help justify and enforce earlier claims. So this style of an interview was suitable for these samples, as stated by Jackson (p.104):

*“...has some structure to it, but the wording of the questions is flexible, the level of the language may be modified, and the interviewer may choose to answer questions and provide further explanation if requested. Respondents have a greater ability to express their opinions in their own words when using this type of interview structure. Lastly, there is more flexibility in terms of the interviewer adding or deleting questions.”*

This encouraged the participants to open up and share their opinions. However most of these questions are open-ended giving the sample interviewees an opportunity to come up with more in-depth answers. The aim was to conduct 10 interviews; however, a more realistic figure was set at 5, in the end 13 interviews were conducted with both students and teachers.

The general limitation in sample size was brought on due to the strict cultural rules, limiting access and exposure of students to strangers, and to participate

in this type of activity. Fortunately, a number of students and family members had already agreed to participate in this type of research. Because most of the participants are familiar with the researcher, they should have been relatively open and honest. However removing any issues with bias and reliability, although the researcher accepts that the participants may just say what the researcher would like to hear.

What the researcher did was first construct a semi-structured one-on-one interview based on questions that had been further developed from the questionnaire, the targeted questions were those that needed more development, allowing one to gain more insightful data.

The participants were chosen due to their availability and willingness. In total there were 13 participants; this was because of cultural aspects, availability, getting to them and trusting them etc. The interviews were conducted one-on-one, in one of the school offices and in some special cases a public setting such as the local mall. The interviews took place within the university during working hours, with the exception of those at the shopping mall. This was done because it was easier to meet them at school, as their schedules are not always as flexible as they could be, and some were short notice.

Originally the participants were chosen based on existing and personal relationships between them and the researcher. While this might seem biased, it in fact has the opposite effect. By having this relationship with them the sample felt more comfortable, more relaxed and more able to express their true feelings about the questions. These girls were chosen not only because of their willingness and friendship but also because of the fact that the researcher knew that she could trust them with the sensitive nature of the interview to keep it confidential and private, but this sample would later change.

With the first attempted interview it was found that in some instances the participant was simply at a loss and remained silent, after being asked a

question. Later when she was asked why she did not answer, the reply was that she had never thought about it.

This caused the researcher to reevaluate the plan and approach. As the students' English was very limited the researcher realized the need for an interpreter. The researcher managed to convince an Egyptian teacher, whom she knew would be discreet and willing to help with the translations. A great deal of time and consideration was given to a suitable venue for interviews. Eventually the researcher's office was selected.

The interpreter would select an appropriate sample, based on the students' home location, also willingness and discretion. This arrangement eliminated the possibility of bias as the researcher did not know or had never met the students involved. The interpreter explained to each participant the reasoning behind these questions. She remained professional, calm and patient throughout. This positive approach helped to persuade the students to participate.

The interview was arranged in a triangular shape with the researcher, interpreter and student. The English questionnaire was read out in both English and Arabic. The students answered in their mother tongue, so with confidence. The first interview lasted thirteen minutes and was recorded on a mobile phone, which the interpreter held and was moved between her and the student.

During this short interview the student seemed relaxed and was answering freely without too much of a hesitation, the researcher became an observer. After each participant departed there was a short discussion about the interview and translations, in the end an Arabic-English transcript was created. After going through this completed transcript the researcher realized that the interview was lacking depth due to her non-involvement and the interpreters misunderstanding that those questions should be followed by sub questions, to reach more in-depth answers.

However it was the researcher's mistake for not providing the full script of questions. As stated by Bell (p. 157): "...the interview can yield rich material and can often put flesh on the bones of questionnaire responses". After reading through some of these questions the researcher found out that even though the interview was not suitably phrased there were some interesting and useful answers. Based on those findings and the interpreter's feedback the researcher decided to create a new, more in depth list of semi structured interview questions including a number of original but improved questions.

The following interviews repeated the same system and were more successful as each interview lasted nearly forty-five minutes. The researcher even met with a student she taught a couple of years earlier and asked her if there is a possibility to meet up. Upon agreement, a meeting was arranged in the food court of a local shopping centre. Since the father would not allow his daughter to be alone in the shopping centre therefore her two sisters accompanied her. An empty table was found and the researcher cautiously placed her mobile phone on which the interview was recorded on the table top, this is when her sisters left to browse through the mall. Moving the mobile towards the sample and back to the researcher the discussion began.

Half way through the interview the prayer call came over the speakers and crowds of women with children were entering the food court. The privacy and the feeling of relaxation has passed as the researcher was getting nervous due to a fear of being asked by the religious police about her recording activity.

After completing the interview they parted and the participant met up with her sisters and was collected up by her father. Even though this interview was a little tense towards the end, the researcher collected some valuable material which encouraged her to arrange another interview and this time with one of her sisters as she was also a student.

The questions and prompts used in the interview can be found in the appendices; Appendices – Interview Questions and Prompts. These were general questions with a list of possible follow up answers.

All interviews were recorded and then transcribed and translated from Arabic to English if needed. Transcripts of all interviews can be found in the appendices. The information gathered was then used together with the questionnaires and observations, as well as on their own, where interesting and valuable information was presented.



## 5.6 METHOD 3 – OBSERVATION

The last method used in this research was observation. This method is not used as often as questionnaires and interviews but can nevertheless be equally effective. As described by Jackson (2010, p.96) “Naturalistic observation (sometimes referred to as field observation) involves watching people or animals in their natural habitats.” This method gives a more accurate picture of how humans or animals behave in their original setting. Results from this method are more easily justifiable. The data collected has more legitimacy than if it is obtained in an unnatural setting of the observed subject.

There are four different methods of natural observation, defined in Jackson’s Research Methods (2010, p.96). The first method is the so-called undisguised observation, which was used in this research. The samples observed were aware of the researcher’s presence and didn’t change their behaviour. By undisguised observation the data collected could later be more accurately analysed and described. The samples had known their observer for a number of years and their behaviour remained natural and relaxed as they did not know about the research.

The other three methods are:

Nonparticipant observation – the researcher is not involved in any activity of their studied subject.

Participant observation – the researcher is involved in observed objects activities. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2006), this is the most appropriate observational method.

Disguised observation – the objects do not know that they are being observed

The researcher had been working at the University for over 4 years when the research began and was already a settled and known member of staff. She could easily be approached by students and teachers. Early on many

students would confide in the researcher, sharing with her personal opinions and stories.

The researcher was so captivated by each different story and experience that she made a mental note of them. As her role at the university changed, so did her methods of observation. Rather than having the information freely told to her, she then needed to take a more indirect approach. These were then smaller and more subtle observations about the students, teachers, facilities and the interactions between all of them.

Ideally the researcher would have created a journal documenting each observation and encounter. However as explained earlier this environment requires a lot of care and caution. Therefore no journal was created; instead everything was saved and stored mentally.

When the researcher was a lecturer she had a direct contact with students, this resonated with the researcher's personal nature, which consists of curiosity, longing for knowledge and understanding. This blend steered the researcher to the lives of different students' who were happy to share their life, culture and customs. This happened through a genuine interest and the desire to establish a positive student-teacher relationship. The young students were happy to see a foreigner showing interest in them and their beliefs. Relationships were soon formed and trust was built. These students felt they could easily approach and express their views to the researcher.

The observational material was obtained by two main methods. The first was by students approaching the lecturer directly and the second was the proactive approach taken by the researcher. The first scenario was usually played out after class when the students would either approach the researcher in the hallway or stayed back after class for a friendly chat. The second was when the researcher observed changes in the students' behaviour and mood, she would then approach them and enquire about their wellbeing.

After moving to a more administrative position the researcher's personal contact with students was reduced. However this administrative position allowed access to all student-related issues. This included any student or teacher-related complaints; in these cases the students would directly approach the researcher providing her side of the story, which would then need to be further investigated by the researcher herself. It was this involvement that provided the researcher with the ideal opportunity to observe these daily interactions.

The majority of daily interactions were complaints either by the teachers complaining about students and their lack of discipline, commitment and respect. From the students' point of view there would be complaints about the teachers' ability to teach their classes, their behaviour and classroom conduct. Their awarded grades, marks and the difficulty level of any exam paper.

These encounters and observations were then written and expressed in a short narrative form. It is through these short stories that one can start to paint a picture in one's mind about the daily interactions and hardships in the Hail region. These stories and additional information can be found under section 6.13 in the analysis and findings chapter.

## 5.7 ETHICS IN RESEARCH

This section will describe the ethical nature of this research. I will explain what measures were taken to insure the researcher conducted herself in a professional and ethical manner.

Regarding ethics in research Bernard Russell (1988, p.289) stated:

*"It cannot be said too often that every single data collection act in the field has an ethical component, and a field worker is obliged every single time to think through the ethical implications of data collection acts."*

With this in mind the researcher took the necessary precautions to ensure that for each method used, the researcher's own ethical judgment was exercised. These included factors such as privacy, consent, anonymity, confidentiality and the handling of data.

During the questionnaire process all participants were informed about the purpose of the research. They were given an anonymous questionnaire and were not forced to participate, all information and data collected has been kept confidential and visible only to the researcher. No personal or private information was obtained or provided to third parties. The interview followed a similar approach.

During the interview process participants were again made aware of the nature of the research. They were informed that the interviews would be recorded and transcribed; they were also informed that they would remain anonymous and no information about them would be disclosed. During the interview process they were informed that if they did not feel comfortable in answering any questions they would not be made to do so and would not need to give a response. The participants were informed that if they did not wish to participate or to have their responses withdrawn they could do so at any time with no consequences.

During the observation process the researcher needed to use her own ethical judgment to determine which cases and observations were appropriate and applicable to use in this research. Again, no names were given to protect the identity of all those directly and indirectly involved. Due to the strict nature of the environment in which the research was conducted, the researcher had to take an extra care and caution throughout the entire process to ensure that she acted ethically in accordance with not only her beliefs but also the beliefs of the Saudi culture.

Figure 14. – Women in Hail shopping and waiting between prayer times.



Figure 15. – The compound from another vantage point.



Figure 16. – The mountains after rain with the compound in the foreground.



Figure 17. – A Saudi student.



Figure 18. – Another view of Hail.



Figure 19. – A young boy sits behind the wheel waiting for his sister.



Figure 20. – Another view of the boy waiting to drive his sister home.





## CHAPTER 6 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this chapter the researcher will compile, group and analyse all the information collected during the research process. The data from the questionnaire will be combined with extracts from various interviews and analysed to help portray and understand the Saudi women. Here the quantitative data will show common trends and themes.

After this interesting and valuable information is taken from the interviews and examined on its own, it will reveal the mind set and thought processes of some of these Saudi women. Personal stories, views and ideals will be expressed, based on what was observed and experienced. Answers to research questions will be uncovered and used to help understand the impact of Westerners and education.

This study, which aims to better understand the impact of the Western educational system on female students at Hail, is underpinned by a social exploratory research design. This design involves the collection and analysis of quantitative and/or qualitative data to answer research questions of all types (e.g., who? where? what? why? how? How often? And how many?). Social exploratory research gains familiarity with, and insights into, the behaviour, perceptions, and experiences of a sample of participants, focusing on a social setting that has not been studied before (Schutt, 2006; Babbie, 2009).

As this was social exploratory research, it was not possible to generalize the findings from the sample and apply it to the full population. The findings may be interpreted inductively to generate new theories, further examine existing theories, and/or to develop future areas of research (Yin, 2009).

In the tradition of an exploratory social research design, the results of the self-report questionnaire administered to female students at Hail University were analysed and interpreted to address the following ten questions:

1. What are the socio-demographic and contextual characteristics of the respondents?
2. What are the characteristics of the respondents' families and friends?
3. What were the reasons for the respondents going to University?
4. What are the respondents' experiences at Hail University?
5. What are the respondents' perceptions concerning Western teachers?
6. What are the respondents' interactions with the teachers?
7. What is the perceived influence of the teachers on the students?
8. What do the respondents believe they will do in the future?
9. What are the theoretical implications of the findings?
10. Can the findings be used to develop plans for future research?

#### Results:

Responses to the 42 questions in the self-report questionnaire received from N = 89 respondents were initially stored in an Excel spread sheet, and then imported into the data editor of SPSS version 17.0 for analysis using the "Descriptive Statistics - Frequencies" procedure (Field, 2009). The analysis included missing values, because many respondents did not answer all of the questions. A response rate of at least 80% was necessary for an answer to be considered valid (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2007). The frequency distributions of the responses to 41 questionnaire items (Q1 to Q41) were expressed in the form of nominal or ordinal categories, and are presented in the form of frequency tables (counts and percentages). The responses to Q42, concerned with the respondents' views about the teachers, were numerically coded, and the scores were summated to create scales. A frequency distribution histogram and descriptive statistics (minimum, median, maximum, mean, and standard deviation) are provided for each scale.

The results of the data analysis in SPSS are presented systematically in ten sections, each addressing one of the ten research questions, as follows:

1. The characteristics of the respondents.
2. The characteristics of the respondents' families and friends.

3. The reasons for the respondents going to Hail University.
4. The respondents' experiences at Hail University.
5. The respondents' perceptions concerning Western teachers.
6. The respondents' interactions with the teachers.
7. The perceived influence of the teachers on the students.
8. The respondents beliefs about their future.
9. The theoretical implications of the findings.
10. Plans for the next stage of the research.

In this section the researcher will provide the results and analyse each of these 10 sections. It will incorporate extracts from the interviews, independent responses and finally some observations and stories of events that occurred.

### 6.1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

This section will look at the participants involved in the research and their characteristics. It is broken into two sections: the first will look at the effect of Hail university on these individuals and characterize them; then it will move on to focus on how university is changing their roles and responsibilities at home and in society. Table 4. below summarizes the responses by the participants, It expresses the most frequent result as both a percentage and figure.

Table 4. – Socio-demographic and contextual characteristics of the respondents.

Item	Category	Frequency	Percent
Q1. Are you the first person in your family to go to university?	No	62	69.66%
	Yes	18	20.22%
	No reply	9	10.11%
Q4. What are you studying?	Engineering	70	78.65%
	Science	12	13.48%
	Business	3	3.37%
	IT	2	2.25%

	Arts	1	1.12%
	No reply	1	1.12%
Q16. Are you married?	No	79	88.76%
	Yes	10	11.24%
Q17. If yes, does your husband support you?	Yes	9	90.0%
	No	1	10.0%
Q18. If not married, will your future husband support you?	Maybe	36	45.57%
	Yes	20	25.32%
	No reply	14	17.72%
	No	9	11.39%
Q28. Who drives you to University?	Father/Brother/Husband	39	43.82%
	Family Driver	37	41.57%
	Taxi	7	7.87%
	No reply	4	4.49%
	Bus	2	2.25%
Q29. How far do you travel to get to University, from your house (one way)?	0-99 km	76	85.39%
	No reply	5	5.62%
	100-199 km	5	5.62%
	200-299 km	2	2.25%
	300 km or more	1	1.12%
Q30. How long does it take you to get/come to university?	0-1 hour	75	84.27%
	2-3 hours	5	5.62%
	No reply	4	4.49%
	1-2 hours	3	3.37%
	3 hours or more	2	2.25%

When asked if the participant was the first in her family to attend university 69.66% (62 participants) said No. This would generally imply that previous generations also attended university, however this is not necessarily the case.

As explained earlier, this is a young university and has only been open for the past 8 years. It is not common in this region for women to travel to other regions or countries to gain an education. We must also reflect on the fact that family sizes in Saudi Arabia and the Hail region are very large, with many siblings, some of which are from polygamy marriages. Which would mean that while they are not the first in their family to attend university they are in the same generation as the first university students.

During my working at the university I observed several students whose older brothers and sisters had already attended or were studying at a university level. This would explain why the response No, was so high compared to the reality that they are still part of that first generation with access to a university education.

When establishing what was being studied the results showed that 78.65% (70) answered engineering. While this is a significantly larger number than the other option this was due to the majority of the sample being from the computer science college. The reality based on student records from 2009 and the Ministry of Higher Education (2013) is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. – Students at a Bachelor Level Hail University

Faculty	Number of female students (2009)
Science & Engineering of Computer	470
Education for Girls, Arts Department	5570
Education for Girls, Scientific Departments	4673
Faculty of Community	771
Faculty of Medicine	19

(Source: <http://www.cdsi.gov.sa/english/>)

Now that we know the type of students we are dealing with, we can examine them on a personal level. When asked if they were married the majority

88.79% said No. This is a changing trend based on the establishment of the university and the changing view of women with education.

Participant 4 has shared, in her own English words, her view on the changes regarding the preferred age of marriage among the young women in Hail:

*“Eight years ago, a lot of girls marry at the age 17. But these couple of years, it seems that families dislike it, their daughters seem do something in their life, they study; they have jobs. So it is likely to get married at twenty years old”. (Personal interview, 29 December 2012).*

We can see from this that the families of these young women now prefer to see their daughters achieve more in their lives such as; a good education, which can therefore lead to the possibility of employment in some cases, or a larger dowry, the true intentions are not clear. Either way this is something, which was not available to their mothers and prior generations.

As higher education amongst women is a new concept in the Hail region we would like to know how this is perceived by males. With only 10 students married, they were asked about the support they receive from their husbands, only one husband was noted as not being supportive. Of the non-married women nearly half (45.57%) were uncertain whether their husbands would support them in the quest to gain a higher education, a further 25.32% were positive that they would be supported.

While the young women seem to have support and encouragement it is not always easy for them to achieve a university education, as just going to and from school is a challenge. Close to 10% of these students travel over 100km and make the 1hour plus journey just to get to school. With some students travelling for 3hours or more. This trip is usually by car or bus where they have a designated driver, this can be any male relative or a professional family driver.

Most of the students were driven to Hail University by their father, brother or husband (n = 39, 43.82%) or by a family driver (n = 37, 41.57%). This is because women are not allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia, and some feel that they do not want to drive, even with all the discussion and debate surrounding the topic. This can be seen as interviewee 2 highlighted the dilemma when asked the question “Would you like to drive?”

*“No, since it is dangerous. Women are scared. They can’t drive without having troubles with the men drivers. In my village, people still think that it is a shame if a woman drives a car because she will be imitating men and trying to behave like them”. (Personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012).*

However the majority of interviewees are keen to be independent by being able to drive themselves, as is determined by participant 5 when asked the same question;

*“So much. Drive everywhere. Like if I want to go anyplace, not to wait for my sleeping parents or my busy brother. I would like to drive to get my things on time. I don’t want to bother someone to do things for me”. (Personal interview, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2013).*

These results demonstrate a high percentage of female transportation is dependent on male family members, as explained by participant 3:

*“My father doesn’t let a driver picking me up to the university. He doesn’t trust these drivers. I may call my uncle to drive me to the university, but not a driver”. (Personal interview, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2012).*



Furthermore, privately employed drivers transport students to the university. It is not uncommon for a family to have a live-in driver who is available 24/7. Private drivers are also essential for women who are missing an available male family member, although it is not unusual to see boys as young as eight driving women around the city illegally; unfortunately a situation which has become totally accepted in Hail. Some of the larger families have more than one driver as not all women in a family want or need to go to the same place at the same time.

The majority of students (n =76, 85.39%) live within 100kms of the University. For students who live a greater distance outside the city the only means of transport would be by bus, unless they have a male family member who works or studies in Hail. Only three respondents lived 200kms or more away. Accordingly, the majority of students (n= 75, 84.27%) took less than one hour to get to the campus. Only three students took 3 hours or more to travel to University. The desire for these girls living in the distant villages to be better educated can sometimes come at a high cost. In 2011, 12 female students lost their lives on the way to college when their minibus collided with another vehicle. This was a major loss not only to the girls' families, but to the entire community. Table 6 illustrates how going to university has changed the home environment for these students.

Table 6. – Home responsibilities of the respondents

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Q35. What were your home responsibilities before you started studying? <sup>a</sup>	Helping mother	44	49.44%
	Own things	39	43.82%
	Looking after family	10	11.24%
	Other	2	2.25%
Q36. What would your home responsibilities be if you were not studying? <sup>a</sup>	Helping mother	45	50.56%
	Work	25	28.09%
	Getting married	18	20.22%
	No responsibilities	9	10.11%

Q37. Has studying taken you away from your home responsibilities?	No	42	47.19%
	Sometimes	35	39.33%
	Yes	10	11.24%
	No reply	2	2.25%
Q38. Do you still have to do chores and other responsibilities in your home?	Sometimes	37	41.57%
	Yes	29	32.58%
	No	21	23.60%
	No reply	2	2.25%

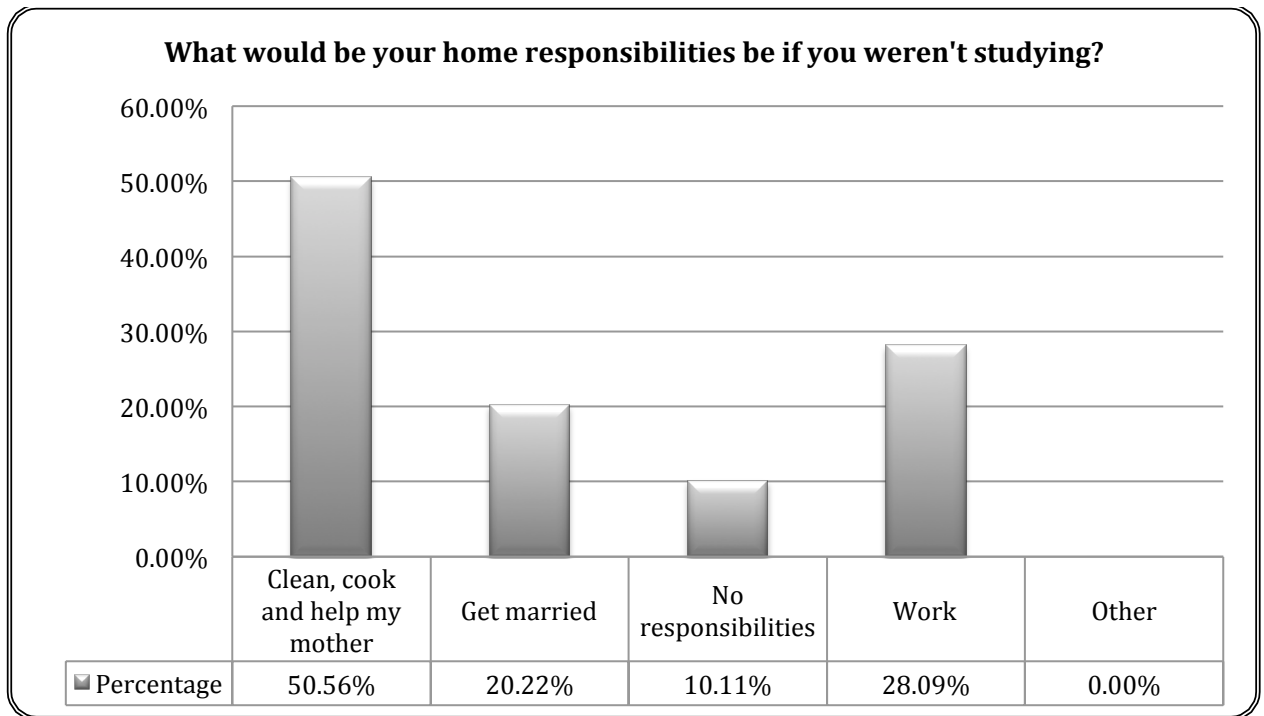
Note: <sup>a</sup> Respondents could choose more than one category therefore the percentages do not add up to 100%

In Western society children are given pocket money to do chores around the house; this is generally to teach them about the responsibilities and the concept of work. In most Western societies teenagers find a part-time job usually stacking shelves or flipping burgers after school. Although Saudi female students are confined to their homes their attitudes towards housework and responsibilities differ.

In response to the question: “What were your home responsibilities before you started studying?” The most frequent responses were helping mother (n = 44, 49.44%), and doing their own things (n = 39, 43.82%). This can be seen in figure 6.1.3.1 Although these students appear to have domestic chores, for example; cooking and cleaning, the reality is quite different to what the outside world would consider home responsibilities. As is explained by participant 2:

*“Cleaning and cooking, and now I just clean and cook on the weekends.” Personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012).*

Figure 21. – Responsibilities if not studying



Even these small tasks are seen by some students to be a burden, as expressed by participant 5:

*“My mother was not that kind of woman, I mean she teaches me what I need to know but not to bother me with home responsibilities. I have been excused from some duties at home several times due to my study, but in general I don’t like to be bothered with duties and responsibilities.” (Personal interview, 4th January 2013).*

For a family based culture relatively few (n = 10, 11.24%) had responsibilities for looking after the family. These results are adequately supported by observation and personal interaction with students. A large number of Saudi families employ live-in maids, who are mostly of Asian ethnicity. Their duties are explained by participant 11:

*“Well, my mom loves cooking. She cooks and the maid washes the dishes and the clothes except the underwear and the towels because it is not nice to let the maid do the underwear. On Friday, we clean our room. We organize things. So, she doesn’t do all the work. But we only have one maid, but one of my relatives has three. It depends on education”. (Personal interview, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2013).*

Participant 11 then continues on the topic of maids and their reason for employment in Saudi Arabia:

*“I think they have maids everywhere. All have maids. It’s a Saudi thing; they depend on others to do their job. We don’t do the work ourselves. I have a friend who bought an I phone and she paid 500 Riyals for the apps and let other people do it for her whereas she can do it on her own. I think it’s the Saudi thinking to be dependent on other people. They don’t want to think. We are incapable of producing anything. We don’t have any industry and big companies. They only have family business and that’s it. When you have authority, you work for yourself, you don’t work for others. They think when you have the money, you can let other people do your job. Horrible! There are not much activities we can do in Saudi Arabia. We don’t have fun. We don’t have anywhere to go and have fun. So if you pay other people to do your job, what are you going to do in your free time? There is nothing to do. They got used to that. They just stay at home. There are no activities. Or they come back from work and lay down. They don’t have libraries, cinema or anything.” (Personal interview, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2013).*

Also further information regarding a maids’ position in this society is succinctly explained by participant 7:

*“But you know we treat our maid well and she is very good with us. I would say if you are a good person with her, she won’t be with you bad. It is unfortunate to say that but it is true that it is a common knowledge to not respect maids and to treat them as second class person. They are not second class person, we are all equal.” (Personal interview, 22<sup>th</sup> February 2013).*

In response to the question, what would your home responsibilities be if you were not studying? The most frequent response (n = 45, 50.56%) was again, helping mother, and relatively few (n = 25, 28.09%) considered the possibility of work.

In response to the same question, the option of marriage as a responsibility (n = 18, 20.22%) was also high. Marriage is still very important in these young ladies’ lives, but more recently as times have changed, education is also becoming a valuable attribute, not only for the women but also for the future husbands.

Quite a low percentage would have No responsibilities (n = 9, 10.11%). About three quarters (n = 66, 74.16%) still had responsibilities and chores to do at home.

These findings are starting to provide insight into the lives of these women who are some of the first women in their families and the Hail region, to have the opportunity to be able to achieve a university degree. They have touched on some of the cultural beliefs and home life styles but have not mentioned how this opportunity is perceived by friends and family; this will now be examined.

## 6.2 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS’ FAMILIES AND FRIENDS

Through studying the characteristics of the respondents’ families and friends we can gain a valuable insight into why Hail women have become so

educationally motivated. As testified by Saleh AL-Abdulkareem (p.14): “Until 1960, the education of girls was almost unheard of except within the family”.

Table 7. – Characteristics of the respondents' families

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Q1. Grandfather's educational level	No reply	68	76.40%
	No education	12	13.48%
	Primary school	2	2.25%
	High school	4	4.49%
	University	3	3.37%
Q1. Father's educational level	No reply	57	64.04%
	Primary school	3	3.37%
	High school	3	3.37%
	College	9	10.11%
	University	16	17.98%
	None	1	1.12%
Q1. Brother's educational level	No reply	50	56.18%
	High School	3	3.37%
	College	4	4.49%
	University	32	35.96%

Q1. Grandmother's educational level	No reply	71	79.78%
	No education	15	16.85%
	Primary	2	2.25%
	High school	1	1.12%
Q1. Mother's educational level	No reply	76	85.39%
	No education	8	8.99%
	Primary	3	3.37%
	High school	2	2.25%
Q5. What does your family think about you going to University?	Proud	85	95.51%
	No reply	4	4.49%

Most of the students (between 56.2% and 76.4%) when asked about the level of education achieved by other family members did not provide a response. Due to the very low response rate to this question the answers are not validated, and therefore cannot be interpreted accurately. However while interviewing several students I was able to establish a trend that showed how their mothers' and grandmothers' generations did not have the same educational opportunities.

Participant 2 explained that her mother did not have a university education and furthermore had no formal education at all;

*“She is illiterate; but she learned how to read and write at the centres teaching Quran. She didn't go to school because when she was a child there were no schools in our village for*

*females. There were only schools for males. My father has a BA in Arabic Language. He is a teacher at one of the primary schools in my village.” (Personal interview, 22 November 2012).*

It is interesting to note that participant 2’s father had a university degree in Arabic Language while his wife was illiterate. This was due to the traditional customs and there were no educational facilities for women. As further explained by participant 3:

*“When my mother was in my age, she was married and had three children. She was living with a big in-law family. She cares only about her kids. She was helping her in-law family with the housework. She was just raising up children. She was not interested in studying. Sometimes, she was reading some books. She finished eight grade. She did not study because she had a big family to take care of. Her priority was her kids and family”.*

*“Life now is much better than my mother’s life. My mother wishes that her life was like ours now. Education is now better. Women are more respected in the society. Now, we can study, choose the major, and do whatever we like. In the past, the girl was being married to the one that her family chooses; now, the girl doesn’t decide on getting married until she feels that she is ready for this big responsibility”. (Personal interview, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2012).*

In response to the question, what does your family think about you going to University? virtually all students (n = 85, 95.51%) replied "Proud". There was a time when, in Saudi society, girls were allowed for religious studies only. Most of the females did not even go to school. But in modern times female education is considered worthwhile. Families feel proud of their daughters who go to university. Now women are not compelled to study religion only, but



they can study subjects related to science, medicine and technology, and parents/relatives feel proud of their daughters being educated.

Table 8. presents the reported characteristics of the respondents' friends. In response to the question, what do your friends think about you studying at University? a relatively high proportion (n = 35, 39.33%) reported that they had friends who studied with them. Question 7 then asked what do your friends do? (n =80, 89.89%) attend "University". From this university is a popular and growing option. It is also interesting to note that 7.87% friends are married. As explained by participant 5, earlier when she noticed the age of marriage increasing.

When women's education arrived in Hail it was not fully supported by the local community. However since the opening of the university the number of female students has continuously grown causing the prestige of higher education to somewhat drop. This was due to the easy accessibility to the university courses.

Table 8. – Characteristics of the respondents' friends

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Q6. What do your friends think about you studying at University?	Study with me	35	39.33%
	Intelligent	32	35.96%
	Do not care	13	14.61%
	No reply	9	10.11%
Q7. What do your friends do? <sup>a</sup>	University	80	89.89%
	Married	7	7.87 %
	Stay home	6	6.74%
	Working	1	1.12%
Q39. How many friends did you have before you studied at Hail University?	More than 10	41	46.07%
	6-10	26	29.21%
	1-5	20	22.47%
	No reply	2	2.25%
	None	0	0.00%
Q40. How many friends have you made since you join University?	More than 10	50	56.18%
	6-10	24	26.97%
	1-5	13	14.61%
	No reply	2	2.25%
	None	0	0.00%
Q41. Do you socialize with your university friends outside of class?	No	32	35.96%
	Sometimes	30	33.71%
	Yes	25	28.09%
	No reply	2	2.25%

Note: <sup>a</sup> Respondents could choose more than one category; therefore, the percentages do not add up to 100%

Less than half of the respondents (n = 41, 46.07%) reported that they had more than 10 friends before they studied at Hail university, and this proportion increased to more than half (n = 50, 56.18%) after they had joined the

University. Only one student reported that she had no friends before or after joining the University.

The meaning of a friend in Western culture is a close acquaintance who is not blood related. It is important therefore to take into account that when these subjects refer to friends it does not equate to the same meaning as that of the West. As it is quite unusual for subjects to socialize outside of the tribal family there will be, in most cases, a blood tie somewhere down the line.

A small percentage of students ( $n = 25$ , 28.090%) socialized with their University friends outside of class, although over one third ( $n = 32$ , 35.96%) did not. It was observed that the university is not only a place where students come to study, but it also provides them with an opportunity to socialize. Being an extremely conservative society, also because of the many restrictions on females and the distances involved it is often difficult for them to socialize outside their families.

Consequently, many students make new friends when they come to university; usually most of their friends and family members also come to university with them. Again this can be seen in table 8. where most students and their friends are studying at university, with the exception of a few who have married or just stay at home.

Even though students appear to have their own social circles, like most schools and universities bullying is present here. The researcher witnessed physical and mental abuse of students due to their tribal origin and belief of inferiority. One of these students eventually got married in order to leave the university.

### 6.3 THE REASONS FOR THE RESPONDENTS GOING TO UNIVERSITY

Table 9. presents the reported reasons why the respondents went to University. In response to the question "Why do you study"? Most (n = 64, 71.91%) replied "Education". The research explains that 71.91% chose to be better educated. The participants in this research realized the importance of education for future career opportunities. The majority of students were aiming for careers in education, law, dentistry and computer technology. Other students wanted to be educated, realizing the importance of it.

These changes are being brought on by a slight influence of Western culture. Typically Saudi society was conservative; it was a society where women were not allowed to go to schools, which were not related to the Islamic education system. They are now aiming for corporate careers with no clear goals or objectives. What would cause some of these women to pursue a career in a field to which they have never been exposed?

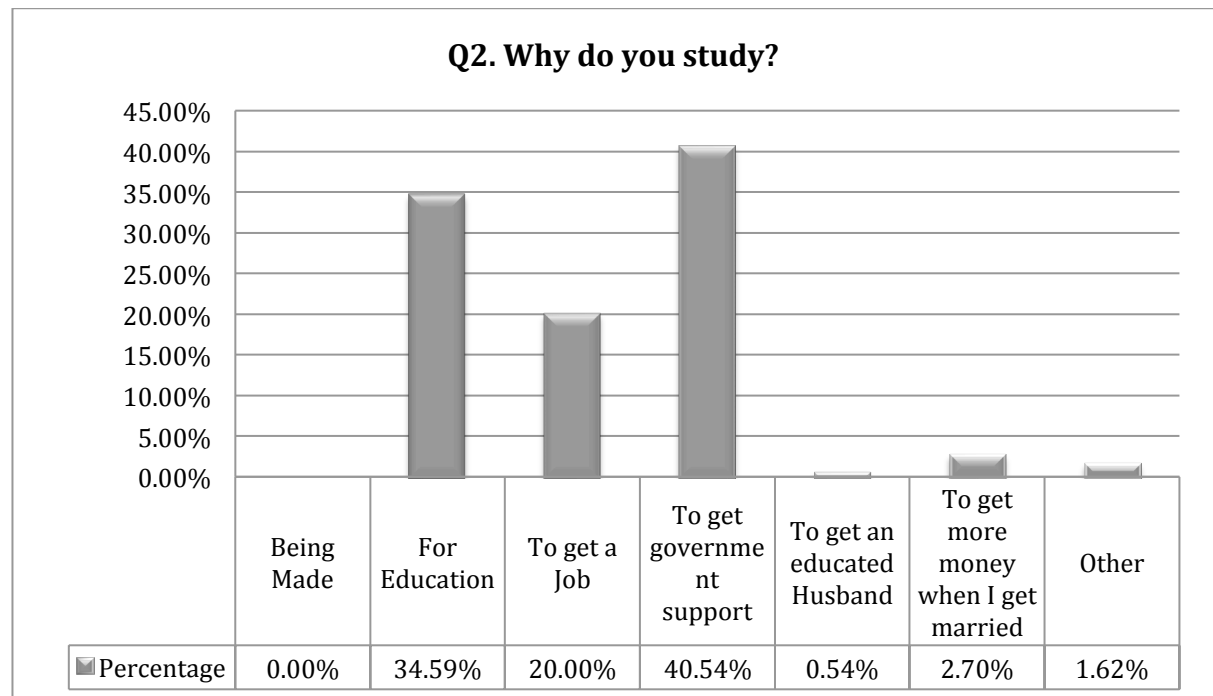
Table 9. – Reasons why the respondents went to university

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Q2. Why do you study? <sup>a</sup>	Education	64	71.91%
	Job	37	41.57%
	To get the government support	75	84.27%
	To get an educated husband	1	1.12%
	To get more money when I get married	5	5.62%
	Other reason	3	3.37%
Q2a.How is Government Study Support used? <sup>a</sup>	Mine	48	53.93%
	Pays the fees	21	23.60%
	Family	12	13.48%
	Other	1	1.12%
	No reply	7	7.87%
Q3. Why did you choose to go to Hail University? <sup>a</sup>	Live in Hail	46	51.69%
	Near to my village	8	8.99%
	Programs	21	23.60%
	English language	16	17.98%
	No choice	12	13.48%

Note: <sup>a</sup> Respondents could choose more than one category; therefore, the percentages do not add up to 100%

When determining why these women go to university it was revealed that there are three main reasons, these can be seen below in figure 22. It shows the main reason for these girls attending university is the government allowance, this was closely followed by gaining an education and then building a career and getting a job.

Figure 22. – Why The Participants Study



The study clearly demonstrates that the first main reason (40.54%) is to obtain financial support, which is approximately 1000 Saudi riyals a month (approximately \$250). This money can be used in diverse ways, such as helping to support the family, or paying for the school bus and materials. Some students retain the money for financial independence. While in the questionnaire no students admitted to it, the researcher has observed cases where the father or husband indeed keeps the money for himself, as this was revealed to me by a number of students.

The second main reason (34.59%) is to be educated. It is a very encouraging sign are that students are actively seeking education; reasons for this will be explained in a later chapter. Being the first generation of women in this rural

area to have access to a higher education, it is no surprise that the level of education between students and parents differs so greatly, as mentioned by several participants. Participant 1 stated:

*“My father studied only for the sixth grade and my mother finished high school and they are both working. My father works as an officer and my mother is a teacher who teaches illiterate women in a governmental educational centre”. (Personal interview, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2012).*

As participant 11 explains her view on her parents' education:

*“My mother did finish high school and the forward degree in the religious time; she took it when she was pregnant with me. Her sisters did not have a degree; one has elementary degree and two younger sisters have; one have English and one have business. The portion of college degrees gets bigger because younger generations want to have degrees”. (Personal interview, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2013).*

The third main reason, as is common worldwide, is to get a job (20%) and be independent, or to support the family.

The Daily Mail (11 August 2012), confirms there are only 15% of women accounting for the Saudi workforce, even though Sharia law allows women to work. To provide women with more employment opportunities the Saudi Industrial Property Authority (Modon) announced that by next year a new industrial city will be completed that will offer a number of diverse job opportunities to 5000 women in areas such as pharmacy, textile, food processing and skilled factory positions. A number of coaching facilities will be also available to assist women to qualify in specialized fields. As evidenced by Gulfnews (webpronews.com, August 14, 2012): “I'm sure that women can demonstrate their efficiency in many aspects and clarify the industries that

best suit their interests, their nature and their ability,” Modon’s deputy director-general, Saleh Al-Rasheed, told Saudi daily newspaper al-Eqtisadiah.

This would result in them being good role models within their own family, their extended family and their village. These students, moreover, were aware of the employment limitations due to their gender. As participant 5 candidly explains, women openly accept the restrictions by saying:

*“Companies are limited for men. There are not much companies that allow women engineers.” (Personal interview, 4th January 2013).*

The insufficiency of employment opportunities in this region is further supported by participant 5, in explaining her personal situation as such:

*“I will talk about myself. I am a graduate student for 6 months. I haven’t got my opportunity; I tried; most of the companies here, doesn’t have women, and if they require experienced ones with 6 years. This major is new in Saudi Arabia.” (Personal interview, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2013).*

As suggested by David Ottaway (Voice of America, article: Saudi Arabia Straddling the Line on Women’s Rights, 8/13/2012), senior scholar at the Washington, DC-based Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars “Saudi Arabia is racing to ward off a “social explosion”. The fear of possible unrests is very real as approximately 300 000 graduates are searching for job opportunities every year. Nearly 60% of all college graduates are women; however, 78% of female graduates are unemployed. These statistics are very worrying for the government which is searching to find fast solutions through new policies such as “Nitaqat”, a program that promotes the replacement of foreign workers with young Saudis. Saudi Arabia has more than 8 million foreign workers mainly from Asian countries such as Bangladesh, India, Philippines and Pakistan.



The government has also established a “Hafiz” program that supports unemployed women between the ages of 20 and 35. At this time 800 dollars is distributed to each of over 1.2 million women for a period of 12 months.

The majority of these students seem to be accepting the fact that they will simply have to stay at home and use their academic skills there, as explained by participant 5: *“I can use my education at home since nowadays everything is about technology and electronics.” (Personal interview, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2013).*

These results were published in ‘Saudi Working Women: Between Social Responsibility and the State’s Responsibility Towards Them’ published by Dar Al-Kalima:

*“The study revealed a diverse number of motivations for Saudi women seeking employment. Sixty-four percent of women asked, claimed they worked for what they described as ‘self-realization’, while almost 63 percent said this was in order to put food on the table. However, 32 percent of Saudi working women said they worked in order to improve their social position, while 22 percent said they did it to fill spare time, and 11 percent said they worked as an expression of freedom”.*

Similarly participant 8 seems to be able to confirm this view, saying:

*“I can use my education at home by teaching my children. If I have children and I know English I can teach them.” (Personal interview, 18th March 2013).*

Additionally, one can hear the frustrations of a Saudi student born of Sudanese parents. She is ambitious, but unable to better herself as the educational regulations deny ‘foreign’ people the opportunity to study medicine or dentistry.

Despite the obstacles of restricted current employment prospects for female students, most seem amazingly optimistic and motivated in taking advantage of educational opportunities being made available to them by the King.

After all, as further illustrated by 'Saudi Working Women: Between Social Responsibility and the State's Responsibility Towards Them' published by Dar Al-Kalima:

*“Women were only a small part of the workforce overall, and that the number of female employees and jobseekers is also a small part of the overall female population.” Last year, the director of the women's department at the Saudi Labour Ministry, Raqqiyah Al-Abdullah, revealed that of 5.9 million Saudi women of working age, only 12 percent of them were active in the labour market. She revealed that of this 706,000 women, only 505,000 are in employment, while 200,000 are looking for work”.*

Over half (n = 48, 53.93%) reported that Government Study Support belonged to them and the majority (n = 50, 56.18%) failed to respond to the question, why did you choose to go to Hail university? Therefore the answers are invalid. However, the University of Hail is the only university in this particular region, and a majority of students live in the city or nearby area. Even though some students would like to study at a different university or in another city, it is nearly impossible unless a family member is located in or near that particular area.

## 6.4 THE RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCES AT UNIVERSITY

The responses to five questions concerning the respondents' experiences at University are presented in Table 10. Over three-quarters (n =70, 78.65%) believed that studying at University was difficult; this is largely due to the fact that English taught in the high school is not professional and there is hardly any exposure to native English speakers.

Table 10. – Respondents' experiences at university

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Q8. Is studying at University difficult?	No	17	19.10%
	Yes	70	78.65%
	No reply	2	2.25%
Q9. Do you ever feel like giving up University?	No	61	68.54%
	Yes	27	30.34%
	No reply	1	1.12%
Q9a. If yes, then why do you want to give up?	Hard	13	48.15%
	No fun	12	44.44%
	Do not need	1	3.70%
	Like to stay at home	1	3.70%
Q10. How many times have you repeated a semester?	Never	72	80.90%
	1 time	9	10.11%
	2 times	2	2.25%
	3 times	1	1.12%
	No reply	5	5.62%

Q11. Does anyone help you with your studies?	No one	60	67.42%
	Brother	8	8.99%
	Sister	5	5.62%
	Father	3	3.37%
	Mother	2	2.25%
	Other	11	12.36%

As was acknowledged by Saud, a proficient English speaker and high school EFL teacher; the reason for university students struggling with their English was the fault of the government. The government has not promoted the quality of teacher training, which is still very poor, and entirely inadequate preparation for higher education. At Saud's school the English pass level for high school students was a dismally low 28%. Students openly admit that high school English teachers supply them with their exam answers in order to inflate their own teaching performance. Some students enrol at university having achieved 98% for high school English, yet are unable to form a simple English sentence.

This is furthermore supported by an ELC lecturer from the male site of the university. He reports that this apathy towards study is not exclusive to the females; in the male college it is widely recognized that as little as 10% of students have the capability to successfully complete even their prep year studies. No one in senior management level seems to recognize or acknowledge this fundamental learning difficulty amongst so many young Saudis. Not only do they have serious learning difficulties, they also come to university totally unprepared, many with an attitude problem, and some attend purely to disrupt the learning process.

Native speaking teachers occasionally face disciplinary actions with students but are reluctant to impose any sanctions because they know it would be likely the student in question would go to higher authority and report them.

Experience shows that some Saudi students could manipulate the system to their advantage, whereby they can report the teacher as incompetent and the reason for their failure. In startling contrast international students from such diverse countries such as Afghanistan, Palestine, Yemen, Syria, Sudan, Egypt and Jordan who interestingly are not funded by the King's purse do not share the same failings as their Saudi brothers and sisters. Not only is their academic performance at a higher level, but also their attitude, preparedness, class participation and behaviour is different.

These are students who have been educated alongside their Saudi brothers and sisters at high school, so have experienced the same exposure to the learning of all subjects, including English and math. As is explained by an Afghani male student; "For regular quizzes we don't need to revise to achieve 18, 19 out of 20 mark. The Saudis in comparison struggle to achieve double figures." For major exams in math the same student admitted the exam was so easy that they did not bother to revise, and still achieved regular A+ in math. However his Saudi brothers seriously struggled to even comprehend the basic concepts of maths.

Of those limited Saudis who do achieve, they are indeed bright, but are often handicapped by a lack of 'wasta' - the Arabic system of family influence. One ELC male student who completed all 4 levels after 21 out of 28 weeks was keen to continue his studies under the King's sponsorship program in an English speaking country, but was prevented at every step because his parents, more precisely his father, had no 'wasta'.

His colleagues with considerably less academic achievement were somehow accepted by the King's program and travelled abroad. He instead had to labour in two part-time jobs, one from 4pm to 9pm another from midnight to 3am in order to earn 3,500 SAR per month to put towards his own overseas education.

Likewise, the same 'wasta' system unfairly discriminates against the achieving students as opposed to the non-achievers. The corrosive effect of 'wasta' cannot be underestimated in the Saudi educational system, or indeed throughout the entire Saudi culture. The intrinsic unfairness of the system inevitably leads to some students contemplating giving up their studies. The study demonstrates that about one third (n = 27, 30.34%) had felt like giving up, mainly because it was "Hard" (n = 13, 48.15%) or "No fun"; (n = 12, 44.44%).

Participant 3 explains how they sometimes perceive the university and wanting to quit:

*"Hhh... sometimes. There is no organization in this university. It's a mess. These are schools buildings. It is so crowded. That's why sometimes I feel I want to quit." (Personal Interview, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2012).*

Also participant 2 has another reason for contemplating giving up on her studies:

*"At the beginning of the semester I wanted to give up because studying at the university is difficult; the courses are mainly in English; and the life is so different from my old school. Another reason was because I live in a small village far away from Hail; it takes a long time to reach the university. I have a problem with transportation. My father and brothers can't pick me up to take me to the college so I have to take the only bus to Hail to study there. That's why I thought of quitting. But now I got used to all of this and I am managing". (Personal Interview, 22<sup>th</sup> November 2012).*

The majority (n = 72, 80.90%) had never failed a semester, and relatively few (n =3, 3.37%) had repeated 2 or 3 semesters. However, in the first 4 years since the female university started it was not uncommon for the administrative

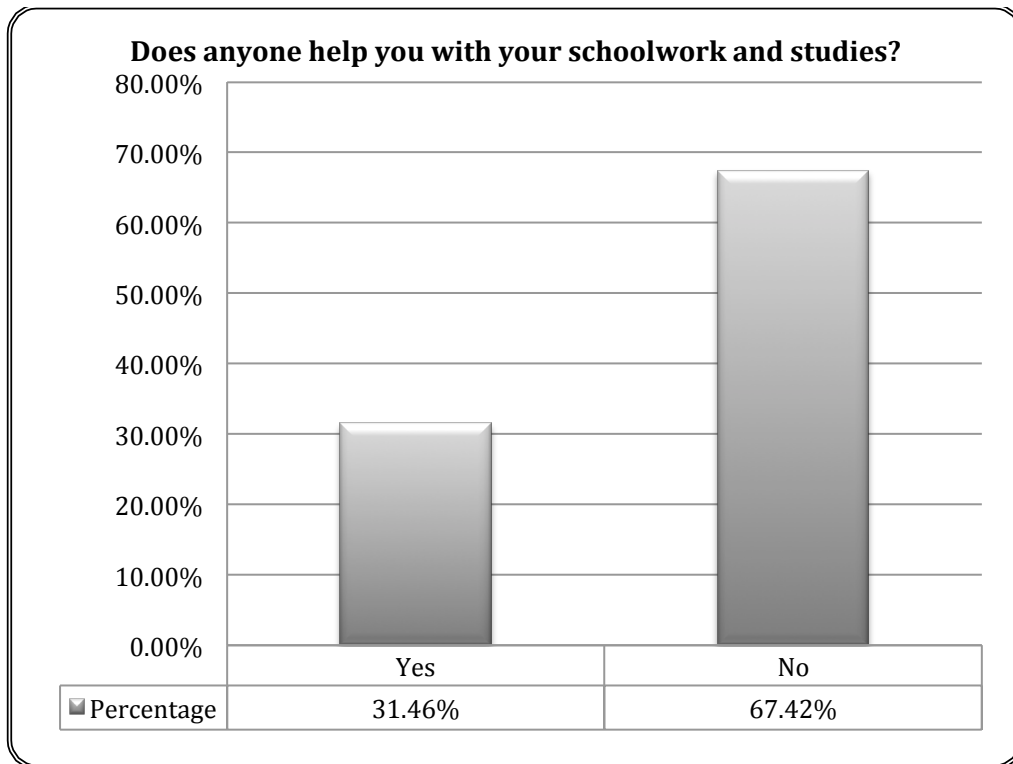
and teaching staff to “adjust-improve” grades accordingly to their own or the parents and students expectations or wishes. This is the main reason why in the past students with very poor non-existent language abilities were advancing through their university studies without actually gaining any skills. However in the last two years the “adjusting-improving-cheating” system has decreased due to the transparency and technology advancement in the marking process, which can be seen in the recent higher rate of failed students.

In addition, and more recently, the reason that a large number of students are failing is also due to the introduction of a new course enrolment system. This framework means all students are accepted into the university without a suitable induction test to assess their prior existing English language skills. This system ensures a place at the university for all students but at what cost? The number of times a student will be allowed to repeat a semester, before being sent to the local community college has yet to be decided. This has to be clarified as soon as possible because the English department has already a number of students repeating the first semester since 2008, which means more than 5 years, more than 10 times the same semester level. As seen from the table above, the number of failed students is quite substantial and the university will be in no position to sustain such a large number of repeaters for a long period of time.

From the sample of 89 participants, 84 responses were collected, but this has not affected the data as there is still a clear trend. The failure percentage is quite low. However, we have to remember that students completing these questionnaires were students in their last year of bachelor studies; therefore, they were the ones being “helped and pushed” through the system. A majority of participants pass their classes even though most are still struggling to understand the English language. This reflects poorly on the educational standards and teachers’ abilities.

Over two thirds (n = 60, 67.42%) reported that they had no help with their studies, that means a majority of respondents have had to study on their own. This is seen in figure 23.

Figure 23. – Does anyone help you with your schoolwork and studies?



As many parents are lacking higher education it is difficult for them to help their daughters. A third of the participants do receive help with their schoolwork; but mostly from private tutors.

Commendably, brothers and sisters also help each other. The reason for this is that there is a strong possibility that their siblings are similarly studying at university. Even though most of the mothers are not educated, the study demonstrates that mothers are as supportive as fathers.

#### 6.4.1 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT USE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Responses to five questions concerning the respondents' use of English language are presented in Table 11. The majority (n = 63, 70.79%) would not like to have only Arabic teachers. Over two thirds (n = 61, 68.54%) would not



like to study in Arabic instead of English. The most frequent response to "Why is studying in English important to you?" was "Want to learn English" (n = 62, 69.66%) followed by "University degree" (n=31, 34.83%) and "Job/Business" (n = 20, 22.47%). The majority (n = 56, 62.92%) watched TV shows in English.

The veracity of these 5 results can be interpreted as doubtful, as it becomes apparent from personal experience that the majority of students have limited motivation for the learning of English. These supposedly impressive responses can be explained by the fact that the questionnaires were distributed by English native speaker teachers. In other words the students responded to what they interpreted to be the response required by the teacher. This is further supported by an interview with participant 2 who confirms:

*"I think that my friends and classmates prefer to study everything in Arabic because it will be easier for them and they may get higher marks". (Personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012).*

Also, participant 4 claimed:

*"We all wish to have Arabic teachers. We can understand the lesson better if the teacher is Arabic. Sometimes, if we have a question about anything we can't understand, we ask her in Arabic and she can explain it again. I don't know. I feel more comfortable if the teachers are Arabic."(Personal interview, 29<sup>th</sup> December 2012).*

Table 11. – Respondents' perceptions about the use of English

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Q12. Would you like to have only Arabic teachers?	No	63	70.79%
	Yes	23	25.84%
	No reply	3	3.37%
Q13. Would you like to study in Arabic instead of English?	No	61	68.54%
	Yes	25	28.09%
	No reply	3	3.37%
Q2. Why is studying in English important to you?	University degree	31	34.83%
	Job/Business	20	22.47%
	Media	6	6.74%
	Want to learn English	62	69.66%
	Other	2	2.25%
Q26. Do you watch TV shows in English?	Yes	56	62.92%
	No	31	34.83%
	No reply	2	2.25%

Note: <sup>a</sup> Respondents could choose more than one category therefore the percentages do not add up to 100%

Arabic teachers also have different academic standards as well as attitudes, whereby they regularly feel slighted by their own student failures: in other words, they often regard student failure as a personal criticism of their teaching ability, and therefore assist them in any way they can.

It is widely acknowledged between ELC teachers that Hail students are less motivated towards studying in English compared to students from cosmopolitan cities such as Riyadh, Jeddah or Dammam. This can largely be explained by less exposure to, and interaction with foreigners.

However there is a small percentage of Saudi students in each class who are genuinely interested in studying in English. As participant 6 shares her thoughts: “...studying in Arabic is considered weak. Yes. For me English is more important than Arabic.” (Personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013).

Moreover, this view is further enforced by participant 8, who continues to say:

*“No, I don’t like to have all Arabic teachers. I like foreigner teachers. Because I want to learn another language ... it is an international language and we need it in all our life.”* (Personal interview, 18th March 2013).

A further point worth consideration is that some students’ believe learning English can be a tool used to spread the teaching of Islam. As participant 2 explains:

*“Because nowadays English is a very important language that everyone has to learn; we need it in our daily life. We need it to let non Muslims know about Islam.”* (Personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012).

This can relate to both spreading the word and encouraging people to join, or to express to the non Muslim community in their own words, what being a Muslim is all about and provide insight into their beliefs, customs and culture.

#### 6.4.2 RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF ABSENCE FROM CLASS

Answers to the questions concerning the respondents' absence from class are presented in Table 12. and are summarized as follows. The most frequent response to, how often do you miss class? (n = 43, 48.31%) was one to five days per month, this means between one day and one full week per month.

The remaining smaller proportion (n = 30, 33.71%) never missed a class. The most frequent reasons for missing class (n = 60, 67.42%) were illness or the

lack of driver (n = 29, 32.58%). Over one third (n = 32, 35.96%) could not get to class if their drivers were sick or busy.

In reality, attendance is very important for all students, and for some it is even more important than the study itself. The university has a strict attendance policy, which can influence a student's final grade, or indeed can be the sole reason for a student having to repeat a whole semester. Nevertheless, even with the knowledge of such a strict policy many students seem to lack the basic responsibility to follow the required procedure. Last semester there were more than 300 students marked DN (dismissal notice) and were refused access to the final exam due to their poor attendance record, which would result in them having to repeat the semester.

Table 12. – Respondents' experiences of absence from class

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Q32. How often do you miss class?	Never	37	41.57%
	1-5 days a month	43	48.31%
	6-10 days a month	4	4.49%
	11-15 days a month	1	1.12%
	More than 15 days a month	0	0.00%
	No reply	4	4.49%
Q33. Why do you miss class? <sup>a</sup>	I am sick/ill	60	67.42%
	No driver	29	32.58%
	Weather	21	23.60%
	Family	17	19.10%
	Want to stay at home	6	6.74%
	Sometimes not allowed	4	4.49%
Q34. Do you miss class because you have to look after your mother, sisters or family member?	No	57	64.04%
	Sometimes	21	23.60%
	Yes	9	10.11%
	No reply	2	2.25%
Q31. Can you get to school if your driver is sick or busy?	Sometimes	35	39.33%
	No	32	35.96%
	Yes	21	23.60%
	No reply	1	1.12%

Note: <sup>a</sup> Respondents could choose more than one category therefore the percentages do not add up to 100%.

The reasons why students miss their classes vary. However, for female students there are a number of genuine reasons such as; no driver or illness.

Some students travel long distances and are dependent on male drivers to take them every day to university. These students are leaving home as early as 5am and returning between 5 to 7pm. As further explained by participant 2:

*“At the beginning of the semester I wanted to give up because studying at the university is difficult; the courses are mainly in English; and the life is so different from my old school. Another reason was because I live in a small village far away from Hail; it takes long time to reach the university; I have a problem with transportation. My father and brothers can’t pick me up to the college so I have to take the only bus to Hail to study there. That’s why I thought of quitting. But now I got used to all of this and I am managing. I like the prep year program because it enhances my English and computer skills”. (Personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012).*

These drivers also sometimes make an impromptu decision to drive back to the village earlier, thereby causing students to miss their afternoon classes, which will cause them to be marked absent. In cases where a father, a brother or an uncle frequently drives a female student to school, it can be used against her and sometimes create problems. These include; driver’s sickness or a bland refusal to drive her to school (this is usually her brother). Also, weather conditions such as sandstorms cause absences, but in this case the university does not count attendance for this day as absent.

Female students also have the disadvantage of having to follow family customs that can often mean random trips to faraway relatives that can impact significantly on the attendance record. The fathers or brothers will spontaneously decide on a family reunion without any input from their

daughters. So as to avoid being marked absent students and their families go to great lengths to obtain an 'official excuse' for class absences. Fathers go to a local government hospital and buy or ask doctor friends to provide them with an excuse for their daughters' absences.

The majority of the participants (n = 58, 65.2%) reported that they were never absent from class because they had to look after family members. Relatively few had to miss class because of this reason (n = 9, 10.1%) although a higher proportion (n = 21, 23.6%) reported that they sometimes had to miss class to look after family members.

Nevertheless, in reality students do actually miss classes due to a family illness and have to look after their mothers or younger siblings. For example; a student had to stay at home and look after her sister following the delivery of a baby, and there was no one else to take care of her. This resulted in student having to retake the semester because of this week absence.

## 6.5 THE RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF WESTERN TEACHERS

Answers to questions concerning the respondents' perceptions of Western teachers are presented in Table 13. The most frequent responses indicated that the respondents perceived that Western teachers behaviour is sometimes strange and confusing (n = 56, 62.92%). This finding can be attributed to the prevalence of less experienced teachers choosing Saudi Arabia as a teaching experiment. This can often result in something of a two-way culture shock for both teachers and students, sometimes leading to unfortunate misunderstandings.

Table 13. – Respondents' perceptions of Western teachers

Item	Category	Score	Frequency	Percentage
Q42.1. Western teachers' behaviour is strange and confusing.	Sometimes	2	56	62.92%
	Never	3	27	30.34%
	Always	1	3	3.37%
	No reply	0	3	3.37%
Q42.2. Western teachers behave like people on T.V. and in movies.	Never	3	41	46.07%
	Sometimes	2	38	42.70%
	Always	1	5	5.62%
	No reply	0	5	5.62%
Q42.3. Western teachers are arrogant	Never	3	72	80.90%
	Sometimes	2	13	14.61%
	Always	1	2	2.25%



	No reply	0	2	2.25%
Q42.4. Western teachers are not shy and talk loudly	Always	1	34	38.20%
	Sometimes	2	33	37.08%
	Never	3	19	21.35%
	No reply	0	3	3.37%
Q42.5. Western teachers are ignorant about our culture	Sometimes	2	66	74.16%
	Never	3	10	11.24%
	Always	1	7	7.87%
	No reply	0	6	6.74%

To clarify, the openness of Western culture is often anathema to the sheltered and immature student body. While it is true that students have access to Western movies and television series through cable TV or through the Internet, first hand exposure to the reality of sometimes shocking behaviour can unnerve some students. Participant 1 confirms this by saying:

*“Western teachers’ behaviour is confusing for me when there is a lack of communication between them and the students at the college. At the beginning of the semester, it is difficult to understand each other, which causes confusion. And because this is the first time we receive our education by Western teachers.” (Personal interview, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2012).*

As an illustration, the findings seem to assert the view that Western teachers never behave like people on TV and in movies (n = 41, 46.07%); Western teachers are never arrogant (n = 72, 80.90%); This high percentage is further authenticated by Participant 10 who verifies: *“No. I think that they are better than Saudi teachers because they treat us like friends, but Saudi teachers treat us as we are nothing, even with Saudi students.”*

Western teachers are not shy and talk loudly scored 38.20%; and Western teachers are sometimes ignorant about Saudi culture scored a surprisingly high 74.16%. This high percentage of students that think Western teachers are often ignorant regarding Saudi culture can be attributed to a number of reasons. One reason why teachers are ignorant is explained by participant 3:

*“At the beginning of the lectures, they ask about our traditions and culture. Maybe because they are conservative. Westerners only care about their study and jobs; they may be not interested in knowing any culture until they go to that country. When we sometimes come late to the lecture, they ask us why do you come late? They don’t know that I can’t drive by myself and my father has to drive my sisters to the school first, then my turn”.*  
*(Personal interview, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2012).*

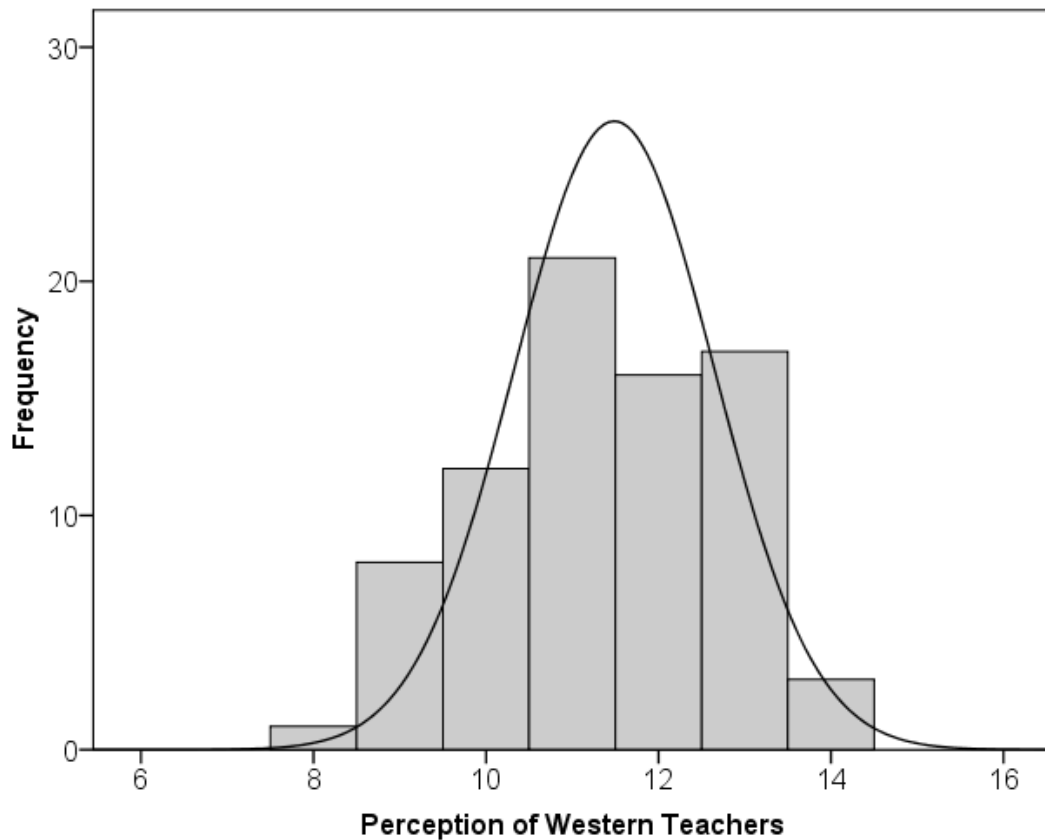
There are some Western nonconformists who simply refuse to accept not only the local female dress code, but also the cultural etiquettes of this region. For instance, the showing of the face or hair can result in a defiant confrontation, whether it be with the Muttawa (religious police) or just a conservative local. A further point worth consideration is that different regions are more tolerant towards women’s dress codes, which can become confusing to expats. In the cosmopolitan cities most of the non-Muslim women wear only the abaya (black oversized coat), with their hair and faces exposed, and even some local women leave their faces uncovered.

However, travel a few hundred kilometres in any direction and you will find the majority of women to be totally covered even down to black gloves. Nevertheless, most teachers genuinely try to conform to local customs, wrestling with the head scarves (hidjab), the face coverings (niqab) and floor sweeping abayas whilst trying to maintain an air of femininity and elegance, but in most cases failing miserably. Teachers who arrive in The Kingdom with a nonconformist mind-set regularly develop a resentful attitude. The many

frustrations that arise from living here can enhance their instability, often leading to public outbursts between colleagues, and also between teachers and students. It must therefore be acknowledged that for these reasons some students will equate this to a form of ignorance.

Responses to questions in Table 13. were scored by 1 = Always; 2 = Sometimes, and 3 = Never, demonstrating that a high score indicated a positive perception and a low score indicated a negative perception. Scores for the five questions were summated to create a variable named the Perceptions of Western Teachers scale. The frequency distribution of this scale approximated a normal distribution (i.e., it conformed to a theoretic bell-shaped curve) as reflected in Figure 24.

Figure 24. – Frequency distribution of the Perceptions of Western Teachers scale



The descriptive statistics for the Perception of Western Teachers scale are Minimum = 8; Median = 11; Maximum = 14; Mean = 11.34; Standard Deviation = 1.397. These statistics indicate that tendencies of the majority of the respondents' perceptions of Western teachers were to be near the centre of the frequency distribution, i.e., close to average. This means that most girls consider the Western teachers' behaviour to be normal, sometimes falling out of the normal and expected.

## 6.6 THE RESPONDENTS' INTERACTIONS WITH TEACHERS

Replies to questions concerning the respondents' perceived interactions with Western teachers are presented in Table 14. The most frequent responses indicated that the respondents perceived that they sometimes liked their Western teachers (n = 46, 51.69%); the teachers are sometimes friendly and help them (n = 47, 52.81%); the teachers sometimes talk a lot about their culture and country (n = 53, 59.55%); the respondents could never approach teachers about personal issues (n = 55, 61.80%) and that the teachers always respected cultural differences (n = 48, 53.93%).

So far the questions were aimed at understanding the students' basics characteristics and ideas. When given the chance to judge and grade their interactions with teachers we are able to see from their perspective their relationship with teachers.

Table 14. – Respondents' perceived interactions with teachers

Item	Category	Score	Frequency	Percentage
42.6 I like most of my Western teachers	Sometimes	2	46	51.69%
	Always	3	40	44.94%
	Never	1	2	2.25%
	No reply	0	1	1.12%
42.7 Teachers are friendly and help me	Sometimes	2	47	52.81%
	Always	3	38	42.70%
	Never	1	2	2.25%
	No reply	0	2	2.25%
42.8 Teachers talk a lot about their culture and country	Sometimes	2	53	59.55%
	Always	3	20	22.47%
	Never	1	14	15.73%
	No reply	0	2	2.25%
42.9 I can approach teachers about personal issues	Never	1	55	61.80%
	Sometimes	2	28	31.46%
	Always	3	4	4.49%

	No reply	0	2	2.25%
42.10 I feel teachers respect our cultural differences	Always	3	48	53.93%
	Sometimes	2	31	34.83%
	Never	1	6	6.74%
	No reply	0	4	4.49%

The responses to the questions in Table 15. were scored by 1 = Never; 2 = Sometimes, and 3 = Always, such that a high score indicated a positive interaction and a low score indicated a negative interaction. The scores for the five questions were summated to create a variable named the Interactions with Teachers scale.

In Western society students are encouraged to interact and engage with their teachers. However in the Saudi environment the relationship between students and teachers has not been established, encouraged or even wanted. Here we will look at how students feel about interacting with foreign teachers. One participant 6 explained her view of accepting foreign teachers as such:

*“If they are not having the previous good characteristics, I won’t accept them because they transfer high standard knowledge. I may accept unfriendly teacher because of his precious knowledge that he may provide me with. My relationship with the teachers has limitations.” (Personal interview, 22nd February 2013).*

Typically in most cultures there are some teachers who are more favoured than others and they engage the students on a different level. At the university of Hail things are no different, with 51.69% claiming that they sometimes like their Western teachers, which is the same in any society. Even though the teachers are not always liked 52.81% of students still feel that the teachers are friendly and helpful by offering support and assistance. This suggests that the students are aware and understand that the teachers are only trying to help.

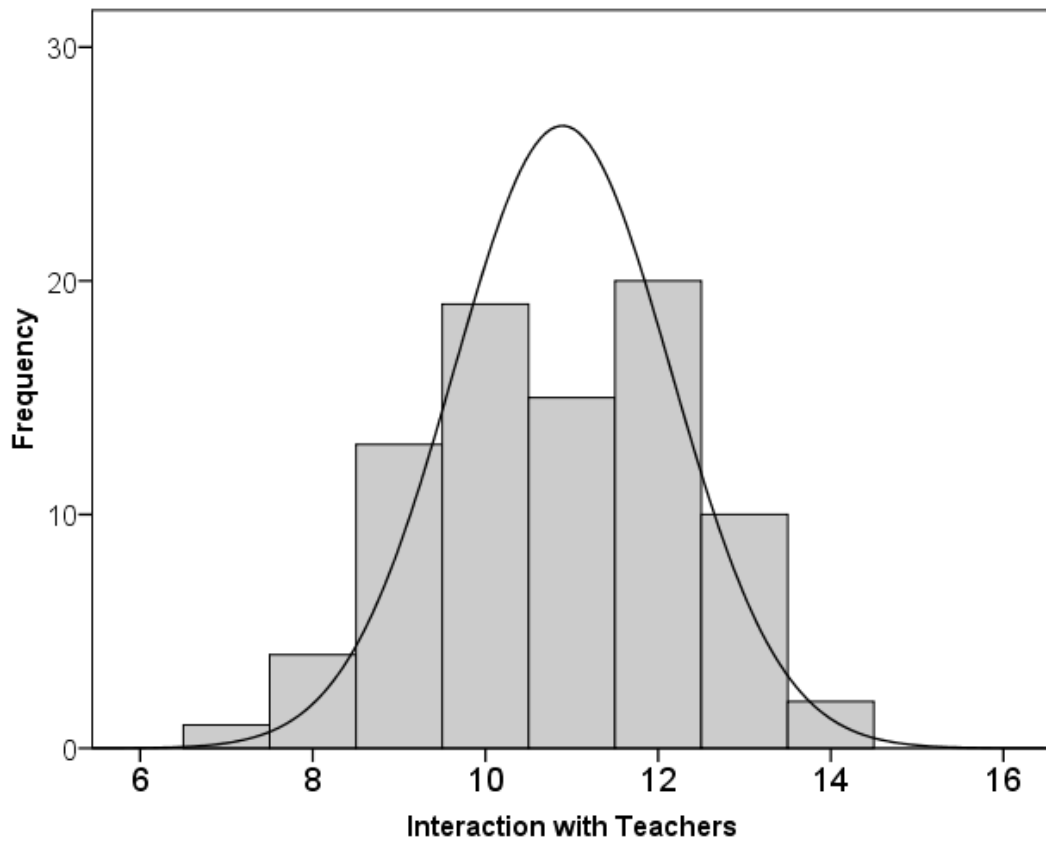
As the teachers present their lectures and presentations it can sometimes be difficult to be culturally sensitive or aware. As a result, it is easy to unintentionally quote Western cultural examples when these are ineffective, inappropriate or confusing. While 59.55% said that their teachers sometimes refer to their cultural backgrounds, the more interesting statistic is that 22.47% think that their teachers are always referring to their own culture.

Despite these results the university has informal guidelines relating to the conduct and topics that need to be taken into consideration and need to be avoided such as politics, religion, boyfriends and girlfriends. There were cases when teachers crossed the line by involving politics or in the majority of cases religious comments. These would be reported by the students immediately after the class in a form of petition where the whole class signed the complaint letter. Sometimes they would all go directly to the vice dean's office and an investigation was launched. Then the teacher had to write an explanation report and with the director would go and present it to the vice dean. In most cases, these issues were caused by a misunderstanding due to a language barrier.

However there were cases where the teacher consciously made religious statements, which she later tried to deny. Based on the teacher's reputation and previous behaviour issues these staff members' contracts were cancelled. This type of procedure has to be dealt with very carefully as recently the students have become aware of their power. They unite against teachers that they particularly do not like because of their nationality or colour of their skin.

The frequency distribution of this scale approximated a normal distribution (i.e., it conformed to a theoretic bell-shaped curve) as reflected in Figure 25.

Figure 25. – Frequency distribution of the Interactions with Teachers scale.



The descriptive statistics for the Perception of Western Teachers scale are Minimum = 7; Median = 11; Maximum = 14; Mean = 10.74; Standard Deviation = 1.490. These statistics indicate that tendencies of the majority of the respondents' interactions with Western teachers were to be near the centre of the frequency distribution, i.e., close to average.



## 6.7 THE PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF THE TEACHERS ON THE STUDENTS

We looked at how students and teachers interact in the previous section. Now we will examine the teachers' influence on these young women, which are presented in Table 15.

Table 15. – Teachers' perceived influence on students

Item	Category	Score	Frequency	Percentage
Q42.11 I am more tolerant towards foreigners	Sometimes	2	48	53.93%
	Always	3	33	37.08%
	Never	1	6	6.74%
	No reply	0	2	2.25%
Q42.12 I am more open minded and want to try new things	Always	3	46	51.69%
	Sometimes	2	35	39.33%
	Never	1	6	6.74%
	No reply	0	2	2.25%
Q42.13 I want to be a teacher when I finish university	Always	3	39	43.82%
	Never	1	27	30.34%
	Sometimes	2	20	22.47%
	No reply	0	3	3.37%
Q42.14 I want to travel to different countries like my teachers	Always	3	58	65.17%
	Sometimes	2	26	29.21%
	Never	1	4	4.49%
	No reply	0	1	1.12%
Q42.15 I feel different about foreigners since studying at university	Sometimes	2	50	56.18%
	Always	3	24	26.97%
	Never	1	12	13.48%
	No reply	0	3	3.37%

Responses to questions in Table 11 were scored by 1 = Never; 2 = Sometimes, and 3 = Always, such that a high score indicated a positive influence and a low score indicated a negative influence. Scores for the five

questions were estimated to create a variable named the Teachers Influence on Students scale.

The most frequent responses indicated that the respondents perceived that they were sometimes more tolerant towards foreigners (n = 48, 53.93%); this response is explained by participant 5:

*“For me, yes. I am interested to different cultures. But I have to admit that dealing with foreigners will be difficult for many people because Hail doesn’t get much visitors from other cities from outside Saudi Arabia. So, they don’t have that communication, but for me, I can understand, that’s why I get more excited about it.” (Personal interview, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2013)*

It is noticeable that students are themselves aware of Hail’s isolated location. However in the last five years Hail has started to grow and develop into a larger metropolitan city, which in turn further establishes its place as the hub in the Hail region. With this growth in infrastructure and development Hail will be subject to an increase in population by both foreigners and local citizens; the locals will have to increase their tolerance of foreigners.

The question regarding being more open-minded and wanting to try new things scored 51.69%; this is quite a high result showing willingness to try new things and have different experiences. However there is a limit as to how far the participant is willing to go as explained by participant 5:

*“If you’re talking about religion, I am not open-minded. I have many different relations with those of different cultures but we never talk about religion. After I came to university, I had some friends who are non Muslims I found them really nice, good, and polite. But they were not students. (Personal interview, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2013)*

Also another participant is strongly inclined to question how far she is willing to push the boundaries of what she considers to be acceptable as described by participant 2; “If the new things are not compatible with my religion, culture, and traditions I will not try them”. (Personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012).

When asked if the participants wanted to follow the same path as their Western lecturers and become teachers when they finished University 43.82% said this is something they would pursue. This can be explained by limited career opportunities due to culture and religion. As mentioned previously the main areas of female employment in Hail are in education, medical and the banking sector.

So this high percentage wanting to be teachers is not surprising. Just a note of interest: not all parents are supportive of their daughters who wish to study medicine. This is due to the fact that in later studies the segregation between male and female students is abolished. A number of students upon reaching the integration of genders withdraw and opt for a safer option like computer studies instead of medicine. The students are disappointed but feel forced to follow their parents’ firm beliefs.

A high percentage of participants wanted to travel to different countries like their teachers; 65.17% want to travel following the trend by Westerners who often take a gap year and explore the world. However, there are a lot of bureaucratic restrictions making it impossible.

Even now that these women have their own ID cards and are allowed to travel to Gulf countries they are still being monitored through GPS chips placed inside these cards and they still need males’ permission. Until recently women were not allowed to travel alone or be permitted to use accommodation in hotels or apartments without a male guardian (in a form of husband, father or brother).

However since 2008, through a Royal Decree, if a woman presents her ID card, and the same applies to men, the hotel must report the occupant's room number and the duration of the stay to the closest police station. Canlas, Jomar (25 January 2008). "Saudi prince assures RP govt. they respect rights of women". The Manila Times. Retrieved 25 January 2008.

Prior to 2008 and also even as late as 2010 women were personally escorted from a number of accommodations, the explanation being for single female travellers only certain premises were available. However, in the last 3 years restrictions are being lifted. Participant 4 explained her reasons for wanting to travel stating:

*"To see new places and new culture, to see France. If I did not finish my studies, I may go to study abroad, but if I finished studying at the university, I go shopping or tell others in those countries about Islam." (Personal interview, 29<sup>th</sup> December 2012).*

It is being observed that the majority of these women obligingly submit to the rule of men without any semblance of resistance. However, they seem to be appreciative, even grateful, for any chance to escape the four walls of their homes. Occasionally, discontent is shown regarding the travel limitations, not only to local shops or cities, but also to dream destinations, like Paris, London or Milan.

These cities are known for their expensive fashion boutiques, though most of the students would not know the names of the countries where these cities are located or where to find them on a map. Their geographical knowledge is extremely limited, which is not surprising as their travels usually only lead as far as the local park, the family farm, or relatives' houses in the not too distant villages.

Some of these ladies have never actually visited their own capital city; however, quite a few of them have been to Mecca for Hajj or Umra. For these young ladies, having the opportunity (or excuse) to leave their home for any reason means a great deal to them, and education enables them to feel some sense of freedom, no matter how limited.

Further building on the ID card that was supposedly granted last year, women have been given their own identity. As told by participant 4 :

*“One year ago, you see, we weren’t allowed to have the Saudi nationality, and now it is approved that we have Saudi nationality. As if I don’t exist. If I have some land or a house, I can’t sell it, I have to pay someone to represent me, or have my father or bother to represent me. As if I am not an existing object. But I can’t leave borders without permission from the family; if I want to move to another city, I have to ask permission. Saudi nationality is one step, that’s why I am optimistic.” (Personal interview, 29 December 2012).*

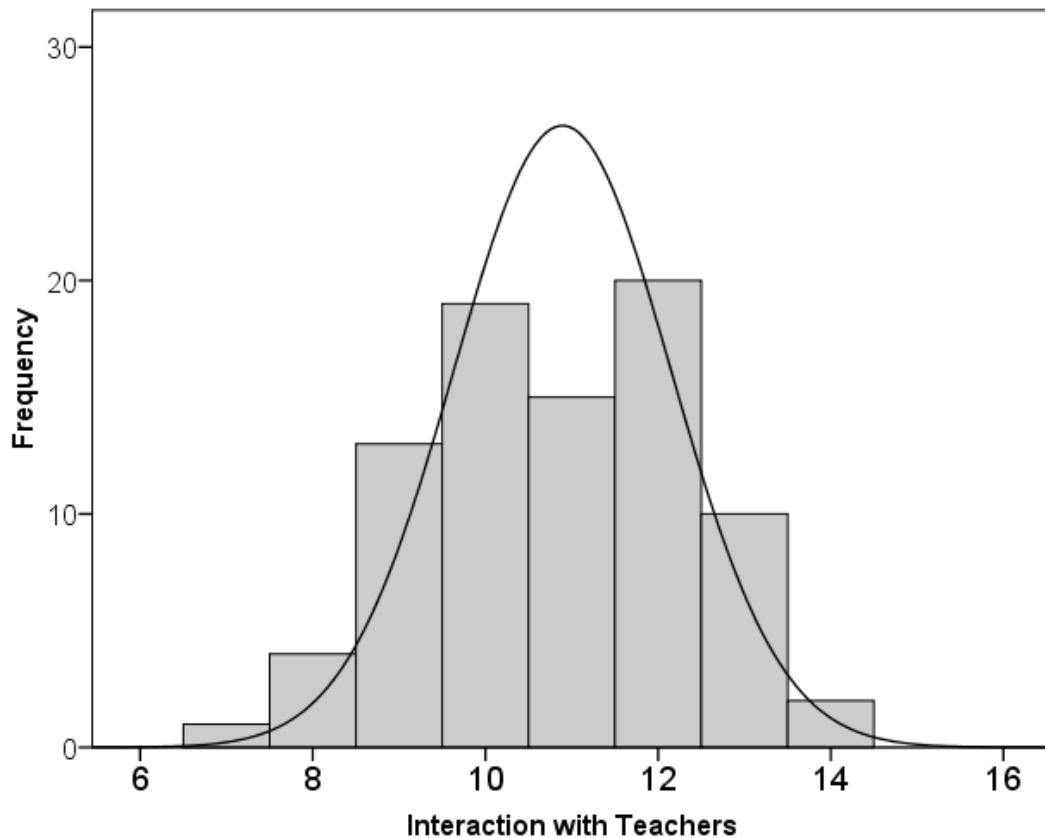
Like everywhere else in the world there are people who like to stay where they are, without a need to discover new places and Hail is no exception. As explained by participant 2:

*“It is difficult for me to travel abroad because I will have problems with language and communication. Also, in other countries, there are different traditions, religion, and behaviour, which is difficult for me to cope with.” (Personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012).*

If given the opportunity to travel, they would certainly be subject to more foreigners. Since studying at university and interacting with them more than half of the participants have had different feelings towards them, in fact 56.18%.

The frequency distribution of this scale approximated a normal distribution (i.e., it conformed to a theoretic bell-shaped curve) as reflected in Figure 26.

Figure 26. – Frequency distribution of the Teachers' Influence on Students scale



The descriptive statistics for the Teachers' Influence on Students scale are Minimum = 7; Median = 12; Maximum = 15; Mean = 11.59; Standard Deviation = 1.813. These statistics indicate that tendencies of the majority of the respondents' perceptions about teachers' influence on students were near to the centre of the frequency distribution, i.e., close to average. Like any interaction there are certain aspects that have more of an influence and pull than others, it is no surprise that a lot of these questions have ended like this.

## 6.8 RESPONDENTS' BELIEFS ABOUT THEIR FUTURE

The responses to questions concerning the respondents' beliefs about their future are presented in Table 16.

Table 16. – Respondents' beliefs about their futures

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Q14. What do you want to do after receiving your degree? <sup>a</sup>	Build a career	73	82.02%
	Further studies	11	12.36%
	Start a family	10	11.24%
Q25. Would you like to travel to a foreign country?	Yes	81	91.01%
	No	5	5.62%
	No reply	3	3.37%
Q21. Will you stay your village after your studies?	Unsure	43	48.31%
	No	14	15.73%
	Yes	9	10.11%
	No reply	23	25.84%
Q20. How can you use your education in your home/village <sup>a</sup>	Help family	41	46.07%
	Work	40	44.94%
	No use	7	7.87%
	No reply	1	1.12%
Q22. When you have children do you want them to go to University?	Yes	79	88.76%
	No	5	5.62%
	No reply	5	5.62%
Q23. If you have a daughter, do you want her to go to University	Yes	84	94.38%
	No reply	3	3.37%
	No	2	2.25%
Q24. If you have a daughter, do you want her to <sup>a</sup>	Study and work	82	92.13%
	Get married	11	12.36%
	Stay home	0	0.00%

Note: Respondents could choose more than one category; therefore, the percentages do not add up to 100%

The overwhelming response to the question; what do you want to do after receiving your degree (n = 73, 82.02%) was to build a career. Here we can see the positive attitude towards work and a career, as the majority of students are keen to enter the workforce even if they do not fully understand the implication of work. A female teacher explains this in more detail through her own observation as such:

*“A lot of them are not studying because they want to work. A certain level of education is required because a man wants to marry a woman who is educated. And a lot of them during this will become mothers. They should get some education to be a good mother. And then, you know, it is also write a passage whatever you do in your time, right and now the expectations are going higher and higher that they should be doing something; they have to find something to do and it is not entirely unproductive; I think eventually you will get good news to have some college training or a kind of this staff even if there is no employment. And I think it is a very different mentality from the west way when you go to college to graduate and get a job. Here is not the same thing. It’s a package... they go to college because that’s what they do. You know at a certain age you should keep going and have achievements... etc.” (Personal interview, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2012).*

Whilst relatively few students (n = 10, 11.24%) wanted to start a family even though marriage is still very high on the students’ list of priority, its importance has decreased due to the university opening, as explained by Participant 7:

*“Marriage is the first option, and this is true. Before university, when girls finish high school, they have no choice but getting*



*married. You see, if a girl is 27 and not got married; it is an odd thing. But now after the university, most of the girls did not get married before 23, or 24. You may probably heard that some girls get married at the age of 13, now all of this is gone because the part of education has become in the Saudi mind. When the university was opened, huge doors has opened for Saudis I mean in Hail. So, I would say like 6 years ago.” (Personal interview, 22nd February 2013).*

Participant 10 stating further supports the importance of marriage in this society: “I think it is important to have a family. In one day there will be no work. If you have kids and family they will stay for the rest of her life.” (Personal interview, 18th April 2013).

Nearly all participants (n = 81, 91.01%) would like to travel to a foreign country and as stated by participant 5:

*“I don’t have a preference, it doesn’t matter, and the experience itself is good. Actually, I think that every country and culture will have something to give to me.” (Personal interview, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2013).*

This shows the participant is open to new things and likes to have a high tolerance of the unfamiliar. Whether the experience that is taken away by the participant is positive or negative is another matter. The alternative option from travelling around the world would be to move to another city or village.

When asked if participants would stay in their local village after their studies the most frequent answer was that the participants were unsure, 48.31% and 25.84% giving no response. This implies a high level of uncertainty. This is due to their marriage possibilities as these students at this stage are unaware of the location of their husband to be and as mentioned previously the male family members are the decision makers.

Currently these students themselves do not plan their futures and are not even thinking about these types of topics. They may say: “I would like to study in Riyadh” but when asked if she will do it she will reply: “No”. Again the reason mentioned is that unless there are relatives living in that city and are willing to accommodate her, then the father will make arrangements to transfer from Hail university to the next educational institution.

If for example they do not leave their village, will they have any use for their degree? When asked how participants can use their education in their home/village the majority answered, that they could help their family (n = 41, 46.07%) or work (n = 40, 44.94%).

Even though nearly half of the participants were not sure about their future living arrangements, nearly half answered that the knowledge they will acquire can be utilized inside the family unit or even the other members inside their village community; as explained by participant 2:

*“If I am educated, this will be reflected on the way I raise up my children. I will encourage them to study hard and get higher education and good qualifications. In my village, I can prepare activities and training sessions for the people in my village and teach them the important things I studied. I may encourage their daughters to study and get certificates. I can teach them the values of knowledge and importance of education for girls”.*  
*(Personal interview, 22nd November 2012).*

Helping the family members and members of the local community can be considered as preparing the next generation and assisting the elderly. When talking about the new generation the vast majority of respondents (n = 79, 88.76%) want their children to go to University regardless of their gender.

Building upon the last statement nearly all (n = 84, 94.38%) replied ‘Yes’ when asked; if you have a daughter, would you want her to go to university? A

similar proportion (n = 82, 92.13%) also replied "Yes" to the question relating to their children's/ daughters' future, regarding the desire to see their daughters enter the work force. This high percentage indicates the rising awareness of current students towards education, and how it will also affect their offspring and future generations. During an interview participant 2 has explained the need for education by saying:

*"Life is changed. Nowadays, girls' education becomes very important. People respect educated girls. They believe in the importance of university education for girls, which will be good for rising up their children and teaching them well. Plus, educated girls can get a job easily so they can help with their families' expenses; even illiterate parents encourage their daughters to go to the university." (Personal interview, 22nd November 2012).*

Further clarification to the same question was provided by participant 10 as she said:

*"...education is important because if you don't know anything, no one will take care of you or ask about you. So, I think it is important." (Personal interview, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2013).*

Also an interesting point of view was presented by a female teacher regarding girls' education in the Kingdom. Her observation focused on the much broader picture as she stated:

*"Educating girls in Saudi Arabia in Islamic context in general have been encouraged since the time of the Prophet. And it's one of the scholars of Islam, the early scholars was the wife of the prophet, because a lot of what we are learning about Islam is about the life of the prophet and how he behave. He is an*

*example of the embodiment of all the teachers. He is the one who lived them all out to give people realize of that example.*

*Anyway, over time this has never gone away, but yes in history some of this got lost. They were never capable; they were just not educated. They always had to learn the basics of their religion... how to read and write... to learn how to read Qura'an and how to memorize it, this kind of stuff never really went away. Education as a package for the sake of employment, for the sake of their skills contributes in a way besides being mothers. And this is really something from outside. How it happens that women in the west are working and men went to war.*

*Somebody has to come to work, make the money, make the cars, make whatever; they don't need it here; they don't need to work, they still have an economy, they still have increasing their living without women to work. It is something again it is very important. These ideas are brought in from outside. Now they want to be educated but I don't think that they realize, they don't have that concept in their mind what kind of education do they want; they don't realize that it will be different... it's again not expected in this society." (Personal interview, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2012).*

## 6.9 WHAT ARE THE THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS?

The hypotheses that may be generated from the findings of this study, and subsequently tested by further research, are that (a) Saudi women appear to be showing signs of wanting to break away from their traditional role in Saudi culture; (b) Saudi women appear to want financial independence, education, jobs, and careers just like women in Western societies; and (c) the exposure of Saudi women to a Western educational system at Hail University may be beneficial, because it appears to promote positive attitudes towards foreigners, travel, and the use of the English language; (d) Saudi women appear to want their daughters to study and work rather than stay at home and take care of a family; (e) most Saudi women are not independent, but need to be supported by male members of their families, implying that the breaking away of women from their traditional role in Saudi culture is not an easy journey.

When each individual hypothesis was broken down and examined in more detail, this is what was found.

A) Saudi women appear to be showing signs of wanting to break away from their traditional role in Saudi culture;

In the researcher's last year in Hail there were subtle changes to be seen in the students' behaviour, attitudes and appearance. Behaviour has dramatically changed as they were remonstrating against university authorities. For example when the university stipulated that they have to continue attending classes after completing their exams, they united and did not attend. When students were threatened with failure they ignored the empty threat. As they started to rebel against the system, they also started to change their appearance.

A small minority, who were closely monitored by the university, created their own individual style by having short hair, which is totally out of character and

tradition. Other students kept their traditional style of long hair but again a small number dyed it, usually blond.

The less able students had great difficulty studying in English. The university system allowed the students to repeat semesters several times. This system was demoralizing for the students as they consistently failed, and those who passed first time had no recognition or sense of value. As in most schools there are always a few that do not care about education or looking and planning for the future.

Some students genuinely tried to pass their exam, and tried to study and prepare but sadly were academically incapable of doing so. Some students, both those who tried and those who did not, reacted with anger, taking their frustrations out on their teachers by shouting disrespectfully in Arabic. These cases were then sent to the student affairs department for investigation.

The student affairs office was mocked by the students, as there were no consequences for their disrespect. There were incidents where students were told by teachers to settle and conform, students would just reply saying that they did not want to be there and that they were being forced by their parents. This attitude problem existed not only in the English department, but also in the Arabic speaking courses, for example engineering or computer studies.

The lack of respect for teachers was an attempt to voice their frustrations, that they are being forced to attend university by their parents. There is a range of systems and solutions adopted by other countries to give students more freedom to study what they enjoy and would like to pursue. Some of the options are as follows:

Students are evaluated at the end of high school and career advice given based on their final academic achievements. For example in Australia students who complete year 12 all sit a standardised test (QCS or HSC), the results are paired with their school grades and they are ranked from 1 – 25.

Universities offer various courses and each course has a different minimum score based on the intensity and academic knowledge required.

A simpler option that is popular in Europe is where students need to complete an entrance exam to be accepted. If they do not score well enough they are refused and as a result they try different courses and universities. They should also offer more service-related training and career paths for example: florist, beautician or hairstylist etc.

Saudi teachers were as shocked by the students' attitude as were the foreign teachers, their behaviour and attitudes often contradicting and not helping their individual hopes and dreams. The more fortunate and affluent students are able to travel abroad which offers them a glimpse of another world, opening their eyes to other aspects of life such as fashion, driving, independence and freedom.

These students openly chatted about their hopes and dreams of independence and wealth in creating their own businesses. In fact two students started a small business in graphic designs on T-shirts, so creating their own distinctive style. In reality these students were rare; the overwhelming majority had a very lazy attitude. Their answer always being the same "but teacher we have oil".

Maybe this change of attitude, behaviour and appearance shows that they are indeed developing independence, which could be the result of watching Western television and having more and more exposure to Western media and interaction with Western foreign teachers. All Western and developed countries have had similar phases; the hippy movement, disco, the punk era and rebellion, the list goes on. So is this just a passing phase as Saudi women try to find themselves and establish their roles in society?

- B) Saudi women appear to want financial independence, education, jobs, and careers just like women in Western societies.

Hail university and its Western education system is the only opportunity for women in this vast region to leave their homes. Teachers that taught evening classes, in a private English schools, spoke of students frustrations in having to stay at home for two or three years waiting for their marriage to be arranged.

The students felt that their only way to get out of the house was to enrol in an evening English class, as the parents believe that the more educated their daughter is, the greater the marriage prospects; they agreed. These young women completed their degrees two or three years earlier without any prospect of work only the long-awaited marriage ceremony. In quite a number of cases the parents did not appear to be searching for a husband at all.

As mentioned, several have dreams and desires. While they may not be ready for financial independence they would like to have more of an impact and influence in society, and the ability to socialise. By having a job or attending university they are able to socialise in what is generally a difficult and closed environment.

There are some who would love to have a positive impact and help others and become doctors, nurses and business owners. These are often the more academically gifted girls, who are being held back by society. Though they still feel some sense of fulfilment via their education this is not enough. Will they need to settle or in their future will they receive a job offer?

- C) The exposure of Saudi women to a Western educational system at Hail University may be beneficial, because it appears to promote positive attitudes towards foreigners, travel, and the use of the English language;



The Western educational system can be viewed as beneficial because of the opportunity to mix with Western teachers' attitudes. It has taught some of the women some simple lessons about manners, respect, responsibility and adulthood. These students had to follow Western standards such as:

Clean classrooms, meaning no litter; leaving it clean the way they found it. Teachers were shocked by the laziness of their students as they hardly ever used the rubbish bins. All the food scraps and packaging were left spread across the desks and floor. Another irritation for teachers was to witness the waste of food. Whole plates of food were left untouched for the cleaners to remove.

Teachers had a constant daily battle to stop students removing chairs from their classrooms. The lack of respect for others and property saw chairs left in halls after the students would take them and form circles to share food, coffee and gossip with their friends.

As in many Western schools, students are expected to bring their own materials, notes, pens etc. Here however, it was a constant struggle as students would be attending classes and exams with little or no equipment such as pencils, books or dictionaries, and permitted notes.

If you are late for work you are warned. If it happens again you might be docked some pay. If it is a constant issue you can be fired. In Hail students consistently tried to persuade teachers to finish sessions early and to let them leave. But they also expected there to be no punishment or consequences when showing up to class to up to 45 minutes late without a valid excuse.

Homework was another tough issue, in Western cultures you are responsible for your own homework, if you choose not to do it, that is your choice and you need to live with the consequence. In Hail it was, in the majority of cases, simply ignored or copied.

All these standards were totally new concepts because these students were used to the more relaxed study ethics and benchmarks from their Arab teachers. Because of their regular exposure to Western attitudes and also behaviour, students often commented on Western teachers' attitude towards them, which is patience and respect. This furthermore supports the observations of Western positive attitudes. The decision to offer the preparatory courses in English has better prepared and benefited the students, preparing them for the university life. The students then feel more valued, respected and responsible, this then causes them to slightly mature.

Parents have a real fear about the Western influence upon their daughters, rightly so in some instances as witnessed on television and videos. Teachers usually were very respectful of the Dean's dress code & the majority followed it closely. The University was very aware of the effect it would have on parents or brothers if they saw a member of staff uncovered, so all nationalities had to diligently completely cover (abaya, headscarf and niqab (face cover)), especially Indians or teachers from South East Asia. Teachers would be seen when dropped off by bus at the start of the day, outside the University. Nonetheless, parents were thrilled if their daughters returned home talking about their teacher having a fair complexion and blonde hair, also a native speaker from Britain, Ireland, USA, New Zealand, Australia, Canada or South Africa. The other nationalities had to work harder to prove their teaching abilities because their skin colour was not so pleasing.

These parental expectations for their daughters' University education are demanding and in some instances not realistic. The reality is there are not 200 blond, blue-eyed teachers wanting to teach in Hail. Parents also are unaware of the diversity of races now considered native speakers. For example a teacher born in Croatia or Kenya can have Canadian citizenship.

D) Saudi women appear to want their daughters to study and work rather than stay at home and take care of a family.

As explained by a number of students that in some cases the fathers were retiring and relocating to Hail because the land was inexpensive in comparison to Riyadh or Jeddah. Also the University of Hail had a reputation of lower educational standards. Consequently parents encouraged their children to join the University of Hail as it is easier to obtain a degree than in Riyadh or Jeddah.

Often teachers would meet Saudis that had graduated from Hail University. It was usually from the department of medicine. One of the hospital directors in Hail had gained his medical degree from Hail University. He was extremely efficient, an excellent organizer and communicator in English and he had never left Hail for travel or to study. A number of times the researcher came across these Hail achievers, for example; a male pharmacist or a female medical nurse. This shows that the reputation of Hail University was not as low as believed.

As they become more competent and their confidence develops in English grammar and vocabulary progresses, they sometimes like to test their language skills with foreigners. This happens both at the university and around campus or other places in Riyadh, which has a higher number of Westerners. However there are not as many opportunities for Hail girls as the region is only developing slowly.

Because their teachers freely talk about their travels after each vacation or a weekend away from Hail, students are realizing the ease of travel, especially for single foreign women. Some of these young women from more conservative families are aware that for them, travel to a distance land is only a dream achievable through the National Geographic channel.

All of the above are the benefits of Western standards hopefully to be utilized in their personal and professional lives. Even these students talk about wanting more for their children. They do not necessarily want to get rid of the traditional roles, but want options for their children to have more free choice.

- E) Most Saudi women are not independent, but need to be supported by male members of their families, implying that the breaking away of women from their traditional role in Saudi culture is not easy.

Throughout this research the author has tried to share stories, experiences, insight into the domestic life and the daily challenges that these young women go through in what is a distant and unknown culture. It has been repeated several times, these women are the first who have been permitted to study at university and this is just a small piece of the big picture where the women want to have more say and more choice.

## 6.10 CAN THE FINDINGS BE USED TO DEVELOP PLANS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH?

The problem with collecting data using a self-report questionnaire is that it only provides information about part of a social phenomenon, and in so doing, misses many important aspects. Although useful information may be summarized in terms of frequencies (counts and percentages) and statistics (e.g., means and standard deviations) it is much more difficult to analyse the perceptions and experiences of each individual participant.

Quantitative data analysis, based on the assumption that facts and feelings are separate, cannot provide answers to more penetrating and rigorous questions beginning with "why" and "how". The answers to such questions are critical to provide a deeper understanding of a phenomenon and to expand social theory (Yin, 2009). Qualitative research methodologies address the limitations of statistical analysis by interpreting a social situation through exploring the myriads of perceptions, behaviours, and experiences of each unique individual assuming that facts and feelings are not separate.

The advantages of collecting data using focus groups, or face-to-face interviews, over the use of a self-report questionnaire, especially if the topic is complex, are that (a) the response rate to questions is higher; (b) interview questions are open-ended, allowing the respondent to provide detailed answers, rather than be restricted to the closed options in a questionnaire; (c) the researcher can develop a rapport with the participants, assisting responses, clarifying questions, and encouraging much more detailed answers than can be achieved by use of self-report questionnaires (Merriam, 2009) and (d) the researcher can "achieve a better idea of the psychological set from which the person is answering the questions" (Ray, 2006, p.29).

Consequently, qualitative data was also being collected in this study by face-to-face interviewing of a sample of female students at Hail University. The interview responses helped provide more detailed answers to deeper open-ended research questions starting with "Why" and "How" which could not be

so easily addressed by the statistical analysis of quantitative data obtained using the questionnaire.

A thematic content analysis of each of the participants' interview responses will reveal subtleties and nuances that could not be inferred from the statistical analysis of numerical responses to questionnaires (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). A content analysis of the interview transcripts will enable the researcher to extract emergent themes relating to the perceptions, behaviours, and experiences of each individual participant, and should provide much richer information in order to better understand the impact of the Western educational system on female students at Hail University.

Another qualitative method to provide better understanding of a social situation is to perform an ethnographic study. Consequently, in this study, more emphasis needs to be given to observing (a) the pedagogic and effective strategies implemented by the Western teachers; and (b) the responses of the female students, particularly with respect to the development of positive attitudes towards foreigners, travel, and the use of the English language. A detailed factual description or portrayal of the events that take place in class needs to be provided. The events observed by the researcher in class can be classified, coded and interpreted to construct a holistic cultural portrait, implying a pulling together of the observations in all their complexity.

The observation of events observed in a classroom requires a holistic perspective, a thick description, and a non-judgmental orientation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010). A holistic perspective demands that the researcher observes events with reference to the cultural dimensions of all the participants, including herself. A thick description implies detailed content analysis of the field notes written by the researcher at the time of the observations, to ensure that everything observed is accurately portrayed, interpreted and reported. Non-judgmental orientation requires the researcher to be impartial and refrain from using biased or distorted personal value judgments. The credibility of

ethnographic data depends on the researcher's integrity to observe and record events accurately, and so it is essential to be self-critical and implement protocols that avoid bias.

## 6.11 INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

This section will further explore and develop themes and topics discussed in the semi-structured interviews that did not directly relate to responses from the questionnaire. These discussions provided further insight into, and understanding of, more complex issues that affect students in the Hail region. The areas of interest will include marriage, social changes, daily interactions and challenges that they face in their lives.

### 6.11.1 MARRIAGE

While the questionnaire covered such topics as the marital age and the role of the husband with regards to education, it has failed to address topics which include polygyny, where a man has more than one wife. Here are a few private stories and personal views that students have shared.

The situations below can be interpreted or understood in Western terms to equate to what happens to young couples who, sometime during their marriage, realize they have nothing in common and they divorce. Participant 5 shares her view in her own words of why Saudi men marry more than one wife:

*“The very less percentage are sick people who are... the second type is those who has gotten married to someone different from him. So, they don’t understand each other. So, the easy option is to divorce. But if he has to divorce her he has to break up his relationship with her family and sometimes she is a relative. Sometimes he has some business, so it is easier to marry again, and sometime for the children’s sake, and even women think it is better for her husband to get married than divorce her. It’s their mind. How they see things”. (Personal interview, 4th January 2013).*



In Western culture people are able to date, screen and search for the right partner. It may not come immediately, however culturally it is accepted and understood that some relationships just do not work. These Saudi men and women are not given the opportunity to socialize and find their compatible partners. Another observation by participant 5 is based on cultural conditioning due to segregation.

*“Some men are getting married very young, just the idea of marriage is enough for him. After several years, he will not pay attention to his wife, if she is not a beautiful woman, then he wants a beautiful one; he was excited to the idea of marriage only, but now he thinks a beautiful woman is better, they don’t want to divorce the first wife because they have children. Maybe they have business with her father, maybe she is his cousin”. (Personal interview, 4th January 2013).*

What is also interesting to note is the husband’s time distribution between his wives. It can depend on the each wife’s location. Sometimes she lives in a different city and in some instances a different country. Wives can have allocated different days per week, different months or even parts of the year. The main point is that the time distribution that the husband spends with his wife is equal with all of them. As further explained by participant 5:

*“They have a system; either he sleeps a day in the first house and the second day in the second house or they have a system. That’s the issue, if you have to have a second wife; you have to give them equal rights”. (Personal interview, 4th January 2013).*

As mentioned by participant 11, her personal story affected the whole family and she is still waiting for closure and final resolution to the current situation:

*“The only man I know in my family who has a second wife is my uncle, my mother’s brother. Although he was married for 17*

*years maybe he needed someone else. I don't know. Maybe his love has gone. Some men have needs, they take it from the second wife, and the first wife gets upset. So she asked all my aunts, her husband's sisters, not to go to the wedding. She told them I am your sister-in-law and you should not go to the wedding. And they did not go because women support women. Although he is their brother, they did not approve. He did not need anything. He had six children from his first wife; so he didn't need more from marrying a second wife. He doesn't have an excuse. All her sisters were against him... He married the second wife, and after one year he fought with her. But, he said I have my needs, I need a second wife, and this is my choice. Now, his wife gets back to him but at first she was so angry. He bought her a house in Egypt and now she does not attend our family meetings. My family can't accept her because my uncle married her with no excuse... now he got two girls". (Personal interview, 18th April 2013).*

When students are asked about their view of being wife number 1, 2, 3 or 4 it is quite illuminating to hear their replies and perspectives on this. The researcher while speaking to students heard such comments as:

*"I will never be number two wife". And remarks such as: "I won't mind to be wife number two because I will have more time to focus on my career without being expected to care for my husband 24/7. If a woman can make her own decision as to be number one, two or more it can be quite good arrangement for the woman and her family".*

There were also some students who said: *"I would be quite happy to be wife number 3 as I would be financially looked after but not solely responsible for keeping my husband happy or having to look permanently glamorous".*

The idea of looking glamorous or beautiful for their husbands is much more complicated for Saudi women. It is not only clothes, hair and makeup but also skin colour which can influence how a woman is perceived and treated. Go to any supermarket or pharmacy anywhere in the country and you will see shelves full of whitening creams, potions and lotions for women promising the fairest of skin. White colour represents a status of beauty as indicated in this article by Nawar Fakhry Ezzi for the Arab News:

*“A wonderful high-school teacher told us once that every girl is beautiful no matter how she looks. On the other hand, an important beauty sign in Saudi Arabia is to have fair skin even though most Saudis have olive skin tone. Of course, there are also Saudis who come from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. Thus, one can see how it is very difficult for girls to feel good about the way they look when others do not necessarily always see their beauty unless they are white”. (17<sup>th</sup> May 2012).*

Unfortunately the lengths these women go to achieve these sometimes unrealistic goals is mind-boggling. As presented in Blue Abay by Laylah:

*“...this reminds me of a tragic story of one young bride to be. A teenage Saudi girl was engaged and in preparations for her wedding, had obtained one of these whitening products available on the black market. A while after she had started using it she got an eye and skin infection. The infection did not improve with oral antibiotics and she was taken into the hospital for treatment.*

*After a while the infection was so bad it has reached her eyes and they had to remove her eyeballs. They could not control the infection. She lost both her eyes. She was in the hospital for weeks but doctors were not able to cure her. Finally the infection*

*spread into her bloodstream and days after she passed away.”*  
(16<sup>th</sup> February 2012)

All that we have discussed so far is still dependent on the acceptance and desires of each individual woman, whether single, married or in a polygamous relationship, to conform to the cultural values and expectations of her family.

All these women have to endure in the name of beauty and love and in the end how many are able to have a short glimpse of their husbands-to-be? In the case of participant 6 she was the lucky. When asked if she had met her husband prior to their marriage the participant replied:

*“Yes. He is my cousin. I was comfortable. But, in Saudi Arabia, you don’t have the option. But you can marry one who you think is good. Very few have the chance to meet the husband before marriage”. (Personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013).*

However not all of these young ladies are so fortunate. In one of these interviews one of the last questions to participant 6 was: What is your dream? What would you like to achieve in life? What’s your plan? The participant’s reply was short and sweet: *“Get married”*.

#### 6.11.2 SOCIAL CHANGE

This section will look at how this young Saudi generation is witnessing changes in the social environment, and how they will react and cope with the shift. It will touch on changes in government policy, cultural shifts and other changes affecting these women.

As of late the number of articles and discussions about women driving are on the increase and even the teachers cannot escape this topic as explained by one:

*“When issues like driving a car comes up, there seems to be conflict. Some clearly would like to drive cars, but others think that it is good that they are not allowed to drive cars. It’s good and it’s normal.”*

Some students have admitted to driving and the reason behind is explained by participant 6 as such:

*“To help myself. It’s not my choice to have a driver, besides it is not so respected thing to have a driver in the popularity here. Not all families can have drivers. In my mind it doesn’t make sense, but it is what it is.” (Personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013).*

In response to her statement she was asked if it is easier to call a driver, she replied; *“No. You live here. Tell me. Is it easy? I don’t think so”*.

Driving is just one of many topics that relate to women in society. As in Western society body image plays a big role in these young women’s lives. During an interview an opportunity arose to gain further insight in relation to family ties, food and exercise while talking about the importance of looking after elderly parents. Participant 7 agreed and followed by sharing her personal experience:

*“Myself, I always lucky to have many sisters, I never worried about my father and a mother. I think they will be safe; they will take care of them. So, living near parents is important, not necessarily in the same house.*

*In the 1989, my father was a young man, he went to a clothes shop, so I asked him what is the size that women wear? He said 28. In America’s clothing standard it is considered like size 6 or 8. What happened is that when Saudi Arabia got opened and the big cities grown, they did not have to walk in the streets,*

*they used cars much. I was with my family having a healthy way of exercising and walking; eating healthy. But in the past three years, more gyms have been opened and women wanting to exercise more and more. Actually, when I was first came to my gym, there was three women there.” (Personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013).*

The researcher asked how long ago that was and she replied: *“Six months ago. Now, the gym is full and women are more and more exercising.”*

The participant explained why these changes took place. What is bringing these women to the gym? She said that in the last 5 years they watched American TV sitcoms and they saw all these beautiful slim women and wanted to look like them. The participant also mentioned that 2 of her married friends complained to her that the husbands do not want them anymore because they are fat.

On the other hand as stated by Arab News (13 December 2012): Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries have the highest number of diabetic cases in the world.

*“The number of diabetic patients in the Kingdom is estimated to be 30 percent of the population and is found mainly among Saudis above the age 30,” said Dr. Najj Al-Johani, a member of the board of directors of the Saudi Diabetes Society in Riyadh. He said obesity is one of the reasons behind the growing number of diabetics in the Kingdom. “About 35 percent of elderly citizens and 30 percent of children are obese”.*

Regarding medical and health issues in Hail the students seem to have some interesting ideas concerning their wellbeing. As many of these girls battle with weight problems one would assume that they would be open to any solutions that could deal with this, such as sensible eating and physical exercise.

Unfortunately this is not the case. At one stage the researcher offered both yoga and aerobic classes before the academic day started. At first this was met with great enthusiasm but this “joy” did not last long. Once the arrangement was made the excuses began to come in thick and fast. Which ranged from: no driver, need sleep, it is not healthy, and it causes problems with childbirth. Therefore the classes shrunk from an enthusiastic thirty to a committed three. However when the proposal was presented to the relevant authority, it was rejected on the grounds of there being no showers, no changing rooms and the parents would be unhappy about the girls being involved in any physical activity.

They were limited to going up and down the stairs, getting up and down off the chair and walking from the school 30 meters to the bus. However, just recently the opportunity has come about through a change in the law, which allows women to ride a bicycle in public parks as long as a male chaperon accompanies her. Maybe in other regions of Saudi Arabia this would be seen as a step closer to getting behind the wheel.

But this is Hail and this new law has surprised many. The researcher was told by a male colleague that many of his students are voicing their concerns about how riding a bicycle could damage the much valued status of their future bride’s virginity.

So with the lack of enthusiasm for exercise among local women the other major issue of health and wellbeing is the addiction to anything sweet, including cakes, biscuits, lollypops, candies, chocolates and pure sugar itself. Arabic tea is very tasty, however it is also extremely sweet. This sugar addiction starts at a very early age. So it is not surprising that diabetes is claiming victims as young as 10 years old.

It is uncommon to find a family that has not been affected with this condition. And so far this dietary trend looks as if it is set to continue for some time to come judging by the supplies available in the university canteens.

Regarding the students' outlook and optimism the young women continue to have mixed emotions about what the future may hold for them. When participant 6 was asked if her life has changed from her mother's life she replied: "Yes". Afterwards she explained the differences:

*"When my mother was in my age, she was married and had three children. She was living with a big in-law family. She cares only about her kids. She was helping her in-law family with the housework. She was just raising up children. She was not interested in studying. Sometimes, she was reading some books. She was having a lot of responsibilities with her family, that's why she didn't finish her studies. Her priority was her kids and family". (Personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013).*

These social changes will continue for this generation and future generations can expect a lot of change. For now they must face the daily struggles of student life.

### 6.11.3 STUDENT LIFE

This section will look at the internal aspects of education and students' lives. It will further explore issues that revolve around peer groups and typical adolescent school behaviour.

When the university opened for the first two years the girls were dressing up ready for a ball. Heavy make-up, hairstyles that would take hours to prepare and dressed to 'kill', would be a reasonable description of the first university generation in this area. The students spent a lot of time on their overall appearance, not forgetting the high heeled shoes. Some of these young ladies were hoping that their beauty would be mentioned over their friends' family dinner in the presence of their brothers; this could then lead to a potential marriage proposal. However over the years, especially the last 3 years, their visual appearance has been toned down. This is not only the



researcher's personal observation but one of the teachers commented herself that:

*"I remember when I first started here three years ago, yes, the makeup was... errrr, I used to keep laughing; looking at them; they are so funny. You wondered how you could stand in front of the mirror and you think that you look better than you did with no make up with yellow and purple eye shadow and bleached eyebrows in the shape of a triangle. And now, I don't see so much of that; they still over do the makeup on a whole, but at least they seem to know what they are doing. So, yeh, yeh, I can see the change."*

As in every society there are some women who tend to use excessive makeup; Saudi Arabia is no different.

It was noticeable that some students wanted to be more independent and wanted to develop their own style. To the Western teacher it was noticeable that gradually shorter hairstyles were appearing. Some of them also dyed their hair, one student was continually harassed by the fashion police because her hair was short and blue. (The fashion police monitored the students' length of skirt and those not following the University of Hail dress code. This code was a blouse in navy blue, black, brown or grey. The skirt had to be black, a certain length and not too tight). When questioned the student with the blue, short hair said her family was not bothered by her hair and allowed her to behave and dress as she wished.

Even with all the makeup and glamour, unlike Western society this will not land them a job opportunity.

The employment opportunities in Hail for women were mentioned and explained previously. However this is another teacher's observation after asking students about their future plans:

*“I think that to an extent they talked to me, trying to impress me; one wants to be an engineer and one wants to be a doctor; but they agree that they are just dreaming.”*

This is the harsh reality, students know their limited employment opportunities but they still like to dream. The same can be applied to their view on travelling, which has already been examined. Here is one teacher’s feedback when she asked her students if they wanted to visit other countries. As explained to me by the teacher, students actually were interested to know which countries she visited and this is what they expressed to their teacher:

*“Some of my classes have said oh we would love to go to Africa, and you can drive us around and we will see the animals together, but again they are dreaming; they are just dreaming. I think they would like to but they have no idea how to get such a thing together and they will be never allowed do it anyway.”*

However when it comes to a question regarding Western culture, the teacher’s response was really not surprising as this is something the researcher also noticed and observed such as:

*“No. They only want to know whether I am married or whether I have children or whether this is my natural hair colour”.*

On the other hand teachers often talk about their students, their problems and their absences. This comment was shared during a teachers’ meeting while discussing the personal circumstances of one of the married students, comparing this case with a case from the previous year:

*“I had a very, very charming girl married, 18 years old, three babies, lovely, lovely girl but no time to study. She really desperately wanted to do this and she couldn’t because of her*

*traditional role; if anyone from her husband's family came to visit, she was asked to be there and be the hostess and if she had a test the next day, the quiz was be so bad; and she used to tell me I didn't study because I didn't have time; my husband's brother came over, you know, but very, charming girl. A belly dancer. She loved dancing. She danced in the class; often drummed on the desk; if anywhere else she could be a movie star".*

#### 6.11.4 EDUCATION

This section will explore the responses given by participants relating to the development and changes in the educational system. It will also address the female students' point of view regarding the impact of this opportunity to gain a higher level of education.

When looking to understand the level of education before the University of Hail was opened, participants were asked about the educational system. Participant 7 stated:

*"Education was small, some women go to schools; the people were closed minded. But after Hail University, people started to have more faith in education and they knew that they couldn't leave women as their housewives without education". (Personal interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013).*

## 6.12 TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE

There were a number of teachers who were also interviewed, were commented on and provided their personal insight. This leads me to the story of an American teacher.

She met her first husband in the U.S. during her studies, and later followed him to Oman (as he was an Omani national) where they married and had 4 children. Although she lived surrounded by luxury, she was never allowed basics necessities, such as air conditioners during scorching summers or heaters during cold winters as he was worried about the bill. Her husband was extremely controlling and fiercely protective of his money, even down to the provision of food for her and her children. After 10 years of living like this with no support, and being treated as a servant by her mother-in-law, she made the difficult decision and left her husband, but, as local customs dictate this also meant leaving her children behind to be brought up by his next wife.

Wishing to stay close to the children, she did not return to America but accepted a job in Saudi Arabia, in the hope she would be able to visit them at some point. This however was not to be, her ex husband was not so easily forgiving and it took her another 3 years before she was reunited with her oldest son for the first time. It was heart breaking to see her so upset after her son returned to Oman.

Unfortunately in the meantime, she threw herself into the same situation again. This time she married a Kuwaiti man that lived for many years in Saudi Arabia and produced another 3 children. He was a Mutawa (a member of the religious police) and she was hoping that this "righteous, holy man" would treat her with respect. However, history repeated itself with just small differences... he never introduced her to his family and only 1 sister and 1 brother knew of her existence.

A few times he took his two children to visit his parents and always claimed that they were his friend's. After his third child was born he married for the

second time and this time a Qatari woman that was “picked and approved” by his parents. But because she was in her early 40ties and had some health issues she was not able to produce a child so the husband asked this woman to give his second wife one of her children which of course she refused to do.

During this union this teacher was always working (even a few days after a birth she was teaching from her home). Her husband on the other hand was mostly unemployed and because he would not allow her to have her own bank account was spending most of her money on himself or on his second wife who was very demanding.

On a number of occasions money was given to her so she was able to buy basic necessities such as food, pay the rent and on one occasion enable her to give birth safely in a clinic. This was because her husband used her saved money to take his second wife for a holiday to Dubai.

These two wives never met but she would sometimes receive threatening emails from an unknown sender, whom she suspected was from the second wife.

The sad end to this story is that her husband did not renew her visa, and she was deported from Saudi Arabia, although this time she was allowed to leave with her youngest child, it did not lessen the heartbreak of once again having to leave her children behind.

They had to be left with her husband and his Qatari wife. She is still in the Middle East and still hopes to be one day reunited with all her children.

## 6.13 OBSERVATIONS

This sub section will provide insight into some of the weird and insightful experiences and occurrences that the researcher was subject to. They are not only observations but interactions with what is generally an unknown culture.

During the first year's stay the researcher's working area was in an office with about 6 additional teachers. It was an interesting mix of different nationalities and different work ethics. During my stay, there was not a day where something unusual did not happen.

### 6.13.1 THE ABAYA

One day a new teacher arrived appropriately dressed in her abaya. This black garment can be described to the Westerners as a coat that is taken off if desired but only in a presence of women, never in front of men, unless they are relatives. This particular teacher kept her abaya on and quietly disappeared to her class to present her lesson. About half way through her class a number of worried looking students came to the teachers' office trying to explain that there was something wrong with the teacher's dress.

The teacher was sent to the compound to get appropriately dressed. Upon her return she was still confused as what she did wrong. So it was explained that abays could be transparent.

As mentioned previously during the researcher's administrative position she had to deal with many different issues related to teachers, students and additional administrative staff. However the majority of the researcher's office time was spent resolving complaints presented by students, teachers or higher authorities.

### 6.13.2 STUDENTS' COMPLAINTS

Sometimes the researcher would have a large number (over twenty) of students coming to complain about their grades saying that; it is not fair that they had received such low grades. They were trying to blame the teacher and whoever wrote the exam or quiz papers as being too difficult. The researcher had to explain to the students that it is not the teachers' fault or responsibility that they failed. The researcher was trying to convince them that they needed to study more in order to be able to pass. Of course this was not easily accepted and then they tried to convince the researcher that the material they were tested on was not taught by the teacher and that they should receive extra marks. The researcher promised these students that she will investigate their claim and will consult with their teacher.

Shortly after the students' departure the researcher checked the teacher's availability and called her into her office to clarify the students' claim. Usually it was the students' lack of preparation that made them fail. However there were cases where the teacher did not cover the designated material due to a number of reasons such as; a new teacher joined the department and was not catching up fast enough, the teacher was missing information due to an Internet malfunction and was not able to catch up with an updated pacing schedule, or simple incompetence of the teacher, or to many changes which were happening too fast and teacher was confused.

It was not an unusual occurrence for the pacing schedule to be changed a number of times during a week especially since a new academic system was put in place. In cases such as these the researcher had to consult with the male side of the department and ask how to deal with each individual case.

The next day the students would visit the researcher's office to clarify their claim. Usually the answer was that the material was covered and that they did not prepare well enough.

Another major issue for students is attendance, which was explained previously. However it is interesting to note that students on a daily basis would come to the researcher's office and complain about some teacher's inability to record attendances correctly. This is about 50% valid; indeed there are teachers who have a difficulty in correctly keeping and entering attendance into their computer spread sheets.

These mistakes can cost students marks as they need to pass a semester course. This is a very delicate topic and brings about emotions and anger from both sides. Usually it gets solved: if it is the student's mistake then the student has to produce a copy of her medical excuse; if it is the teacher's mistake she has to deal with the students' affair ladies and fix the problem.

Another student issue was students' study books in the case of a student who has failed a semester. These students would be coming to the researcher's office asking for new books as their old books were already filled, scribbled on or simply lost. However the policy was not to hand out new books to the repeating students.

To explain this to them was a daily challenge as they were not able to ask for what they wanted in English, but they also did not know their teacher's name, their section number, and in many instances they also did not know their ID number or to which college they belonged.

### 6.13.3 TEACHERS' COMPLAINTS

Now we will examine teacher's complaints which were usually related to the students' unruly behaviour in overcrowded classrooms with up to 50 students. Again the same problem: no books for the students, no board markers or any other office supplies, which forced the teachers to buy their own supplies. The last issue teachers had were interactions with their colleagues.

There were times when it was not easy for teachers to relate to each other or to keep their cool. Especially during the last half of the second semester,



before the end of the academic year, when everyone was getting tired, more stressed and the temperature was getting near or over +40 degree Celsius.

Normally small incidents would escalate into personal confrontations that would have to be dealt with in the researcher's office. Teachers were under a lot of pressure due to constant academic changes or due to a lack of teaching staff where a large number of teachers taught 6 hours straight. Some volunteered because of their need for the extra income and some had no option.

With such large classes and many challenges it was not surprising that these incidents happened. Also many single female teachers were missing their families, their home environment and their more open culture. The lower the stress threshold, the less life/teaching experience the individual teacher had, the more likely she felt despair. At the end this manifested itself by the teacher's permanent departure from the university or, due to her unsuitability, aggressive behaviour, argumentativeness and lack of teaching experience, her departure was organized for her.

Situations like this were quite common occurrences in the researcher's daily working routine. The researcher's administrative position had an open door policy: the researcher was simply available at any time during working hours and also during her free time at home as there were always some problems to solve.

#### 6.13.4 WANDERING OUTSIDE

'Climber' was on a mission from God and she was another case that was interesting to observe. She was an excellent teacher, however she was not only an ex-nun but also in the process of becoming a church minister. This place was just not right for her.

Before she landed here, she envisioned herself to be 'the one' to enlighten the local Muslim population and put them on the 'right path' (her path). However

she soon realized that this was not going to happen and would only get her into trouble. To ease her spiritual disappointment she began a friendship with a male Christian teacher that ended with two claims of rape, which she reported to the university's higher authority. The male authorities mocked this. The teacher left, but before she did she received an official request not to venture outside, alone, into the desert.

She responded by explaining that she simply liked walking and collecting rocks. The authorities were very much surprised by her answer. Here ladies do not walk freely through the streets, let alone in a desert. Not only because of its physical nature, but also for safety reasons.

#### 6.13.5 TEACHER SPIRITS

Here is another example of the effects of isolated Saudi life on a single teacher. This teacher had entered the morning university bus and had gently rubbed her hands through every teacher's hair whilst chanting. This bizarre behaviour was a shock to all involved, including the male driver.

This particular teacher was physically strong and her unpredictable behaviour continued. The resident doctor refused to help saying that she was not allowed to venture behind the concrete walls of the institution.

The teacher was removed from the university premises. As she left she started to shout: "save the children, the devil is coming to get them". Once at the compound, the teacher performed a small voodoo dance, as a departing thank you gesture for the driver.

The teacher never returned to the classroom and was incapable of performing her professional duties. It took several months for the authorities to organize her departure from Saudi Arabia.

#### 6.13.6 FATHER'S MARRIAGE

A student told a story about her father's second marriage.

Her father married a close cousin (which is quite common in Saudi Arabia) and had 9 children. His sister then proceeded to marry his wife's brother. One-day the father's sister came crying to their home, and told him that her husband was getting married to wife number two. They were both very upset. The father thought that if he could talk to his wife (his sister's husband), she would be understanding, and would talk to her brother asking him to change his mind regarding this situation.

However, to his surprise she had no objection to her brother's second marriage, and was quite sympathetic to this arrangement. The student's father was very disappointed by his wife's lack of support, and he decided to punish her by also taking a second wife. After the wedding took place the student's life changed dramatically. Her mother became very angry with her father and for about a year the "happy family" life was turned upside down.

Now, 7 years later the second marriage is still childless, and as children play an important part in Saudi family culture, the student's father is hoping that his second wife will divorce him because of this. In the meantime both women have their hopes. One wants to again be the only wife, and the other one wants to be a mother. Who will "win"? The main thing is that the student feels happier as there is now a possibility of an approaching divorce, and once again her family life will return to its original tranquil state.

## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

The body of evidence seems to indicate that even though education for the majority of students is indeed developing, there are many obstacles that need to be addressed if the momentum is to be maintained.

The root of this problem is the Saudi culture itself: a religious theocracy pervades all corners of Saudi society. The Kingdom, as custodian of the two holiest mosques in Islam, is home to the strict Wahabi sect of Sunni Muslims, and one which wants women to stay at home, raise kids and look after the family. However, in the last few years there appears to be a shift, as living is getting more expensive and families welcome any additional income.

The Islamic religious police force is referred to the King and his government as the “Committee of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice.” There were approximately 3,500 police officers, supported by thousands of volunteers.

These men focus on finding unrelated men and women speaking or socialising: The Muttawa (religious police) were often found roaming the shopping Malls checking on modest dress and noise levels. If a female offended then they would be screamed at and verbally abused, this was not only upsetting for the offender but also for the people witnessing these incidents.

It is considered by Saudi men that if a woman is walking with an unrelated man, then she is ‘mazbutah’; this means dating him for sex. As a result a Saudi man might make a gesture to a woman [Saudi or Westerner], for example: pinching her bottom, rubbing themselves against her or groping. Often this is a test to see the reaction. A Western teacher sometimes found she was groped in a supermarket, even though her husband was standing beside her, and was deeply offended by this. This for a Westerner is a difficult situation, if they alert the police then she will be investigated by both police and probably be blamed for violating the law, for facilitating the assault.

The religious police also check the dress code, to ensure that women are modestly covered. Hail female students wear an all-in-one abaya, often Westerners wear a separate scarf, but the Saudi Girls in Hail wear an abaya that covers them from head to toe. Before the abaya is pulled up over their head they would have put on their niqab and a scarf over their eyes so their lashes could not be seen. These abayas covered them completely so their shape was well disguised. This type of abaya seems only to be used in traditional areas, it is a regulation for the university of Aja students. The Mutawa would drive round circling the campus ensuring that there were no ankles or eye lashes on display, if any were found then the girls were screamed at. On one occasion a mature Western teacher was waiting for the bus to take her home when she became overcome with the heat, she pulled off her scarf and niqab, trying to breathe, the Muttawa witnessed this and forced her back inside the building, everyone was too petrified to help the poor woman.

On another occasion a student was picked up and taken away for speaking to an unrelated male Saudi outside the university campus, he was dragged off, it was never known what happened to him.

Not only do the Muttawa monitor fashion but also businesses. They check that all stores are closed at least 5 times a day for prayer time. It was taken extremely seriously by the foreign workers because if they were picked up by the Police then they would be immediately deported.

Also employees would become quite nervous if a woman was alone with them in their shop. The most susceptible workers were the tailors or dressmakers who had a tiny glass door cut into their shop so there was no way the worker could be accused of touching a female client. A Western teacher not understanding this, walked into a shop not realising that she was not allowed in, the tailor was very agitated, trying to explain that a woman was not allowed in his workplace. So if she wanted work done then she had to communicate through a little window.

With strict rules about eating pork, all food was scrupulously checked for any banned substance. Western teachers often found that while trying to track their parcels from abroad, the parcels had been withheld because the customs felt they contained a banned substance. A teacher had ordered biscuits from a well know department store in the UK, she was astonished to find that the Saudis claimed there was pork in the shortbread! So it was forbidden!

Priests could be arrested for saying mass. In 2006 a Roman Catholic priest was arrested in Riyadh and immediately deported. However, the Filipino community are ignored, as they make up such a large part of the workforce. If any religious activity was kept low key and within their compounds, then it was allowed, similarly with alcohol.

The University gave strict guidelines on banning any mention of Western festivals or celebrations, in any context. Teachers had to be very careful not to fall into a trap of becoming too comfortable with their students and openly talking about birthdays or baptism for example.

The Muttawa also feared the introduction of Valentine's Day. As quoted in Arab News February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004 "200 arrested for Celebrating Valentine's Day":

*The Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice has arrested more than 200 Bangladeshi and Burmese workers as they celebrated Valentine's Day in Mina.*

*Al-Madinah Arabic newspaper said yesterday the workers contravened a fatwa issued recently by Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al-Asheikh by drinking and dancing in a tent camp they were charged with cleaning. The grand mufti condemned the partygoers.*

*“What these workers did in a holy place by celebrating and singing and drinking alcohol is a very grave sin,” Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al-Asheikh told the daily. “Committing a sin in a holy place is doubly sinful. Valentine’s is an infidel tradition that has no place in Islam,” he added. (source: <http://www.arabnews.com/node/244447>)*

The Muttawa are taken very seriously, especially over issues like Valentine’s Day. A warning, by them, would be printed in local newspapers stating that if any shop owners violate the laws concerning red flowers, clothes or toys on this day there will be serious consequences. Often around this time there will be a nationwide crackdown on shops selling items connected to this day.

However it seems that the young Saudis do not care about Valentine as explained by two young males from Qasim in the Arab News (14 February 2004) article; People Warned Against Celebrating Valentine’s Day:

*“I know it but I disdain it,” said a 23-year-old Ahmad Al-Mutairy. “The Internet is full of such triviality. Only fools will fall into such traps,” he added.*

*“Our religion is very clear in this matter. We only celebrate two occasions every year at the end of Ramadan and during pilgrimage. Anyone who adopts another culture is very weak and misguided,” said another young man.*

(source: <http://www.arabnews.com/node/244277>)

From birth as females, girls are taught to believe they are luckier than boys because they are divine ‘princesses’. Once they enter marriage, which is often within the family unit, they then become the property of the male spouse.

Saudi culture dictates that these women will never have to rely on their education or employment to establish their lifestyle or support themselves. Unlike young Western women, who as they mature will leave home and



provide for themselves, it is rare indeed for Saudi women to be expected to follow this path, or indeed be permitted to contemplate doing so.

The findings of this study would appear to indicate that Saudis want the world to perceive them as being in the process of change, while at the same time conservative elements in society remain too powerful for any meaningful change to emerge.

For Westerners observing Saudis at work, their apparent ambivalence to the structures of the work ethic can often be interpreted as workshy. Timekeeping and a responsible workplace attitude are not attributes that the Saudis appear to regard with any significance. For instance, it is not uncommon for male students to challenge the native speaker English teacher with the retort: "Teacher, why work when we have oil."

An oil-rich country where a third of its workforce is made up of foreigners has led to a reliance on expats, predominantly of Asian origin, to construct and maintain its entire industrial and service sectors. Despite a recently inaugurated Saudi-ization program, whereby the private sector faces an employment quota system, even educated Saudis question whether it is a policy which has any chance of success.

One thing remains certain; the workplace doesn't have nearly enough jobs for its educated and trained female labour force. Even where there are positions available, these are predominantly administrative posts. Indeed, there appear to be few financial incentives for women in the workplace.

The shopping mall is a relatively recent addition to Saudi culture, and most cities have sprawling suburban retail enclosures featuring all the major international brand names to attract local women. Indeed, consumerism is clearly one area that is changing dramatically, and for reasons that may differ from other cultures. While it is apparent that Saudi women profess to enjoy shopping, there is evidence to suggest that many of those shoppers are

actually using the mall as a convenient meeting place to socialise outside the family unit.

After being submersed in the culture and lifestyle and after several interviews, questionnaires, discussions and personal observation The researcher is able to draw conclusions about the impact that Westerners and the concept of higher education are having on these young Saudi women.

To respond to the aim “To research female students at Hail university in order to better understand the impact and exposure to foreigners and Western educational system on their culture and how this affects their lives”.

The researcher is able to say, after examining the educational system, it is apparent that prior to the University of Hail the educational opportunities were quite limited. The community college was only offering courses that were approved and tolerated by the Saudi system. Now it is quite common for women to attend the local university and the number and variety of offered programs for women in Hail University is increasing.

This is further supported by the slow but steady increase in job opportunities for women. However if the university students have difficulty passing through the university system, the student can transfer and join the community college where all courses are taught in Arabic instead in English. With the support of Sharia law (that is a universal law, which entitles and supports women’s education) the future looks promising.

Since the opening of Hail University the numbers of female students has been annually increasing. As explained previously, there are several reasons why women attend this institution, starting with government money subsidies, using the university as a social club or being genuinely interested in education and career opportunities. If students complete their degrees it is likely they will get married and start a family, some females will stay at home and help their families and only a small percentage will be genuinely

searching for employment and of them an even smaller percentage will succeed.

One needs to keep in mind that the University of Hail is a very young institution and this is the first generation of females to have been granted this educational opportunity in the region. As with every new establishment there are issues that have to be addressed and the culture has to accept, grow and adapt to a new level of a fast developing society and this takes time. These first university graduates are in a process to learn how to study in a new and educationally different learning system.

However these students soon or later will be mothers. Through their acquired university knowledge these current students will be able to better prepare their own children to be the next generation of students. This way the standard of education will increase and with it the professionalism of future generations. The young generation of women who miss out on this first time opportunity will most likely marry and their children will be put in a disadvantaged position.

There is definitely an influence which foreign teachers have on their students, whether positive or negative. The first interactions with Western teachers have a great impact on these young ladies especially as it is often their first encounter with Western culture. The interactions will be the basis for further stereotyping by the Saudi students. Not only the teachers' behaviour, but also what information the teachers' share with their students', both influences and alters in some way these young females' expectations and outlook on life.

Through the researcher's observation the students' daily routine is quite monotonous as there are hardly any afterschool activities. The majority of students after arriving home and finishing their lunch go to sleep. They are sleeping between two to four hours each and every afternoon. After waking up they usually prepare and eat dinner and talk to their family members till late at night and afterwards they sleep again. This is why a large number of students take the university not only as an educational institution but also as a place to

socialize. Once they leave the university premises they are driven by the family drivers or male family members back home to their old sleeping routine; a routine encouraged by the hot Arabian climate.

However it seems that whatever a researcher writes is never final, as the Kingdom is going through constant changes, not only of rules and regulations but also with regard to female employment. As further explained by the Oilwell7 company founder Tariq Alkahily, who created a working “mixing” chart for women divided into four sections and scenarios:

Segregated; semi-segregated, which shows a man and a woman in different boxes denoting separate work quarters; unsegregated conservative, with a man and a woman in the same box but separated by a long distance; and unsegregated relaxed, where men and women toil side by side.

*“If a woman wants to enter the job market, she must be able to go and work with men,” Alkahily, 31, says. “Those who want a female la-la land -- where the customers are female, the suppliers are female, the marketing department is female, and everything is female -- it won’t happen.”*

According to a November survey taken by his company, 46 percent of women seeking jobs are looking for the most relaxed environment. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg, an economist and an assistant secretary-general for negotiations and strategic dialogue at the Gulf Cooperation Council states that:

More women are working than ever before -- a total of 647,000 in 2012, up from 505,000 in 2009, according to the country’s Central Department of Statistics and Information. “The number is minuscule, but it is a significant increase.

As mentioned before, these numbers still show that only 10% of Saudi women are employed. According to the Ministry of Education: Some 59,948 women received postsecondary degrees in 2009 compared with 55,842 men.

There are however continuous and fast changes happening in regard to restructuring workplace areas and allowing women to work in new fields. It will still take time to provide employment for these thousands of young women all over the Kingdom. While in the cities, where the idea of a working woman is more acceptable and more opportunities will arise, the smaller places such as Hail will have to wait longer. They will have to wait not only for the new jobs for women to be created but also for each male family member to be more open to the idea of his daughter leaving the house with the purpose of earning her own money. This extra income is not only a way to self-realization and personal satisfaction but it can also bring a higher living standard for the entire family.

How to close this research paper after months of reading, analysing and comparing? After so many months of observing and interviewing, the researcher would like to depart this project by sharing an email she received just before completing this work, which nicely sums up the last 200 or so pages.

The email below was just received from a past student in which she explains her current situation and is furthermore supporting my findings, which are as previously explained; that even though the women's situation regarding their standing in society, their education and their personal choices are improving, the reality for the majority, as is written to me by my friend, is still gradual:

*Things are getting hard here because it has been over a year and still out of job. I had a great job offer last month in Dammam but my father turned it down and I have been having hard time getting over it because it was like a dream job to me. And now I*

*have come to the fact that I need a distraction that connects me to life like a job even if it was boring.*

*Marriage is on hold for couple of months you know that my father refuses to even consider talking to him before getting a job. But the good thing is that Fahad talked to my mom that he is running a good business and if that is convenient to my father then he will propose in the spring vacation that is couple of months.*

*I know for a fact that if I was engaged then I could be free to have my dream job because Fahad supports me non stop.*

This truly reflects the hardships. This one girl could have had more than she imagined, but local traditions and customs stopped her. While her husband appears to be one of the more open-minded males, it is uncertain if he would fully support her for her own sake.

## CHAPTER 8 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is this final chapter where the researcher will be able to make a range of recommendations based on personal experience, observation and the results from the research. These recommendations will focus mainly on improving the university, the teacher selection process and their morale, and the general living conditions offered to foreigners.

#### RECOMMENDATION FOR THE STUDENTS:

The substantive recommendation is that education for women needs to be initiated at a much earlier age, for both educational and psychological reasons. The female, while belonging to a largely patriarchal society, urgently needs to learn she is capable of being a more valued, and valuable member of the community, and therefore accomplished and equipped to fully contribute to the future development of the Kingdom.

It becomes abundantly apparent to all ESL teachers at the University of Hail that the vast majority of freshmen students arriving to learn English at university level are inadequately equipped to cope with classes featuring mostly native speaker instructors. A 'clearing' exam streams all students into three grade levels. Another clearly discernable feature of the student body is its level of maturity. Whereas most Western freshmen are given guidance preparation for college study, the Saudi high school system provides little or no preparation for that 'next step.' As a consequence, on her first day in class, the teacher can face up to 50 ill-prepared students, most of whom display an average maturity level of 15 years of age.

There is a student orientation program provided by the Saudi management, but limited to a generalised one-off lecture, and lacks any specific guidance or notion of expectations incumbent of the student body. Thereafter, there is no follow-up orientation to monitor if these immature young learners are indeed fulfilling their responsibilities as students of higher education.

The 'streaming' exam faces all students arriving for registration to establish their English language levels. At level three, the most proficient, these



fortunate students will be able to orally form a simple sentence, and perhaps tackle compound sentences in the written form. The least capable, level one will struggle to understand ANY English, and most likely will be able to learn only the basics of the English alphabet. It becomes self evident that these weakest students would benefit most, at least initially, from dual speakers of Arabic and English.

Nevertheless, the Saudi authorities insist at least some of the level one classes are taught by a native speaker, who like a square peg in a round hole find it almost impossible to communicate at all. The learning process inevitably shudders to a halt, much to confusion of the students and the frustration of the teacher.

Many of these level one learners indeed acquire so little of the language that they end up repeating the same course book three more times, before failing again. This blatant failure could be easily remedied by better utilization of the teaching faculty; that is, by placing dual speaking teachers with the weaker students, and native speakers with the more capable learners.

Coming from a notorious 'blame culture', many students lack any evidence of motivation to learn, but are indeed adept at manipulating the system to their own benefit, and will lose no opportunity to attach blame for their lack of any progress on the system; that is, they will blame the teacher. Consequently, even those students who show signs of wanting to learn can be sucked into this maelstrom of non-achievement and even disruption of classes. Consequently, the teacher is at risk of rapidly losing confidence.

There is a notable scarceness of parental involvement in any positive sphere of the learning process, other than the use of Wasta, the Arabic system of influence, to promote their offspring beyond their capabilities. The Saudi authorities, instead of resisting such societal pressures, seem all too ready to please the student body, and therefore accede to all parental requests. As a result, by the second Semester, palpably incapable students are found to

have been promoted to classes beyond their capabilities, and are therefore being set up for inevitable failure.

The overriding recommendation, apart from the lack of early learning preparation, is to correct the absence of any clear direction and setting of goals and targets for these students to attain. It is beyond any incisive and rational observation that the entire faculty can be blamed for the lack of student motivation, while the learners themselves (and their parents), can be absolved of all responsibility for the multiple failures of achievement.

This is the reality of the situation, which until and unless it is recognised by the Saudi authorities, is unlikely to ever be remedied. Do sufficient numbers of Saudi parents truly want their offspring, particularly girls, to be educated? Or are they merely playing the system to supplement the family income via the generosity of the King with his monthly stipend?

For most teachers it is blatantly obvious that far too much power lies in the hands of the student body, and that the authorities are reluctant to reverse this process to adequately allow the teachers to teach, rather than to simply administer and police their young charges. If the faculty were to be given consideration and listened to, then perhaps a learning environment truly worthy of a university could be created.

But this requires an attitudinal shift on the part of Saudi parents and the university authorities to acknowledge their respective shortcomings, and their misplaced loyalty towards their offspring. Above all, the teaching body requires knowing it has the full support of the management, and of the parents.

## RECOMMENDATION FOR THE TEACHERS:

There is ample evidence to vindicate the belief that some significant changes have already been implemented in recent years. However, for this fledgling growth to take hold there is a basic, but urgent, requirement for enthusiastic, committed and fully qualified teaching staff. By having daily exposure to experienced Western teachers it is to be hoped that Saudi women will receive a higher standard of education. This pioneering policy would then enable this first generation of educated Saudi women to share their acquired knowledge and professionalism with future generations, not only as educators, but also as mothers. The continuity of this process can only help to propel women towards a more equal partnership with men.

In order to achieve the goal of teaching excellence, the Saudi authorities must themselves engage in a significant degree of soul-searching. Within the university hierarchy there appears to be limited recognition of precisely how difficult it is for the Western female to adjust to a largely paternalistic society, where they are forced to forsake even the most basic facets of everyday life taken for granted in the free world. For example, taking the car to the local shops, dressing as casually as you want, publicly sharing a coffee with a male colleague.

Significantly, instead of actively welcoming the Western female, and thereby understanding her cultural conflicts, the university, through its inaction, faces the inevitable accusation (again through its male-dominated culture), of treating professional colleagues as second-class citizens. As a consequence of being largely left to fend for themselves, new recruits, particularly the single, young and inexperienced, find their arrival in such a daunting new culture, made even more difficult.

In setting up home in the protected compound, for instance, (a natural instinct of the free-world woman) the new University of Hail recruit is left to share the pitfalls of the university bus (sometimes overcrowded) to gather together her household utensils.

Next day, she will awake to an early Arabic dawn, and unlike a partner or husband, she has NO alternative but to take the university bus to campus, again fully covered in abaya and niqab, (no matter how extreme the heat) in order not to offend local cultural norms.

Once at work, the Western trained teacher arriving for the new September intake can expect to be thrown in at the deep end, facing more than 50 students per class, not instructing an ESL class, but instead teaching a basic English grammar A to Z grammar group. If so fortunate, there may be time for some basic orientation.

The entire welcoming process affords little or no consideration for the Western female arriving and integrating into an entirely alien culture. While accepting the cultural divisions within Saudi society, serious consideration should be given to how to better welcome and integrate new arrivals. Certainly, if the university authorities are serious about recruiting and retaining quality teachers the initiative of a more welcoming process should be a matter of urgent priority for the University of Hail.

Equally important, the retention of quality teachers should be a matter of urgent attention. Currently, even the best teachers feel they are treated with such ambivalence and disrespect by their Saudi managers. This attitude, so unfamiliar and foreign to those professionally trained in the West, will inevitably promote disillusionment and early departure.

Managers, when dealing with teachers unaccustomed to such an alien environment should, instead of being confrontational, be focusing their energies on positive, confidence-building initiatives. By all means have a disciplinary code, but apply it fairly and impartially, and certainly without any religious prejudice.

The evidence is abundant that managers should not exercise a threatening atmosphere, particularly towards a faculty of such diverse international cultures. Alternatively, a more sensitive and certainly more productive approach would be to harness the strengths and qualities of each individual member of the faculty.

International academic research has consistently proven that the spirit of positive encouragement far enhances any negative, threatening managerial atmosphere. Although as yet unfamiliar to many Saudi academics, unless this more constructive and positive attitude can be inculcated into their Arabic educational institutions, then they are less likely to beneficially deal with the societal problems they inevitably face.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMPOUND:

Western standards should be applied in all my suggestions of how to overcome and improve these issues; these are as follows:

- Sporting facilities: renovated and maintained swimming pool facilities, tennis courts, basketball
- Healthy maintained environment such as trees, flowerbeds
- Mini supermarket
- Updated housing facilities
- Restaurant/ Coffee shop
- Socializing with other compounds e.g. sporting competitions, social meet ups.

All organizations prosper and thrive through the continuity and loyalty of its workforce. The University of Hail, however, has consistently suffered from staff dissatisfaction and a lack of retention. Since its inauguration as a university in 2005 it has grown substantially, but has found distinct difficulties in recruiting and retaining key international ESL teachers of good quality.

As it is presently constituted as a university, the Preparatory Year has more than trebled its male and female student registration to over 3,500 each,

bordering on a total of almost 8,000 per year. To limit class sizes to no more than the required 25 students, the Prep Year alone now targets roughly 250 teachers each year.

The university doesn't own its compound outright, but instead leases a former leisure complex on the edge of the city. It is in direct competition to scores of other Saudi and Middle East universities seeking competent and qualified ESL teaching staff from throughout the world. Naturally, those teachers searching the recruitment websites and visiting the recruitment fairs are looking for which universities are offering not only the most lucrative salaries, but also the most attractive accommodation and leisure facilities.

Scouring the relevant recruitment sites it's not difficult to isolate Saudi teaching jobs. Each offers a compound fully equipped with quality housing, together with a communal swimming pool and fully equipped fitness and sporting facilities.

Hail, home of the University of Hail, is located in a provincial setting in the northern desert, and is somewhat hampered in not being able to offer such enticing resources. As a consequence, many teachers on arrival are disappointed with the lack of facilities on offer. Housing on the compound is largely of bungalow construction, with some villas. But mostly it is dated, and the furniture desperately needs replacing.

The compound is ringed by an eight-foot high breeze-block wall topped by razor wire, giving the impression of a prison rather than a welcoming residential compound. The management team, led by Saudis, lack even the most basic of welcoming skills, and the levels of maintenance leave much to be desired.

There is a small community centre where get-togethers are arranged, and the children have a small playground. Only recently, after much lobbying of the current Rector, has a small shop opened, and as of writing a purpose-built

leisure centre, complete with indoor swimming pool and gym has opened after much wrangling between the site owner and university.

When one couples the lack of residential facilities, together with the aforementioned teaching difficulties – even the somewhat confrontational working attitude of the university authorities – it is hardly surprising that many teachers stay for only a limited period, some a matter of weeks, before departing for more comfortable, welcoming surroundings.

A somewhat backward city compared with Riyadh and Jeddah, where most universities are located, Hail now has the arrival of new shopping malls. However, most teachers recognise it as a city where 'saving money' is its most prominent attribute. There are few restaurants, limited shopping, and even more restricted leisure opportunities, particularly for the active and young professional.

If the University of Hail authorities are serious about recruiting and retaining a quality faculty, they need to recognise the failings of not only their welcoming procedures, but also of their housing and leisure facilities. The Rector, in rare meetings with the teaching fraternity, is certainly made aware of the University of Hail's shortcomings, and acknowledges his recognition of their failures. He pledges to rectify those failings over which he has direct control.

Nonetheless, much more needs to be achieved in order to attract, but also retain, those teachers of quality. The Saudi authorities seem oblivious to the fact that these teachers from different countries do have a choice, and only the most welcoming institutions, both at the working and accommodation levels, will attract and preserve a quality faculty.

These recommendations would have an immediate positive effect on the staff. Many of these improvements would also reduce the dissatisfaction and high staff turnover.

## REFERENCES

### Research articles:

- Alamri, M., "Education in Saudi Arabia", (2011). Available at: <http://www.na-businesspress.com/JHETP/AlamriWeb11-4.pdf> (Accessed: 3 October 20113).
- Al shaer A.I., "Education for all programs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.", (2007). Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001554/155498e.pdf> (Accessed: 10 February 2013).
- Al-Hujailan, Maha F., "Saudi Arabia: Saudi man 'wins' 10-yr-old bride; marriage postponed", (2008). Available at: <http://www.wluml.org/node/4745>. (Accessed: 16 August 2012).
- Al-Muala, A., "What is the Sunnah? (part 1of 2): A Revelation like the Quran", The Religion of Islam, (2012). Available at: <http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/653/> (Accessed: 22 September 2012).
- Al-Sadaawi, A. S., "Saudi National Assessment of Education Progress", International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership, 5(11), 1-14, (2010). Available at: <http://journals.sfu.ca/ijepl/index.php/ijepl/article/view/202/100> (Accessed: 5 August 2012).
- Cameron, B.T., "Critical Thought on Critical Thinking in Saudi Arabia", Open Democracy, 21 July (2011). Available at: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/bobby-thomas-cameron/critical-thoughts-on-critical-thinking-in-saudi-arabia> (Accessed: 3 March 2013).
- Babbie, E.R., "Basics of social research", Belmont: Wadsworth, (2009).
- Baker, D., "No man's land: Women-only city planned for Saudi Arabia to allow more and more females to pursue a career", The Daily Mail, 11 August (2012). Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2187072/Saudi-Arabia-Women-city-planned-allow-more-females-pursue-career.html> (Accessed: 16 September 2012).
- Baker, D., "No man's land: Women-only city planned for Saudi Arabia to allow more and more females to pursue a career", Mail Online, 11 August (2012). Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2187072> (Accessed: 17 September 2012).
- Bremmer, I., "A Kingdom Slowly Changes", The New York Times, 16 March (2010). Available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/17/opinion/17iht-edbremmer.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/17/opinion/17iht-edbremmer.html?_r=0) (Accessed: 12 March 2012).
- Cameron, B.T., "Critical thoughts on critical thinking in Saudi Arabia", Open Democracy, 21 July (2011). Available at: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/bobby-thomas-cameron/critical-thoughts-on-critical-thinking-in-saudi-arabia> (Accessed: 1 March 2013).
- Chapin, H., "Saudi Arabia: A country study.", U.S. Library of Congress, (1992). Available at: <http://countrystudies.us/saudi-arabia/31.htm> (Accessed: 10 October 2012).
- El Badawi, S.E.F., "Girls' Education in Saudi Arabia", (1969). Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001592/159235eb.pdf> (Accessed: 29 October 2012).
- Ezzi, N.F., "Hidden messages in beauty standards", Arab News, 18 May (2012). Available at: <http://www.arabnews.com/hidden-messages-beauty-standards> (Accessed: 4 March 2013).
- Gamble, P., "Saudi Arabia's 2012 budget", (2011). Available at: [http://www.bbaep.org/sitecore/wpcontent/uploads/Jadwa/Jadwa\\_2012\\_Budget.pdf](http://www.bbaep.org/sitecore/wpcontent/uploads/Jadwa/Jadwa_2012_Budget.pdf) (Accessed: 10 October 2012).
- Goldman, A., "Social Epistemology", Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, (2006). Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology-social/> (Accessed: 2 December 2012).



Hamdan, A., "Women and education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and achievements.", International Education Journal, issue 6, March (2005). Available at: <http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/education/iej/articles/v6n1/hamdan/paper.pdf>. (Accessed: 5 May 2012).

Hilleary, C., "Voice of America", (2012). Available at: [http://www.voanews.com/content/saudi\\_arabia\\_straddling\\_the\\_line\\_on\\_womens\\_rights/1497387.html](http://www.voanews.com/content/saudi_arabia_straddling_the_line_on_womens_rights/1497387.html) (Accessed: 10 December 2012).

MacColl, M.R. "Grade divide, single-sex classes are back on the agenda", The Courier Mail Qweekend, 26-27 February (2011). <http://www.couriermail.com.au/extras/qweekend/fff/features/pdfs/262.pdf> (Accessed: 15 November 2012).

Michael, M., "Saudi Arabia: Women Sue Male Guardians Who Stop Marriage Women Reclaiming and Redefining Cultures", Women Living Under Muslim Laws, 28 November (2012). Available at: <http://www.wluml.org/node/68192010>. (Accessed: 21 January 2013).

Saudi Arabian Ministry of Higher Education, "Saudi Arabia – Kingdom of Humanity", (2010). Available at: <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/studyinside/aboutKSA/Pages/default.aspx> (Accessed: 6 October 2011).

Mirza, S.K., "Islamic Sharia Law in Brief!", Australian Islamist Monitor, (2011). Available at: [http://islammonitor.org/index.php?id=4050&option=com\\_content](http://islammonitor.org/index.php?id=4050&option=com_content) (Accessed: 8 May 2012).

Robinson, B.A., "Religious Tolerance", (2007). Available at: <http://www.religioustolerance.org/islsharia.htm> (Accessed: 12 June 2012).

Robinson, B.A., "Sharia law within Sunni Islam: A brief introduction", Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance. 19 March (2007). Available at: <http://www.religioustolerance.org/islsharia.htm> (Accessed: 15 May 2012).

Saudi legal, "Islamic Law", (2013). Available at: [http://www.saudilegal.com/saudilaw/01\\_law.html](http://www.saudilegal.com/saudilaw/01_law.html) (Accessed: 21 January 2013)

Slackman, M., "Growing Up Saudi", The New York Times Upfront. 9 May (2011). Available at: [http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/upfront/features/index.asp?article=f090108\\_saudi\\_boys](http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/upfront/features/index.asp?article=f090108_saudi_boys) (Accessed: 18 August 2012).

State University, "Saudi Arabia - History & Background, Constitutional & Legal Foundations, Educational System—overview, Preprimary & Primary Education, Secondary Education", (2013). Available at: <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1308/Saudi-Arabia.html> (Accessed: 4 February 2013).

Steiner, S., "Sharia Law", Guardian Unlimited, 20 August (2002) . Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/aug/20/qanda.islam> (Accessed: 4 June 2012).

Yousuf M., "Solution To Spinsterhood: Take 4 Wives", Arab News, (2010). Available at: <http://www.arabnews.com/node/349619> (Accessed: 7 October 2012).

Zoepf, K., "Growing Up Saudi", The New York Times Upfront. 9 May (2011). Available at: [http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/upfront/features/index.asp?article=f092208\\_saudi\\_girls](http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/upfront/features/index.asp?article=f092208_saudi_girls) (Accessed: 18 August 2012).

Zoepf, K., "Growing Up Saudi", The New York Times, 22 September (2008). Available at: [http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/upfront/features/index.asp?article=f092208\\_saudi\\_girls](http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/upfront/features/index.asp?article=f092208_saudi_girls) (Accessed 17 June 2012).

## Books:

- "Kontaktzonen Dynamik Und Performativität Kultureller Begegnungen"*, Berlin: Akad.-Verl, (2010).
- Abdulaziz, A., Al Khateeb, M., Motuali, M. and Abduljawad, N., *"Educational system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia"*, Riyadh: Alkhurigy Publisher & Distributers, (1998).
- Agar, M.H., *"The professional stranger: An informal introduction to ethnography"*, Orlando, FL: Academic, (1980).
- AL-Abdulkareem, S., *"The Educational Policy in the Saudi Arabian Kingdom"*, Riyadh: the Ministry of Education, (1980).
- Al-Musnad, M.A.A., *"Islamic Fatawa Regarding Women"*, Riyadh, Darussalam, (1996).
- Al-Seghayer, K., *"English Teaching in Saudi Arabia: Status, Issues, and Challenges"*, Riyadh, Hala Print CO., (2011).
- Bernard, R.H., *"Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology"*, Newbury Park: Sage Publications, (1988).
- Bin Ladin. C., *"Inside the Kingdom: My Life in Saudi Arabia"*, New York: Warner Books, (2004).
- Bogdan, R. B. and Biklin, S. K., *"Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods"*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Needham Heights: Allyn and Bacon, (1998).
- Creswell, J. W., *"Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches"*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, (2009).
- Creswell, J. W., *"Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches"*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, (2007).
- Doughty, C. M., and Garnett, E., *"Travels in Arabia Deserta"*, Garden City: Doubleday, (1955).
- Field, A. P., *"Discovering statistics using SPSS"*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. London: Sage Publications, (2009).
- Flick, U., *"An Introduction to Qualitative Research"*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn. London: Sage Publications, (2009).
- Fraenkel, J. R. and Wallen, N. E., *"How to design and evaluate research in education"*, 7<sup>th</sup> edn. New York: McGraw-Hill, (2010).
- Jackson, S.L., *"Research Methods A Modular Approach"*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Belmont: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, ( 2009).
- Krakauer. J., *"Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith"*, Pan MacMillan, (2004).
- Lacey. R., *"Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists, and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia"*, New York: Viking, (2009).
- Ladin, B. C., and Marshall, R., *"Inside the Kingdom: My Life in Saudi Arabia"*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. New York: Warner, (2005).
- Mack, N., Woodsong, C., Macqueen. K. M., Guest, G., and Namey, E., *"Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide"*, North Carolina: Family Health International, (2005).
- Merriam, S., *"Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation"*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, (2009).

- Murdock, G. P., *“Atlas of World Cultures”*, Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, (1981).
- Noddings, N., *“Philosophy of Education”*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Boulder: Westview Press, (2011).
- Ramadan, A.A., *“Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”*, Al Khobar: The New National Publisher & Distributers, (1994).
- Ray, W. J., *“Methods towards a science of behaviour and experience”*, 8<sup>th</sup> edn. Belmont: Wadsworth, (2006).
- Russell, B. H., *“Research Methods In Cultural Anthropology”*, London: Sage Publications, (1988).
- Sasson, P., *“Princess: a True Story of Life behind the Veil in Saudi Arabia”*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Atlanta: Windsor-Brooke Print, (2004).
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., and Thornhill, A., *“Research Methods for Business Students”*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall, (2007).
- Schutt, R.K., *“Investigating the social world: the process and practice of research”*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, (2006).
- Shaughnessy J.J., Zechmeister, E.B. and Zechmeister. J.S., *“Research Methods in Psychology”*, 9<sup>th</sup> edn. New York: McGraw Hill, (2012).
- Sowayan, S.A., *“The Arabian Oral Historical Narrative: An Ethnographic and Linguistic Analysis”*, Wiesbaden, (1992).
- Steinar, K. and Brinkmann. S., *“InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing”*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London: Sage Publications, (2008).
- Tabachnick, B. G. and Fidell, L. S., *“Using multivariate statistics”*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn. Boston: Allyn& Bacon Yin, (2007).
- Wulf, C., *“Kontaktzonen Dynamik Und Performativität Kultureller Begegnungen”*, Berlin: Akad.-Verl, (2010).
- Wulf, C., Poulain, J. and Triki, F., *“Europäische Und Islamisch Geprägte Länder Im Dialog: Gewalt, Religion Und Interkulturelle Verständigung”*, Berlin: AkademieVerlag, (2006).
- Wulf, C., Triki, F. and Poulain, J., *“Erziehung Und Demokratie: Europäische, Muslimische Und Arabische Länder Im Dialog”*, Berlin: AkademieVerlag, (2009).
- Yin, R. K., *“Case study research, design and method”*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, (2009).

**Websites:**

- “Arabian Campus”*, (2012). Available at:  
<http://www.arabiancampus.com/studyinsaudi/edusys.htm> (Accessed: 11 February 2013).
- AMEinfo, *“Women's employment in Saudi Arabia: A major challenge”*, (2010). Available at:  
<http://www.ameinfo.com/228236.html> (Accessed: 13 March 2013).
- Central Intelligence Agency *“The world fact-book”*, (2011). Available at:  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2103.html> (Accessed: 18 September 2013).

Donna Abu-Nasr, "Saudi Women More Educated Than Men Are Wasted Resource", Jun 4, 2013, Bloomberg Markets Magazine. Available at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-06-04/saudi-women-more-educated-than-men-are-wasted-resource.html> (Accessed: 8 August 2013).

College Stats, "College Stats - Higher Education in Data Form", (2009). Available at: <http://collegestats.org/articles/2009/12/top-10-oldest-universities-in-the-world-ancient-colleges/> (Accessed: 18 March 2013).

Federal Research Division Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Saudi Arabia", (2006). Available at: [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Saudi\\_Arabia.pdf](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Saudi_Arabia.pdf) (Accessed 12 November 2012).

Federal Research Division Library of Congress, "Saudi Arabia: A Country Study", (2011). Available at: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/satoc.html> (Accessed: 2 November 2012).

Keresztes, G., "Islam Dunk TV", (2010). Available at: <http://www.islamdunktv.com/2012/05/documentation-sunnah-hadith-begin-early.html> (Accessed: 8 May 2012).

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Education, "Education for all assessment for the year 2000". Available at: [http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/countryreports/saudi\\_arabia/contents.html](http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/countryreports/saudi_arabia/contents.html) (Accessed: 20 March 2012).

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Education, "The development of education", (2004). Available at: [http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Natreps/reports/sarabia\\_en.pdf](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Natreps/reports/sarabia_en.pdf) (Accessed: 14 March 2012).

Kingdom of Saudi Ministry of Education, "English language studies to begin from Grade IV". <http://www2.moe.gov.sa/english/Pages/Default.htm> (Accessed: 20 August 2012).

Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, "Education for all assessment for the year 2000", (2000). Available at: [http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/countryreports/saudi\\_arabia/contents.html](http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/countryreports/saudi_arabia/contents.html) (Accessed: 10 October 2012).

Ministry of Higher Education, "Saudi Arabia - Kingdom of Humanity", (2010). Available at: <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/studyinside/aboutKSA/Pages/default.aspx> (Accessed: 20 November 2012).

Ministry Of Higher Education, "University of Hail", (2013). Available at: <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/studyinside/Government-Universities/Pages/HU.aspx> (Accessed: 9 January 2013).

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia Washington, DC., "Education", (2013). <http://www.saudiembassy.net/about/country-information/education/> (Accessed: 20 September 2013).

Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission to the US, "Students Guide", Available at [http://www.sacm.org/pdf/studentsguide\\_english.pdf](http://www.sacm.org/pdf/studentsguide_english.pdf) (Accessed: 25 September 2013).

Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission to the US, "Background educational System in Saudi Arabia", (2013). Available at: <http://www.sacm.org/> (Accessed: 28 September 2013).

Universita Di Bologna, "Our History", (2013). Available at: <http://www.eng.unibo.it/PortaleEn/University/Our+History/default.html> (Accessed: 14 December 2012).

White, J., "*Baby Steps, Chart From Top*", Bloomberg Markets Magazine. Available at: [http://media.bloomberg.com/bb/avfile/rOY\\_vmFYvJ9o](http://media.bloomberg.com/bb/avfile/rOY_vmFYvJ9o) (Accessed: 10 August 2013).

Wikipedia, "*Education in Saudi Arabia*", (2013). Available at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education\\_in\\_Saudi\\_Arabia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Saudi_Arabia) (Accessed: 12 September 2013).

Wikipedia, "*Saudi Arabia*". Available at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi\\_Arabia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi_Arabia) (Accessed: 3 April 2013).

Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality, "*Early Marriage*", (2009). Available at: <http://www.wisemuslimwomen.org/currentissues/earlymarriage/> (Accessed: 15 November 2012).