

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role in helping young people to develop into good citizens. It instils knowledge, skills and favourable attitudes. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, like most countries of the world, places a heavy emphasis on the education of the younger work-force in various fields. Skilled and qualified manpower is urgently needed to meet the demands of rapid development and progress in the scientific and technical fields.

The general aims of education in Saudi Arabia are to eradicate illiteracy and to provide people with the basic facts, concepts and abilities to apply scientific and technological processes in their daily lives. A further main objective of education in Saudi Arabia is to train technicians, teachers, managers and administrators who are desperately needed to cope with rapid economic development (Ministry of Education, 1974, Educational Policy). Teachers are a much needed resource to implement the government's educational policy, which relies on the school curriculum. The quality of teachers and selected materials make a difference to student performance, especially in developing countries (Husen and Noonan , 1978; Brophy and Good, 1986). Teachers are given great trust and confidence by education authorities to teach and take over the responsibility for educating new generations. Therefore, teachers and curricula have a very important influence on students' achievements.

The technical and scientific objectives are complemented by an equally important moral and social religious programme which forms an essential part of an Islamic education. Unlike scientific and technical education in Saudi Arabia, which has been greatly influenced by educational developments in the West, religious and moral education has

not been subject to similar influences. Indeed, it is probably not unfair to argue that, in Western countries, religious education has become a somewhat neglected discipline in the school curriculum, compared with science and technology education, for example. In Saudi Arabia (and other Islamic countries) this is not the case.

Despite the absence of external influences from other countries and cultures, religious education in Saudi Arabia has not retained its former importance in the curriculum, at least not in the eyes of teachers and students. A report published by the Islamic Division of the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education, published in 1986, brings this out and suggests, not least by implication, that there may be a crisis in religious education in Saudi Arabian schools.

It is possible, of course, that this development reflects a general trend towards the secularisation of life which has been noticeable in many countries, Islamic and non-Islamic alike. However, this can at best be a part-explanation of the phenomenon; since the crisis affects schools and the people in them, we must look towards the school curriculum as its possible primary cause. This is the position taken in this study. It focuses on, and investigates, a number of different aspects of the religious education curriculum in Saudi Arabian schools, with particular reference to the following two main issues:

- i. Pupils' and teachers' perceptions of the aims and objectives of religious education.
- ii. The nature of the educational experiences provided for students in religious education programmes.

Several subsidiary issues, also investigated in this study, relate to the foregoing.

Traditionally, religious education has been a very important and influential component of the school curriculum in Saudi Arabian schools. The reason for this is that Saudi Arabia is an Islamic state and, hence, the propagation of the Islamic religion is at the heart of the education system.

The primary goal of the Islamic curriculum in Saudi secondary schools is to ensure that the content, beliefs and religious practices of Islam are taught to students so that they are applied to every aspect of daily life both in and out of the school environment (Ministry of Education, 1982). Islamic education is also intended to prepare young people to take responsibilities in their life and to encourage belief in the Islamic faith, the principles of which are part of the law, by giving guidance as to the right way of thinking and acting.

The customary assumption is that these aims can be realised by the appropriate selection of topics and learning activities within school religious education programmes; good teaching methods are also thought to contribute to the realisation of these objectives. However, this can happen only if the curriculum is in line with the students' abilities, aspirations and interests. An important aspect of the latter is the extent to which topics in the religious education programme correlate with students' life and society, and the learning experiences arranged for students promote that interest in the pursuit of their religious education studies.

A report by the Islamic Education Division of the Saudi Ministry of Education, published in 1986, found that neither teachers nor students were happy with the results of religious education at secondary school level. One major complaint by teachers concerned the ways in which students take, or fail to take, religious education seriously. The response by students to religious education was stated to be not always as positive as it should be. Many other difficulties were also cited. One was that, “although the aims of the religious education programme are sound, teachers have difficulties in realising them”. This was thought to be due to cultural weaknesses on the part of the teachers. Another problem was that topics were often presented by teachers without any proper preparation and organisation (Ministry of Education, 1986, Islamic Education Division, p. 27).

If religious education courses are to retain (or regain) their impact and importance, their suitability to the needs of the students has to be carefully assessed and the assessment results acted upon to ensure that the courses remain relevant in terms of both content and teaching methods. However, there is evidence that this does not happen in reality. As was reported in a major report in 1988 (Ministry of Education 1988, Education Documentation, No. 29)

The Islamic curriculum in the three grades of secondary school has remained unchanged for over 20 years, except for modifications to Islamic law. (p.5)

The observation was made at the same time, by religious education supervisors attached to the Ministry of Education, that the aims of school level religious education were not sufficiently clear and that some of them were difficult to understand. The supervisors also commented adversely on the fact that there was no periodic review of

the religious education curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1988). It has to be said that little has changed in this respect since the publication of the supervisors' observations.

Other studies have shown that, although students want to study the subject, they do not enjoy it because they find the teaching approaches boring. For example, Bedaiwi (1988) indicated that "although the educational authority tries to make the educational process more effective, the teaching methods are still the traditional ones in which the teacher provides information and little else" (p.4). Likewise, Mofada (1989) stated that "the teaching methods used do not have effective elements which encourage the students to pay attention to the lesson". He added that "educational aids were not used in religious education" and concluded that "the subject contains huge amounts of information without consideration of how it is to be taught and that most teachers are weak and not well qualified, especially in their knowledge of the Holy Quran" (pp. 149-150).

Alshafei (1984) argued that most of the students were not interested in religious education because they were not interested in study generally, but he added that the teaching methods used in religious education were such that they gave students no opportunity to contribute during the lessons.

Findings like the foregoing largely reflect 'expert' opinion and judgement based on anecdotal and similar evidence. Although there is no reason to doubt their validity, they leave open the question of how representative these findings are of teachers' and students' views about their religious education programmes generally. To explore this

requires a systematic empirical study involving fairly large teacher and student populations.

The study reported here represents an attempt to identify, by systematic large-scale enquiry, teachers' and students' perceptions of selected aspects of religious education in Saudi Arabian secondary schools. (These are identified in the next section). It was recognised at the outset that the primary outcome of this enquiry would be the generation of data and information about the views held by teachers and students concerning contemporary religious education in schools. However, since such information may be regarded as an essential basis for arriving at valid conclusions and recommendations about the ways in which the religious education curriculum should or might be revisited, the direction taken in this study was viewed to be entirely justified.

1.1. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

As already indicated, the purpose of this study was to explore teachers' and students' views concerning the teaching and provision of religious education in secondary schools in Saudi Arabia. Among the issues examined were the following:

- i. What do teachers and students consider to be the aims of religious education programmes in schools and what importance do they attach to individual aims?
- ii. What are the teaching and learning strategies commonly employed in religious education programmes?
- iii. What resources are used in religious education programmes?

- iv. What is the main content covered in religious education programmes? To what extent does the treatment of controversial issues feature in them?
- v. How concordant, or otherwise, are teachers' and students' views on the above issues?

Views on the foregoing issues were explored through the use of questionnaires administered to a large number of teachers and students in Saudi Arabian schools in selected population centres.

In view of the fact that the study is concerned with religious education in a country which, in terms of its history and culture (including religious traditions and values), is different from Britain or other Western societies, it was thought to be important to present - as part of this thesis - an overview of the salient features of Saudi Arabia's history and its education system. This is done in the remainder of this chapter.

Following this, Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature with particular reference to the curriculum for religious education in secondary schools. This review focuses strongly on writings about religious education in an Islamic society, especially Saudi Arabia. However, more general issues and views evident from the literature concerning religious education in Western countries have also been included.

Chapter 3 deals with methodology and the design of this thesis, and explains how the study questionnaires were designed and administered. It shows the procedures involved in conducting the field work survey and the methods adopted in collecting the

data from Saudi Arabian secondary schools. The study population is also described and the characteristics of each sample city. The statistical descriptive analyses of teachers' and students' characteristics and demographic data are also explained in this chapter.

Chapter 4 analyses and discusses the results and the findings obtained from the teacher questionnaire. Their perceptions about different aspects of religious education programmes are described in detail by using the appropriate statistical procedure. The results derived from the open-ended part of the questionnaire are analysed in detail and possible explanations for teachers' responses are given.

Chapter 5 analyses and discusses the results and the findings obtained from the student questionnaire. Students' perceptions about different aspects of religious education programmes are described in detail by using the appropriate statistical procedure. The results derived from the open-ended part of the questionnaire are analysed in detail and possible explanation for students' responses are given.

Chapter 6 examines to what extent there is similarity between teachers' and students' perceptions of the aims and objectives and teaching approaches, where the teacher questionnaire and student questionnaire in certain respects covered identical aspects of the religious education curriculum.

Finally, in chapter 7 of this thesis, the main findings from the present study are summarised. Information derived from teachers and students is aggregated, as far as possible, into a coherent set of conclusions, instead of being presented separately.

The conclusions drawn are then translated into a set of suggestions for future actions and activities whereby changes in religious education in Saudi secondary schools may be brought about in the light of the findings from this study. The role to be played in this by different educational agencies is also considered.

1.2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SAUDI ARABIA

The purpose of this part of the introductory chapter of the thesis is to give an outline of the key aspects of Saudi Arabia's history and its education system. This should provide the reader with a basic appreciation of some features of the society to which this study relates.

Saudi Arabia is located in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula and covers four-fifths of peninsula. It comprises most of the world's largest peninsula and is situated among three of the world continents: Asia, Africa and Europe. Saudi Arabia is bounded to the west by the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba; to the north by Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait; to the east by the Arabian Gulf, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates and Oman; and to the south by the Yemen Republic. The total area of Saudi Arabia is approximately six times that of the British Isles, but its total population is only about one quarter that of the United Kingdom (approximately 15 million) (Ministry of Information, 1992).

1.2.1. BRIEF HISTORY

The official name of the country is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The word 'Saudi' itself is derived from the name of the ruling house of Saud. The house of Saud has ruled most of what is now Saudi Arabia on and off since 1744, when its first founder,

Mohammed Bin Saud, was emir (governor) of a small semi-independent village-state in Najd (the central region of Arabia).

The country has been ruled by the present Royal family since the First World War. Before the First World War, Saudi Arabia (Arabian peninsula) was divided into five regions: Najd under Wahabi supervision; Al-Ahsa along the Arabian Gulf; Hail under the Rasheed dynasty; Al-Hijaz region under Sherif of Makkah (Mecca); and Asir under the Idrisi dynasty (Bindagti, 1979). The present Kingdom of Saudi Arabia came into existence in 1932 when Abdul-Aziz Bin Abdul-Rahman Al-Saud, who was simultaneously King of Hijaz and Sultan of Najd and the Dependencies, united the two parts of his state under one administration and one name. King Abdul-Aziz organised the kingdom according to four Islamic policy assumptions which are: stability, accessibility of the rulers, social mobility and mechanisms for growth and change (Twitchell, 1953; Sanger, 1954).

Since World War II in particular, oil has generated great wealth in Saudi Arabia, but economic diversification and development of resources were considered necessary at an early stage. Hence, a shift from oil to industrialisation was encouraged. Rapid growth has taken place, but without a change in religious practices. Islam is seen as a complete way of life and people are invited to use their intellectual abilities and to keep a balance between spiritual and secular demands (Hobday, 1978).

The reform to upgrade Saudi Arabia from its ancient traditions into a modern state were begun by King Abdul-Aziz, through a social and economical work programme called '*Al-Hijjar*' (communities). This was modelled on the establishment of a few

Hijar (communities) in the early part of the century. King Abdul-Aziz promoted the wide-spread establishment of *Hijar*. He commenced the development of an extended communications network by, for example, building a railway line connecting the capital, Riyadh, with the Eastern province. He also entered into concession contracts of digging for oil, as this is to be the starting point of all economical accomplishments achieved by Saudi Arabia in its modern era. Furthermore, King Abdul-Aziz spread security, stability and development in a very limited period. A further achievement was the establishment of schools in each *Hijar*, which marks the beginning of general education in modern Saudi Arabia (Khan, 1981).

After King Abdul-Aziz's death in 1953, his son, Saud Bin Abdul-Aziz, continued his father's work to modernise the newly uprising state, to consolidate its socio-economic development and to vitalise Saudi Arabia for an effective role in serving its Arab character and Islamic culture. The kingdom's first institute of higher education, King Saud University, was opened in 1957 (Information Centre, 1996).

Faisal Bin Abdul-Aziz became king in November 1964. He was named Time magazine's "Man of the year" in 1975 and was one of the world's respected leaders and powerful men. He established the foundation of great social change and instituted the first five-year plan, to achieve a great economic stability in Saudi Arabia at the start of his regime by a great construction process aimed at modernisation of the country. Tragically, he was assassinated in 1975, whereupon King Khalid Bin Abdul-Aziz came to the throne and continued the work of his predecessor (Information Centre, 1996).

King Khalid died in 1982 and was succeeded to the throne by his brother, Fahad Bin

Abdul-Aziz, who is still the current king of Saudi Arabia. His reign has been marked by a great concern for the Saudi people. His declaration, "I will be father to the young, brother to the elderly; I am but one of you: whatever troubles you, troubles me; whatever pleases you, pleases me", testifies to this (Information Centre, 1996, p.20). King Fahad has spared no effort to achieve the reform objectives in all fields on both the internal and external levels. However, he has also endeavoured to solidify Saudi Arabia's position as the homeland of the Islamic world and the custodian of the great mosques at Mecca and Medinah. In this sense, religion and religious education are seen as an integral part of Saudi culture and life.

1.2.2. THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA AS THE HEARTLAND OF ISLAM

According to Islamic tradition and belief, Saudi Arabia was predetermined to have eminent stature and an important role in history because it was pre-chosen by Allah as a residence for His Holy place at Makkah (Mecca) (which is the cradle of Islam) and also because it was the starting point from which His last Prophet and Messenger, Mohammed Bin Abdullah, conveyed Allah's message, guided the nation and struggled to spread Allah's religion. Thus, the Arabian Peninsula became the centre of the new world religion, that is, the Islamic religion, with no other state rivalling its position from the point of view of religious justice and equality.

All Muslims all over the world direct themselves toward (*Al-Kaaba*) Makkah (Mecca) in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula during their prayers, and over three million annually visit Mecca during the pilgrimage period. The Saudi Arabian government spends many billions of Riyals a year to provide living and travelling facilities for the pilgrims. Petroleum reserves have given the country political and economic weight in

the world and perhaps political leadership in the Middle East. The economic, strategic and religious factors have given the country great importance (Ministry of Information, 1990).

1.3. EDUCATION IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Education is an essential building block of any successful society. It contributes to the development of mankind and provides the means by which society constructs its patterns of life. Education of the young, therefore, becomes the primary concern of society and should be based on sound principles deriving from the experiences and practices of the society. Selection of appropriate experiences for the development of any educational system is a moral problem. Education of a nation's youth is, no doubt, the most important of all human activities, for no other activity can be so significant and fruitful.

For Saudi Arabia, as for every other nation, education is a vital tool of advancement for both the individual and the national economy, affecting the standard of living of all people in the country. Saudi education has a long history, involving important educational institutions, some of which date from the seventh century. Their main function was to educate people in Islamic culture and religion. However, in recent decades, considerable attention has been given to an adjustment in educational philosophy towards the provision of training for a technological future, in order to allow the country to compete more effectively in the world market. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was only a rudimentary educational system in Hijaz, which had been established by the Ottomans (Alkadi, 1981). One of the first things that King Abdul-Aziz did after coming to Mecca in 1923 to unify the nation, was to convene an educational conference with the scholars and educators of Mecca. He encouraged them

to spread and expand education. Since that time, the history of the modern system of education in Saudi Arabia parallels, step by step, the establishment and strengthening of the Saudi state (Alkhatrawy, 1990).

In 1925, the Directorate of Education was established in Mecca with the task of supervising education policy, directing the expansion of learning in the Mecca region, and creating new school systems (Alesa, 1979). Schooling was made free for all the population. This Directorate of Education became the nucleus for the first modern educational system in Saudi Arabia. From 1925 to 1953, it achieved a number of educational goals which are looked upon as landmarks in the history of education in Saudi Arabia. Currently the main educational authorities for public education are the Ministry of Education, the Presidency of Girls' Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and the General Organisation for Technical Education and Vocational Training (Abdul-Wasee, 1983). There are also other ministries and public organisations serving public education, such as the Ministry of Defence and the Religious Institutes.

In 1926, the Saudi Science Institution Secondary School was opened by the Directorate of Education, with the aim of producing graduate teachers. However, in the absence of a higher education system in Saudi Arabia, students frequently went abroad for higher education, after completing their secondary education. As Tibawi (1972) wrote:

The pressing need for trained civil servants, teachers and school inspectors prompted the directorate of education to send selected students for study in the neighbouring Arab countries, particularly Egypt (p.179).

The fact that Egypt was the preferred country for higher education studies was facilitated by the adoption, in Saudi schools, of the Egyptian school curriculum.

In 1928, the Saudi government sent the first group of students to the Al-Azhar College in Egypt to extend their education; this was followed by a second group in 1936 to the same institution. At that time, the government was facing many problems in education, and suffering from shortage of staff because there was not enough income to provide a comprehensive solution to the problem. However, after World War II, with the increasing income from oil, many of these problems were solved.

In 1953, the Saudi government upgraded the Directorate of Education to the Ministry of Education. This marked the beginning of a new era in the history of education development in Saudi Arabia, since now education had become a fully self-standing resort at government level (Alhugail, 1992). The first Minister of Education was Prince Fahad Ibn Abdul-Aziz, who is the present king of Saudi Arabia. The Ministry of Education was one of several ministries established at the same time.

Following the creation of the Ministry of Education, education offices were established in different parts of the country. These were smaller replicas of the Ministry, with the function to administer and supervise education in their respective districts. However, because there were not enough Saudi teachers, the Ministry of Education had to 'import' teachers from other countries to cover the shortage of staff. Gradually, education spread over all the regions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Simultaneously, the government took many steps to modernise education, and organised the school system in three levels: Elementary, Intermediate and Secondary education (Farge, 1971, Zaidan 1982).

1.4. THE STRUCTURE OF THE SAUDI EDUCATION SYSTEM

1.4.1. MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

The responsibility of the Ministry of Education is to formulate education policy for the education of males in elementary, intermediate and secondary schools. It also has responsibility for technical colleges, teacher training institutions and private schools.

According to Abo Ali (1972):

The Ministry provides technical education for male teachers and technicians, special education for the blind, mute and deaf of sexes, adult education for men and a number of kindergartens. It also provides regular academic intermediate and secondary education in the evening for those whose circumstances do not enable them to pursue their education in the day school (p.61).

The Saudi system of education is highly centralised; it is organised by the Ministry of Education and administered by directorates of education in 41 educational districts in the country. Each directorate has the responsibility for the schools in the cities and villages situated in its district. The Ministry of Education is also responsible for educational planning, school curricula and textbooks, educational expansion and the financing of public education. Private education, although financed by the private sector, is supervised by the Ministry of Education. The government provides a budget to the Ministry yearly; for example in the year of 1985 the budget was 11,367 billions Saudi Riyals (Ministry of Planning, 1985-90). The General Presidency of Girls' Education has equivalent responsibilities for the education of females in a similar number of education districts, and has its own budget (General Presidency 1988).

The growth of education in Saudi Arabia is well demonstrated by the increase in the number of schools over a 30 - year period. In 1958, there were only 15 secondary

schools in the country, 14 of which were located in middle school buildings and were for male students only. By 1989/90, this figure had risen to about 500. During the period from 1970 to 1990, the total number of schools for general education for both males and females at all stages of education increased from 2949 to 16476. The total number of students in all educational grades was 2,8 million in 1989, with a teaching force in excess of 180 thousand (which represents a threefold increase during the last ten years) (Ministry of Information, 1987, 1990).

1.4.1.1. General Education in Saudi Arabia

As already pointed out, general education in Saudi Arabia consists of three stages of schooling: Elementary, Middle and Secondary. Preceding entry into elementary schools, children between the ages of 4 and 6 may attend kindergarten, although this is an elective stage.

a. The Elementary Stage

Most children start school when they reach the age of 6 years. The elementary school curriculum covers all the basic subjects, such as Religion, Mathematics, Geography and Arabic language and grammar. The length of the elementary stage of schooling is six years. Boys and girls go to separate schools, and this separation of the sexes applies throughout students' educational careers.

b. The Intermediate Stage

After six years of elementary schooling, students pass to the next level which is the intermediate school. The purpose of the intermediate stage is to extend the students' general education. They study for three years, then pass to the secondary school. An

Intermediate Certificate is awarded to students upon the successful completion of this phase of their general education.

c. The Secondary Stage

Education in the secondary stage is more specialised than during the preceding stages. It enables students to opt for one of two streams, with emphasis on science and art, respectively. The students study for three years, after which they receive the Secondary Certificate. After their secondary stage studies, students can choose between University or Colleges, such as the Army Academy, or take up employment.

1.4.1.2. Other School Types

In addition to the general schools, there are many institutes such as teacher training institutes, vocational institutes, agricultural institutes, commercial schools and army institutes. Students may study at these schools, instead of at general secondary schools, after completing the intermediate stage.

Education is paid for by the Government, except that private schools depend in part on tuition fees paid by the students' families. Some educational institutions (for example, universities, colleges, religious institutes and technical and special education institutes) even offer their students a monthly allowance.

1.4.1.3. The School Curriculum

According to Educational Statistics (1985/1986), the school curriculum undergoes a continuous improvement process. This is to make it more responsive to developments taking place in the Saudi Kingdom in the economic and social fields. It also has to meet

the increasing demand on education and to keep abreast with up-to-date educational concepts and technology. All developments and improvements have to observe the true Islamic values to which the Saudi society adheres.

In 1984, the Ministry of Education instituted the rules for the establishment of “national committees” which act as advisory committees to the Educational Development Organ of the Ministry of Education. The objective of these committees is to study, and amend if necessary, the subject areas which are or will be taught in schools at the various stages of education. These committees may also deal with special issues such as adult education, measurement and testing, special education, audio-visual aids, and student guidance and counselling. In the field of curriculum development, there is close co-operation between the Ministry of Education and the Presidency of Girls’ Education: experts from the two authorities are essential members of curriculum development committees.

The administration of the general education system in Saudi Arabia is highly centralised. All aspects are subject to government control and supervision. Policy matters are regulated by a special Higher Council on Education. Syllabuses and curricula are uniform throughout the Kingdom and approved centrally. The Ministry of Education and Girls’ Education Presidency are also the central authority for the setting of the terminal examinations for the intermediate and secondary stage (Ministry of Education, 1985/1986).

Both the Ministry of Education and Girls’ Education Presidency have a curriculum department which is responsible for curriculum development and curriculum

implementation in the schools. Qualified teachers and inspectors operate or work with the Curriculum Department. All curricula and relevant textbooks are prepared under the authority of the Curriculum Department, according to the rules and regulations of the Ministry. Thus, there is a uniform curriculum in the country. Generally, the curriculum content is organised in terms of specified amounts of subject matter which have to be mastered by students. The curricula of both girls' and boys' schools have a heavy emphasis on religious subjects. The curriculum is identical except that girls' schools offer classes in home management, cooking and sewing which boys' schools do not offer. There is heavier emphasis in boys' schools on physical education than there is in girls' schools. Private schools are supervised by either the Ministry of Education or the Girls' Education Presidency, and their curricula are basically identical to those of the state schools (Ministry of Education 1991/1992; General Presidency of Girls' Education, 1994).

The proper implementation of the curriculum in schools is ensured through a variety of means. School principals have a major responsibility for this. However, inspectors from District Education offices also play a major role in the implementation of the curriculum, as does a system of final examinations which cover all the material that is supposed to be taught in a particular semester.

1.4.1.4. The Secondary School Curriculum

In the first grade of the secondary level, students are required to study the following subjects: Arabic (language and literature), Islamic Studies (religious education), Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, Physical Education, English and general activities. In grades two and three, the subjects for study depend on whether science or arts courses

have been chosen, but all students are required to take Arabic, Religious Studies, English and Physical Education. Sometimes, the student does not make his own choice of arts or science; that decision is made by the schools according to his attainments in Science and Mathematics (Ministry of Education, Public Secondary School Curriculum, 1988). However, there are still some students who, for intellectual or economic reasons, are not able to follow these programmes. They can go to vocational schools or to a military institute.

The current curriculum programme for the general secondary school was introduced in 1992, together with a reorganisation of the departmental structure of the schools. General secondary schools are now reorganised on the basis of four main departments, as follows:

1. The Arabic and Religious Sciences Department.
2. The Social Science and Management Department.
3. The Natural Science and Physics Department.
4. The Department of Applied Sciences and Technology.

Each department now has responsibility for the teaching of a range of subjects, as is indicated in Table 1.1. This table shows the number of study periods per week, allocated to different subjects during each of the three years of secondary schooling. It should be noted that the grade 1 programme at the secondary level is a 'general education' programme which is the joint responsibility of all departments in the school. The particular curriculum responsibilities of the different departments thus come to the fore during grades 2 and 3 (Ministry of Education, 1992).

Table 1.1: Number of Lessons Per Week in the Secondary School Curriculum

Subject Curriculum	Subject Curriculum Branch	Department									
		General	Art & RE			Management & Social		Sciences		Applied Technology	
		1 st Grade	2 nd Grade	3 rd Grade	2 nd Grade	3 rd Grade	2 nd Grade	3 rd Grade	2 nd Grade	3 rd Grade	
Religious Education	Holy Quran	1	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	
	Interpretation of Quran (<i>Tafseer</i>)	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	Theology (<i>Tawheed</i>)	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	Jurisprudence (Islamic law) (<i>Fiqh</i>)	1	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	Islamic Tradition (<i>Hadith</i>)	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	<i>TOTAL</i>	5	12	12	6	6	5	5	5	5	
Arabic Studies	Grammar	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	
	Art and Literature	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	Reading	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	
	Criticism	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Comprehension	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	<i>TOTAL</i>	6	9	9	4	4	3	3	3	3	
Management Science	Management	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	
	Economic	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	
	Calculation	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	
	<i>TOTAL</i>	0	0	0	5	6	0	0	0	0	
Social Science	Geography	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	
	History	1	1	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	
	Psychology	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
	Social Science	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	
	<i>TOTAL</i>	2	3	3	5	4	0	0	0	0	
Sciences	Physics	2	0	0	0	0	4	4	**	**	
	Chemistry	2	0	0	0	0	4	4	**	**	
	Geology	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	**	**	
	Biology	2	0	0	0	0	4	4	**	**	
	<i>TOTAL</i>	6	0	0	0	0	13	13	13	13	
Mathematics & Statistics	Maths & Calculus	5	0	0	3	3	6	6	6	6	
	Statistics	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	
	<i>TOTAL</i>	5	0	0	4	4	6	6	6	6	
Other General Subjects	English Language	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	
	Computer	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	Library & Research	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	
	Physical Education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	Activities	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	

Source: Ministry of Education, 1992

** These represent "Technical and Applied Science" lessons.

On successful completion of three years of study in secondary schools, students are awarded a High School Certificate. This certificate is the entry requirement for university or other study (such as academic, military) and for certain jobs both in government and the private sector.

1.4.2. HIGHER EDUCATION IN SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia works to build its higher education through its universities, colleges and centres of higher learning, so as to make the education available to its people. It attempts to educate a new generation in the various fields of knowledge and, at the same time, to safeguard national traditions and patterns of behaviour. Higher education follows on from secondary education and is provided in universities and colleges. All Saudi institutions of higher education are state institutions.

In 1974, a Ministry of Higher Education was established to co-ordinate and plan the development of higher education. In 1975, the formerly semi-independent universities were placed under the responsibility of the Higher Education Ministry, through the Supreme Council for Universities (Hurst, 1983).

The development of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia can be traced back to 1949, when the first College of Islamic Law was established at Mecca. In 1952, a teacher training college was founded, also at Mecca (Alkhatrawy, 1990). The first university was opened five years later, in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. It was aptly named 'King Saud University' and is now the largest university in Saudi Arabia, with 13

faculties (including a Faculty of Education) and two off-campus branches in locations other than Riyadh (KSU Brochure 1986).

The development of other universities took place at a fairly rapid rate, following the establishment of the King Saud University. Table 1.2 gives an overview of the universities currently in existence in Saudi Arabia, together with a brief description of their main characteristics.

Table 1.2: Overview of the Universities in Saudi Arabia

Name and Location	Year of Foundation	Main Characteristics
King Saud University (Riyadh)	1957	King Saud University is the first Saudi Arabian university. It has thirteen faculties and two branches off-campus. It has a Faculty of Education in the main campus, as well as in each of its branches.
Islamic University (Medinah)	1961	It has a department of education within the Faculty of <i>Da'wa</i> and <i>Usul-aldeen</i> (Department concerned with religious affairs). The people who graduate from Islamic University have the opportunity to work as qualified teachers of Islamic education (Islamic University Catalogue 1986).
King Abdul-Aziz University (Jeddah)	1971	This is the only university that started as a private institution. Later on it became a public university in 1971. It has nine faculties with a branch off-campus in Medinah, which has a Faculty of Education (KAU Catalogue 1985).
King Faisal University (Al-Ahsa)	1974	It has six faculties and one of them is the Faculty of Education. The main campus is located in Al-Ahsa with a branch in Dammam. It offers programmes in the arts and sciences (KFU, Faculty of Education Catalogue, 1989).

<p>Imam Mohammed Bin Saud Islamic University (Riyadh)</p>	<p>1974</p>	<p>It controls most of the Islamic Schools throughout the country. These schools were opened before any university was established in the country. The main campus is located in Riyadh. It has four branches, one each in Al-Ahsa, Abha, Medinah and Qassim, with nine faculties. There is no Faculty of Education but the people who graduate from it are considered qualified to work as teachers (IMBSIU Catalogue 1986). Both the Islamic universities and Imam Mohammed Bin Saud Islamic University are religiously oriented and offer mainly training in Religious Studies, Islamic Law, and Arabic. Together they have 61 faculties and colleges/institutes located in different parts of the Kingdom.</p>
<p>King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals (Dhahran)</p>	<p>1975</p>	<p>This was first established as a college in 1963 and later upgraded to a university in 1975. In December 1986, the university took its present name, King Fahad. It is in the east of the country, located near the oil in Dhahran. This university has six faculties. It offers programmes in engineering and management, etc. There is no Faculty of Education (KFPMU Catalogue, 1988).</p>
<p>Um-Al-Qura University (Mecca)</p>	<p>1981</p>	<p>The main campus is located in Makkah (Mecca) and has one other branch in Taif city. It has seven faculties, including a Faculty of Education at the main campus as well as at its branch. It is Saudi Arabia's newest university (UAQU, Education Faculty Catalogue, 1990).</p>

The normal period of study in universities is four years of study for the bachelor's degree in the social sciences or arts. For a bachelor's degree in the exact sciences, the study period is five years.

1.4.2.1. Colleges of Education

There are around thirteen colleges or faculties of education in Saudi Arabia. These form part of the university system and are under the control of the Ministry of Higher Education. Courses in these colleges extend over four study years and prepare students for teaching posts in elementary, intermediate and secondary education (Ministry of Higher Education, 1986).

1.4.2.2. Higher Education for Girls

As was pointed out in the discussion of school education in Saudi Arabia, the organisation of education for males and females is separate in terms of both teaching institutions and the government agencies responsible for their administration and financing. The principle of providing separate education for males and females also applies at the higher education level and manifests itself in two different ways, as follows:

- a. University institutions cater for both male and female students, but do so by providing separate courses for the two genders in separate buildings. The courses are staffed by different groups of teachers, also separated according to their gender. In situations which require a male teacher to instruct female students, direct face - to - face contact is avoided through the use of closed-circuit television. This separation of the genders is, of course, a strict requirement of the Islamic law.
- b. A range of higher education institutions (colleges) exists solely for the education of female students. Currently, over ten such colleges operate in different parts of

Saudi Arabia, including an institution for social work. Unlike universities, which are controlled and financed by the Ministry for Higher Education, the colleges for girls are under the direct control of the Presidency of Girls' Education.

1.5. CONCLUSION

During the relatively short period of the history of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, there has been a rapid and impressive expansion of education at all levels. There has been a remarkable effort to produce the quantity and quality of teachers needed to staff this expansion, especially at the elementary and intermediate stages of education. Likewise, the expansion of secondary education has been very significant in recent years. As this expansion has filtered through the system, higher education likewise has had to expand in order to ensure the generation of qualified personnel for other expanding sectors of the Saudi society and economy. As outlined earlier in this chapter, higher education in Saudi Arabia has undergone a major growth during the past two decades.

The contemporary challenge for education in general, and higher education in particular, is to move towards an improvement in quality. This challenge relates to the reform and revision of study programmes as much as it does to the enhancement in the competencies and qualifications of personnel. The tradition of sending students abroad has advantages in giving the opportunity for gifted students to be exposed to other systems of education. This gives them experience in the sharing of knowledge and expertise so that they can return to cascade this within Saudi Arabia. Thus the development and expansion of education can continue and improve steadily, hereby fulfilling the need for Saudi Arabia to have a highly educated and qualified population to provide for progress for development.