

School Leaders of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

THE FORGOTTEN PROFESSION

December 2019



BIANNUAL REPORT

School Leaders of the Kingdom: The Forgotten Profession

Globally, schooling has recognizably similar structures and systems, with pertinent contextual, political and cultural differences reflected within systems. One of the significant contextual differences in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is the role of School Leaders.

In the Kingdom, school leadership roles are defined as administrative not instructional, and there doesn't yet exist a well-defined School Leader career pipeline. School Leaders are, in many ways, **the forgotten profession**.

A substantial body of research validates the importance of **instructional school leadership** on the quality of teaching and student outcomes.ⁱ “No longer is there a question about the effect of leadership on student achievement. Clearly, leadership makes a difference.”ⁱⁱ

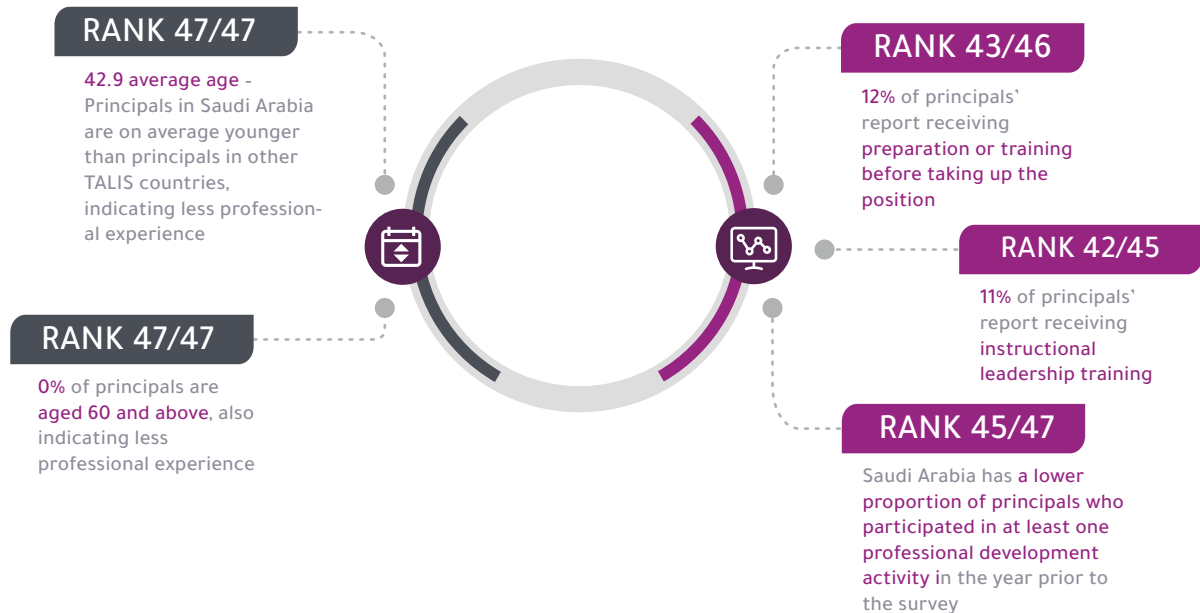
“Leadership is second only to teacher effectiveness among all school related factors that contribute to results for students.”ⁱⁱⁱ

(Hattie. 2018)

However, in some education systems the practice of **instructional leadership** remains poorly understood and outside the core responsibilities of School Leaders. For these, the expectation for instructional School Leaders represents a major shift from current practice.^{iv}This is the case for many School Leaders in the Saudi government system.

Principal Profile - Saudi Arabia

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD; 2018) surveys (Teaching and Learning International Survey - TALIS) indicate **limited experience, preparation, training and professional development for Principals** in the Kingdom compared to other participating TALIS countries.^y



Compounding Factors Impacting School Leadership in Saudi Arabia

In addition to the lack of focus on instructional school leaders, issues impacting the effectiveness and impact of school leadership in government schools in the Kingdom relate to recruitment and development pipelines, as well as systemic policies and structures.



A Renewed Focus on Improving School Leadership Development in the Kingdom

School reform requires school leaders to drive change. It is therefore crucial to build the capacity of current and emerging school leaders in the Kingdom, to equip them with the knowledge and skills to lead the changes required to achieve the **Vision 2030 education goals**.^{vi}

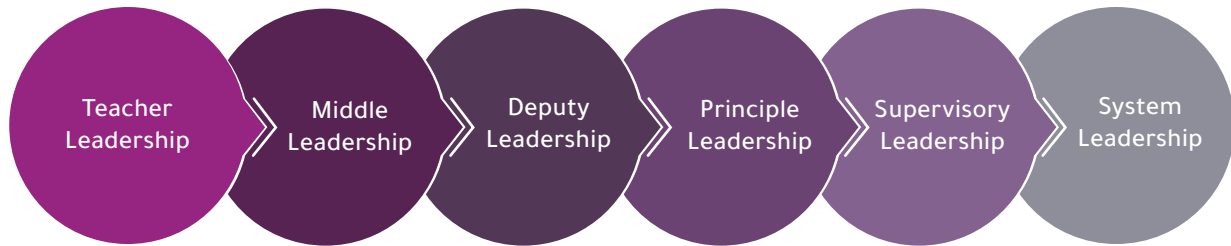


#3 PRIORITY INTERNATIONALLY

Improving school leadership is not a challenge faced by Saudi Arabia alone, this was ranked #3 priority by OECD Education Committee.^{vii}

Leadership development has recently come to the forefront in the KSA Ministry of Education, with systemic improvements in this area being a key strategic priority of the National Centre for Educational Professional Development (NCEPD). Work is currently underway to establish career-long leadership development programs based on a leadership competency framework.^{viii}

Informed by research and international best practice in high performing systems including Singapore, Scotland, Ontario and Australia, these leadership programs will contribute to establishing clear career pathway options from teachers to Middle Leaders and Principals, and into system leadership. Across these systems, there is a similar approach to **the leadership development pipeline** as illustrated in the figure below.^{ix}



Leadership at All Levels



NATIONAL

This focus on developing leadership at all levels is an essential cornerstone for system change, with strong leadership required at all levels of the system.



REGIONAL DISTRICT

Sustainability in reform will be strengthened when leaders at all levels are moving together in the same direction, with a consistency in focus and understanding in how to make the system work.^x



SCHOOL

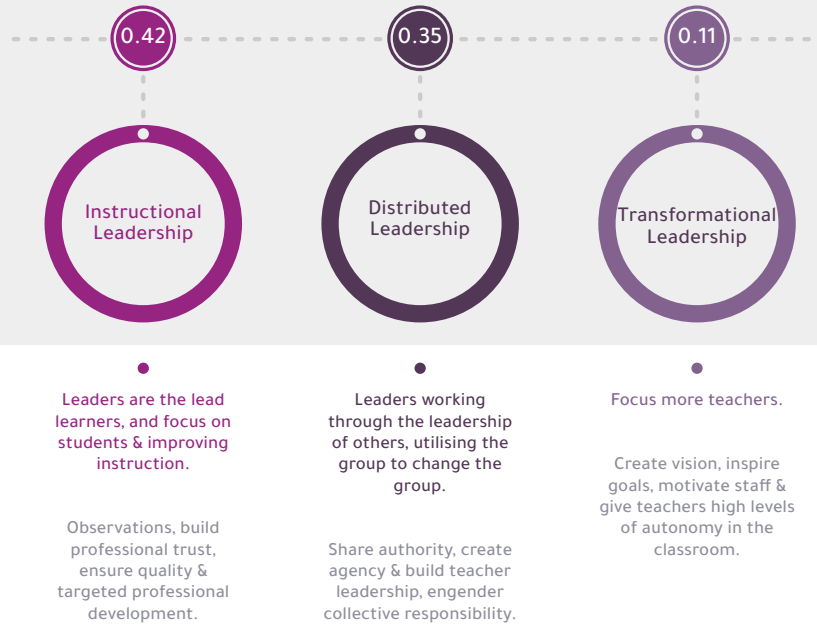
School leadership in the Kingdom will be considerably enhanced when these development programs are in place and leadership at the system level is improved and coherent.

High Impact School Leadership

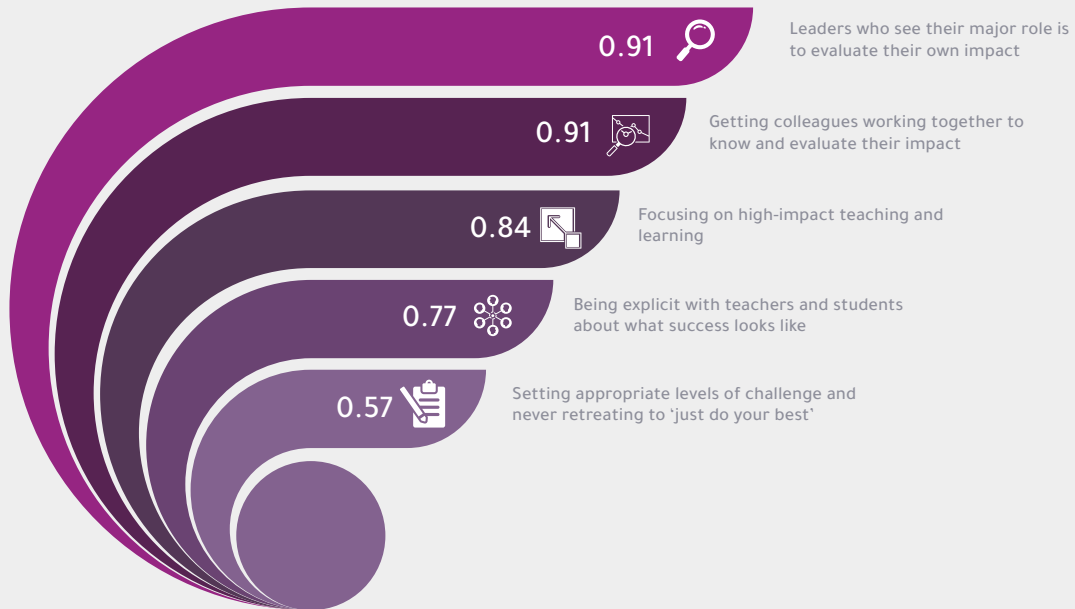
What is written about what constitutes effective school leadership could cover the deserts of Saudi Arabia. Given the critical importance of **School Leaders in improving teaching and learning**, considerable investigation has been undertaken to identify high impact leadership practices and traits.

The importance of evaluating and knowing one's impact as an educator has been highlighted through Hattie's meta-analysis on the influences and effect sizes related to student achievement.^{xi} Numerous other studies have been undertaken to analyse the effect size of a range of leadership styles; with **instructional leadership predominantly being identified as having the greatest impact on student outcomes**.^{xii}

Effect Size of Different School Leadership Styles^{xiii}



Hattie further analysed the effect size of specific school leader traits on student learning.^{xiv} **These high impact strategies** can be embedded in school leader induction & training.



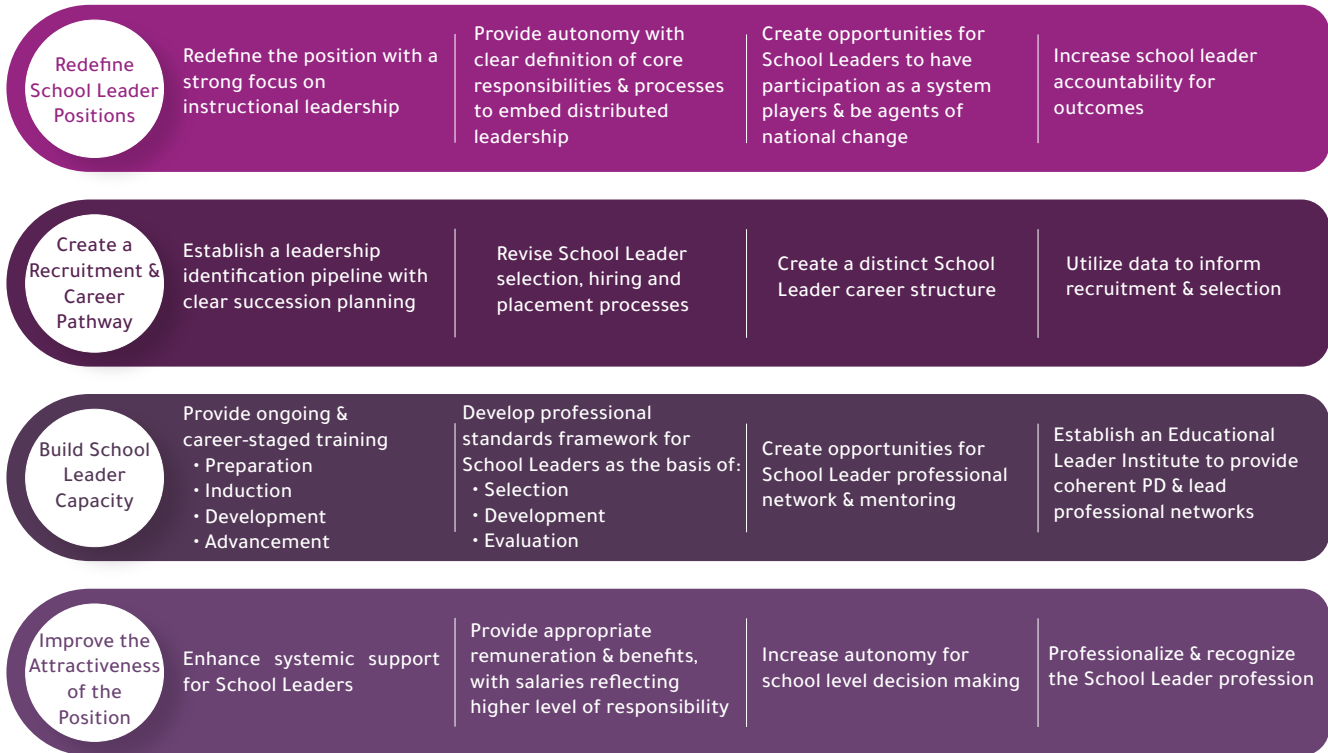
Systemic Reform to Support the Professionalization of School Leaders

A systemic mind shift is required in order to redefine and reposition the role of School Leaders in the Kingdom, and for the role to be considered essential system players. The work of **the Ministry of Education through the NCEPD proposed educational leadership development pathways** is a significant step towards reform in this area.

There are a range of policy levers which will drive further reform in the area of school leadership. It is **essential to put in place policies and processes that support School Leaders**. “Efforts to improve [school leader] recruitment, training, evaluation and ongoing development should be considered highly cost-effective approaches to successful school improvement.”^{xv}

Moving School Leaders from the forgotten profession to drivers of education reform will contribute to improved system performance and student outcomes. **An investment in school leaders, is an investment in comprehensive education system improvement.**

Systemic Policy Levers^{xvi}



References

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- v Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2018, Country Note - Saudi Arabia, Education GPS, OECD.
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- vii OECD 2008, Improving School Leadership - Policy and practice in OECD Countries.
- viii Consultation with the National Center for Educational Professional Development, KSA Ministry of Education and B. Jensen, Learning First, 2018.
- ix Emkan Education figure based on analysis of leadership development pipelines in systems of Queensland Educational Leadership Institute (QELI, Australia), Ontario (Canada), Scotland Centre for Educational Leadership (SCEL) and Singapore.
- x Fullan, M 2015, Leadership at all Levels, Motion Leadership.
- xi Hattie, J 2009, Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement. London, UK: Routledge.
- xii Robinson V, Lloyd C & Rowe K 2008, The Impact of Leadership on Student Outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types, Educational Administration Quarterly, 44(5); Leithwood, K & Mascal, B 2008, Collective leadership effects on student achievement. Educational Administration Quarterly, 44(4), 529-56; AlMarshad, Y.A 2017, Effects of Instructional, Transformational & Distributed Leadership on Student Academic Outcomes, International Journal of Education, Vol. 9, No. 2.
- xiii Ibid.
- xiv Hattie, J 2018, Leadership Matters - Does school and college leadership really matter? Visible Learning.
- xv Leithwood, K, Seashore Louis, K, Anderson, S and Wahlstrom, K 2004, How Leadership Influences Learning, Wallace Foundation, pg. 14.
- xvi Emkan analysis and defined strategic directions based on the research noted within this paper and extensive consultation in the KSA education sector.

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To join in the reform for improved School Leadership contact us to find out more about the Emkan & Aanaab:

- Leadership Standards
- Cambridge Educational Leadership Professional Development Qualification
- School Improvement Framework
- School Assessment Process



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