Power and Autonomy in the Saudi State

Case Study Analysis of Policy Implementation

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Declaration

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ABSTRACT

There is a substantial literature that now exists on public policy analysis which recognises a variety of issues surrounding implementation. Studies of the actions of public policy service deliverers or what Lipsky (1980) calls street level bureaucrats (SLBs), reveals numerous examples where they misinterpret or contest the conceived purpose of policies formulated at the central level and, therefore, fail to deliver policy in a manner consistent with the ideals of core policymakers. In the case of Saudi Arabia however, little is known about the factors that contribute to the implementation of public policy there or the degree of political autonomy experienced by Saudi SLBs at the implementation stage. The purpose of this study is to address this lacuna by exploring the nature of power and autonomy in the Saudi political system through a case study of public education policy. The research examines the way in which such policy is implemented by secondary schools principals and education managers (SLBs) in three different local education authorities across Saudi Arabia, namely in Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam cities, and examined the variable degree of devolved power or political autonomy experienced by these SLBs in the implementation process. The research was drawn from semi-structured interviews conducted with secondary school principals and various managers of education at the local level, as well as with senior officials in the Saudi Ministry of Education (MoE). The issues that emerged were mainly related to key aspects of power relationships between different bureaucratic tiers of the MoE and education policy process within the policy formulation, implementation and monitoring stages. The key finding of the research indicates that SLBs have a considerable degree of discretionary power in the implementation process, leading to variation not only between the central policy formulation stage and the local implementation level but also across the 3 regions. This is explained by the nature of the Saudi governance structure and, more particularly, the education policy itself, which lacks clear objectives, instructions, rules, procedures and mechanisms for monitoring and feedback. These findings challenged the existing literature on the Saudi State that explains the authoritarian, top-down nature of the Saudi political system which assumes policy made by the centre is closely translated further down the policy-chain at the policy implementation stage by SLBs.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

His Royal Highness Prince Salman Bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud

The Governorate of Riyadh Province-Saudi Arabia

A man who valued education and never thought twice when it came to investing in his people's education. Without his support and encouragement, the completion of this work would not have been possible.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

BSR: Basic System of Rules

C.C: Consultative Council

CoM: Council of Ministers

CoD: Council of Deputies

CDOM: Central Department for Organisation and Management

DDP: Departments of Design and Production

DEA: Dammam Education Authority

DECD: Department of Educational Curriculum Development

DEI: Department of Educational Inspection

DGET: Directorate General for Educational Technology

GDME: General Directorate of Measurement and Evaluation

GMEP: General Management of Educational Planning

GMTA: General Management of Teacher Affairs

HCE: Higher Council of Education

JED: Jeddah Education Authority

LCC: Low of Consultative Council

LoP: Low of Provinces

Mgr: Manager of Education at the Local Level

MoE: Ministry of Education

MoHE: Ministry of Higher Education

SCEP: Supreme Committee for Education Policy

Senior: Top Level Official at the Ministry of Education

SJC: Supreme Judicial Council

SLB: Street Level Bureaucrats

SPr: School Principals (Secondary school)

CHAPTER ONE

1.1-Introduction

In Saudi Arabia, the political system functions within a framework of an absolute monarchy, whereby the King is the ultimate source of power, being the head of both state and government (Aba-Namay 1993). As the central institution of the Saudi government, the monarchy has a strong political presence, and the country is ruled by the sons and grandsons of King 'Abdul Aziz Al Saud', a man regarded as the founder of the modern Saudi state. On a religious note, the *Qur'an*[1] is the constitution of the country, which is governed according to the *Shari'ah* [2] (Islamic law) (Al-Rasheed 2002).

Since 1992, the government of Saudi Arabia has been engaged in a series of political, economic and administrative reforms designed to cope with various economic, political, social and legal problems as well as to meet both the country's development needs and the challenges of globalisation. For example, the political-administrative reform initiated by King Fahd[3] in 1992 (The Basic Law of Government, the Consultative Council Law, and the Law of the Provinces)[4] introduced major changes to the Saudi state's organic institutions and established various administrative procedures for state organisations (Al-Mehaimeed 1993). Since then, the structure of power and the power relationship between central and local government has changed dramatically, taking various twists and turns as it has done so. For instance, prior to the adoption of this reform, both legislative and executive powers were exercised by the Council of Ministers (CoM) with the King as the head of government. However, the reform established a Consultative Council (CC) with advisory and regulatory power that is in line with the CoM and constitutes the legislative arm of the Saudi government. It has been argued that the reform was a breakthrough since it set up a clear framework for the power structure and addressed the interrelationships between the three arms of government, especially the executive and legislative branches. This was a significant event in the history of the Saudi political system since power was split between two councils for the first time; however, the King remained the point of reference for all these authorities (Aba-Namay, 1993).

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[1] The Qur'an is the Muslims holy book, revealed to Prophet Mohammad (peace upon him) nearly 570 A D.

[2] Rules and regulations generated from the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad's words and deeds.

[3] King Fahd (1921-2005) is the fourth monarch to rule the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

[4] These three primary laws will explained in more details in section 2.3.

Along with the above-mentioned reform came another important change in the power structure with the adoption of the Law of the Provinces (LoP). As a consequence of this new law, the country was divided into thirteen administrative regions with local governments, each headed by a governor appointed by the King and granted the administrative power to oversee and run local affairs. The local governments in Saudi Arabia consist of ministries and other public agencies' offices/ branches, and they are considered to be part of the executive branch. The law of provinces: 'sought to regulate the relationship between central government agencies and regional governors' (Al-Ghadyan, 1998:235) and aimed to decentralise authority by granting considerable financial and administrative independence to the regions. Moreover, the reform of 1992 created a written constitution for the first time that codified the largely unwritten legal system of the country (Aba-Namay, 1993).

These political reforms introduced great fundamental change to the power structure and were seen as a shift towards allowing greater power at the local level and enhancing public participation in policymaking. They were also seen as an attempt to systemise government functions and increase effectiveness and efficiency in delivering social policies (Aba-Namay 1993). However, despite these constant changes in the power relationships within the Saudi political framework and their impact on public policy process and delivery, the system remains centralised and continues to follow a strict top down approach[5] in terms of policy making. It is noteworthy that policy making in Saudi Arabia is generally undertaken at the centre of the government, usually by the CoM and/or other specialised councils or committees, such as the Supreme Committee for Education Policy. Despite the role of the Consultative Council in legislative issues (e.g. progressing a new draft or an amendment to a law), the executive arm's representative on the CoM retains the power to: 'propose laws and ratify international agreements, in addition to having the final say with regard to adopting bills of law and regulations' (Al-Mehaimeed 1993: 34).

Once a policy is enacted at the highest level of the Saudi government, it makes its way down through the policy chain of command to bureaucrats in state organisations, who then

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[5]The top-down approach suggests that successful policy outcome depends largely on the interaction process between goals set by policy-makers and hierarchal bureaucracy (rules/procedures) to ensure that policies are executed as accurately as possible in terms of achieving these goals (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973; Meter and Horn 1975; Bardach 1977; Sabatier and Mazmanian 1981, 1983).

translate this policy into practical terms or put it into action (Barrett 2004). This means that once a policy has been codified and fine tuned with specific aims at the centre, implementers or street level bureaucrats (SLBs)[6] supposedly transform this policy into practice in a way consistent with the ideals of policymakers. However, studies on the implementation of government policy (Lipsky 1980, 1984; Kelly 1994; Weissert 1994; Schneider and Jacoby 1996; Scott 1997; Meyers, Glaser, and MacDonald 1998; Keiser 1999; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2000, 2003) recognise that policies emanating from higher levels of government or, more specifically, the implementation of these policies can be problematic. Most, if not all, of these studies focus on why policy has unforeseen or unintended consequences at the implementation stage. Interestingly, Odden (1991: 2) states that:

> Early implementation research findings, coupled with somewhat later findings on the local educational change process, concluded that local response was inherently at odds with state program initiatives. If higher levels of governments took policy initiatives, it was unlikely local educators would implement those policies in compliance with either the spirit, expectations, rules, regulations, or the program components.

The problem of convincing local implementers to adhere to the spirit of government mandates has been repeatedly identified in relation to different social policies at both state and local levels (Baum, 1984). SLBs frequently misinterpret or disagree with the conceived purpose of policy formulated at the top level and, therefore, fail to deliver the intended policy outcomes. To this effect, Richards and Smith (2005:9) state that: 'those responsible for implementation, street-level bureaucrats [police, social workers, doctors, agency staff... etc], play a vital role in determining the success or failure of a policy'. The variation in policy goals between policymakers and SLBs often leads to public services being delivered in a manner not originally intended by the centre. In many ways, SLBs can be seen as exerting ongoing influence on public policy through the choices they make on a daily basis. Hill and Hupe (2002: 27) further highlight the argument by declaring that: 'Street-level bureaucrats see themselves as decision-makers, whose decisions are based on normative choices, rather than as functionaries responding to rules, procedures or policies'. These

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[6] According to Lipsky (1980: 3), teachers, police officers, health and safety inspectors, judges at lower courts, medical doctors and other social workers are examples of street-level bureaucrats. Lipsky argues that these bureaucrats 'interact as public servants directly with citizens in the course of their job and have substantial discretionary power in the execution of their work'.

concepts associated with bottom-up studies of the policy process constitute the basis for the analytical framework of this thesis, which seeks to explore the ways in which education policy is implemented and examine the variable degree of political autonomy experienced by SLBs at different bureaucratic levels within the Saudi Ministry of Education (MoE). In other words, this thesis explores the issue of variation between the policy goals set at the centre and their implementation at the local level. The analytical framework draws mainly from the literature of policy implementation and its central argument is that is *The nature of the Saudi Political System, based as it is on a monarchical model of government, assumes that policy goals set centrally at the policy gestation stage are closely adhered to by SLBs at the policy implementation stage.* This contrasts with the research on liberal democracies, for example in the United Kingdom and the United States, which highlight a variety of implementation problems in the policy process.

This thesis adopts a bottom-up approach to public policy-making in Saudi Arabia and examines the way in which the policy aimed at reducing the number of failures and drop-outs in secondary schools is being implemented by SLBs and the degree of political autonomy or independency they experience in the implementation process. An examination of this policy is important from the perspective that the high rate of failures and drop-outs at any level of education raises questions concerning the effectiveness of the education system and its internal efficiency. For instance, Alkhteeb et al (2004:232) argue that: '...studies indicate that the high rate of educational waste - repetition and drop-out rates - means low education efficiency and effectiveness'. However, an analysis of the quantitative growth of public education in Saudi Arabia for the fourth development plan (1984-1989) indicates that the rate of internal efficiency in the field of education decreased due to the continuation of high rates of repetition and drop-out. Figures showed that the average number of years of education invested for each graduate in general education was raised to 18 years of schooling for boys and 15 years of schooling for girls rather than 12 years. This means that six additional places for boys and three places for girls in the educational system were wasted as a result of failure or leakage[7]. Alkhteeb et al (2004:232) insist that the results of general secondary school examinations in Saudi Arabia

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[7] Ministry of Planning, fifth development plan (1989-1994), Riyadh, 1989, page:311

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clearly indicate a continuous fluctuation in the rates of success over the period of twenty years (1975-1995). They argue that:

> The percentage of success in the scientific section declined from 77.9% in 1975 to 58.1% in 1980. This ratio improved to 74.2% in 1989 and then declined once again to 71.6% in 1992. The percentage of success in the literary section decreased from 90.3% in 1975 to 49.4 in 1979. This figure then rose to 76.4% in 1989, declining once again to 74.3% in 1992 .These figures indicate that the percentage of losses in the output of the secondary school stage was at least 25%, which shows the waste and ineffectiveness of educational internal efficiency of secondary education in Saudi Arabia.

It could be argued from the above figures that the education system in Saudi State is under-performing if assessed on the relationship between the number of students who start learning and graduate from school. i.e., if the learning of students is linked with the lowest expenses and accompanied by graduation of the largest number of students with sufficient education required for the society (Haddad. et al., 1990). This research therefore is also located within an important debate concerning the effectiveness of Saudi State education and aims to add to the existing literature in this area. The purpose of the study is discussed in the next sub-section.

1.2- Purpose of the study

The primary aim of this thesis is to explore the nature of power and autonomy within the Saudi political system, with particular reference to public education policy implementation. There is a set expectations of the centre that policies are directly implemented on the ground with little variation from their original intentions. Therefore, the thesis explores the extent to which the policy of reducing the number of failures and drop-outs in secondary schools is being implemented by SLBs (secondary school principals and education managers) in three different local authorities across Saudi Arabia mainly in Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam cities[8]. The thesis assumes that

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[8] These three cities were chosen for historical, political and economic reasons. They are the major cities in Saudi Arabia, and, consequently, they have the biggest local governments in terms of area, population and economic activities. Moreover, education existed in these three cities before it did in other regions and has developed significantly. Jeddah was chosen because, in addition to it being a prime industrial and commercial centre, it is the most historical and commercial city in the Hejaz region where formal education began even before it became a part of Saudi Arabia. In fact, the entire Hejaz region outweighs all other regions in terms of the importance of education due to the presence of the two Holy Mosques, and it has become a forum for Muslim scholars and preachers. Riyadh, on the other hand, was chosen because it is the biggest city in the country and the political capital.

exploring the way in which such policy is implemented and the degree of power and autonomy SLBs exercises in the implementation stage, as well as the obstacles and challenges they confront at work on a day to day basis, provides both a useful and original insight into the nature of the Saudi political system, and more particularly the way in which public policy is delivered. The thesis therefore has a number of themes it sets out to explore:

- To explore and understand the nature of the Saudi political system and how the power relationship between the centre and local could be explained.

- To provide a thorough analysis of the nature and evolution of the public education system and its practices.

- To examine SLBs understanding and beliefs with regards to education policy and how they translate the policy into action in their daily work.

- To explore the degree of power and autonomy experienced by SLBs in the implementation stage.

- To account for possible variation between policy set by the centre and its implementation at the local level.

- To explore the reasons behind the shifting of SLBs perspectives on the implementation of education policy.

1.3- Research Questions

To explore the way in which public education policy aimed at reducing the number of failures and dropouts within secondary school education is implemented in Saudi Arabia, the thesis seeks to answer the following central question: *To what extent the SLBs adhered to education policy goals in the implementation stage?* The sub questions below flow from the central question, and these need to be answered in order to derive the answer to it:

Moreover, it is the centre of religious authority and of government, most of the Ministries' offices, including the MoE and government organizations, being found there. Therefore, it is important to include Riyadh in the study to understand the effect of these elements on the implementation process. Dammam was also chosen because it is a big city, the third largest in the country and the most industrialized, having the biggest port for oil exportation; education in Dammam was influenced in its early stages by the presence of a western oil company. Importantly, these three cities represent the western, middle and eastern regions of Saudi Arabia and the associated cultures, norms and social statuses, which could possibly influence the manner in which SLBs implement policy.

- What is the nature of the public policy system in Saudi Arabia, with specific reference to education policy, and how does it function?

- What perceptions do SLBs have of education policy objectives?

- How are education policy targets and goals translated into action in a public service context at the MoE?

- How can relations of power and autonomy within the MoE be explained?

- Where and why in the delivery chain might misinterpretation occur within the levels of bureaucracy?

- What evaluation and measurement techniques are employed in secondary school education?

- What major problems are encountered by SLBs in the implementation of education policy?

1.4- The Significance of the Study

The importance of this study and its contribution to the current literature dealing with policy implementation could be viewed from different perspectives:

- Firstly, this thesis is the first piece of academic-based research to explore the nature of power and autonomy in the Saudi system and the power relationship between the central government and the regional level and the effects of this on the implementation of public policy. More specifically, it is an attempt to explore the link between policy design and implementation and/or the extent of which policy set by the centre is implemented by SLBs at the local level. The thesis aims to contribute to this effort by establishing a basis for future Saudi literature dealing with policy implementation and developing a theoretical concept and understanding of the policy implementation applicable to the specific nature of the Saudi system of policy delivery.

- Secondly, although there have been several studies dealing with the implementation of education policy in Saudi Arabia from different perspectives, there is a lack of systematic research on the policy aimed at reducing the number of failures and drop-outs in secondary schools in Saudi Arabia. This means that neither the way in which this specific policy is being implemented nor the degree of political autonomy experienced by SLBs in the implementation stage have been investigated and analysed. Therefore the

thesis aims to fill this gap by providing an in-depth investigation of the way in which such policy is implemented.

• Thirdly, this thesis comes at a time when the Saudi government is continuing to reform and develop its political, administrative and social systems and to increase the efficiency of government agencies in delivering social policies. It is hoped that the results of the study undertaken for this thesis will form a basis for recommendations aimed at helping decision-makers in the field of education to identify the potential strengths and weaknesses of public education policy implementation and to develop and improve education policy capable of fulfilling its goals extensively.

• Fourthly, the policymaking approach including the implementation process in Saudi context will be examined and tested in the light of studies and theories of scholars and researchers in the field of policy implementation in Western countries, particularly the UK and the USA that assumes implementation problems. This will help broaden the scope of implementation literature beyond the context of the West and the viewpoints of its Western scholars to include non-democratic systems, alternative political cultures and different bureaucratic environments such the one Saudi Arabia.

1.5- Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on the implementation of education policy, more specifically on the policy aimed at reducing the number of failures and drop-outs in secondary schools. However, this thesis does not directly address all aspects of the operation of education policy or of the processes involved. The scope of this study is limited to SLBs (education managers and secondary school principals) working for the MoE, that is those who are involved in translating the policy into action. Secondary school principals in the private or military sectors are not included in the research since these two sectors are governed by their own regulations and procedures. In addition, the study does not include female SLBs in secondary schools due to the constraints of time and resources available for the study. If more time and resources had been available, it would have been possible to obtain multi-gender in-depth information to augment the current results and to ascertain whether the

research findings were generalised or were specific to the male SLBs working at the three large local education authorities participating in the study.

1.6- Organisation of the Study

This thesis is divided into nine chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the research aims and objectives and a discussion of the key research questions, the answering of which should lead to a better understanding of the nature of the Saudi political system and the extent to which education policy is implemented. The chapter begins with a discussion of the change in power structure in the Saudi political system due to the 1992 reform and its impact on both the policymaking process and the relationship between the centre and local government in terms of policy implementation. Relevant academic literature on policy implementation is presented in brief in this chapter along with a central argument that assumes consistency between policy goals and their implementation according to the nature of the Saudi system. These two elements (implementation literature and central argument) constitute the base for the analytical framework of this thesis. The chapter then discusses why research in this area is necessary and how it contributes to both the Saudi literature and existing literature on policy implementation. The chapter also discusses the limitations of the study and concludes with a section on how the study is organised.

The second chapter explores the nature and development of the Saudi political system from different perspectives. The chapter traces the evolution of the state and its development throughout the course of Saudi history as well as the genesis of political and religious convergence. It discusses the interdependence of Islam, tribalism and monarchy and the role these have played in the formation of the modern state, its model of governance and its political structure. The chapter analyses the nature of the Saudi state post 1992[9], as a key point in terms of the development of the political system, and the change in the structure of power and how it has centralized since then. As a way of establishing a context through comparison with other nations, the political structures of the United Kingdom, Jordan and Morocco are described and compared with the Saudi system in terms of differences and similarities. This helps in understanding the nature of

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[9] In 1992 the monarch introduced important political, economic, social and administrative reforms aimed at systemizing the government's work, increasing its efficiency and effectiveness and at coping with public demand for widening of participation in policy making and the need for meeting development and globalization challenges.

decision-making and its impact on the delivery of public policy. The chapter concludes with an argument that the Saudi model will ultimately yield more autonomy to the civil service by replicating the development process of the Moroccan and Jordanian monarchical systems, which are characterised by greater fragmentation and more pluralisation of political power and, hence, greater autonomy at the street-bureaucrat level.

Chapter three provides a general overview and discussion of the nature and development of the Saudi education system. The chapter sheds some light on the connection between religion, a corner-stone of Saudi life, and education as well as on the relationship between the state and education. These three elements, religion, education and state, are the main pillars that constitute the base for understanding the evolution and development of the education system in Saudi Arabia. The chapter also provides a brief overview of the organisation of the public education system, with a focus on the MoE as the main state organisation responsible for public education. This is followed by a brief discussion on the administration of public education and its stages. In the final part of the chapter, education policy is analysed and discussed in terms of the policy actors involved in the policymaking and policy implementation processes.

In Chapter Four, current literature on policy implementation is reviewed, focusing on the theoretical background and empirical works pertinent to policy implementation. The chapter reviews different theories of scholars in the field of policy implementation in relation to the issue of why policy may or may not be implemented according to policy mandates. This is followed by a discussion on the SLBs' role and impact on the implementation of education policy.

Moving on from the literature, chapter five discusses the research methodology employed to explore the Saudi political system and investigate the degree to which education policy is implemented. Justification for the choice of research strategy, instruments and procedures of data collection is given. Then follows a discussion centred on implementation of the questionnaire and administration of interviews in the field, processing of field returns, mode of analysis, and validity and reliability as they relate to the study of policy implementation. Ethical concerns, such as the ethics of policy study and researcher bias, are also addressed in chapter five.

Chapters six, seven and eight consist of three case studies conducted in the three main educational authorities being studied, namely Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam, respectively. These three chapters focus on the way in which education policy is implemented in these local authorities, with specific reference to the policy of reducing the number of failures and drop-outs in secondary schools. These chapters also investigate the degree of power or political autonomy experienced by school principals and their managers of education in the implementation process in the three local education authorities of the aforementioned cities and the possible variation between the policy goals and their implementation.

Chapter nine presents a discussion and analysis of the study. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section analyses the aims of the study and its contribution to both the policy implementation literature and Saudi literature in terms of the nature of the political system and the implementation process. The second section analyses the education authorities of Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam as well as the contribution of each to the aims of the study. The third section analyses the results of the study in relation to the research questions and/or the research's main themes. This includes a discussion of education policy implementation as an indicator of the nature of power and autonomy in delivering public policy within the Saudi model of governance. The conclusion of the research is presented in section four. In the final section, recommendations that might help policymakers to improve the implementation process are presented and a further research agenda is discussed. Figure 1.1 shows the thesis map; order and organisation.

Figure: 1.1 Thesis Map

PART 1		PART 2	PART 3
Introduction	Background and theoretical context	Empirical research Case studies	Analysis of research Finding and conclusion
Chapter.1 Introduction Defining the research agenda and the structure of the thesis	**Chapter.2** The Nature and development of Saudi political system	**Chapter.6** Case study-1 Jeddah educational authorities	**Chapter.9** Discussion of the research conclusion and recommendations
	Chapter.3 The nature and development of Saudi educational system	**Chapter.7** Case study-2 Riyadh educational authorities	
	Chapter.4 Policy implementation and the role of street-bureaucrats level	**Chapter.8** Case study-3 Dammam educational authorities	
	Chapter.5 The research Methodology		

CHAPTER TWO

The Nature and Development of the Saudi Political System

2.1-Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, the aim of this study is to understand the nature of the Saudi political system by investigating the extent to which public education policy is implemented by SLBs. In other words, it attempts to explain the power relationship between the centre and local government in terms of policy implementation within the framework of Saudi governance. This chapter contributes to this aim by setting out the historical, religious and cultural foundations of the Saudi political system and its development over time. More specifically, this chapter analyses the nature and development of the Saudi political system from different perspectives. Firstly, it provides a historical background to the political and the religious convergence out of which the Saudi political system emerged and its development throughout the course of Saudi history. The emphasis is placed on the formation period of the Saudi state that lasted until 1962. The discussion focuses on the interdependence of Islam, tribalism and monarchy as well as the role these have played in the formation of the modern state and its model of governance. Secondly, the chapter moves on to analyse the political reforms of 1992, which are seen as a key point in terms of the development and evolution of the Saudi political system, and the extent to which the contemporary state has been shaped by the past.

The analysis traces the development of the political system and how the power structures evolved and changed over the period of time from 1962 to 1980 as this period was characterised by the centralisation of the Saudi state. This aids an understanding of the nature of decision-making as well as the power relationship between the centre and local government and how these both influence the delivery of public policies. Thirdly, in order to establish context, the political structures of the United Kingdom, Jordan and Morocco are considered to show the contrast with the Saudi system that described as a highly centrlised / authoritarian regime despite the fact that all these political system including Saudi are embracing a top down, state-centric approach for achieving policy goals. This contrast constitute the basis for the argument that the Saudi model will ultimately yield more autonomy to the civil service by replicating the development process of the Moroccan and

Jordanian monarchical systems, which are characterised by greater fragmentation and more pluralisation of political power and, hence, greater autonomy at the street-bureaucrat level. These three political systems were chosen for comparison with the Saudi system because of the following similarities:

- All these monarchies share specific features in terms of evolution and longevity as well as the monarchs being the head of the state though not the head of government as in Saudi Arabia.

- The monarch in these systems is the main reference of power and has the power to choose the Prime Minister as the head of government. Although the monarchy's power in the UK is theoretical and nominal, the monarch possesses the right to choose any British citizen to be his or her Prime Minister and can call and dissolve Parliament whenever he or she wishes.

- All these monarchies, including Saudi Arabia, are presented as political systems with a high concentration of power at the centre despite the degree of variation in terms of power fragmentation at the local level.

- The power structure in these monarchies could be seen as a progression from *Shaikal* or a tribal system of rule to a monarchical system with a more open political structure, such as in Jordan and Morocco. Alternatively, as a transition from an all-powerful king, who claims that he obtains his right to rule from God, to a national parliament, such as in the U.K, where the Commons and Lords emerged in 1341 (Darlington, 2009).

Before the roles of religion and tribalism in Saudi politics and their impact on the formation of the contemporary Saudi state and its system of governance are discussed, the next section briefly explains the identity of the Saudi state and the nature of its political system.

2.2- Political History of the Saudi State

The identity of the Saudi state and the nature of its political system are clearly spelt out in Articles One and Five of the Basic Law of Government, issued in 1992 with bundles of political, economic, social and administrative reforms. Vassiliev (1998:466) points out that Article one declared that 'The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic state

with Islam as its religion; God's Book and the *Sunnah*[10] of His Prophet are its constitution'. Meanwhile, Article Five of the same law declared that the system of government in Saudi Arabia 'shall be monarchical, and the dynasty's right shall be confined to the sons of the founder, King Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Su'ud, and the sons of their sons'. These two Articles, then, clearly illustrate the state's identity, the nature of rule and power and the constitutional framework of governmental structures and policies. Nonetheless, to understand the nature of the Saudi political system, the process of its development and the forces that shaped the system in 1992 (the key point in the change and development of the Saudi political system), one must have a greater understanding of religion, tribal allegiance and the monarchy in Saudi Arabia (Metz, 1993) and how they have shaped the system of governance and state policies since the foundation of the modern state in 1932. The following section discusses the relationship between religion and the Saudi state.

2.2.1-Religion and State

Bowen (2007) noted that when King Fahd (1921-2005) ascended to the throne, he did not adopt the title of king; rather, he was designated the Khadim al Haramayn or "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques"[11]. According to Bowen, this emphasised the Islamic element of governance and reflected the partnership between the religious and political elements of Saudi society. This society was established in 1744 by Muhammad Ibn Saud, the Amir[12] in Ad Diriyah, a small town near Riyadh,[13] and Muhammad Ibn Abd al Wahhab[14], a prominent theologian and scholar, who promoted the doctrine of the oneness of God in true Islam (Bowen 2007).

Literature dealing with this subject (Philby, 1928; Salameh, 1980; Hourani, 1991; Vassiliev, 2000; Krieger, 2001; Niblock, 2006) suggests that the alliance made between the two men was a landmark in the political-religious history of the Arabian Peninsula. It is claimed that these men had ideas and thoughts in common. According to Philby (1928:72), Muhammad Ibn Saud was impressed by Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab's message of reform because of the beneficial effect it might have on regional politics. Similarly, Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab

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[10] Action and speech of prophet Mohammad
[11] The Two Holy Mosques in Makah and Medina cities
[12] Prince- ruler
[13] Muhammad Ibn Saud ruled from 1744 to 1756 (Vassiliev, 2000).
[14] The term Wahhabism is derived from the name of Muhammad Ibn Abd-al Wahhab (Algar, 2002).

'saw the political ramifications clearly and realised that his religious message would have greater impact with the support of strong and ambitious men like al-Saud'. Hence, the agreement between the two men led to the configuration of the first Saudi state according to Islamic law, which meant that Islam was the guide for state policies and their goals. Hourani (1991: 258) observes that:

> The reformer made an alliance with Muhammad Ibn Saud, ruler [tribal chieftain] of a small market town, Dir'iyya, and this led to the formation of a state which claimed to live under the guidance of the *Shari'a* Islamic law code and tried to bring the pastoral tribes all around it under its guidance.

Hourani (1991) states that between 1773 and 1819 this combined force united most of the lands making up the current kingdom for the first time since the days of early Islam. The ruling system that emerged is credited with establishing a clear framework of power from the beginning of the first Saudi state as well as organizing how that power was to be divided. According to Vassiliev (2000), the leader of the Al Su'ud was given the title of "imam"[15] and religious authority was vested in the *Al al-Shaykh* (the family of the sheikh[16], Muhammad Ibn Abd al Wahhab). However, the imam did not have absolute political power because the precepts of Abd al Wahhab dictated that legitimate secular authority must conform to Islamic law and produce civil order (Vassiliev, 2000). Niblock (2009:29) describes the interdependence between religion and monarchy in Saudi politics as a mutually-dependent and supportive relationship, arguing that:

> The relationship between Wahhabism and the Saudi political system, in all three of the Saudi states, has been close and supportive. Without the support of the Al Su'ud, Wahhabism would not have gained a predominant position within the Islamic framework of the Arabian Peninsula, and without the militant support of the Wahhabi movement, it is unlikely that the Al Su'ud would have gained territorial control of the peninsula. Wahhabism provided the basis on which the Al Su'ud could claim legitimacy both for their control of existing territories and for the expansion of their control.

This convergence of political and religious interests has been a feature of the political ruling system in the Arabian Peninsula since the mid 17th century and continues within the modern

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[15] Political leader
[16] Religious leader

Saudi state. Bowen (2007) remarks that this model[17] guided the rule of the Al Su'ud in Najd[18] (the first and second Saudi state) in the middle of the Arabian Peninsula for more than two decades. However, there was a short period from 1891 to 1902 during which the "Al-Rasheed"[19] family had access to power in Najd, with support from the Ottoman Empire, resulting in the exile of the Al-Saud family to Kuwait in 1891 (Bowen, 2007). As Krieger (2001) notes, the first Saudi state, which dated from the mid-seventeenth century, expanded to cover most of the Arabian Peninsula and even some parts of modern Iraq and Jordan. According to Krieger (2001), this state did last long, coming to an abrupt end in 1819 when the Ottoman government of Egypt became alarmed by the Al-Saud's power and its threat to Damascus and Baghdad and thus to Ottoman control of pilgrimage. The Ottoman pasha, Muhammad Ali, attacked the state and destroyed the capital (Krieger 2001).

The second Saudi state (1824-1891) was established in Riyadh in 1824. According to Krieger (2001), this second state re-emerged a few decades later when the rule of the House of Saud was restored to central and eastern Arabia after having previously been brought down by an Ottoman-Egyptian invasion in 1818. Compared to the first state, the second Saudi state was marked by less territorial expansion and less religious zeal, although the Saudi leaders continued to go by the title of "Imam" and still employed Wahhabist religious scholars (Krieger, 2001). It was also marked by severe internal conflicts within the Saudi family, eventually leading to the dynasty's downfall. As a consequence, a local rival[20] backed by Ottoman power defeated this state in 1891, and the Saud family were forced into exile in Kuwait.

Perhaps the clearest expression of this combining of religious and political forces came in the early part of the 20th century when Prince Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud (1879-1953) recaptured Riyadh, the capital of the second Saudi state, which had ceased to be when the Al- Rasheed family exiled the Saud family to Kuwait. Krieger (2001) notes that Abdul Aziz established the new state in three stages, assisted by the *Ikhwan*[21] or brotherhood: firstly, he regained control of the rest of Najd (centre of Saudi Arabia), including the Al-

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[17] Interdependence between religion and politics
[18] Central part of Saudi Arabia
[19] Regional power in the north of the Arabian Peninsula.
[20] The Al-Rasheed ruling family is in the north of Arabian Peninsula.
[21] Ikhwan is a keen group of Wahhabi advocated warriors.

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AHsa region in the east of Saudi Arabia, which was controlled by Ottoman troops; secondly, he defeated the Al Rasheed forces at Hail in the north of the Arabian Peninsula in 1921 and eradicated their ruling system; and, thirdly, he conquered the Hejaz[22] (the west region of Saudi Arabia), including Makkah and Medina, in 1924 (Krieger, 2001).

By 1932, the country had been unified under the name of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which covered an area approximating to the territory of the present state (Bowen, 2007). Having created a nation state through reliance on a combination of force and ideological mobilization, King Abdul-Aziz (the founder of the modern Saudi state) continued to use this combination in order to maintain monarchial rule. Long (1997) argues that it is obvious that King Abdul-Aziz and his successors have used Islam to legitimate their position and policies and, indeed, their very right to govern as a royal family. According to Long (1997), the royal family has accomplished this by emphasizing their position as guardians of the holy places, patrons of the pilgrimage and promoters of Islamic causes throughout the world.

Religion has long been regarded as an integral part of the Saudi system. It is structurally and functionally embedded into the overall system. Since the foundation of the modern state in 1932 and, indeed, since the beginning of the first Saudi state in the 18th century, the *Shari'ah* (Islamic law) has been the source and inspiration of the Saudi system, providing legitimacy for the nature of the state and guiding its goals, policies and responsibilities as well as clarifying the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Esposito (1998:108) states that 'Although monarchy is not an Islamic form of government, it has been rationalized by the claim that all, even the king, are subservient to Islamic law'. Moreover, religion plays a central role in establishing public policy and guiding its implementation. Articles 1, 48 and 67 of the Basic Law of Governance, issued in 1992 with a bundle of political and administrative reforms, state that Islamic Law is the source of both legal rules and political powers (Al-Mehaimeed 1993). Long (1997: 42) points out that 'for Saudis Islam is more than a religion; it is a totally self-contained cosmic system'.

This complex system of interdependence defines the nature of the relationship between governmental and religious authorities, with both these actors managing to moderate their

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[22] Hejaz (western region of Saudi Arabia, including Makah, site of the Holy Mosque) was under the rule of the Hashemite family (the contemporary monarchical system in Jordan).

actions and, thus, influence any attempts to change or restructure Saudi society. For example, the resistance to Western culture and influences is frequently attributed to the strong influence of religion on state institutions (Al-Baadi, 1994; Metz, 1993). Long (1997: 44) takes the view that Saudis are self-reliant and depend largely on their own cultural heritage, which could be explained by the fact that 'Saudis use religion, or rather Islam, as the basis of their political system and see it as self-contained as their rules are based on Islamic *Shari'ah* law'. Fandy (1999: 126) claims that 'The Saudi state is peculiar in that it usually presents itself as the defender of the faith in the face of cultural and religious onslaughts from the West.' Thus, the state is founded on the concept of accepting that the *Shari'ah* is the sole source of legislation. It could be argued that the relationship between the royal family and the religious establishment is primarily a function of religious legitimacy and social control. The religious establishment grants religious legitimacy to the monarchy in return for control over vital social spheres, most importantly education and preaching (Hamzawy, 2006). Therefore, the *ulama*[23] serve a unique role by providing religious legitimacy for the monarch and government policies. They are an influential political force due to the fact that they enjoy trust and respect from most of Saudi society and this enables them to influence large sectors of popular thought. Moreover, Saudi society is religious by nature, religion playing an important role in Saudi life, as explained in this chapter, and, therefore, it is not surprising that the *ulama* have such an influence on state policies. Niblock (2006:15) argues that 'the *ulama* are not simply an arm of the state. The influence which they carry with the monarch stems from his recognition that they occupy a position of strength in civil society'.

To sum up, religion has been an integral part of the Saudi system. It is structurally and functionally embedded into the overall system, providing legitimacy for the political system and guiding state goals, policies and responsibilities. Moreover, religion plays a central role in establishing public policy and guiding its implementation. Islamic Law, which is considered to be the state constitution, is the source of both legal rules and political power. Both religious establishment and monarchy are the main actors in the Saudi system and, therefore, the relationship between them is both mutual and supportive. Religion provides legitimacy for the state, and the state avoids any policy that might offend religion.

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[23] Ulama are the main religious leaders in Saudi Arabia.

The second factor that has contributed to the nature and development of the Saudi political system, shaping the system of governance and state policies since the foundation of the modern state in 1933, is the tribal system. This is discussed in the following section.

2.2.2-Tribal and State

A tribe is a social group or community consisting of people of the same race, who share a common lineage, culture and language and usually live in one specific area (Said, 1982). Structurally, tribes are formed of individuals within lineages with a common patriarch, and these lineages combine individuals in increasingly larger segments (Dahlan, 1990). Cole (1973) notes that four to six patriarchally related lineages are grouped together in a tribe. Although tribes may differ in their status, all lineages of a given tribe are considered equal. These groups are composed not only of the members of the extended family but also of their distant relatives and in-laws, and the power of the group depends on its size. Historically, tribes throughout the Arabian Peninsula had a degree of sovereignty. The head, or sheikh, of the tribe held complete power, governing as a result of consensus in an informal council.

According to the literature on this subject (Cole, 1973; Khariji, 1983; Metz, 1993; Long, 1997; Esposito, 1998; Black, 2001; Algar, 2002; Palmer, 2002), the political history of the Arabian Peninsula is characterised by strong tribal links. Long (1997:16) defines the nature of these links as 'genealogical ties; the extended family, a sense of deep roots rather than occupational or political connections'. The traditional social ties in Saudi society are based on blood relationships in the same tribe (Al-Khariji, 1983). In highlighting the relationships between family members and how these have affected the population in the Saudi context, Esposito (1998: 16) comments that 'The extended family is the most influential social institution in Saudi Arabia and loyalty to it probably exceeds even loyalty to the state'. Similarly, Palmer (2002: 14) argues that 'loyalty to the family continues to compete with loyalty to the state, and it is probably safe to assume that most residents of the Middle East place the interests of the extended family far above the interests of the state'. It is argued that this sense of deep roots and unity of family, which differentiates the Muslim world from the West, is derived from the Islamic religion, as is the politics of Saudi Arabia. While nearly every religion emphasizes good family relations, Islam has taken this to incomparable heights. For example, Black (2001: 350 -351) indicates that:

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> Both patrimonialism[24] and neo-tribalism lie behind what most of all differentiated Islamic from European political thought: the absence of the concept of political office, of the state as separate from individual rulers, and of a distinction between public and private......In the Islamic world, authority remained tied to the outstanding individual and dynasty.

The framework of government is an evolution of the tribal model, and the development of political institutions is still based on the tribal origins of the political system. Metz (1993) argues that in the Arabian Peninsula, almost 80% of which is occupied by Saudi Arabia, tribal affiliation has been the core of identity. Traditionally, the political power in Najd[25] lay with the tribal leader, or sheikh, who took advice from other senior members of that tribe, his rule being tempered by tribal custom and the principles of Islam. The sheikh was expected to mediate in disputes and to guarantee the security and sustenance of his tribe, receiving tributes and dispensing largesse (Algar, 2002). The relationship between the Saudi monarchy and Saudi citizens today mirrors the traditional relationship between the sheikh and tribal members, convention persisting in the dealings of the monarchy with citizens. The Saudi concept of legitimate rule is similar to the concept of tribal democracy in which the individual exchanges views with the tribal sheikh. Cordesman (1997: 21) suggests that:

> Even today, Governors in the provinces and the King himself continue the tradition of holding an open audience (*majlis*) at which any tribesman or other male citizen could gain a hearing. Saudi Arabia has a long tradition of public access to high officials and the right to petition such officials directly.

The Saudi monarchy represents the simplest model of Arabic tribal tradition due to the fact that the country was insulated from the direct impact of foreign influences. Owen (1992) argues that most local and regional forces failed, for various reasons, to control a large part of the Arabian Peninsula. As a result of this situation, he insists that "there were no fingerprints of these forces with their armies and bureaucracies on the inhabitants of the region, which makes Saudi Arabia account for less complex tribal systems than other systems in the Arab world". Long (1997) takes a similar view, arguing that Saudi Arabia has not experienced colonization or other lesser forms of tutelage, as have other Arab states. The

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[24]In Weber's *Economy and Society*, patrimonialism refers to forms of government based on rulers' family-households. The ruler's authority is personal-familial, and the mechanics of the household are the model for political administration (Adams, 2007).

[25] Central region of Saudi Arabia

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resulting isolation strengthened tribal culture and family structure, which has heavily influenced the government system, contributing to its nature and development. Furthermore, according to Long (1997: 108), Saudis 'see themselves on equal, if not superior, terms to the West, and this has eliminated the type of identity crisis sometimes common among Western-educated elites from other traditional societies.'

The influence of the tribal system and its role in the formation of the Saudi state is evident in that in the early years of the 20th century, Saudi society was divided into large tribal groups that maintained a corporate life and inhabited different regions in the central and northern Arabian Peninsula. These tribes were organised under a chieftaincy, which was the common Saudi political model during the first and second Saudi states (1744-1891) and was re-established by King Abdul-Aziz in 1902 (Khoury and Kostiner, 1991). The tribal tasks that developed under Saudi chieftaincy were relevant to Saudi state formation in several ways: firstly, tribes were used as military power that accompanied trade convoys; secondly, they were used to fight the enemies of the Saudi chieftaincy and, thus, expand its territories; and, thirdly, they were regarded as the executers of the religious Wahhabi cause. The tribal segmentary organisation that dominated the chieftaincy influenced the Saudi value system. For example, political decentralisation, minimal administration, social solidarity and economic cooperation were among the values shared by both nomadic and sedentarised populations, whose loyalties and settling patterns were dictated by segmentary lines. These values affected state formation in its different stages (Khoury and Kostiner, 1991).

In 1912, King Abdul-Aziz began organising the *Ikhwān*,· a militantly religious tribal organization, in settlements known as *hijrahs* in order to break the traditional tribal allegiances and create a reliable and stable source of an elite army for the expansion of his power over the Arabian Peninsula. The *hijrahs* offered tribesmen living quarters, mosques, schools, agricultural equipment and instruction as well as arms and ammunition. Most importantly, religious teachers were brought in to instruct the tribesmen in the precepts of Islam as taught by the religious reformer Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb in the 19th century (Habib, 1978). This religious and military orgnisation played an important role in the formation of the state and enabled the new state to expand its authority over the territories that form the contemporary Saudi state. The *Ikhwan* began its campaign against the Hāshimid kingdom of the Hejaz on the western coast of Arabia

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in 1919, and this resulted in the conquest of Hejaz, including Mecca, and the subsequent surrenders of Jiddah and Medina in 1925. The *Ikhwān* was also instrumental in securing the provinces of Asir, just south of the Hejaz, in 1920 and Hāil, in the north of the peninsula along the borders of Transjordan and Iraq, in 1921. However, despite their assigned roles in the formation of the state, the tribes and their chieftains were not incorporated into the Saudi power structure and held no administrative positions. This was because the Saudi power structure was dominated by the ruler, Al Su'ud, and the *ulama,* which had traditionally ruled the chieftaincy as political and spiritual leaders (Khoury and Kostiner, 1991). However, during the formation of the contemporary Saudi state (1902-1932), the relationship between the monarchy and the tribes was one of mutual dependence. Niblock (2006:33) states that:

> In return for subsides provided by the public treasury and the recognition
> given by Abd al-Aziz to their administrative authority within their own
> areas, the tribal leaders secured and maintained the political acquiescence
> of a significant part of the population.

The assurance of direct and frequent access to the king as well as their ability to influence his decisions reinforced the tribal leaders' involvement with the Al Su'ud. This enabled the tribal leaders to play an essential role as interlocutors between their tribe and the monarchy, ensuring the loyalty and quiescence of their people to King Abdul Aziz (Niblock, 2006). The historical institutionalism of tribal power has changed over time due to urbanisation and the rapid economic development of Saudi society. Al-Saif (1997) indicates that traditional social ties and social relationships are changing in large Saudi cities and the power of the traditional in-group has lessened so that an individual is now able to join a variety of in-groups, such as associations and clubs, which are found in complex societies. A similar view is presented by Champion (2003), who indicates that Saudi tribal allegiance has been weakened since the mid-twentieth century by the increasing role of a centralized state and by the growth of urbanization and industrialization resulting from the discovery of oil. On the other hand, the discovery of oil transformed Saudi Arabia and the life of its population as a result of the generation of financial resources with which the state was able to create its infrastructure (Cleveland, 2004).

To sum up, a tribe is a social entity made up of people belonging to the father's lineage. Tribal affiliation has been the core of identity in Saudi Arabia, influencing the social, political and cultural environment in Saudi Arabia. Saudi political institutions have evolved out of a political system that was based on the tribal model at the formation of the first Saudi state. Despite being a recognisable factor in Saudi politics due to the significant role they played in the formation of the Saudi contemporary state, tribes do not figure in the current Saudi system's framework of power and hold no administration positions. Moreover, tribal power has decreased due to urbanisation and the rapid political and economic development of the Saudi state.

2.3- Political Reform in the 1990s

The year 1992 marked the 60th anniversary of Saudi Arabia's continuing existence as a state and the tenth anniversary of King Fahd's[26] accession to the throne. This year is particularly significant because it was marked by several reforms that introduced major changes in the Saudi state's organic institutions, including the monarchy, and established various administrative procedures for state organizations. It also created a constitution[27] for the first time since the establishment of the political system in 1932. These reforms included three primary laws: The Basic Law of Government, the Consultative Council Law and the Law of the Provinces. Niblock, (2006:104) states that:

> Over a prolonged period, promises of reform from within the political leadership and calls for reform from those modernisers with links to Government had focused on a basic law defining the processes whereby the country was governed, the establishment of a Consultative Assembly which would comment on proposed legislation, and the creation of more coherent structure for the administration of the provinces.

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[26] King Fahd was the first Saudi monarch to initiate a major reform in the Saudi political system since its foundation in 1932.

[27] Saudi Arabia had not had a written constitution since the Kingdom was proclaimed in 1932 due to the fact that the state believed a constitution to be unnecessary or less suitable than the principles to be found in the Qur'an and *shari'ah* (Islamic law). Aba-Namay (1993:236) argues that there are some historical as well as ideological reasons for the absence of both a written constitution and a legislative institution until the political reforms initiated in 1992. He suggests that 'The term *Dustur* or "constitution" is not commonly used by Saudis, who believe that only the Qur'an can be called a constitution; the government has always maintained that the constitution of Saudi Arabia is the Qur'an.'

Some scholars of Saudi politics (Al-Mehaimeed, 1993; Aba-Namay, 1993; Al-Baadi, 1994; Al-Ghadyan, 1998; Al-Rasheed, 2002) view these legal and constitutional reforms as a step towards modernizing and systematizing the work of the government in order to cope with emerging economic, political and legal problems. Furthermore, they argue that writing a constitution and codifying the largely unwritten legal system of the country has made the political system more transparent, contemporary and responsive. For example, Al-Mehaimeed (1993:30) points out that: 'it is only since 1 March 1992 that the country has been enrolled on the list of nations which have written constitutions in a recognisable, modern form'. However, revision or amendment of the Constitution is by royal order, the exact legal instrument used to promulgate it in first place[28]. The same is true with regard to the Statute of the Consultative Council. Pursuant to Article 82, no provision of this Consultation may be suspended except when such a measure is interim in cases of war or a state of emergency and in the manner specified by the law. Whatever the mechanism of revision or amendment of the constitution, these reforms were regarded as the first stage in the creation of a more open political system with a strict and codified legal framework. This can be seen as the beginning of a new era in Saudi law and politics, as observed by Aba-Namay (1993:295), who argues that: 'this step will inevitably lead to more democratization because constitutionalism is, of course, not in itself democracy but an improvement in the mechanisms of constitutionalism leading to a form of democracy'.

Regardless of the emerging economic, political and legal problems that led to the reforms, the reforms themselves were seen as a key point in terms of the development of the power structure within the Saudi political system since it was founded in 1932. To understand such fundamental change and its effect on the power structure in the Saudi system, it is necessary to trace the evolution of the political system and analyse the way in which it has developed over time. It is argued that the Saudi political system evolved around three periods of change and adjustment. The first period of change began in the late 1910s and continued up until 1962. This period was a formative stage, characterised by territorial expansion and the incorporation of new populations. The second period of change was from 1962 until 1980 and was characterised by infrastructural buildup, improvement and entrenchment of the administration in society as well as centralisation of the regime. The third period of change

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[28] The Saudi Constitution, Article 83

began in 1980 and was characterised by the re-shaping of the state, which involved the adoption and adjustment of the changes made during the first two periods (Khoury and Kostiner, 1991; Niblock, 2006). These three periods of change and development in the Saudi system are the focus of the following section.

The formation stage of the Saudi state began in 1910 and continued into the early 1960s. This period witnessed a gradual transformation of the simple administrative structure, found especially in Hejaz province (on the west coast of Saudi Arabia), into a series of defined and organized institutions. This transformation assisted the executive authority in managing the affairs of an expanding territory in the Saudi state. Al-Su'ud (2002) argues that the first steps toward inaugurating a system of governance and implementing the Islamic-based principle of consultation, as presented by the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*[29], were taken with the introduction of the "Makkah Consultative Council" in 1924. This council was responsible for overseeing communication, trade, education, the court system, internal security and the municipal affairs of the Hejaz province. This initial step to improve the social, political and administrative infrastructures was followed by another development in 1926 when the monarch endorsed a comprehensive system called basic regulation (al-Talimat al-Assasiah) for the province of Hijaz. Solaim (1970) argues that basic regulation consisted of nine sections and seventy-nine articles, which dealt with core issues, such as the System of Government, the Administration's Responsibility, the Affairs of the Hijazi Kingdom and so on. He adds that the fourth article of this system established several governmental bodies, including the Consultative Council, Administrative Councils, District Councils, Village Councils and Tribal Councils. Furthermore, within this period of state formation came another important development that was identified as a course of action for administrative reform, the Council of Deputies (Majlis al-Wukala), which was formed in 1932. This served as a small council of ministers for the Hijaz province until the creation of the Council of Ministers in 1953, which brought all the provinces of the Kingdom under its jurisdiction (Solaim, 1970; Dahlan, 1990). Unsurprisingly, most of the political and administrative development during the formation stage concentrated on the Hejaz province. In fact, the Hejaz had its own legal and administrative systems that were generated from Ottoman and,

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[29] Prophet traditions

later, Hashemite rule. The aim, then, was to reform and develop these systems to cope with the challenges, trends and development of the new state. Aba- Namy (1998:237) argues that:

> The various constitutional instruments that were enacted during the formative period of the kingdom were limited to the Hijaz during the early days of its amalgamation with the rest of the Saudi domain. These constitutional instruments were undertaken as an attempt to cope with the new realities of the more developed region of Hijaz.

However, these efforts to develop the old type of administration were rendered less significant by the discovery of oil in the Eastern Province in the 1930s as well as by the increasing complexity of government affairs (Nyrop, 1984). Therefore, in order to advance the development of a new administrative organization, several ministries were created between 1930 and 1953. In addition, a number of centralised departments were founded, eventually paving the way for the establishment of the Council of Ministers (al-Su'ud, 2002). Nevertheless, the Hejaz province joined other provinces when the country united under the name of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in1932. Al-Ansary (2008) indicates that this major step brought all Saudi citizens under the umbrella of a unified constitutional and administrative system, allowing for the completion of new structures for the new Saudi state.

By 1953, three important steps had been taken that would see the transformation of the Saudi state in terms of political sovereignty, stability and economic fortunes: the regulation of succession, the creation of the Council of Ministers and the establishment of the oil industry. The Council of Ministers was established in 1953. The members were appointed by and responsible to the King, and they have given advice on the formulation of general policy and directed the activities of the growing bureaucracy. Al-Ansary (2008) argues that in 1958 Faisal Ibn Abdul-Aziz, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, transformed the Council of Ministers into a legislative, executive and administrative body with decision-making abilities. Most of the constitutional basics in the Kingdom were embedded in the Law of the Council of Ministers. According to Al-Rasheed (2002: 97), 'in the early 1950s the basic political system was in place and ARAMCO, the American Oil Company which won the oil concession in 1933, was employing 20,400 people'. Despite these fundamental achievements in terms of state sovereignty and the economy, the political history of the

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shows that in the early 1950s the state was suffering from poor administration and a lack of government organization. Owen (2000: 59) comments that at this time the Saudi state 'was still ruled much as it had been in the 1930s, with only minimal bureaucracy... supported on occasion by the considerable resources of the oil company ARAMCO from its enclave in the eastern province'. This situation continued to shape the system until the late 1960s, except for the establishment of a few new governmental ministries and organizations.

The second period of change and development of the Saudi political system began in the early 1960s and continued up until the late 1970s when the Saudi state underwent an important transformation. This period was characterised by the building up of the political and economic infrastructure, the improvement and entrenchment of the administration in society and the centralization of the regime. Such development was made possible by an improvement in the Saudi financial situation as a direct result of huge oil revenues. These enabled the state to pursue various reforms and modernization projects. During the 1970s and 1980s, the state continued with its social, administrative and economic infrastructures. Many of the country's government ministries, agencies and welfare administrations were developed during King Fisal's reign (1964-1975), and the country's first five-year plan for economic development was inaugurated. In addition, the state introduced the country's current system of administrative regions and laid the foundations for a modern welfare system, including the execution of policies related to the national economy, education, social welfare and most public affairs (Solaim, 1970; Dahlan, 1990; Al-Tahawi, 2002).

Consequently, the power of the Council of Ministers in regulating and formulating state policy regarding both domestic and foreign affairs policies increased dramatically. The Council was all powerful in terms of policy decision and policy implementation in the Saudi state until the early 1990s when major political and administrative reforms[30] were introduced by King Fahad (1982 - 2005), changing the domestic political environment in Saudi Arabia. This political and administrative development resulted in a great deal of

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[30] These reforms included the issuance of the Basic System of Governance, the Consultative Council Law, and the Regional Law. These three laws issued by Royal Order No. A/90, A/91, A/92 dated (27/8/1412H, Mar. 1, 1992), and published at the Official Gazette (Umm al-Qura) No. 3397 (2/9/1412H, Mar. 5, 1992).

expansion of government programmes and state institutions during the seventies and eighties, leading to the creation of a powerful centralized system that continued to shape the Saudi political system and the nature of the policymaking process. Consequently, the power of both state and monarchy was reinforced to the degree that the state was 'no longer inhibited by influences from the tribal and religious leaders or the commercial establishment' (Niblock, 2006). Table 2.1 shows the monarchs and their period of governance of the Saudi State.

Table 2.1: *Saudi Monarchs and their Period of Rules*

SAUDI MONARCHS	PERIOD
King Abdul Aziz	1932-1953
King Saud	1953-1964
King Faisal	1964-1975
King Khalid	1975-1982
King Fahd	1982-2005
King Abdullah	2005 to present

To summarize, three elements need to be considered in relation to the development of the power structure in the Saudi political system during the formative period. Firstly, religious authority is a dominant actor in Saudi politics, providing legitimacy for the ruling system. It is not an arm of government or part of the policymakers circle, but its opinions, which are based on Islamic principles, are sought to justify important political actions. In other words, the religious establishment has the power to ensure state compliance with the *Shari'ha* even though it is not directly involved in the decision-making process. Secondly, despite the influence of the tribal system on the framework of governance in the Saudi state and the role tribes played in the formation of the Saudi contemporary state, tribes are not represented in the framework of power in the Saudi system and hold no administration positions. Thirdly, despite the creation of the Hejaz Consultative Council, the Council of Deputies and other administrative organs for the new state, power is centralized in the monarchy; the King and his entire circle of advisors control policy decisions and government affairs. In spite of important developments in the political and administrative system, including the creation of the Council of Ministers in 1953, the King continues to control policy decision making. It is

important to point out that the King's personal leadership remains a critical factor in maintaining the stability and growth of the political system and introducing change to the system. King Abdul Aziz (1876-1953) in the formation stage and King Faisal (1904-1975) during the sixties and seventies are both a good example of a strong personal leadership. They gradually developed a successful centralizing process for government after the foundation of the modern Saudi state in 1902 despite the challenges from various social groups[31] over the years to state centralizing policies (Ansary, 2008).

2.4- Division of Power and Authorities of the State

The Basic System of Rules (BSR) (sometimes referred to as the Basic Law) initiated in 1992 offered detailed definitions of the executive, legislative and judiciary authorities, defining the interrelationships between these authorities. Although this law does not exactly define the distribution of power between these branches of government authorities, it does feature a horizontal as well as vertical division of authority within the workings of the Saudi government. Article 44 of the Basic System of Rules states that:

> The authorities of the state consist of the following: the judicial authority; the executive authority; and the regulatory authority. These authorities cooperate with each other in the performance of their duties, in accordance with this and other laws. The King shall be the point of reference for all these authorities.[32]

As indicated above, all authorities in the state continue to be answerable to the King, who is the final point of authority. However, this division of the state authority is expected to improve government efficiency. It is an institutionalisation of different types of authority that enables each branch to perform its assigned functions better. The King, as an external supervisor of these branches, controls and oversees the amount of power that goes into each of the three authorities, emphasising his control of their performance (Almehaimeed, 1993; Ansary, 2008)

The Law of Provinces (LoP) divides the functions within the country's administration vertically, giving semi-autonomy to the 13 provinces that make up the Saudi state.

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[31] The military-tribal group, known as the *Ikhwan,* which had to be confronted and suppressed in 1930, and radical Islamic in the late 1970s and mid-1990s. Both tried to confront the Saudi Royal Family's monopoly on government and Islam (Ansary, 2008).

[32] The basic system of rule, Article 44

According to this law, each province has a local council comprised of ten appointed citizens, and the appointed governors are accountable to the Minister of the Interior. The provinces' functions and power tend to be controlled by the functional authority that flows from the centre. This system has empowered local government administratively and financially, and this has been seen as a step toward decentralisation of decision making, which should enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public policy delivery.

The monarchy is the central institution in the Saudi political system. The King is the head of state and government, and he holds the main levers of power, executive and legislative functions resting with him. By having the power to pardon, the King exercises occasional judicial authority. Figure 2.1 shows the power structure in the Saudi system in which the King is the main reference of the state authorities.

Figure 2.1: *Power Structure in Saudi System*
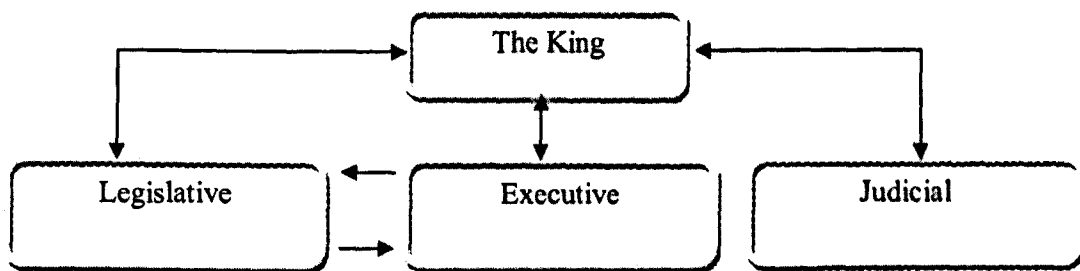
The Executive Branch: The King rules by decree, in accordance with the *Shari'ah* and with the consensus of senior princes and religious officials. The King is somewhat constrained by Islamic law, the necessity to attain consensus among royal family members and the tradition of consultation. However, there is little formal accountability and there are no institutional checks on his authority, which gives him wide-ranging powers of discretion. He exercises executive, legislative and judicial powers through his deputies and ministers. Chapter 6 of the constitution vests unlimited powers in the king:

> The King carries out the policy of the nation, a legitimate policy in accordance with the provisions of Islam; the King oversees the implementation of the Islamic *Shari'a*, the system of government, the state's general policies, and the protection and defense of the country.[33]

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[33] Article 55 of the Saudi constitution

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The King's powers also include the appointment and discharge of his deputies and members of the Council of Ministers, the execution of judicial judgments, commanding the armed forces, the declaration of emergency measures and a state of war, conferring orders of honour and instigating measures to remove threats to the Kingdom or its interests. Article 57 of the Basic Law of Government (Constitution) states that:

> (a) The King appoints and relieves Deputies of the Prime Minister and Ministers and members of the Council of Ministers by Royal Decree. (b) The Deputies of the Prime Minister and Ministers of the Council of Ministers, by swearing allegiance to the King, are responsible for implementing the Islamic *Shari'ah* and the state's general policy. (c) The King has the right to dissolve and reorganize the Council of Ministers. [34]

Kings are chosen through hereditary succession. The 1992 Basic Law altered the tradition of choosing a king or crown prince on the basis of seniority to suitability. Since 1975, the tradition has been for the King to appoint a second deputy prime minister, who would become crown prince upon his death. However, in response to growing uncertainty over succession issues, amendments to succession procedures were announced in 2006. Henderson (2006:142) states that:

> Although the crown prince will still be either sons or grandsons of Ibn Saud, rather than simply being appointed by the King, they will have to be approved by an allegiance (*Bay'ah*) commission made up of the royal family. If the commission rejects the nominated crown prince, it may vote for one of three candidates suggested by the King.

In addition to the King and the Council of Ministers, the executive authority in the Saudi system consists of local governments, ministry subsidiaries and other public independent and quasi-independent agencies (Al-Ansary, 2008). The King appoints the Council of Ministers for a four year term, and its members are responsible to him. Two-thirds of the members constitute a quorum in regular circumstances, and the majority of those present can pass resolutions. In exceptional cases, half of the members make up the quorum. However, in such cases, resolutions must be passed by two-thirds of the votes of those present (Bowen, 2007). The Council draws up and formulates general state policy and ensures that

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[34] Article 57

government departments run smoothly and efficiently (Cordesman, 2003). Headed by the King or the Crown Prince, the Council of Ministers is the direct executive authority in the Kingdom. It has the power to draw up the nation's internal, external, financial, economic, educational and defense policies. It serves the same role regarding general affairs of state and then supervises their implementation. It has final authority over the executive and administrative affairs of all ministries and other government agencies (Dahlan, 1990). It also has the authority to monitor the implementation of laws, regulations and resolutions, establishing and organizing public institutions while simultaneously following up on the implementation of general development plans[35]. In addition, the Council of Ministers has the power to set up committees that review the conduct of the ministries, other governmental agencies or any specific case which might be brought to its attention[36]. Al-Jarbou (2002) indicates that several higher councils and committees have been established to deal with particular issues that fall within the Council of Ministers functions in laying down the policy of the state. The competences of each council and its members as well as the nature of its decisions are always defined by its respective establishing decree. The Supreme Council of Higher Education, the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, the National Security Council and the Higher Committee for Administrative Reform are examples of these councils and committees.

The local governments, branches of ministries and other public agencies in the different regions of Saudi Arabia are considered to be parts of the executive branch. The Law of Provinces divides the country into several regions, which are subordinate to the central government and accountable to the Minister of the Interior[37]. The aim of this division is to improve the level of administrative work and development, maintain security and order and guarantee the rights and liberties of citizens in the framework of the Shari'ah[38]. This indicates that the regions enjoy considerable financial and administrative independence. Overall, this demonstrates an effort to decentralise authority in the Saudi system.

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[35] The basic law of government (Article,1)
[36] The basic law of government (Article,1)
[37] The Law of Provinces (Article 5)
[38] The Law of Province (Article 1)

The Legislative branch: The King, the Council of Ministers and the Consultative Council (*the Shura Council*) share legislative authority in the Saudi state. The Basic System of Rules declared that the *Shari'ah*, is the basis of legislation. The King occupies an essential legislative role in support of *Shari'ah* rule[39]. As the implementer of the *Shari'ah*, the King is granted broad discretion over matters of public interest. However, this right is exercised only when there is no clear text present in Islamic law that could regulate a given issue. The Basic System asserts that:

> The regulatory authority lays down regulations and motions to meet the interests of the state or remove what is bad in its affairs, in accordance with the Islamic *Shari'ah*. This authority exercises its functions in accordance with this law and the laws pertaining to the Council of Ministers and the Consultative Council[40].

The Council of Ministers undertakes both executive and legislative functions[41]. It shares the legislative function with the King and the *Shura* Council. Each minister has the right to propose a draft law or regulation related to the affairs of his ministry[42]. More importantly, the decisions of the Council of Ministers, including those related to the approval of legislative proposals and amendments, are not considered final unless the King approves them.

The Consultative Council shares the legislative authority with the Council of Ministers. It is an institution intended to oversee government organizations' policies, sometimes via requesting a meeting with the relevant ministers, allow citizens to participate directly in the administration and planning of country policies, monitor the performance of its agencies and open up the Saudi decision-making process to greater public scrutiny and accountability (Al-Jarbou, 2002). The powers of the Council are spelled out in Article 15 of its statute. It is empowered to form opinions on state policies referred to it by the Prime Minister. In particular, it debates and provides opinion on the general development plans of the Kingdom in economic and social fields, it interprets laws and it studies draft laws, treaties, international agreements and concessions before their submission to the King for issuance by royal decrees. The Council, furthermore, discusses and makes recommendations

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[39] The basic system of rule (Article 1&55)
[40] The basic system of rule (Article 67)
[41] The Council of Ministers Law (Article 19&20)
[42] The Council of Ministers Law (Article 22)

regarding yearly reports submitted by the various ministries and other government departments. Article 15 of the Consultative Council Law indicates that the:

> *Shura* Council shall express its opinion on the State's general policies referred by Prime Minister. The Council shall specifically exercise the right to do the following: (a) Discuss the general plan for economic and social development and give a view. (b) Revise laws and regulations, international treaties and agreements, concessions, and provide whatever suggestions it deems appropriate. (c) Analyze laws. (d) Discuss governmental agencies' annual reports and attach new proposals when it deems this to be appropriate.[43]

The opinions of the consultative Council are subject to review by the King, who decides which resolutions will be referred to the Council of Ministers. In accordance with the terms of Article 17 of its Statute, resolutions of the Council are submitted to the Prime Minister, who in turn presents these to the Council of Ministers for discussion. If both councils are in agreement, the resolutions come into force following the King's approval. If there is disagreement, the King deems what is appropriate.

> The *Shura* Council's resolutions shall be submitted to the King, who decides which resolutions to refer to the Cabinet. If both the *Shura* Council and the Cabinet agree, the resolutions are issued, with the King's approval. If the views of these councils differ, the issue shall be returned to the *Shura* Council to decide whatever it deems appropriate, and the new resolution sent to the King, who takes the final decision.[44]

The size of the Consultative Council has increased steadily over the years. In 1997, the membership was expanded from 60 to 90. In 2001, it increased to 120 members, expanding once again in 2005 to 150 members. The King appoints these members for four-year terms. The presence of two-thirds of the members of the Council, including the chairman or his deputy, is necessary to constitute a legal quorum. A majority vote by the members who are present means a resolution is adopted.[45]

Judicial branch: The legal system in Saudi Arabia is based primarily on the principles of the *Shari'ah*. By virtue of the Judicial Law of 1975, the judiciary is considered to be

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[43] The Law of Consultative Council (Article 15)
[44] The Law of consultative Council (Article 17)
[45] Ibid (Article 20)

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independent. Section 1 of this law declares that jurors are to be subject only to the dictates of the *Shari'ah* and the law. Sections 53 and 54 declare that the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) is the administrative authority of the judicial system. The SJC is composed of two departments: the Permanent Commission and the General Commission, the former being composed of five members appointed by the King. Each member must have at least the stature of a Head of the Court of Appeal. The General Commission is comprised of five members of the Permanent Commission and an additional five members: the Chairman of the Court of Appeals, the Deputy Minister of Justice and three senior jurors from the General Courts. The Supreme Judicial Council, as the highest judicial body in Saudi Arabia, is empowered to appoint, promote and transfer judges (Vogel, 1999).

The judicial system is composed of a four-tiered hierarchy of *Shari'ah* Courts, which hear cases involving criminal and family legal issues, personal injury and property matters as well as numerous commissions and tribunals, both of an ad hoc and permanent nature. At the base of the hierarchy of the *Shari'ah* Courts are the Limited Courts, which are empowered to hear civil and criminal cases and in which the maximum penalty is limited. At the second level are the General Courts, which are the courts of first instance for all matters falling outside of the jurisdiction of the Limited Courts. The Court of Appeal serves as the third level of the judiciary. For the bulk of matters, the Court of Appeal represents the final arena of appeal. It sits in chambers of three or more judges and makes majority decisions. At the apex of the structure sits the SJC, which, in addition to its administrative authority, also serves in a limited capacity as a final court of appeal for the *Shari'ah* Courts (Vogel, 1999).

To sum up, the political and administrative reforms of 1992 are considered to be a key point in the development of the Saudi political system. The reforms came about as a result of the gradual development of the system since the establishment of the state in 1933. This led to major changes in the state's organic institutions and the power structure within the political system. Although the reforms identified the state authorities and the interrelationships between them, they did not define the distribution of power between these authorities. The King is still the main reference of power for the state authorities. The creation of the Consultative Council with legislative power changed the power structure of the decision making process and ended the dominance of the Council of Ministers. Regardless of the efforts to decentralise the decision making process, the centre still held the power and

controlled the provinces functions, although the country was divided into 13 provinces with some degree of autonomy in terms of financial and administrative matters.

The following section examines and compares the political structures of Morocco, Jordan and the United Kingdom in order to enhance an understanding of the Saudi political system, the decision making process and the power structure.

2. 5 -Comparison of Monarchies

The monarchies of Morocco, Jordan, United Kingdom, and Saudi Arabia display considerable variations in almost every sphere, not only in terms of their legitimacy and longevity but also in the degree of sophistication of their civil societies. Morocco, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, for example, are not only the most populous and influential of the Arab monarchies but also mark extremes in the continua of longevity, wealth and civil sophistication structures. Despite the contrast between these monarchies in terms of power structure and the functions of government, the similarity lies in the development of the power structure from historical point that being a progression from the *Shaikal* or tribal system of rule to the monarchical system and then to a more open political structure such as in Morocco and Jordan. For example, Owen (2000:55) suggests that the nature and practice of Al Su'ud family rule in Saudi Arabia shares many features with Jordan and Morocco 'with the important proviso that the Saudi royal family is much larger and thus able to dominate the senior civil and military posts itself'. Moreover, the literature (Zartman, 1987; Metz, 1989; Owen, 2000; Rauch and Evans, 2000; Maghraoui, 2002; Al-Ansary, 2008) suggests that these systems are characterised by a high concentration of power in the centre though with differences in terms of the fragmentation of power at the local level. Whatever the consistencies between these political systems, it is true to say that the structures of power are varying. For example, Morocco and Jordan formerly are absolute monarchy, but moved towards constitutional monarchy employ a parliamentary system and have appointed prime minister although the monarch retains tremendous power, to the point that the parliament's influence on political life is negligible.

Similarly, British monarch ruled autocratically but eventually its power was diminished and dissolved with the introduction of constitutions giving the people the power to make

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decisions for themselves through elected bodies of government. In other word, the U.K monarchical system have strictly Ceremonial duties or have reserve powers, directly or indirectly elected prime minister who is the head of government and exercises effective political power. However, this is not the case within the Saudi system. The monarch in Saudi system exercises ultimate governing authority as head of state and head of government, thus wielding political power over the sovereign state and peoples. The monarch's authority is not legally bound or restricted by a constitution and there is no political competition or formal separation of powers exists. Therefore, the power structure in Saudi system is personalistic and reinforced by the AL-Saud dynasty. Hence, the system is the most traditional political system that described as an authoritarian monarchy.

To this end, government's functions and systems as well as the existing power structures in the political systems of Morocco, Jordan and, additionally, the United Kingdom, will be highlighted in the following sections.

2.5.1 -Morocco - Political System

The ruling dynasty in Morocco (Alawis) achieved power in Morocco in 1666, centuries before the Saudis and the Hashemites of Jordan and Iraq (Zubaida, 1993). The ruling system in Morocco is a constitutional monarchy. The monarch is the central institution of government. The system is based on multi-party politics, with ultimate power resting with the King as the Head of State (Omar, 1996). Even with constitution, legislature and a number of active political parties, the King is the ultimate source of power in the Moroccan system and the main point of reference for the state authorities. The King presides over the Council of Ministers, appoints and dismisses ministers, including the Prime Minister, promulgates legislation and has the power to dissolve Parliament at any time and rule the country himself by decree (Maghraoui, 2002). However, political reforms in the 1990s established a bicameral Parliament to strengthen representative institutions, enhance the authority of the Parliament and Cabinet and increase political participation. These reforms had the effect of limiting the King's ability to manipulate political affairs (Maghraoui, 2001b).

The revision of the Moroccan Constitution in 1992 created a clear separation between the three tiers of government: executive, legislature and judiciary. The executive branch consists of the King and the Cabinet, which consists of the Prime Minister, who is the head of government, and the Ministers. Articles 24 and 25 of the Moroccan Constitution affirm that

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the King appoints the Prime Minister and, upon the Prime Minister's recommendation, the other Cabinet members, and he may terminate their services either on his own initiative or because of their resignation. The Prime Minister may initiate legislation and exercise statutory powers, except in domains reserved for the King (Maghraoui, 2001b).

Morocco is divided into 16 administrative regions, which are further broken into provinces and prefectures, and each is headed by governors appointed by the King, all under the authority of the central government. Each province is divided into circles, and the circles are divided into districts (Swearingen, 1987). Despite the degree of administrative power given to local governments, the distribution of power is not even and is largely centralized. The centre (the national government) dictates financial matters by setting taxes and controls, budgeting for all government institutions. This lack of financial autonomy has given local governments little room in terms of executing social and economic programmes.

The legislature body in Morocco is an elected bicameral Parliament, consisting of two chambers: a House of Councillors (Majlis al-Mustasharin, Upper Chamber) that consists of 270 members indirectly elected for nine-year terms of office by local and national electoral colleges, which are made up of local councils, professional associations and trade unions. One-third of the House of Counsellors is renewed every three years. The other chamber is the House of Representatives (Majlis al-Nawab, Lower Chamber), which is elected by universal suffrage for a six-year term of office (Maghraoui, 2002). According to Maghraoui (2001a), there are 333 deputies, two-thirds of whom are elected by universal direct suffrage and one-third by indirect vote (municipal, labour and professional Electoral College). The new Constitution that was promulgated in 1996 created the second House of Parliament, the House of Representatives, to pursue the democratization of the country by strengthening the powers of Parliament through enacting laws, overseeing bureaucracy and emphasizing the accountability of the government, that is making it answerable to the King and the Parliament (Maghraoui, 2002). The judicial branch is independent from the legislative and the executive branches. Judges are nominated by the King following proposal by the Higher Judiciary Council (Omar, 1996).

2.5.2- Jordan - Political System

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy led by a ruling family descended from the Hashemite dynasty. As in Saudi Arabia and Morocco, the monarchy is the most important political institution in Jordan. The Constitution stipulates that the country is a hereditary monarchy with a parliamentary system[46]. According to Article 1 of the Jordanian Constitution:

> The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is an independent sovereign Arab
> State. It is indivisible and inalienable and no part of it may be ceded. The
> people of Jordan form a part of the Arab nation, and its system of
> government is parliamentary with a hereditary monarch.

The Constitution outlines the functions and powers of the state, mandating the separation of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. Significantly, it also guarantees the right to elect parliamentary and municipal representatives. The King has both executive and legislative powers guaranteed by the Constitution. Like the monarch in the Moroccan system, the King appoints the Prime Minister, who in turn recommends candidates for other Cabinet appointments. The King also appoints Members of the Senate, judges and other senior government and military functionaries (Metz, 1989). In addition, he commands the armed forces, approves and promulgates laws and has the power to declare war, conclude peace and sign treaties, which, in theory, must be approved by the National Assembly. The King also convenes, opens, adjourns, suspends or dissolves the legislature. Additionally, he orders, and may postpone, the holding of elections. He has the power of veto, which can be overridden only by a two-thirds vote in each House (Brand, 1999). The King appoints the Cabinet, which consists of the Prime Minister and the other Ministers. The Cabinet members serve at the pleasure of the King, but the Constitution requires every new Cabinet to present its statement of programmes and policies to the House of Representatives for approval by a two-thirds vote of the members of that House. If the House passes a vote of no confidence, the Cabinet must resign. Administratively, the country is divided into twelve governorates or provinces, each of which is headed by a governor appointed by the King. These governorates are further subdivided into districts, sub-districts, municipalities, towns and villages (Shlaim, 1988).

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[46] Bicameral legislature, National Assembly created in 1989, consists of Senate appointed by king and popularly elected House of Representatives.

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As in Morocco, the legislative branch in Jordan is bicameral in structure. The legislative power is rested in the National Assembly (Majlis al-Umma) and the King. The National Assembly is formed by two houses, the Senate and the House of Representatives. The upper chamber, the Senate, has one-half of the number of the members of the lower chamber, the House of Representatives. The Senators are chosen by the king from among former ministers and government, retired high-ranking officers of the army and other prominent persons. The Senators were appointed for a period of four years[47]. Reappointment is possible. The upper chamber is headed by its President who is nominated for terms of two years. The House of Representatives is a representative body. Its size was doubled to 60 members by constitution in 1952. Members of the lower house are elected for four years period by a popular ballot. The president is elected by a secret ballot held by the members of the House of Representatives (Rauch and Evans, 2000). Laws pass by the lower house followed by the upper house and finally by the King. Decisions are taken by a majority of votes. The quorum is 2/3 of the total numbers of members in each house. In the case of rejection of a law by one house, a joint session of both houses was celebrated. The decision is then made by a 2/3 majority. Although the House of Representatives was vested with more legislative power than the Upper House, the executive side of government has overshadowed both chambers.

The judicial system is based on a combination of Islamic law with French, British and Ottoman codes. The courts consist of the Court of Cassation, the Courts of Appeal, the Courts of First Instance, Magistrates' Courts and Religious Courts (Rauch and Evans, 2000). Justice is dispensed in Civil, Religious and Special Courts. Tribal law was abolished in 1976. There is no jury system, and judges decide matters of law and fact.

2.5.3- United Kingdom - Political System

The political structure of the United Kingdom is a combination of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy based on universal suffrage. The system is multi-party, with the partial devolution of power in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The monarch is the theoretical head of state and a nominal source of power in the UK. The monarch has many hypothetical powers, including the right to choose any British citizen to be a Prime Minister

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[47] The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Department of Statistics: www.dos.gov.jo

and the right to call and dissolve Parliament whenever he or she wishes (Verney, 2003). Peters (2000:42) observed that:

> By appearing to argue that the state, or the centre of government, is largely incapable of ruling, it appears to refuse to consider that indeed there are cases in which the center may be effective. That variance may be by country, with the state some countries-Singapore, Iraq, but also the united kingdom-having a great deal of capacity to achieve compliance from society.

The power theoretically enjoyed by the monarch in the United Kingdom under the Royal Prerogative[48] include the appointment and dismissal of ministers, the dissolution of Parliament and the calling of elections, and the declaration of war. The Royal Prerogative is historically one of the central features of governance in the U.K. Ministers directly exercise most prerogative powers, such as the power to regulate the Civil Service, all without any need of approval from Parliament (Verney, 2003). Bogdanor (2001) argues that the role of the sovereign is a ceremonial one and power is restricted by custom and public opinion. However, the King or Queen does continue to exercise three essential rights: the right to be consulted, the right to advise and the right to warn. Accordingly, the Prime Minister holds weekly confidential meetings with the monarch, when he or she exercises the right to express opinions (Bache and Flinders, 2004).

The political structure of the UK represents the strongest form of parliamentarism, sometimes referred to as the Westminster system. Under this system, the executive branch is not entirely separate from the legislative branch, to such an extent that the British Cabinet is often described as the leading committee of Parliament (Dunleavy, 2003). The executive is comprised of the government, which consists of members of the Cabinet and other ministers responsible for policies, in addition to government departments and agencies, local authorities, public corporations, independent regulatory bodies and certain other organizations subject to ministerial control. The government exercises executive

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[48] The Royal Perogative is a body of customary authority, privilege and immunity, recognised in common law jurisdictions possessing a monarchy as belonging to the Crown alone. It is the means by which some of the executive powers of government are possessed by and vested in a monarch with regard to the process of governance of their state are carried out. It is not subject to parliamentary scrutiny but an individual prerogative, which can be abolished by legislative enactment.

power, sharing legislative power with the two Chambers of Parliament, the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Richards and smith (2002:272) stresses on the power of the executive government in the British system and argue that:

> We are skeptical of the arguments that suggest power in the British policy has shifted away from Westminster/Whitehall to the extent that the core executive has had its power curtailed. Instead, we would suggest that the core executive has had the capacity to adopt, in particular, because change has occurred more broadly within the context of the British parliamentary state.

The UK Parliament (the legislature) makes primary legislation, although it has devolved a range of issues to the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and, when it is sitting, the Northern Ireland Assembly. According to the Constitution, Parliament is supreme, and it continues to exercise authority over government and law making in the United Kingdom as a whole. The judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature, though several senior judges are also members of the House of Lords, the highest court of the UK (Verney, 2003). Table 2.2 shows the nature of the ruling systems and the power structure in the U.K, Jordan, Morocco and Saudi Arabia.

Table 2.2: *Power Structure and Model of Ruling System in U.K, Jordan, Morocco and Saudi*

	UK	Jordan	Morocco	Saudi Arabia
Model of political system	Constitutional Monarchy 'Westminster Parliamentary'	Monarchy in Multi-Party System	Constitutional Monarchy/ Bicameral Parliament	Absolute Monarchy (Authoritarian)
Bodies involved in legislative function	Upper: House of Lords Lower: House of Commons Executive: PM chosen by majority party in the legislature. PM chooses Cabinet. Cabinet, or its ministers, is a member of the legislature. Queen is head of state (mostly ceremonial).	Upper: House of senate Lower : House of Representative Executive: PM and Cabinet are appointed by King. King is head of state.	Upper: House of Councillors Lower: House of Representatives Executive: PM and Cabinet are appointed by King. King is head of state and Chief Executive.	Consultative Council and Council of Ministers Both councils appointed by King. Executive: King and Council of Ministers King is head of state and Chief Executive.
Power to initiate, amend or veto legislation	Executive and both Houses, but MPs cannot introduce bills affecting govt. Spending or taxation but can only amend on technical ground. Executive-initiated bills take precedence over members' bills.	King may refuse assent and return bill within 6 months, and then it must be passed by a 2/3 majority of House of Deputies.	King can order a review of legislation and has the power to disband Legislative Assembly.	Reviews and proposes laws and approves treaties and budgets. Submits proposals to Council of Ministers. If both bodies agree, ideas can be implemented with the consent of King. If they disagree, King decides.
Monarch's role in nominating and dismissing executive	The monarch plays no role. Legislature dissolves Chief Executive and Cabinet through vote of no confidence, forcing new parliamentary elections.	PM is appointed by King, who also appoints ministers on advice from PM. King can dissolve Parliament and call or suspend elections at any time.	King is empowered to disband Legislative Assembly	The monarch is chief executive. Monarch can dismiss the Council or Council members at any time.

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From the above comparative table, it is clear that the political model in U.K, Jordan and Morocco is a constitutional monarchy with the monarch as the head of the state. In contrast, the model of rule in Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy, and the King is the head of the state and government. The former model of rule has a more open political structure than the Saudi system because it developed gradually and changed over time from a tribal model to an absolute monarchy to constitutional. Furthermore, the legislative structures in the U.K, Jordanian, and Moroccan systems consist of two chambers: upper and lower houses, while the legislative branch in the Saudi system is composed of two councils: the Consultative Council and the Council of Ministers. It is interesting to find a clear separation between the legislative and the executive authorities in terms of the legislation process in both the Jordanian and Moroccan systems. However, this separation of power between the two branches is not found in the U.K and Saudi systems, where both executive and legislative branches cooperate and are directly involved in the legislation process.

The above table also shows that the monarchs in Jordan, Morocco and Saudi Arabia appoint the executive authority that consists of the cabinet of ministers and the Prime Minister, though there is no Prime Minister in the Saudi system, and can dismiss the council or council members at any time. This is in contrast to the process in the U.K, where the Prime Minister and the Cabinet are elected by the majority party in the legislature. Except in the Saudi system, where the King is the head of both the state and government, the monarch in these political systems is the head of state, though in the UK the role is mostly ceremonial.

In terms of power to initiate, amend or veto legislation, in the U.K system, neither the executive nor the Houses can introduce bills affecting government spending or taxation. The executive controls the legislative agenda, and individual legislators have little political power to introduce their own legislative initiatives. In contrast, in the Jordanian system, resolutions are made by majority vote in both Houses. Generally, the Prime Minister refers proposals to the House of Representatives. If the representatives accept the proposal, they refer it to the government to draft it in the form of a bill and submit it back to the House for approval. A bill approved by the House of Representatives is passed on to the deputies for debate and a vote. If approved, the bill is then submitted to the King. However, the King may refuse the bill or law and return it within 6 months, and then it must be passed by 2/3 majority of the House of Deputies.

In the Moroccan system, either the Prime Minister or one of the Houses of Parliament may initiate legislation. However, the government does refer draft bills to Parliament. A draft bill is considered by the relevant committees in both chambers in order to reach a joint decision within a period of six days. If a decision is not reached, steps are taken, upon the government's request, to set up a joint committee with equal representation to reach a decision in three days. If the two chambers do not adopt a final draft via this process, the government may submit the draft to the House of Representatives, where an absolute majority of its membership can definitively adopt it. Legislated bills may be amended by decree and with the consent of the Constitutional Council. The King can order a review of legislation and has the power to disband the Legislative Assembly.

In the Saudi system, the Council of Ministers shares the legislative function with the King and the Consultative Council. In order to consider a proposal approved by the Council of Ministers, two-thirds of the members who are in attendance must agree to adopt it. Unlike the decisions of the Council of Ministers, two-thirds of the Consultative Council's members must approve a legislative proposal or amendment for it to be adopted. The Council submits the proposal or the resolution to the King. The opinions of the Council are subject to review by the King, who decides which resolutions will be referred to the Council of Ministers. If both Councils are in agreement, the resolutions come into force following the King's approval. If the views of either Council vary, the issue is returned to the Consultative Council, which delivers whatever decision it deems appropriate. The new resolution is then sent to the King, who renders the final decision.

In terms of the Monarch's role in nominating and dismissing the executive, in the U.K system the Monarch plays no role and the legislature dissolves Chief Executive and Cabinet through a vote of no confidence, forcing new parliamentary elections. This is in contrast to the Jordanian, Moroccan and Saudi systems, where the monarch has the power to not only dismiss the Prime Ministers or the Cabinet members but also to dissolve or disband Parliament at any time and call or suspend elections any time.

2.6- Conclusion

This chapter presented a theoretical analysis of the Saudi Arabian political system's origins, evolution, nature and development. The chapter also analysed the power relationship

between the centre and local government in relation to the development of the political system and the changes in the power structure until the 1992 reforms. It discussed the impact of this relationship on the decision-making process and the delivery of public services. The analysis contributes to the central question of this thesis (To what extent the SLBs adhered to education policy goals in the implementation stage?) since it aids an understanding of the power relationships within the Saudi system and the degree of autonomy experienced by implementers at the lower level of administration.

The chapter traces the development of the Saudi system and shows how religion, tribalism and the monarchy are major factors in the evolution of the Saudi political system. In fact, religion remains a corner-stone not only in a social context but also in Saudi politics, providing legitimacy for the political system and indicating state goals, policies and responsibilities. Although the religious establishment is not an arm of the Saudi state, it plays a central role in establishing public policy and guiding its implementation. Tribalism, on the other hand, constitutes the model of the Saudi government even though it is not formally recognized within the framework of power in the Saudi system and no administration positions are held by tribes.

Despite the impact of these elements on the Saudi model of governance and the power structure over time, the monarch has ultimately settled on an absolute rule and gradually developed a centralized state over the period from 1933 until the present. The centralisation of decision-making in the Saudi system continues to shape the policy making process despite the political and economic reforms that were set in motion in 1992 to widening political participation and included the introduction of a set of new laws that aimed to modernise and systemise the work of government and to enhance government efficiency and effectiveness in delivering public services. Even with the delegation of a certain degree of administrative and financial power to local government, the system is considers as an authoritarian political system were the political decision-making is highly personalized making ties to and within the royal family more important than official status. In other word, the decision is made by small circle of princes who decide on the Saudi policies and affairs and deny public participation in government. However, it is true to say that the political reforms enacted in 1992 exemplify a remodeling of authoritarian rule in an effort to maintain the status quo and the Saudi regime's capacity and ability to maintain power lies in the

authoritarian character of the state and its institutions as well as on the religious, tribalism, and economic factors (oil).

Regardless of the similarity in terms of the evolution and progression of the Saudi, Moroccan and Jordanian monarchies (moving from *shaikhal* to monarchical to a more open political structure that is constitutional specifically in Morocco and Jordan) and the contrast between these systems in terms of power structure and the functions of government, there is no sign that the Saudi monarchical model is shifting towards the Moroccan or Jordanian model despite the political reform initiated in 1992 that led to the creation of the consultative council. In these models, political reforms, such as establishing a bicameral Parliament, have been enacted to encourage greater political participation among the citizenry, leading to greater fragmentation of political power and greater autonomy at the local level to ensure successful implementation of public policy at the lower levels of administration. In other words, the development achieved by Morocco and Jordan through their political structure, led to greater fragmentation of power at the local level and more pluralisation of power at the centre and that ultimately yield more autonomy to the civil service which lack in Saudi political system.

CHAPTER THREE

The Nature and Development of the Educational System

3.1- Introduction

The previous chapter provided an overview and a theoretical analysis of the origins, evolution and development of the Saudi political system. The chapter traced the development and changes in the power structure from the establishment of the contemporary Saudi state in 1933 until the political and administrative reforms of 1992 and the influence of this change on the power relationship between the centre and local government. This chapter develops the analysis by tracing the historical roots of education in Saudi Arabia and discussing the external forces that have shaped the present educational system and impacted on the educational policy process. The chapter discusses the relationship between religion and education as well as between state and education along with their influence on framing education policy and the way in which it operates in the Saudi context. The central argument of this chapter is that bureaucrats at the lower level of administration (local level) are presumed to implement education policy according to the policymaker's intent. This argument is based on two assumptions:

- Education policy decision making and design is a top down process that is a mirror of the policymaking process in the Saudi political system.

- Due to the nature of the Saudi political system, it is assumed that policy made at the centre is closely translated further down the policy-chain at the policy implementation stage.

Taking these assumptions into consideration, the thesis aims to explore the extent to which educational policy (specifically policy to reduce the number of failures and drop-outs at the secondary school level) is being implemented as well as the degree of devolved power or political autonomy experienced by SLBs at different bureaucratic levels in three different local educational authorities. To this end, the chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part presents an overview of Saudi educational history. This includes an analysis of the relationship between religion and state as well as between state and education. It also includes an overview of the administration and organisation of the educational system. The second part discusses educational policy and the assumptions underpinning the organisation of that policy, particularly how it is delivered at the SLB

level. It also presents and discusses various studies conducted by Saudi researchers and scholars related to education policy and its implementation.

3.2- Political History of Education

Al-Akeel (2005:70) indicates that, according to historical sources, education existed on a very limited scale on the Arabian Peninsula before the Saudi rule. This was due primarily to political circumstances and economic conditions; more specifically, to a lack of financial sponsorship from the state, private organisations etc., none of whom were prepared to take responsibility and support the educational process. However, a simple form of education was offered in villages and towns through the *"Kuttab"*, which taught children to read and write, focusing particularly on the *Qur'an*. Although the parents of students had to pay nominal fees in most cases, teachers made an effort to educate children in the mosques free of charge (Al-Akeel, 2005).

Despite the consensus among historians that ignorance prevailed not only in Najd[49] but also in the Arabian Peninsula at the end of the 18th century, there were signs of limited education, especially religious education. Education outside the province of Najd, especially in the Hejaz region, where Mecca and Medina have been renowned as centres for science and education since early Islam, suffered from a considerable degree of bad governance in the Ottoman period. However, this did not prevent a number of *Qur'anic* schools in Mecca and Medina from providing religious education (Alkadi, 1981).

In order to understand the political history of education in Saudi Arabia, two important dimensions need to be considered. First, the relationship between Islam (the major religion of the Saudi state) and education plays an important role in Saudi education. The second dimension is the relationship between the state as a provider of education and education as a process in terms of aims and means. These two dimensions are discussed in detail in the following two sections.

3.2.1- Religion–Education

According to Muslim thought, the Islamic religion is a spiritual institution that strongly supports and promotes education among all Muslims. This is both theoretical and practical due to the fact that the word "read" was the first revelation to the Prophet

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[49] Central Saudi Arabia; the region witnessed the emergence of Saudi Arabia's first, second, and modern states.

Mohammed in the seventh century. Al-Shawan (1985:11-12) noted that 'It is impossible to study education in any Islamic nation without considering the close relationship between religion and education because the two are inseparable'. In many verses, the *Qur'an* supports the notion of education and encourages Muslims to seek knowledge. Al Hariri (1987:51) argues that 'according to the *Qur'an,*[50] education is supposed to be given to all Muslims...families have become more and more interested in sending their children to school and integrating them in a coherent educational system'. This religious perspective has contributed to the spread of education among Islamic societies and remains a corner-stone in the educational politics of Muslim countries (Akkari, 1999).

According to the literature on this subject (Akkari, 1999; Al Hariri, 1978; Al-Shawan, 1985; Blanchard, 2008; Hamdan, 2005; Trial &Winder, 1950), Islamic countries, such as Saudi Arabia, have developed a dual approach to the educational process: traditional/religious education and formal/government education, which also incorporates a religious perspective (Trial & Winder, 1950). Historically, religious education has been carried out by institutions known as *Madrasa*. In general, this Arabic term has two meanings. Literally, it means "school". A secondary meaning is an educational institution offering instruction in Islamic subjects, including but not limited to the *Qur'an*, the sayings (*Hadith*) of the Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon Him), urisprudence '*Fiqh*' and law (Blanchard, 2008). However, the word *Madrasa* has varied meanings among Islamic countries. Blanchard (2008:2) maintains that:

> In many countries, including Egypt and Lebanon, *"Madrasa"* refers to any educational institution (state-sponsored, private, secular, or religious). In Pakistan and Bangladesh, *"Madrasa"* commonly refers to Islamic religious schools.

According to the Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World (1995), *Madrasas* were institutions of higher studies, as opposed to more rudimentary schools called *Kuttab*, which taught only the *Qur'an*. Hamdan (2005:51) notes that *Kuttab* was a 'class of *Qur'an* recitation for children, which was usually attached to the local mosque. The teaching of girls also took place in private tutorials, which occurred in the homes of professional male or female *Qur'an* readers'. Akkari (1999) argues that the *Qur'anic* School was a vital component in the upbringing and development of a Muslim; all

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[50] Holy book for Muslims

Muslim children were exposed to *Qur'anic* recitation, and many progressed to higher religious studies. Blanchard (2008) points out that during European colonisation, the role of the *Madrasa* decreased and was even replaced by secular institutions throughout the Islamic world. However, these religious schools experienced a revival in the 1970s thanks to an increase in interest in religious studies and Islamist politics in Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia (Blanchard, 2008).

Islam has fundamentally shaped the nature of the Saudi educational system, particularly the curricula content, at all educational levels for both boys and girls. Al Salloom (1995:15) states that 'Islam is not only an integral part of Saudi education, but also serves as the very essence of its curriculum'. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the roots of religion are found in the early years of the millennium when Saudi Arabia, or, more specifically, the Holy Cities of Makah and Medina, became a place of pilgrimage for every Muslim (Al-Farsy, 1990). As such, it was only natural that the *Shari'ah* should influence the entire system within which the state authorities function. In other words, Islam decides how the country is run and how the educational system works. Consequently, any comprehensive presentation of the profile of Saudi Arabia must take into account both the religious nature of the Saudi state and the moral nature of its population.

Religion in Saudi Arabia is not separate from the disciplines of education, economics, law etc. but rather is a part of them. The *Qur'an* is expected to be memorised, interpreted and applied to all aspects of daily life (Al-Zaid, 1981). As such, education is seen as a means of promoting the *Shari'ah*. Al Salloom (1995:39) notes that 'students are taught to understand Islam in a proper and complete manner, to implement Islamic values and teachings'. Meanwhile, according to Hamdan (2005:59), it is not only a matter of education in terms of reading and writing but also 'a struggle of the state to keep alive the basic concepts of Islam in its purest form, as promoted by the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* of Prophet Mohammed'. Therefore, Islam plays a central role in defining Saudi culture, acting as a major force in determining social norms, patterns, traditions, obligations, privileges and practices of society (Al-Saggaf, 2004: 1). Islam also influences the family, which is considered to be the pillar of Saudi society, and the family values that are generated from religion are maintained and supported by the Saudi education system. Al Hariri (1987:51) observes that:

The family in Saudi Arabia is a part of society which represents customs and habits and has a very strong structure...At the same time, the Saudi educational system gives a central role to Islamic doctrines and values, which in their turn support the concept of the family as the key social unit and stress the vital importance of family links. Hence, educational progress consolidates family life.

The Islamic religion's impact on the contemporary Saudi educational system can be traced back to the 17th century when the first Saudi state was established based on a coalition between religion and politics (Bowen, 2007). This religious and political convergence constituted the basis of the educational system, which has been a primary goal of government in Najd since the late 18th century, at which time the *Wahhabi* movement encouraged the spread of Islamic education throughout the peninsula (Trial & Winder, 1950). Since the purpose of Islamic education was to ensure that the student would understand God's laws and live his or her life in accordance with them, classes for reading and memorising the *Qur'an* along with selections from the *Hadith* (the Prophet Mohammed's words) were given in towns and villages throughout the Arabian Peninsula (Trial & Winder, 1950). This tradition has continued to this day in Saudi Arabia, mostly taking places in mosques. As a result, the transformations that Saudi education has undergone throughout the decades do not represent a substantial move away from the religious path or from the entire set of associated values. However, in the 1920s, a small number of private institutions began to offer a limited secular education for boys and continued to do so until public education was introduced following the formation of the modern state in 1932. It has been argued that this strong path dependency[51] has ensured that education in Saudi has developed a very distinct and persistent Islamic identity. The fundamental path dependence of historical institutions is most relevant to the study of the influence of Islam on education in Saudi Arabia. The historical foundations are revealing, showing how strong Islam and Islamic education have remained over time. Education rooted in religion is a path that Saudi Arabia is not about to stray from. Historical institutionalism exposes the power of Islam and explains its impact on Saudi life, including the education system (Pierson, 2000). In this sense, it can be argued that the evolution of the educational system has served to improve the level of culture of the

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[51] Path dependency means: an idea that tries to explain the continued use of a product or practice based on historical preference or use (Pierson, 2000).

population and, at the same time, represents a manifestation of the deep-rooted religious nature of Saudi society. According to Mazrui (1997:118):

> Westerners tend to think of Islamic societies as backward looking, oppressed by religion, and inhumanely governed [but...] measurement of the cultural distance between the West and Islam is a complex undertaking, and that distance is narrower than they assume.

As a consequence, the penetration of Western culture into non-Western societies and their social functions, such as progressing from school to work, may be facilitated within Islamic Arab national systems due to greater cultural similarities than differences. Saudi Arabia is a non-Western nation that still demonstrates some of the structural characteristics of a developing nation (Metz, 1993; Sara, 1981), often refusing to adopt certain Western characteristics despite the fact that Saudi Arabia and other Islamic and Arab nations are trying to integrate into the global economic and political community (Jarrar, 1987; Massialas & Metz, 1993; Al-Baadi, 1994; Obeid, 1994). Therefore, it lends itself perfectly to an analysis of school and work in a non-Western system. Thus, while Saudi Arabia is modernising rapidly, it is also strongly Islamic, and the cultural mores that accompany Islam exert an enormous influence on most social institutions, including schools. As a result, the penetration of Islamic Arab culture into Saudi Arabia's educational structure and curriculum, which were indirectly modelled on the Western version of mass schooling and carry with them an inherent human capital rationale, is strong (Al-Baadi, 1994; Alromi, 2000).

Both the teachings of Islam and the realities of contemporary society highlight the importance of education in the Saudi state. On the one hand, the religious teachings advocate the need for a thorough knowledge of Islamic values and norms, and in this sense the religious establishment promotes a well-established educational system. Prokop (2003:78) argues that 'by 1986 more than 16,000 of the kingdom's 100,000 students were enrolled in Islamic studies. By the early 1990s one quarter of all university students were studying in religious institutions'. On the other hand, the monarchy in charge of most of the activities that define a contemporary state tends to support a modern educational system and reforms to the current one due to the obvious demand for skilled labour and an educated society. These two perspectives oppose one another to some extent, and

education reforms have caused unease between the monarchy and the religious establishment, highlighting the shifting balance of power between the two, from the latter to the former. These reforms have become necessary as a result of internal factors, such as the demands from different groups for general reform, including educational ones, and external factors, such as international pressure after the events of 9/11 when the United States accused the religious establishment that controlled the educational system of being responsible for extremism. Hamzawy (2006:14) claims that:

> In recent years, the moderate faction in the royal family has clashed several times with the religious establishment over educational reform plans. Specifically, U.S. pressure concerning educational reform has hardened the position of Wahhabi clerics fearful of losing one of their strongholds in society.

The relationship between the state and the religious establishment in Saudi Arabia has varied according to the historical context. For example, between 2002 and 2005, the government merged the administrative structure of the male and female[52] branches of education and put the resulting merger under the responsibility of the MoE, which undertook several steps to remove extremist ideas from the curricula and create a balance between religious and non-religious topics as well as unifying the curricula for both branches. Hamzawy (2006:14) argues that 'this step was strongly opposed by the religious establishment, particularly the unification of male and female curricula as well as the minimal increase in credit hours devoted to non-religious sciences'. Although the religious establishment opposition has not persuaded the government to reverse its educational reform measures, it has clearly diminished the government's ability to implement such reforms. George Trial (1950:123) argues that:

> One should not underestimate the influence of the theologians and their followers in Saudi Arabia. These people take the place of political parties and social groups that play such a large part in forming public opinion and influencing the governments in most Western nations.

Whilst religion has historically been a major influence on the Saudi educational system, underwriting the curriculum and decisions taken by governmental organisations,

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[52] Before this date, female education was supervised by the general presidency for girl's education which is independent government orgnisation under the supervision of the religious establishment.

ultimately the power lies with the monarchy and the state. The next section discusses the relationship between the state and education.

3.2.2- State–Education

Education serves as the foundation for community development and revitalisation; as a result, each country seeks to develop and enhance its educational system to rise to the challenge of its national aspirations and developmental requirements. The Saudi government acted upon this concept when it initiated an extensive programme of wide-ranging reforms to its educational system, including increasing the volume of expenditure on education and training to approximately 26% of the state's 2007-2008 budget, which exceeded 101 billion dollars. Table 3.1 shows the massive increase in education finance from the total budget of the Saudi government in 2007-2008.

Table 3.1: *General Government & Education Budget 2007-2008 (Billions of U.S dollars)*[53]

General budget	Gov. Education budget	Sector %of budget	General educational budget	MoE* % of education budget
101,333,000,000	25,790,000,000	25.45%	18,900,000,000	73.28%

Ministry of education (MoE) is provider of general (public) education

King Abdul-Aziz initiated the modern Saudi education system when he established the Directorate General of Education as the first education organisation in 1926. Bedaiwi (1998:5) states that:

> 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.

After unifying the country and establishing the monarchy in 1932, he oversaw the launch of public education. Prior to this, no formal educational system existed on the Arabian Peninsula, and education, as mentioned in the previous section, was offered only through a

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[53] Source: http://www.moe.gov.sa/openshare/englishcon/Statistics/Projected-Summary-Statistics-for-the.htm_cvt.html

few private schools called *Kuttabs*, the purpose of which was to teach students Islam the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* as well as rudimentary reading and writing (Alkadi, 1981). According to Al-Salloom (1995), the development of modern Saudi Arabia is strongly correlated with the spread of education all over the country and education has influenced not only the building of the nation but also the attitude and character of the Saudi individual.

Throughout its history, the modern Saudi state has maintained a relatively uncomplicated education system. Prior to the discovery of oil in 1933, neither large-scale demand for general education nor the financial means to provide it existed. As Trial and Winder (1950:121) point out, it was 'only after World War II that Saudi society actually felt the need for an educated population'. This need arguably stemmed from different factors, one of which was the massive increase in state revenues that resulted from oil exports during the 1970s. With this period of impressive economic development in Saudi Arabia 'came the construction of houses, schools and universities' (Baki, 2004:17). British and American oil companies influenced education through educational programmes and job opportunities provided for the population in eastern Saudi Arabia, where the oil fields were located. Trial and Winder (1950:121) argue that once the oil companies started investing in refineries and oil related industries:

> The local population had either the possibility to improve their standard of living by accepting the job offers Westerners made to the educated teens or remain in the limited horizons determined by the lack of technical and practical skills.

This economic development impacted on the education system, leading, from a structural point of view, to real progress in comparison with previous educational experiences on the Arabian Peninsula and the system set in place beforehand. This progress could be seen in the move from traditional and purely religious education provided by clergy in the mosques to a broader education in organised educational institutions provided by the state. Along with this development came an extensive programme of publicly funded secondary schools, initiated in 1951. The MoE, which administers public education

institutions for boys, was then established in 1953, followed by the General Presidency for Girls Education[54] in 1960 (Metz, 1992).

Education in Saudi Arabia is the responsibility of the government, which is committed to the development of education at all costs and maintains exclusive control. Education is free but not compulsory beyond the elementary level. The government provides free tuition, stipends, subsidies and bonuses to students entering certain fields of study and to those continuing their education outside the country. The MoE, which is responsible for education policy, curricula, textbooks, teachers and the organisation of education in public schools (Al-Gahtany, 2001), also provides students with textbooks and educational materials. In addition, it is responsible for developing and improving educational programmes and curricula that promote the main concerns of the MoE. Al Salloom (1995:23) notes that 'in recent years, and as part of the administrative reorganization within the MoE and its components, a great deal of interest has been expressed concerning the need to improve educational administration in schools'.

Public education developments in the Saudi state have passed through different phases. The first phase (1925-1964) was characterised by the construction and establishment of the identity of the educational system, including identifying the features of its policy (Al-Saloom, 1991:11). This stage witnessed the creation of the country's first education system, modelled on Egypt's education system. Alromi (2000:4) states that 'the Egyptian educational model was following in the footsteps of the English educational model at that time; therefore, the Saudi educational model indirectly adopted the English educational model'. The reliance on the Egyptian model was due to the fact that there were not enough qualified and educated Saudi people to provide education in addition to the lack of financial resources. Importantly, Egyptian assistance was requested, not only as a supplemental aid for teaching but also to help develop the curriculum and organize the system. However, when relations with Egypt declined during the 1960s, the Saudi state abandoned the Egyptian model and proceeded to develop its own educational system (Al-Baadi, 1994).

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[54] The General Presidency for Girls Education was integrated into the MoE in March 2002, which then became responsible for public education for both boys and girls.

In 1925, the Directorate of Education was established in Mecca, tasked with supervising educational policy, directing the expansion of learning in the Mecca region and creating a new school system (Alesa, 1979). This was followed by the creation of the scientific institute as the first government school in Saudi Arabia and other educational bodies. At that time, in the entire kingdom of Saudi Arabia only 2,319 pupils were enrolled in schools. The number of elementary schools reached 182 in 1949, with a total enrolment of 21,409 pupils. During this phase, a number of schools were opened, including 312 elementary government schools, 11 secondary government schools, 4 high schools and vocational schools, 8 institutes to prepare teachers and a college of teachers, the Faculty of Sharia, 6 schools to teach English and 1 evening school to teach typing (MoE, 1990: 15). In 1954, when the Directorate of Education became the MoE, the first organisational structure for education was established, creating four new education departments. During this stage, as the education budget had increased, a major campaign was launched to expand the opening of schools and institutes of various categories and types. This stage also saw the founding of the General Presidency for Girl's Education in 1960 (MoE, 1990:16).

The second phase of educational development (1964-1982) was characterised by the horizontal growth of both public and higher education, with the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) being established in 1975. During this phase, the government established two five-year plans, with specific targets, to facilitate the growth of the nation's economic infrastructure. This was accompanied by education and training programmes that aimed to develop the Saudi people as a human resource to participate in the economic development of the country (Alhugail, 1992). Moreover, this phase witnessed the redesigning of the education system to ensure adequate capacity for the increasing number of students at both elementary and intermediate stages. Only half of all students were allowed to continue to secondary education, culminating in a university degree, whilst the others were placed on teacher training, vocational and technical education programmes(Aldosary, 1987).

The third phase (1982- 1995) was characterised by extensive horizontal and vertical expansion. Schools, institutes, colleges and universities were opened in most parts of the Kingdom, offering public education, higher education, technical education and vocational training. During this phase, civil establishments and other government agencies, such as the Ministries of Defense and Aviation, Foreign Affairs, The Interior, Health, Labour and

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Social Affairs, and Municipal and Rural Affairs as well as the National Guard and the postal, telegraph and telephone departments, started to contribute to the supervision of some types of education. All these agencies worked according to the education policy developed by the Supreme Committee for Education (MoE, 1990:16).

The fourth phase (1995- 2005) was characterised by a review of education policies and the outcomes of the education process in order to harmonise education and training systems and identify development requirements as well as trained specialist labour. Consequently, major changes occurred within the education system. A Directorate General for Educational Technology was created, consisting of the departments of design and production. These departments are responsible for the development of educational materials, supplying classroom educational technology and training senior staff at the MoE in educational technology. Standards for teacher certification were made more rigorous, and control over the examination system for elementary and intermediate schools was transferred from the central government to individual schools (MoE, 1999:16). Furthermore, the states' review of all activities and functions of government departments has had a positive impact on the direction and trends of education at different levels. The content of the curricula was extensively reviewed, developed and updated to be responsive to the country's development needs as well as to the challenges of globalisation. Reviews of governmental activities were extended to cover the core philosophy of public education, including an assessment of the functions of both teachers and the education system process (MoE, 1999:18). Table 3.2 shows the phases of developments of public education in the Saudi state.

Table3.2: *Phases of Development of Public Education in Saudi State 1925-2005*

The first phase 1925-1964	The second phase 1964-1982	The third phase 1982-1995	The fourth phase 1995- 2005
Construction and establishment of the identity of the educational system.	Growth of all types of education as well as education and training programmes for the economic development of the country.	Horizontal and vertical expansion of Schools, institutes, colleges and universities.	Review of education policies and output, and harmonising of education and training systems for trained specialist labour.

Public education in Saudi Arabia is currently characterised by the following:

• Education policy is discerned from the teaching of Islam, the eternal religion of the nation, which is cherished by everybody in regard to faith, worship, ethics, conduct, doctrine and way of life.

• Free education is made available to every citizen on an equal opportunity basis, free of any sort of discrimination throughout all education stages, from primary to university.

• Basic services are provided to both male and female students free of charge, including school transportation, health care, school boarding and university student hostels.

• Separate schools are provided for females students at all stages (except nurseries and kindergartens) in fulfilment of the teaching of Islam (GEG, 2002: 9).

3. 3- The Structure of public education

3.3.1- Administration of Education

The structure and administration of Saudi Arabia's education system is highly centralised. All education policies are subject to governmental control and are supervised by the Supreme Committee for Education Policy (now called the Supreme Council of Education). Curricula, syllabi and textbooks are uniform throughout the country (Al-Gahtany, 2001). The MoE and MoHE are responsible for the administration of public education and higher education, respectively. These two ministries serve as the main service providers for education. However, other government agencies are responsible for providing education for their staff and/or their children, including the Ministry of Defence and the National Guard.

General public education for both males and females falls under the jurisdiction of the MoE, which supervises approximately 90% of all schools. Other governmental departments supervise approximately 4% of schools and just over 6% of schools are controlled by the private sector (MoE, 1996). Junior colleges, teacher training, special needs and adult education are also the responsibility of the MoE. In addition, the MoE is in charge of supervising other educational organisations, such as those within the National Guard, the Ministry of Defence and Aviation and the Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu[55] (MoE, 1996).

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[55] The two industrial cities in Saudi Arabia for petrochemicals industry

The MoE's responsibilities include policy-making (formulation and implementation), planning, budgets and staffing as well as the provision of facilities, teaching materials and supplies to schools. All schools at all levels implement the same educational policies and use the same methods of instruction, textbooks, evaluation techniques and curricula. The MoE also engages in programmes to enhance the performance of schools as well as in research and development programmes related to the development of curriculum and teaching methods. Al Salloom (1995:23) notes that 'in recent years and as part of the administrative reorganization within the MoE and its components, a great deal of interest has been expressed concerning the need for improving educational administration in schools'.

In order to facilitate the administration of the education system, the Kingdom has 42 educational directorates spread throughout the regions and provinces. Each directorate is responsible for those schools in the cities and villages within its region and works as a link between local schools and the MoE. Table 3.3 presents the number of schools, classes, students, and teachers in all different levels of education under the supervision of the MoE in 2005.

Table 3.3: *Schools, Classes, Students, and Teaching Posts by Educational Level*

Level	Gender	Schools	Classes	Students	Teachers Posts	Assistants
Kindergarten	Co-education	1,320	5,704	100,032	9,744	1,074
Primary	Male	6,525	60,585	1,272,295	97,869	2,702
	Female	6,537	54,000	1,241,990	103,499	6,516
	Total	13,062	114,585	2,514,285	201,368	9,218
Intermediate	Male	3,662	23,312	564,951	51,351	1,784
	Female	3,203	21,735	543,380	49,398	3,682
	Total	6,865	45,047	1,108,331	100,749	5,466
Secondary	Male	2,195	16,974	500,169	36,091	1,330
	Female	2,035	15,695	455,169	37,931	2,603
	Total	4,230	32,669	955,338	74,022	3,933
Special Education	Male	506	2,137	13,707	3,595	1,470
	Female	117	602	4,767	1,380	411
	Total	623	2,738	18,473	4,976	1,881
Tech & Voc	Female	79	455	6,927	1,064	246
Adult Ed.	Male	1,051	2,114	28,374	0	0
	Female	2,577	6,981	51,415	10,253	513
	Total	3,628	9,095	79,790	10,253	513
Total	Male	13,939	105,122	2,379,496	188,906	7,286
	Female	15,868	105,172	2,403,680	213,269	15,045
	Total	29,807	210,294	4,783,176	402,176	22,331

Source: (Computer & Information Centre 2005), MoE.

3.3.2- Organisation of Public Education

As previously mentioned, the MoE is responsible for both boys' and girls' education as well as for providing school buildings and organising construction and maintenance work. It equips schools, provides materials and supplies students with textbooks. Importantly, the formulation and implementation of the country's educational policy is a major task of the MoE (Oyaid, 2009:18). Public education in Saudi Arabia is composed of four educational stages that correspond to the physical and psychological development of students. The MoE sets out the objectives of each stage, their duration, the categories that can be included in the stages and the nature of the study within the stages. The aim of this approach is that students should be able to progress through the system at a speed that corresponds to their physical and psychological growth (MoE, 1995). Table 3.4 shows these four stages and the length of study in each stage.

Table 3.4: *Stages of Public Education in Saudi Arabia*

STAGE	CONTEXT
Kindergarten	Children attend this stage from three to six years old.
Primary education	Children start when they are six years old; this stage lasts six years.
Intermediate education	Students study for 3 years, usually starting when they are 12 years old.
Secondary education	Students study for 3 years after the completion of intermediate stage.

In the primary stage, the focus is on religion and Arabic studies (classics) in addition to general culture and science. Students who successfully complete the six-year period earn a Primary Education Certificate that allows them to continue on to the intermediate stage. Intermediate education provides more opportunities for students to develop a greater understanding of their culture. It also provides more opportunities for developing students' capacities in order for them to choose their orientation in future stages. Once students have successfully completed the intermediate stage, they move on to study another three years at a secondary school, which provides studies that are more specialised as well as additional general culture studies. During this stage, students prepare for university or for the labour market (MoE, 1990).

The school year usually starts at the beginning of September and ends in mid June. It is made up of 2 semesters, each of which lasts 17 weeks. Semester holidays, as well as the fasting and sacrifice required for Islamic holidays, are allowed during this time. The school week is five days from Saturday to Wednesday. Thursday and Friday are official holidays for schools and government offices. The school day starts at 7:00 a.m. for all stages and ends at 12:00 p.m. for the elementary stage and 1:30 p.m. for the intermediate and secondary stages. The beginning and end of the school day can be modified due to weather conditions. Each student attends a number of 45-minute periods during the school day (GEG, 2002). Since this study focuses on the principals of secondary school (SLBs) and their behaviour and attitudes in terms of implementing educational policy, the secondary stage of education and its objectives are considered in greater detail below.

The secondary school stage is considered to be the most important stage in public education in Saudi Arabia. It aims to enlighten the student in matters relating to public life as well as to prepare pupils' to continue their education at universities and higher institutions (AL-Akeel, 2005). In 1953, when the MoE was first established, 10 boys' secondary schools had already been created, with 133 teachers and 1,315 students. By 1997, the number had increased to 1,482 schools, with 21,010 teachers and 335,576 students (MoE, 1998). Students are admitted to the secondary school stage once they have obtained the Intermediate Stage Certificate. Normally, students in secondary stage education are between the ages of 15 and 18 years. All students follow the same curriculum elements during the first year. In the second and third years, they pursue their study in one of the following areas: Islamic and Arabic studies, management and social sciences, natural sciences or technological sciences. However, Islamic and Arabic studies and natural sciences are the only pathways available for girls. The final examinations for these subjects are usually prepared by the teachers of individual schools under the supervision of the head teacher of the school. Students must pass examinations in all subjects studied to earn the Secondary School Certificate. High marks on such examinations give a student priority for university and college admission (Oyaid, 2009:18). The major objectives for secondary education are:

• Strengthening faith in God, making all deeds pleasing to God and complying in all aspects with that which He loves.

• Strengthening loyalty to the Islamic nation and aspirations for the highest social standing as well as developing a strong physical constitution suitable for the student's age.

- Developing students' abilities and directing them in a manner suitable for them.

- Providing opportunities for students and preparing them to pursue their studies at various levels in higher education.

- Preparing students to work in various fields of activity.

- Taking care of young people according to Saudi culture, addressing their intellectual and emotional problems and helping them achieve success in the future.

- Developing in students a positive consciousness so that they can confront subversive ideas and misleading trends.

- Instilling in students the virtue of useful reading and the desire to broaden their scope of knowledge and fruitful work and to use their leisure time doing activities that improve their character and the conditions of their community.

- Establishing the feeling of family solidarity in order to construct the solid Islamic family.

- Developing students' scientific thinking and entrenching in them the spirit of research, systematic analysis, the use of reference sources and the practice of academic methods (Oyaid, 2009:20).

3.4- Educational Policy and its Implementation

Education policy in Saudi Arabia is defined by the Supreme Committee for Education Policy (SCEP) as 'the general lines upon which the process of education depends on to fulfil the individual's commitment toward his God and religion as well as to meet the needs of society and achieve the objectives of the nation' (MoE, 1980). It is also defined by Al-Maydani (1992:12) as:

> General constitutional articles of education that explain the general principles on which planning are based and state the aims and objectives of the educational process.....whether these articles are written and publicly published in the form of decrees or unwritten and unpublished, supervisors and managers of educational institutions are aware of them.

A similar definition of education policy in Saudi Arabia is provided by Al-Mengash (2006:4) when she states that education policy is:

> A set of principles, trends and general rules made by the state to direct education at its different levels and types to satisfy society's present

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and future needs according to the current conditions and possibilities
and to serve the overall objectives of the state.

Despite the various definitions of education policy in the Saudi context, education policy in Saudi Arabia is part of the state's general policies that guide and govern Saudi society. The policies are derived from the Islamic religion, which the Saudi state embraces ideologically, methodologically and in terms of application. Therefore, it expresses a continuation of Islamic rules and principles that affect not only education policy itself but also social policies in all disciplines. As discussed in chapter two, the Islamic religion plays a key role in establishing public policies in the Saudi government while the basic social administrative-related aspects are organised according to the Islamic system and the subsequent interpretative norms of the Muslim world (Long, 1997). The effect of religion on educational policy in Saudi Arabia was justified in the policy document initiated in 1970 by the SCEP. According to Article 28 of the document, the primary purpose of education in Saudi Arabia is:

- To have the student understand Islam in a correct and comprehensive manner.
- To plant and spread the Islamic creed.
- To furnish the student with the values, teaching and ideas of Islam.
- To equip him with the various skills and knowledge needed in order to develop his conduct in a constructive direction.
- To develop society economically, socially and culturally.
- To prepare the individual to become a useful member in the building of his community (MoE, 1980).

The religious component of education policy was confirmed by the Basic Law of government (the Constitution) that was initiated in 1992. Article thirteen of the Basic Law states that the aims of education are to inculcate the Islamic faith in the hearts of people and prepare them with knowledge and skills in addition to preparing them to participate in building their society (Al Salloom, 1995). Furthermore, the Saudi education system stresses that school textbooks are in line with Islamic requirements. Al Zaid (1981:69) points out that:

The government shall be concerned with the control of all books coming into the Kingdom from abroad or going out of the Kingdom to the outside world. No books shall be allowed for use unless they are consistent with Islam, the basis of the intellectual trends and educational aims of the Kingdom.

Educational policy in Saudi Arabia passes through various stages/phases before state bureaucrats (mangers, principals, teachers etc.) at the local level translate it into action. These stages include policy formulation, policy implementation and policy evaluation. In general, the education policy-making process starts at the higher level of the Saudi government, specifically the SCEP. This committee was formed in 1963 to be responsible for the study and ratification of major policies relating to the development of education that should be executed by the various educational institutions. In other words, the SCEP is involved in setting educational aims as well as developing national strategic plans for education and stating how they should be directed to serve the country's development plans. According to the General Education Guide issued by the SCEP in 2002, the duty of the SCEP is to 'serves as a major reference that delineates the objectives, plan and programs of education at its various levels for general and higher education' (GEG, 2002:8).

The committee is headed by the King or the Crown Prince and consists of various ministries, such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Planning etc, in addition to various councils and committees. AL-Akeel, (2005) argues that one of the committee's most important action was its issuance in 1970 of the document of "Education Policy in Saudi Arabia" that explained the general principles that education depends on, setting its goals and objectives. The educational policy document contains the vision and aspirations of the nation regarding the educational system. It sets out the foundations and principles underlying the design of the educational system as well as its role in the care of children and young people, namely that of preparing them for life and providing them with appropriate concepts, skills, attitudes and values (MoE, 1980). Alkhteeb et al, (2004) argue that the most notable feature of educational policy in Saudi Arabia is that it sets out general outlines to guide the process of education and avoids the details, thereby enabling the

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country's technical and administrative organs to implement this policy with a degree of freedom while allowing them to take appropriate decisions to solve the problems they face. However, once the general framework of the policy has been set by the SCEP, the MoE, which is responsible for general education, formulates the policy. This means that the MoE translates the education aims, goals and objectives into regulations, rules and administrative procedures to operationalise the policy. The policy then moves further down the policy chain to the implementers' at the local level, who translate the policy into action. Alromi (2002) suggests that written and published policies will have no impact or influence without proper implementation procedures. However, moving from the policy formulation and adoption phases to the policy implementation phase is a fundamental and crucial stage of the policy cycle that should not be divided. Practically, the local level governments in the Saudi education system consist of directorates of education in regions and cities, and these directorates supervise many schools in districts, villages etc. The directorates of education work as a moderator between the MoE and the schools' principals. Both the directorates of education and the schools principals are involved in the implementation process. The former oversee the implementation of the policy, provide interpretation of rules and regulations and issue administrative rules and regulations to maintain compliance with the policy goals and targets. The latter, on the other hand, are involved on a daily basis in educational and administrative activities set by the education policy and the instructions and orders of the directorates of education. The last stage of the education policy process is the evaluation stage.

The monitoring and evaluation process in the Saudi education system is performed by the General Directorate of Measurement and Evaluation (GDME) at the MoE. The GDME is responsible for:
- Setting of standards for elements of the educational system (school leadership, teacher, curriculum, student, school environment etc.)
- The construction of educational, psychological and social tests and scales
- Conducting training and support of continuous vocational growth;
- Evaluation of scholastic and educational performance; and
- Evaluation of programs and projects.

In practice and at the local level, the directorates of education are involved in the evaluation process, and hold accountable for not submitting reports and data regarding the schools achievements to the GDME. However, bureaucratic accountability in Saudi Arabia as Borthwick, (1980:6) stated is 'a result of the progression of typical cultural, political, social, and administrative structures'. The typical culture of Saudi Arabia is founded on Islam where the Quran guides and controls government policies. In Islam, the concept of accountability is addressed on two levels: The first level is that every individual is accountable for his own behaviour and conduct. The second level involves the accountability for individuals and objects under their charge. Hence, public official in the Saudi bureaucracy are self-accountable for their behaviour and actions' (AL-Humedhi, 1999, cited in Al-Tweam, 1995:196).

As institutionalised by Islam, self-accountability is a powerful mechanism for holding bureaucrats accountable. Islam encourages and ordered Muslims individual to perform job with integrity and honesty to get the reward from God. In the mean time, established a system of sanctions applied to those misused their responsibility and authorities in serving the community. However, other qualities of administrative responsibility such as competence, responsiveness, fairness and hard work are also emphasised by Islamic *sharia*. The Saudi administrative structure is similar to that of other developed governing systems with regard to internal accountability. If things go wrong, employee must be held accountable to the authority. This incorporates the assignment of sanctions in case of rule violation or malfeasance (Al-Tweam, 1995). Internal accountability is practiced through the hierarchical chain of command, standard operating procedures, codes of ethics, and audit assignment of financial transaction through the Department of Financial Representation as part of the Ministry of Finance and National Economy, and applications of the Civil Service Law of 1977, and the Central Department for Organisation and Management (CDOM). In addition, bureaucrats can be held accountable by the executive branch through the King- the head of the Council of Ministers. The King has a vested power to appoint and dismiss ministers and high government officials. The Council of Ministers in the Saudi government is the most powerful institution in the country. It exercises executive, legislative and advisory functions. The Council formulates statutes and rules governing the major functions of the bureaucracy and several agencies attached

to the President of the Council aid him in holding bureaucrats accountable (AL-Humedhi, 1999). Figure 3.1 shows the phases of the education policy cycle in Saudi Arabia.

Figure 3.1: *Education Policy Process in Saudi Arabia*

Policy Initiation
Supreme Committee for Education Policy

Policy Formation
Ministry of Education

Policy Implementation
Departments of Education in Region

School Principals in Cities

Policy Evaluation
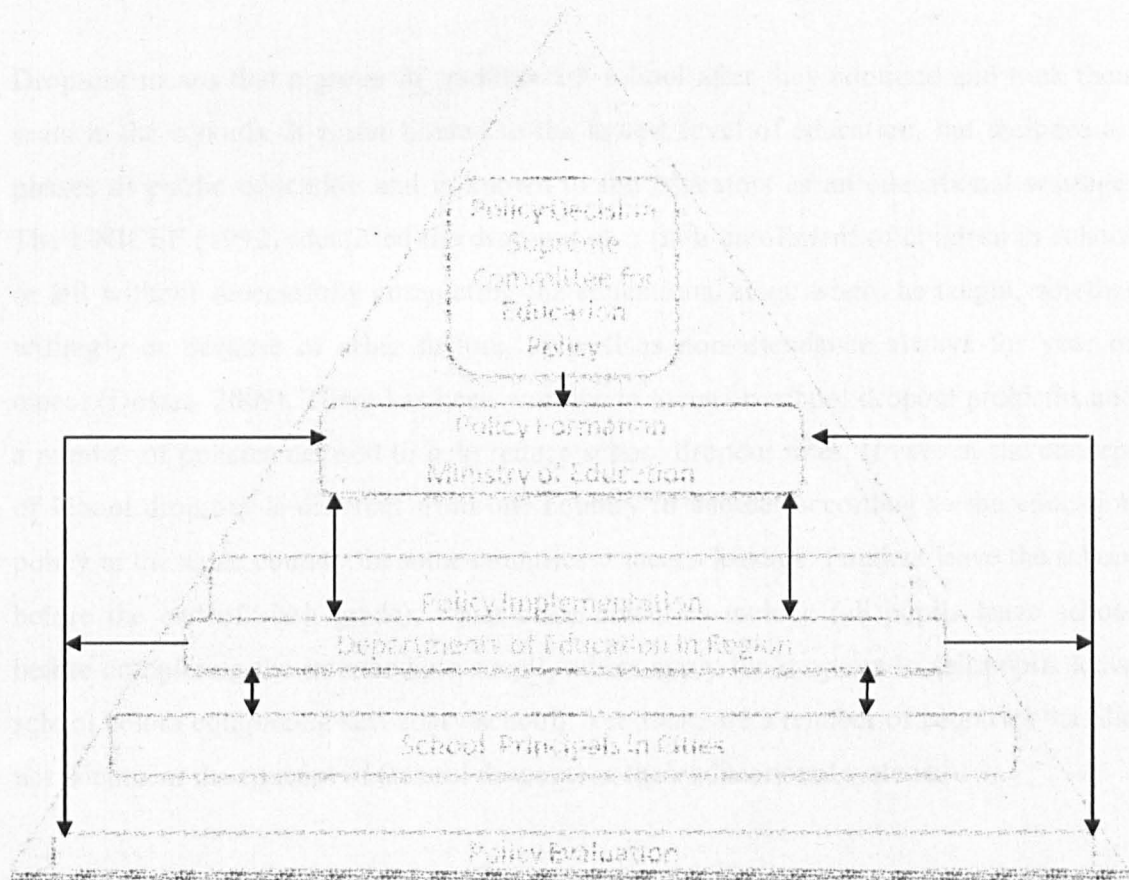
Since the focus of this research is on the implementation of education policy in Saudi Arabia and particularly on the policy of reducing the number of failure and dropout in secondary school, it is worth to shed lights on this policy and show how it's related to the recent policy changes.

Repetition is the failure to pass the tests and move to the next grade. It reduces the ability of students to join the schools and continue their education. The percentage of repetition and dropout had increased at all stages of education and the phenomenon is continues recognisably in the two stages (intermediate and secondary).This failing leads to overcrowding of pupils in the classroom, possible deprivation of large numbers of pupils entitled to join the class and discourage the student to continue his/her

education. In fact, this problem has been founded in all education systems in the world including the education system in Saudi Arabia. Since this causes a loss of student's time and efforts, it could be argued that this problem is one of the leading causes for dropout and thus the spread of illiteracy.

Drop-out means that a group of students left school after they admitted and took their seats in the schools. It is not limited to the lowest level of education, but includes all phases of public education and is known to the educators as an educational wastage. The UNICEF (1992) identified the drop-out as a (non-enrollment of children in school or left without successfully completing the educational stage where he taught, whether willingly or because of other factors, as well as non-attendance always for year or more) (Dosari, 2009). There has been worldwide focus on school dropout problems and a number of policies devised to help reduce school dropout rates. However, the concept of school drop-out is different from one country to another according to the education policy in the same country. In some countries it means leakage: (student leave the school before the end of sixth grade), while other countries include (all pupils leave school before completing the intermediate stage), others apply the drop-out to (all pupils leave school before completing secondary school). Yet, there are a number of countries that did not document the concept of (school dropout) in their educational systems.

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, repetition appears as a large waste in all education stage especially at the primary level where the percentage rose to more than 30%. The data generated from the Saudi Ministry of planning (sixth development plan, 1995-1999/2000, p.179) showed that the Drop-out rates are high in Saudi school: over 40% of Saudis finish their education before reaching secondary school, with approximately 28% of the new entrants to the labour market being drop-outs from elementary and adult vocational training programmes. Elsewhere, Saudi government report published in Asharq Alawsat newspaper (2005) indicated that the education system suffers from the repetition, relatively high dropout rates in addition to the relative weakness in the graduate level, confirming the presence of weakness in the alignment between the outputs of public education and the needs of the economy and the Saudi society. The report pointed out that the issue of internal efficiency of the public education system is lack of consistency between the input of the system and its outputs. In other word, there is an imbalance in

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the functions of the educational process where the volume of inputs is much greater than the size of the output and this is what it calls educational waste. Repetition, leakage, and absence are examples of wastage images. According to the report, the estimated proportion of spending on the education sector in Saudi as an input was about 9.5 per cent of GDP, which is higher than those estimated in a number of developed and developing countries such as France, Germany, Indonesia and the Philippines. Yet, the percentage of expenditure on education in the Kingdom was about 25 per cent of government expenditure, while in the industrial countries the percentage rate was 12.3 per cent and 18.4 per cent in developing countries (Asharq Alawsat, 2005).

However, since the education output in Saudi Arabia is charctrised by repetition and high rate of dropout, the report emphasized inconsistent with the good level and featured of the input of the educational system. It is argued that the education output requires a focus on the efficiency of the educational process with its various dimensions including: the efficiency and skill of the faculty, the effectiveness of teaching methods and the means used, in addition to the curriculum structure and content, and the efficiency of school management, monitoring, and evaluation systems. Therefore, in 2003 a Ten-year strategic plan of the Ministry of Education was adopted, covering the period 2004-2014. Within the main goals, the plan is expected to improve internal and external sufficiency for the educational system through the following objectives:

- To reduce repetition and drop-out rates to 5% in the elementary stage, 7% in the intermediate stage, and to 8% in the secondary stage.
- To develop classroom patterns of learning and teaching (individual learning) to achieve better results according to student levels.
- To reduce the drop-out rates to a general rate of 1% in all stages.
- To diversify the standards of academic acquisition tests and their technologies.
- To secure a safe school environment.
- To improve the rates of success.
- To improve the average number of teachers per student to that of 1 to 20 in the various educational fields by the end of the plan.
- To improve the average number of administration employees per number of educational job occupants to a rate of 1 to 20.

- To allocate financial resources conservatively in order to reduce rates of resource waste.
- To improve the quality of male and female secondary education for university study.
- To provide male and female students with the appropriate and necessary skills to enter the labor market.
- To adopt a system of comprehensive quality in education (MoE, 2003).

Before we move to the conclusion of this chapter, it's worth to mention some of the studies that have analysed education policy and the way in which it is implemented. Most of these studies have focused on the extent of knowledge and familiarity with education policy in terms of objectives, its degree of clarity and the extent to which these objectives are achieved as well as identifying the main obstacles to achieving education policy goals. The analysis of these studies is limited to a section or chapter of the nine chapters of the education policy document, and it shows a lack of familiarity and knowledge with some of the content and principles of education policy. It also shows various degrees of clarity and implementation. For example, Al-Ali's (1992) study focused on understanding the extent of knowledge and clarity of primary education objectives, its achievement and its suitability to the needs of Saudi society from the perspectives of a sample of managers and teachers of primary schools in Riyadh city. He found that the degree of knowledge and clarity of the policy goals was very good and the degree of achievement was between good and very good while the degree of its relevance to Saudi society was very good.

Similar conclusions were reached in a study by Alkhorayef (1996), who examined the perspectives of a sample of managers and teachers in government secondary schools in Riyadh city to determine the extent of their knowledge about the objectives of secondary education in terms of clarity, the extent of achievement and the obstacles that hinder the determination of these objectives. The study found that the respondents' familiarity with the objectives were high, medium, limited and nonexistent. This also applied to the degree of clarity and the achievements of the policy's secondary goals.

Further to the above, Hakeem (2000) investigated secondary school teachers in the Mecca region's knowledge of and familiarity with the principles of educational policy and the extent of its implementation as well as the obstacles that hinder implementation.

The results of the study revealed that a large proportion of the respondents were aware of the existence of an education policy document, but few had actually viewed the policy. The study also revealed that the degree to which these objectives had been implemented was medium and there were many obstacles to implementation related to curriculum, facilities and the interaction between the school and parents. Alshaiya (2001) studied the objectives of teachers' colleges as reflected in the policy document from the perspectives of a sample of faculty members. His research aimed to understand the degree of clarity of these objectives and the extent to which these objectives were achieved as well as to identify the main obstacles to achieving these goals. The results indicated that the objectives of teacher training colleges varied in terms of the degree of clarity and achievements. Finally, Almengash (2006) analysed the content of the education policy document in the light of the literature on the formulation of education policy in general and the studies that dealt with the formulation of some principals of this document. She found that the text structure of some items of the policy document were particularly problematic. They were characterized by repetitiveness, non clarity, redundancy and lack of accuracy in terminology, lack of coherence and sequencing of ideas, lack of realism, and predominantly rhetorical clauses. However, these studies highlighted some of the reasons for not implementing education policy, particularly the objectives of various education stages (primary, elementary etc.) in the Kingdom, which were:

- Lack of schools staff awareness of education policy.
- Lack of spaces and tools needed for the schools activities.
- Lack of delivery of textbooks in a timely manner.
- Lack of education facilities.
- Lack of special training sessions to clarify the policy objectives.
- Lack of financial and material resources.
- Lack of good school buildings (AL-Ali, 1992; ALfaqih, 2000; Hakeem, 2000; Alshaiya, 2001; Alkhorayef, 1996).

These findings are supported by Al-Salloum (1995), who insists that in terms of drafting and compilation of its items and arrangement of its ideas, the policy document is not presented in an optimum manner, particularly when considering that it is the only official document that represents the general framework of policy of education in the Kingdom

of Saudi Arabia. In terms of the implementation of the education policy document, the studies found that most of the principles and items of the policy were not translated into practice. Most of the principles and objectives that the policy contained were not taken into account in the curricula or teaching methods and the training, evaluation and preparation of teachers and students. Alsaloom (1995) insists that a number of principles of education policy in Saudi Arabia have remained unimplemented since it was codified and others have been implemented to a lesser degree than expected. Redha (1998) argues that education policies in the Gulf countries are have a documentary nature that alienates those responsible for education implementation. Community and other sectors have not been involved to a significant extent in the formulation of the policies. In addition, education policies have not been fully aware of and have not been included in the curricula of teacher preparation for the various stages. Therefore, they have no effect in directing education content and practice. Abdul Jawad(1992) notes that only some of the objectives of primary education have been partially implemented.

3.5- Conclusion

This chapter has focused on providing an overview of Saudi Arabia's educational system. The chapter analysed the evolution and the development of the educational system and shed light on the factors influencing education identity and the framework of the education policy. The Saudi educational system incorporates four special characteristics: an emphasis on Islam, a centralised educational system, separate education for men and women and state financial support. Religion is important in the framing of social policies and its implementation in Saudi Arabia. It is the underlying factor that clearly determines not only the nature of the Saudi political system and its influence on framing public policies but also the nature of the educational system in all aspects, such as policies, curricula and practices. It is argued that the development of an education system in Saudi Arabia was, and still is, both a tool for the natural improvement of the level of culture of the population and a further manifestation of the deep-rooted religious nature of Saudi society.

The Saudi state, on other hand, is the main provider of education on all levels. The public educational system in Saudi Arabia is centralised in the MoE, which supervises and controls all public education aspects, including policy on education. In fact, the education policy process is a mirror of the decision making in the Saudi political system, which

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follows a top down approach and is characterised by a concentration of power at the centre with a minimal degree of power fragmentation at the local level. According to Al Salloom (1996), the educational system should be more flexible. He suggests giving school districts more autonomy and authority so they can adapt programmes to address their students' needs, to prepare them either for college or employment, as well as to implement changes as needed to respond to future needs. Despite the centralisation of the education system and its implication, studies in the Saudi context reveal that the goals and objectives of education policy is not defined well or clear to those bureaucrats involved in implementation at the local level. In other words, policy is not implemented according to the policymakers intent as would be expected in the Saudi political system.

CHAPTER 4

Policy Implementation

4.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters provided a broad overview and discussion of the nature and development of the Saudi political system and the Saudi educational system, respectively. Chapter 2 traced the evolution and development of the Saudi political system and discussed the change in the power structure and the power relationship between the centre and local government and its influence on the delivery of social policies. Chapter 3 discussed the factors contributing to the evolution and development of the education system and their influence on education policy and its implementation in Saudi Arabia.

This chapter concerns the implementation of public policies, starting with the recognition that policies cannot be understood in isolation from the means of their execution. The chapter presents a review of the theoretical background and empirical works pertinent to policy implementation and discusses the role of SLBs in the implementation process and their effect upon it. The main argument of this chapter is that the implementation of policy is problematic despite the nature of the policy decision in the political system. This is due to the fact that implementers at the local level frequently misinterpret or contest the conceived purpose of policies formulated at the top level and, therefore, fail to deliver them in a manner consistent with the ideals of policymakers. It has been argued that implementers have substantial discretion in the execution of the policy, which often leads to policy output differing from what policymakers intend. This argument will be further explored in the light of the core question of this thesis that seeks to explore the extent to which the education policy set at the centre of the Saudi government is implemented by SLBs at the local level. The researcher argues that the nature of the Saudi political system based, as it is, on a monarchical model of government avers that policy goals set by the centre at the policy gestation stage are closely adhered to throughout the policy-chain, up to and including the policy implementation stage by SLBs.

This chapter is organised into three main sections. The first presents a brief overview of the policy cycle. It starts with a different definition of public policy and sheds light on three distinct phases of the policy cycle: formation, implementation and evaluation. The second

section describes policy implementation, which is a critical phase in the policy cycle, and highlights debates among scholars of policy implementation on why effective implementation is unattainable. This section examines top-down and bottom-up approaches to policy implementation. It also discusses variation in policy implementation as well as models of linkage between policy makers and those involved in translating policy into action. The third section focuses on the literature on SLBs, including the discretionary powers they exercise at the implementation stage and their influence on policy output.

4.2 Policy Making Cycle

Richards and Smith (2002:1) define the word "policy" as a 'general term used to describe a formal decision or plan of action adopted by an actor, be it an individual, organisation, business, government, etc., in order to achieve a particular goal'. Policy is also described by Finlay et al. (2007:139) as 'a loose term used to cover value commitments, strategic objectives and operational instruments, and structures at national, regional, local and institutional levels'. Fenna (1998:3) define policy as 'the purposeful connecting of ends with means; it is a course of action calculated to achieve a desired objective'. Public policy is a more specific term applied to a formal decision or a plan of action that has been taken by, or has involved, a state organisation (Richards and Smith, 2002:1). Kilpatrick (2000:2) defines public policy as 'a system of laws, regulatory measures, courses of action, and funding priorities concerning a given topic promulgated by a governmental entity or its representatives'. Dye (1972:3) also defines public policy as 'Anything a government chooses to do or not do' Similarly, Howlett and Ramesh (1995:5) state that 'Public policy is, at its most simple, a choice made by a government to undertake some course of action'.

The first generation of public policy studies began in the 1960s as a method for governments 'to technically determine the best way of action to implement a decision or achieve a goal' (Taylor et al, 1997: 3). The first studies differentiated between policy as process, programme, choice of government, authorisation or outcome and policy as theory or model (Taylor et al., 1997). Policy scholars attempted to integrate the outcome of the first policy studies into a conceptual framework for policy research (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1981; Odden, 1991), thus generating a number of models for policy analysis that focused largely on policymaking issues. Hence, the first wave of policy studies did

not properly reflect the contexts in which policies had been implemented and the effect of those contexts on the policy outcomes. As a result, policy scholars and researchers started to recognise policy as a staged process. Policy researchers devised three distinct phases of the policy process that could be studied, rather than focusing on policy as a response to a problem or an issue. These phases are policy formation, policy implementation and policy evaluation (Nakamura & Smallwood, 1980). While much of this chapter will be devoted to the policy implementation phase, the policy formation and evaluation phases are first addressed below.

The first stage in the policy process is that of formation. This stage is characterised by policy actors and certain activities that distinguish it from other stages. Policy actors in this stage are likely to hold governmental positions or be perceived as official policy makers. Their positions grant the right to formulate policies and direct resources to them. According to Nakamura and Smallwood (1980), the policy activities at this stage focus on defining the problem, designating resources and prioritising the issues through policy statements. Traditionally, policy formation has included four phases:

1. Defining of social problems.

2. Discussions of competing policy solutions.

3. Evaluations of particular policy solutions.

4. Considerations of general implementation problems (Silver, Weitzman & Brecher, 2002; Scheurich, 1997)

The most critical step in the policy process is defining the problem because this can have a serious impact on what circumstance/action will be taken towards the policy agenda, what policy alternatives will be chosen and how the policy will be implemented (Cooper, Fusarelli & Randall, 2004). When the problem is clearly stated, defined and takes a form of policy, different and competing policy solutions are discusses and a policy choice is set. In other words, the study of possible policy solutions or choices follows the problem statement step in the policy formation stage. Nakamura and Smallwood (1980) insist that the way in which policy is defined and expressed determines the policy choices. However, solutions are distinct from the problems which they might be called on to solve although it is one of the several relatively independent streams of events that make up the specific decisions within an organisation. Dyke (2004, 27) argues that:

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Participants may have ideas for solutions, and they may be attracted to
specific solutions and volunteer to play the advocate. Only trivial solutions
do not require advocacy and preparation. Significant solutions have to be
prepared without knowledge of the problems they might have to solve.

According to the Garbage Can Model by Cohen, March & Olsen (1972), problems,
solutions and decision makers move from one choice to another depending on the mix of
recognised problems, the choices available, and the mix of solutions available for
problems and outside influences on the decision makers. The Garbage Can theory allows
problems to be addressed and choices to be made, but does not necessarily following a
rational process because problems are addressed based on a solution choice and choices
are made based on shifting combinations of problems, solutions and decision makers. In
this sense, decision-making appears as not controlled instead of rational. However, poorly
understood and addressed problems can drift into and out of the garbage can process,
depending on the situation and factors (Cohen, March & Olsen, 1972).

Policy statements can be hindered by technical limitations and conceptual complexities that
can create a difference of opinion among policy experts and make it difficult to stimulate
the various groups required for implementing policy alternatives (Nakamura & Smallwood,
1980). These issues gradually become clearer as policy choices are placed on the public
agenda. Entering into the analysis of the various policy solutions are the extent to which
policy solutions can be implemented, the resources available to execute the alternatives
solutions and the impact and evaluation of each solution. As Silver, Weitzman & Brecher
(2002) argue, those who hold the most power in the process will determine the policy
solution. However, implementation of the solution ultimately determines the policy
outcomes despite the policy solution chosen to address the problem.

In an effort to formulate an effective policy, a third step is incorporated into the formation
process that includes evaluating the competing potential solutions. Policy solutions must be
evaluated to determine how to address the problem at hand most appropriately. Designs for
evaluating policy alternatives vary but the most typical designs include decision analysis,
cost-benefit analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis and resource-based approaches
(Ackerman & Heinzerling, 2001; Schulman, 1976; Tiller, 2002). Each of these evaluation
designs is able to standardise the review of policy alternatives, where the decision about

which policy alternative is chosen is typically made by those who have control over the political resources (Ackerman & Heinzerling, 2001).

During the policy formation process, potential implementation problems must be carefully considered so that they do not later create barriers and delays in the implementation process. Implementation problems can be attributed to factors such as implementers' indifference or apathy toward a policy, lack of resources, insufficient time for implementation and disagreement about how to achieve results (Hope, 2002). This stage of the process includes a discussion of problems that can potentially surface around policy goals, the key actors in the implementation process, resources earmarked for the policy and indicators for measuring the success of the policy (Nakamura & Smallwood, 1980). Policy formation is complete when the problem to be addressed has been identified, the policy alternatives have been weighed and recommended, a process for evaluating the policy outcomes has been designed and the implementation instructions have been provided.

The final stage in the process is the policy evaluation stage. This involves assessing the effectiveness of policy with regard to policy outcomes. The effectiveness of policy outcomes could be determined by the successful implementation of the policy. As Ripley and Franklin (1986) suggests, degree of compliance with specific mandates, smoothness of established routines, absence of problems and the extent to which a policy accomplishes desired results are characteristics of successful implementation. Policy evaluation can focus on the quantifiable aspects of policy (cost per service, personnel resources and infrastructure) or qualitative measures (impact on policy constituent and consumer, focus on changing the policy context or environment). As a result, policy evaluation can assume many different methodological stances (Nakamura & Smallwood, 1980). According to Marsh & Smith (2001), the appropriateness of the different methodologies used for policy evaluation has been a subject of debate since its inception in the early 1960s. Policy evaluation has traditionally leaned towards a systems analytic approach, particularly in economic, industry and early education policy evaluation (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). However, more recent policy evaluation studies have given way to theories of action evaluation or the evaluation of planned policy actions. Policy actions and outcomes are closely linked to the policy goals and directives. This relationship forms the basis for

theories of action evaluation with an emphasis on how closely policy is implemented according to the original goals and intents (Malen, Croninger & Muncey, 2002). A theory of Action evaluation assists policy actors in identifying the critical links in implementation strategy. In addition, it provides an opportunity to weigh the political promises associated with a particular policy with the programmatic and personnel costs of choosing a particular policy option (Malen, Croninger & Muncey, 2002).

4.3 Policy Implementation

Policy implementation is a key phase in the policy-making cycle in which policy targets and goals are translated into practice/action by bureaucrats at the lower level of an organisation or agency. Meter and Horn (1975: 447) describe the transformation of goals and targets into policy outcome as "an activity of groups or individuals directed toward achieving the goals outlined in a policy mandate". The activities of these individuals have become a central concern for researchers and those involved in studies of policy implementation since the groundbreaking work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), continuing through recent contributions and syntheses (Hall, 1992; Hill & Hope, 2009). O'Toole (2000:266) defines policy implementation as "what develops between the establishment of an apparent intention on the part of government to do something or to stop doing something and the ultimate impact in the world of action". Pressman and Wildavsky (1979: xxi) state that policy implementation 'may be viewed as a process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieve them'. The most influential definition of implementation was, however, provided by Mazmanian and Sabatier in 1983, when they stated that:

> Implementation is the carrying out of basic policy decision, usually incorporated in a statute but which can also take the form of important executive orders or court decisions. Ideally, that decision identifies the problem(s) to be addressed, stipulates the objective(s) to be pursued, and in a variety of ways, 'structures' the implementation process' (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983:20-1, in Hill & Hope, 2009:7).

Until the work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), implementation as a key phase of policymaking was not of any interest to political scholars and scientists and was investigated only in a limited way in a variety of other studies (Hill, 1997). Hogwood and Gunn (1984:196) comment that the 'previous studies tended to be of decisions rather than policies

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and that, in either case, the focus was upon the moment of choice at which a decision was taken or a policy made'. Since then, policy researchers have begun to understand the role of policy implementation in policy outcome success. Perhaps it is for this reason that policy studies concerned with bottom-up approaches have evolved to focus on the implementation process rather than the policy formation process (Fowler, 2004; Odden, 1991).

The refocusing of attention on the implementation stage as a key element in studying public policy has contributed to the realization in western democracies that many measures introduced by liberal administrations in the 1960s had not brought indispensable or permanent change. For example, in the UK, 'Specific implementation failures were being observed in different social and industrial programmes as a result of government attempts to engage in the industrial field and regulate the trade unions in 1970' (Hogwood & Gunn 1984: 196). The literature on policy implementation (Goggin et al., 1990; Hill & Hupe, 2002; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Schofield & Sausman, 2004) suggests that implementation studies since 1970 are divided into three generations or phases, discussed below.

The first generation of researches began with the work of Pressman and Wildavesky (1973) and Bardach (1977). Researchers of this phase started from the assumption that successful implementation is a matter of decision-making in the centre and control over implementers. Hence, their contributions focused on the gap between policy intentions and the reality of programme delivery and were broadly concerned with understanding why a series of federally funded programmes, launched in the 1960s in the U.S, were relatively ineffective (Fitz, 1994:54). The majority of researchers of this phase focused on individual case studies analysed separately. According to Martin (2007), the implementation process was described in greater detail by a wide range of theories created by this generation of researchers.

The second generation of researches and studies of policy implementation focused on searching for useful theoretical perspectives and developing frameworks and analytical tools to deal with the complexity and challenges of implementation. In other words, the focus was on the role of actors in the policy process as well as on contextual issues. This phase of research and studies led to two important conclusions: firstly, a potential cause for

inconsistencies in policy implementation centred on a conflict between local orientations, values and priorities and state initiated programmes (Moore, Goertz & Hartle, 1991); and, secondly, policy is implemented not in a linear fashion as claimed by the classical (top-down) approach but through trade-offs between policy officials, policy implementers and local actors (Schofield, 2001). The second generation of researchers suggested the need to look more closely at what was taking place at the local level and how local orientations influenced the policy implementation process. Moreover, they identified variables that they believed would lead to greater success in policy implementation (Berman, 1978; Elmore, 1979; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; Martin, 2007).

The third group of researchers on policy implementation, by contrast, were less concerned with specific implementation failure and more with understanding how implementation works in general and how its prospects might be improved (Schofield, 2001). In other words, those researchers sought to 'provide a comprehensive synthesis or a unifying approach to implementation analysis via empirical research' (Martin, 2007:6). The focus was on how tools could be used in both achieving policy goals and in different sectoral and national styles for approaching design and implementation (Linder & Peters, 1990; Howlett, 1991). Table 4.1 presents the three generations of implementation research and the characteristic of each phase.

Table 4.1: *Generations and Characteristics of Implementation Researches and Studies*

Generations of implementation research	Characteristics
First generation: Pressman and Wildavesky (1973); Bardach (1977)	Implementation a linear process and policymakers are able to control it.
Second generation: Berman (1978); Elmore (1979); Lipsky (1980); Mazmanian & Sabatier (1983)	Implementation a trade-off between policy officials, policy implementers and local actors.
Third generation: Linder & Peters (1990); Howlett (1991); Martin (2007)	Understanding how implementation works in general and how its prospects might be improved.

The central theme in the policy implementation literature (Lipsky 1980, 1984; Kelly 1994; Weissert 1994; Schneider & Jacoby 1996; Scott 1997; Keiser 1999; Maynard-

Moody & Musheno 2000, 2003; Meyers, Glaser & MacDonald 1998) is that while policy emanates from a higher or central level of government, problems arise at the implementation stage. Two key issues have been identified: firstly, why policy often does not coincide with policymakers' intentions, and secondly, how local implementers can be convinced to adhere to the intentions of government mandates. These concerns constitute the basis for illustrating the problem of policy implementation and the way in which social policies are delivered.

Once policy is enacted at state-level, it makes its way through a policy chain to bureaucrats in the organisation, who then translate it into practical means or action (Barrett, 2004). That means, when the policy is codified and regulated with specifics, implementers/front-line workers supposedly transform the policy into a reality consistent with the ideals of policymakers. Frequently, implementers misinterpret or disagree with the conceived purpose and in so doing undermine policy makers' intent. Garn (1999: 2) insists that: 'this implementation problem has been repeatedly identified in studies of agricultural, economic, energy, environmental, labor, penal, public health, urban planning, technology, and welfare policies at the state and local levels'. Similar frustrations regarding the problem of implementation in government policy were identified in many researches and studies by scholars of public policy (e.g. Baum, 1981; Clune, 1984; Barrow, 1978; Berman & Mclaughlin, 1978; Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977). Odden (1991:2) concludes that:

> Local response was inherently at odds with state (or federal) program initiatives. If higher-level governments took policy initiatives, it was unlikely that local educators would implement those policies in compliance with either the spirit, expectations, rules, regulations or program components.

In policy implementation, however, one should not underestimate the influence of the implementers and their perceptions on policy outcome. Lipsky (1980: xii) stated that public policy is what bureaucrats at the grass roots level do. Furthermore, he added that:

> Public policy is not best understood as made in legislatures or top-floor suites of high-ranking administrators, because in important ways it is

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actually made in the crowded offices and daily encounters of street-level workers.

Traditional understandings of policy implementation have been based on an ideal type, with perfect implementation as the goal, presenting implementation as a problem rather than an area of study or a source of understanding (Hill, 1997). Within this conceptualisation, politicians and civil servants of the central state see implementation as occurring in a distinct place and time outside the central decision making offices, although it has been acknowledged for some time that perfect implementation is unattainable (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984) and might even be undesirable. Yet, explanations of the policy process have continued to be centred on why policy in general or certain policies in particular are not implemented as intended by policymakers. Through studying several social programme, scholars and analysts of public policy recognised that policies originating from higher levels of government are inherently problematic (Garn, 1999). They argue that there is a variation in policy goals between policymakers and implementers that lead to different ways of delivering public services not originally deliberated by the policymakers. Therefore, there is an assumption that public policy is a paradox because policy goals have multiple meanings and are often conflictual (Stone 1997).

What seems to cause more mystification in the implementation process and lead to policy outcomes that differ from the policymakers' intention is that policy often carries vague, unresolved or conflicting meanings. Furthermore, policy often contains shadow/unclear guidance for practice and its implementation often takes place under incomplete, inaccurate or poor understandings of what policy means and how it should translated into reality (Hall, 1992; Matland, 1995; Stone, 1997; Hill 2003). Policy formulators might prefer to leave various aspects of policy (especially the ones with the greatest responsibility) deliberately ambiguous so that others cannot blame them for non-implementation or implementation failure (Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977; Lipsky, 1980; Berman, 1978; Elmore, 1979; Hjern & Hull, 1982). However, the question of why policy does or does not occur as its policy makers intended is still controversial and prompted further debate among scholars and researchers of public policy and public administration. Hill (2003:267) argues that 'scholars of policy implementation have

identified more than three hundred variables that might affect implementation, most of which fall into one of four general classes of influence on implementation'. According to Hill (2003), the first class of variables that influence the implementation is:

> The policy and its process: through its design, the resources devoted to its implementation, the validity of its causal theory, and the presence of fixers or other interested parties sovereigns, policy models' outcomes.

During the policy design, targets and objectives should be clearly identified and made specific to avoid any confusion or ambiguity on the side of the implementers. Nakamura and Smallwood (1980:128) indicate that 'Policies are often vague around the problem to be solved and the means for solving it. Vagueness in policy statements means that the responsibility for more specific definition is shifted from policy makers to implementers'. This vagueness or ambiguity 'refers to a state of having many ways of thinking about the same circumstances or phenomena. These ways may not be reconcilable and thus may create vagueness, confusion and stress' (Zahariadis, 1999:74). Keiser (2003:4) states that:

> Under ambiguous policy conditions, street level bureaucrats may all work and yet still have variation in the decisions that they make because each street-level bureaucrat may have a different understanding of what he or she is supposed to do.

This is because implementers do not always receive clear instructions from policy makers (Schofield, 2004). Within this category of variables that affect the outcome of the implementation process is the local capacity and motivation to embrace policy objectives or strategies (McLaughlin, 1998). It has been argued that the ability of SLBs to plan, execute or maintain an innovative effort is influenced by local capacity. Local capacity includes expertise, organisational routines and resources available to support planned efforts to change. It has also been argued that motivation is crucial to produce the enthusiasm and energy required to make a project successful (Kaufman 1972; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975; Edwards, 1980).

The second class of variables affecting implementation focuses on organisations and their environment. Hill (2003:267) argue that 'organisational characteristics are known to influence the production of outputs and many scholars of implementation have noted the problems when organisations do not work together to produce policy'. Keiser (2003:7) argues, 'It is difficult to understand individual decision-making without taking into account the organisational context where street-level bureaucrats make decisions'. One difficulty facing a decision maker is the inability of humans to process large amounts of information at the same time. Therefore, decision makers must choose which information to pay attention to in the environment. However, changes in attention to different kinds of information help to explain policy change (Jones, 2001). Organisations have evolved to compensate for some of humans' cognitive limitations (Jones, 2001). For example, organisations allow humans to process information serially through specialization and to process a higher volume of information than an individual is capable of doing alone. Through organisations, humans can move closer to rational-decision making (Simon, 1947). Organisations highlight certain attributes in the environment for individual members of that organisation and provide individual decision makers with standard operating procedures that allow them to make decisions without a high level of search and analysis (Jones, 2001).

Hill (2003:267) indicated that the third class of variables affecting policy implementation 'focuses on agents, whose preferences and leadership abilities may further shape policy outcomes'. For example, Richards and Smith (2005:10) indicate that 'those responsible for implementation - street-level bureaucrats [police, social workers, doctors, agency staff, etc.] - play a vital role in determining the success or failure of a policy'. Zahariadis (1999) suggests that policy implementers frequently have conflicting philosophies in terms of what they seek to accomplish through policy implementation and what preferences they hold about policy outcomes. Furthermore, Lipsky (1980: xii) indicates that:

> Public policy is not best understood as made in legislatures or top-floor suites of high-ranking administrators because in important ways it is actually made in the crowded offices and daily encounters of street-level workers.

Lipsky (1980: xii) goes on to say that public policy is actually what bureaucrats at the grass roots level do. He argues that 'the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routine they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively *become* the public policies they carry out'.

The fourth class of variables that might affecting implementation focuses on the implementation environment. Hill (2003:267) indicated that 'implementation may be affected by condition within the implementation environment: the behavior of groups affected by policy, economic conditions and public opinion (Mazmanian & Sabatier 1989)'. There are different perspectives on this issue: the literature assumes that policies' meanings are shared, a priority among policy makers, implementers and their managers. However, the evidence is that policy usually carries vague, unresolved or conflicting meanings as legislators resolve differences, though compromised language and silences throw a spanner in the works (Yanow, 1996). This evidence suggests that implementing thoughts about policy extends beyond simply deciding whether to implement or not and, importantly, includes a judgement about what the policy means in the first place. Further, policy often contains only shadowy guidance for practice (Matland, 1995) and implementers of policy often work under incomplete, inaccurate or simply individual understandings of what policy means for their daily work or practice (Lipsky, 1980).

4.3.1 Models of Policy Implementation

Two schools of thought regarding the study of implementation have developed from the implementation literature since the pioneering work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1973). These approaches are known as the top-down and bottom-up approaches to policymaking. These models are considered to be the most effective methods for studying and analysing implementation. Matland (1995:146) points out that:

> Top-down theorists see policy designers as the central actors and concentrate their attention on factors that can be manipulated at the central level. Bottom-up theorists emphasize target groups and service deliverers, arguing policy really is made at the local level.

The top-down approach to policy implementation emphasises the policymaker's abilities to set clear goals for policy and control the behaviour of policy implementers. The top-

down approach characterises implementation as hierarchical and linear (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983, Fitz *et al.,* 1994). Proponents of this approach (e.g., Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; van Meter & van Horn, 1975; Bardach, 1977; Sabatier & Mazmanian 1981, 1983) start from the assumption of centrality of policy decision-making. They argue that the policy process is the property of decision-makers at the top level of government and the centralisation of decision-making ensures implementers compliance with targets set by top level and therefore successful implementation of the policy. According to this approach, successful policy outcome depends largely on the interaction between goals set by policy-makers and hierarchal bureaucracy (rules/procedures) to ensure that policies are executed as accurately as possible in terms of achieving these goals (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). The top-down model of implementation implies separation between policy formulation and policy implementation. It is also discounts the effect of those front-line workers on the implementation process and, therefore, the policy outcome. Pulzl and Trieb (2006:92, cited in Parsons, 1995: 463) state:

> Top-down studies were based on a "black box model" of the policy
> process inspired by systems analysis. They assumed a direct causal
> link between policies and observed outcomes and tended to disregard
> the impact of implementers on policy delivery.

In analysing the policy decisions made at the top level of government and their relationship to implementation, Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979, 1981) identify 17 independent legal, political and tractability variables affecting the different stages of the implementation process. These variables can be categorised into three main themes, which are: tractability of the problem, ability of statute to structure implementation and non-statutory variables. Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983:22) integrate this large number of political and tractability variables into six sufficient and necessary conditions for the effective implementation of legal objectives. They suggest that the following six factors must be available in order for successful implementation to occur:

1. Clarity of objectives
2. Valid causal theory
3. Adequate structural process
4. Adherence to policy goals
5. Support from different actors

6. Changes in socio-economic conditions

Sabatier (1986:23) insists that 'the first three conditions can be dealt with by the initial policy decision (e.g. a statute) whereas the latter three are largely the product of subsequent political and economic pressure during the implementation process.' However, Sabatier and Mazmamian (1983) acknowledge the difficulty of achieving control over the implementation process despite perfect hierarchical control. They conclude that successful implementation could be obtained by adequate programme design and smart structuration of the policy process on the part of policy makers. Similarly, Meter and Horn (1975) identified key variables associated with the success of the top-down implementation model. These variables mainly relate to capacities and hierarchical control. In other words, they sought to link policy and performance by proposing variables that contribute to successful policy implementation and hypothesise that:

• Successful implementation is dependent on full funding. If a programme is unfunded or only partially funded, the possibility of success is significantly lowered.

• Implementers should have the ability to implement policy activities. For a programme to achieve success, target groups must produce acceptable outcomes.

• The nature of public opinion and support affects the possibility of programme success. If the public is supportive, then the programme is more likely to succeed.

• Implementers must be fully committed to the programme's goals and mission. It seems obvious that implementers would agree with the policy being implemented although it is not always the case (Matland, 1995).

Many scholars of bottom-up application for policy implementation have criticised the top-down approach, arguing that the conversion of policy ideas into practical steps cannot simply be referred to submit of government and administrative agencies with orders given through hierarchical bureaucracy (Keiser, 2003). For example, Brehm and Gates (1997) demonstrate that policy makers are very limited in their ability to control bureaucrats' behaviour. They argue that SLBs' decisions are mostly explained by bureaucrats' own preferences and by the preferences of their peers/co-workers. They then suggest that a better understanding of bureaucratic decision-making aids an understanding of the policy

preferences of bureaucrats rather than the administrative controls that policy makers use to affect decisional outcomes (Keiser, 2003).

One criticism of top-down models and their inability to ensure successful implementation is that policy formulators are more reliant on others actors for information needed in initiating the policy and this, according to Lipsky (1980), makes decisions regarding implementation more susceptible to the influence of others players and not limited to policy makers. Lipsky (1980) argues that SLBs cannot be deprived of discretion and interest groups within implementation agencies or elsewhere often need to be accommodated. He asserts that the implementation process requires a deep understanding of the descriptive power that SLBs hold from their interaction with citizens in their daily work and the strategies they develop to solve the problems facing them and that therefore they should be seen as a part of policy-making. Similarly, Barrett and Fudge (1981:25) criticise the top-down approach for viewing policymaking and implementation as a linear process. They argue that:

> Implementation, as a process, should be treated as the transmission of policy into a series of consequential actions; the policy-action relationship needs to be regarded as a process of interaction and negotiation, taking place over time, between those seeking to put policy into effect and those upon whom action depends.

Meter and Horn (1975) highlight two variables that might deviate from the top-down approach. They argue that the extent of policy change has a critical impact on the possibility of successful implementation and that the degree of consensus on goals is crucial. The bottom-up approach suggests that the implementation process is more than actual implementation of management orders. It is a 'political process in the course of which policies are frequently reshaped, redefined or even completely overturned" (Pulzl & Treib, 2006:100). Proponents of this approach e.g. Berman, 1978, 1980; Lipsky, 1980; Hjem and Porter, 1981; Hjern and Hull, 1982, see policy implementation on the micro-level as a process in which local organisations respond to the macro-level plans, develop their own programmes and implement them. They argue that the goals, strategies, activities and contacts of the actors involved in the micro-implementation process must be understood in

order to understand implementation. Berman (1978) argues that most implementation problems arise from the interaction of a policy with the micro-level institutional setting.

Scholars of this approach depart from the top-down perspective that policy formulation and policy implementation can best be seen as one process and cannot be separated. Instead, they argue that the specific position of SLBs as an interface between government agencies and citizens/consumers, the routines they establish and the strategies they develop to solve problems encountered are an integral part of a policy decision making. Furthermore, Lipsky (1980: xii) states that public policy is what bureaucrats at the grass roots do. He argues that 'the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routine they establish and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out'. Weatherley and Lipsky (1977) argue that the effect of policy on the action of SLBs must be evaluated in order to predict that policy's impact.

The bottom-up approach emphasises the importance of SLBs and locally based organisations in the success or failure of policy implementation and rejects the notion that policy is the property of decision makers and that hierarchical control leads to successful implementation. This means that the emphasis shifts from the power of central authority over policy to the interaction that takes place at the micro level, even though policymakers can only indirectly affect micro-level factors and are definitely unable to control the implementation process (Matland, 1995). For example, Hjern's (1982) studied a policy problem, asking micro level actors about their goals, activities, problems, and contacts. His study enables him to map a network that identifies the relevant implementation structure for a specific policy at the local, regional, and national levels, and allows him to evaluate the significance of government programs vis-a-vis other influences such as markets. He finds that central initiatives are poorly adapted to local conditions. Program success depends in large part on the skills of individuals in the local implementation structure who can adapt policy to local conditions; it depends only to a limited degree on central activities. However, it has been argued that under such conditions, if implementers at local level are not given the autonomy to adapt the programme to local conditions, it is expected to fail (Palumbo, Maynard-Moody & Wright, 1984).

There are limitations to bottom-up research. Sabatier (1986) notes three difficulties. Firstly, it is likely to over-emphasise the ability of the periphery to frustrate the centre's intentions. Secondly, its focus on present participants in the policy process tends to lead to overlooking policy developments in the past and the influence of earlier (and different?) participants. Thirdly, in making the perceptions and activities of participants paramount, there is a danger of leaving unanalysed, 'social, legal and economic factors, which structure the perceptions, resources and participation of those actors' (Sabatier, 1986:35). The bottom-up approach has been criticised normatively and methodologically. Matland (1995:149) indicated that the normative criticism is that:

> In a democratic system, policy control should be exercised by actors whose power derives from their accountability to sovereign voters through their elected representatives. The authority of local service deliverers does not derive from this base of power. Decentralization should occur within a context of central control. Street-level bureaucrats do have great discretion in their interactions with clients.

To proceed from this fact to theorise that because such flexibility exists it should serve as the basis for designing policy, however, is to turn the role of theory on its head (Linder & Peters, 1987). It effectively likens description with prescription. Flexibility and autonomy might be appropriate when the goals of the policy formulators and implementers are the same, but if they differ greatly, flexibility and autonomy may lead to policies which result in lower performance on official goals (Matland, 1995). In terms of the methodological criticism, the bottom-up approach overemphasise the amount of local autonomy. As mentioned above, the Methodology been used by Hjern (1982), relies on perceptions and, therefore, indirect effects and the effects actors are unconscious of are not registered. Variations in actions can be explained mainly by local level differences, yet all actions may fall within a limited range where the borders are set by centrally determined policy. Matland (1995:150) suggest that:

> While main actors do not act in detail or intervene in specific cases, they can structure the goals and strategies of those participants who are active. The institutional structure, the available resources and access to an implementing arena may be determined centrally and influence policy outcomes.

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4.3.2 Variation in Policy Implementation

According to the behavioural theory of choice, three factors explain the variation in implementation. These factors compromise hierarchical control, bureaucratic culture and individual views or emotions. One of the issues that concerns political science literature and public administration is hierarchical control and a significant amount of this literature can be classified under the category of principal-agent models. The problems of principals controlling their agents due to both moral hazard (hidden actions) and adverse selection (hidden information) are the focus of the principal-agent models (Keiser, 2003). The literature of the principal-agent model explores a series of possible institutional arrangements which will ease the problems of the moral hazards and adverse selection. That said, there is no definite agreement as to whether this control is possible and what the most effective mechanisms to be used are. Brehm and Gates (1997) present a game-theoretic model, which shows that, within an organisation, supervisors are unable to significantly influence the behaviour of SLBs. Brehm and Gates find strong evidence to support this assertion. On the other hand, they note that the subordinates report that supervisors partially influence their behaviour. There is a lack of consensus in the literature regarding empirical findings of responsiveness in aggregate, bureaucratic output and principal-agent models.

The empirical literature shows that bureaucratic outputs move in the same direction but with different magnitude, with changes in the elected officials (Moe, 1982, 1985; Wood, 1988; Wood & Waterman 1994). Brehm and Gates (1997) explain this disjuncture between principal-agent models and empirical findings by arguing that political principals and bureaucrats have the same preference. Brehm and Gates (1997) found that supervisors do not mean much, if they mean anything at all, regarding the hierarchy in the bureaucracy. The principal-agent models and the overhead democracy literature are lacking in that they do not deal with the ambiguous circumstances of the policy and the policy environment. Coercive methods and education are two mechanisms through which leaders can affect their followers and subordinates (Brehm & Gates, 1997).

Bureaucratic culture is the second factor that explains the difference in implementation. Wilson (1984) describes bureaucratic culture as a patterned and continuing difference among systems of coordinated action that lead those systems to respond in different ways

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to the same incentive. Bureaucratic culture makes the shape and character of the organisation comparable to the character of a human being, whilst political culture points the employee in a certain direction. According to Wilson (1984), a sense of mission or role orientation and an attachment to administrative rules are essential components of organisational culture. Jones (2001) argues that the bureaucratic culture causes bounded rationality to show through. This is because bureaucratic culture is to the organisation as personality is to the individual and political culture works to give workers a pre-disposition to act in certain ways (Keiser, 2003). Despite the value of bureaucratic culture, few studies have analysed and explored the importance of bounded rationality and its impact on the administrative decision making process.

Individual views or emotions are the third factor explaining the variation in implementation. Different individuals are more or less attached to administrative rules because humans tend to embrace an emotional attachment to the regulations and the rules within the organisation to which they belong to a greater or lesser degree (Jones, 2001). Emotions change and changes in the environment surrounding the decision-maker may affect his decisions (Jones, 2001; Simon, 1947). As emotions can cause the decision maker to pay more attention to some aspects or to respond to some motivations more than others, they play a role in the decisions made. There is some evidence to show that attitudes affect SLBs' decisions. For example, Scott (1997) found in an experimental research study that there was a tendency for those who played the role of social workers to give more benefits to sympathetic clients than to unsympathetic ones. In addition, Hasenfeld and Steinmetiz (1981) found that clients who can be described as troublemakers receive less in benefits and less information from SLBs.

4.3.3 Implementation Structure and Policy Failure

In general, the making of public policies leads to the creation of a relationship between the actors (policy makers, implementers, agents...etc.) and the activities resulting from the formation, implementation and evaluation of policy. These relationships are not linear or hierarchical as the classic approach of policy implementation suggests. They depend on the distribution of power between policy makers and those carrying out and evaluating the policy. In other words, the understanding of policy implementation has moved from the hierarchical structure to a complex structure with multiple decision points. This shift in

understanding was due to the interactions between the different policy actors and the dimensions of different implementation structures. Therefore, in studying public policy, the implementation linkages between the various actors are crucial because they help in understanding why the implementation of policies fails. Nakamura and Smallwood (1980) suggest five kinds of structures or links between policymakers and implementers. These structures characterise the different modes of implementation as follows:

1. Classical technocracy. This model assumes that bureaucrats at the local level apply the policy according to directives and orders from the authority at the top level. Therefore, the implementation process is hierarchical and linear. This structure of implementation is mostly found in policies that require expertise to carry out the policy. However, technical failures usually cause implementation breakdowns.

2. Instructed delegation. This model assumes that implementers at the local level receive full authority, regulated by officials at the top level, to make rules and regulations regarding the policy. Policymakers transfer with discretion some of the technical administrative and negotiating powers. The instructed delegation generates its essence from the traditional approach of implementation that assumes policy is formulated centrally with clear goals and objectives.

3. Bargaining. This model suggests that the implementers of the policy do not necessarily share the objectives and goals set by decision makers. Therefore the bargainers introduce negotiation into the process of policy implementation. It is unlike the previous two models in which there is a relative consistency among policy makers and executors about the implementation process. Under this model, the distribution of power and resources determines the success or failure of policy implementation. An imbalance on any of the two sides could lead either to coercive policy implementation or to non-implementation of the policy. This model of links in the implementation process makes policy failure more likely. For example, lack of technical expertise might lead to the failure of the application on the ground. In addition, failure in negotiations may lead to the suspension of the implementation process and, finally, the implementers of the policy might circumvent the policy and implement the policy that suits their own needs.

4. Discretionary experimenters. This model is similar to the bargaining structure in that implementers have regulated discretionary authority to improve the goals and procedures for implementation. This regulation of power happens because the policy actors at the top level are not able to formulate the policy or they lack technical expertise. The implementation structures resulting from this model can fail for different reasons, such as inadequate communication of technical requirements, ambiguity of implementation in terms of goals and means and superficial implementation of policy without a change in local practice.

5. Bureaucratic entrepreneurship. Under this form of implementation structure, goals and means are defined by the implementers and supported entirely by policymakers. Implementers possess power of information, ability to combat bureaucracy and entrepreneurial skills to implement policy according to traditional implementation. This full shift of power to the implementers leads to positive outcomes for policy.

The above-mentioned implementation structural models can be both overwhelming and productive. Failure of any of them may occur if the goals and objectives of policies that were originally identified are not implemented in a manner that addresses the problem. However, failure of policy can result from either non-implementation or unsuccessful implementation. Non-implementation of the policy means that the policy is not implemented as policy makers intended because 'those involved in its implementation have been unco-operative and/or inefficient or because their best efforts could not overcome obstacles to effective implementation over which they had little or no control' (Hogwood & Gunn 1984:197). Unsuccessful implementation on the other hand means that the policy fails to produce the intended results or the desired outcomes due to external factors, even though the policy is executed in full (Hunter & Marks, 2002). Policy failure can occur because of poor implementation, poor policy or bad luck. Hunter and Marks (2002:5) insist that:

> 'Ineffective implementation will be viewed by policy-makers as bad execution or external circumstances may be so adverse that bad luck is identified as the reason for failure. In other words, it was no one's fault.'

It has been argued that the point about policy failure is drawn from the assumption that both policy formulation and implementation processes are not clearly separated. Hunter and Marks (2002:6) argue that:

'There is an assumption in government, often implicit, that precisely such a distinction does exist. The line adopted is that the government has produced the policies and it is now up to those working at the local level to implement it. Policy failure will, therefore, be regarded as bad execution and not bad policy.'

However, policy failure could be explained by the policy's being imperfect due to being designed with insufficient information, poor logic or impractical theories. Studies of policy implementation show that policy outcome is most likely to be affected by the unanticipated or unforeseen activities that occur at the implementation phase. Policy failure 'can occur when policy is imposed from the centre with no consideration given to how it might be perceived or received at local level' (Hunter &Marks, 2002:6). On the contrary, if the policy designers give thought during the design stage to the potential problems of implementation, the possibility of a successful outcome increases. This might indicate the need for a policy impact statement or for an evaluation of potential implementation problems or barriers to success. Hogwood and Gunn (1984:199) identify ten preconditions for perfect implementation, although they recognise that this is difficult to attain:

1. Circumstances external to the implementing agency do not impose crippling constraint.
2. Adequate time and sufficient resources are made available to the programme or policy.
3. Required combination of resources is actually available.
4. Policy to be implemented is based upon a valid theory of cause and effect.
5. Relationship between cause and effect is direct and there are few if any intervening links.
6. Dependency relationships are minimal.
7. There is an understanding of, and agreement on, objectives.
8. Tasks are fully specified in correct sequence.
9. There is perfect communication and co-ordination
10. Those in authority can demand and obtain perfect compliance.

4.4 Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs)

In 1980, Michael Lipsky introduced the term 'street level bureaucrat' (SLBs) in social policies and public administration disciplines. According to Lipsky (1980), teachers, police officers, health and safety inspectors, judges at lower courts, medical doctors and social workers are examples of street-level bureaucrats. These SLBs 'interact directly with citizens in the course of their job and have substantial discretionary power in the

execution of their work' (Lipsky, 1980: 3). Therefore, they are significant players in any policy-implementation process (Lipsky, 1980, 1984; Keiser, 1999; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2000; Scott, 1997).

SLBs are at the front line of service delivery and are, to a large extent, responsible for carrying out the policy objectives developed at higher levels of government. The unique position they occupy in public service organisations enables them to choose the way they implement public policy and, thus, influence the policy outcome as a whole. It has been argued that the delivery of policy is directly affected by the objective and subjective conditions in which SLBs operate. It appears that policies that do not take into account the views and experiences of SLBs will face serious problems in the implementation phase and might fail. The importance of SLBs in the implementation of social policies is generated from the fact that they interface between the state and the citizens who benefit from the services provided. Meyers and Vorsanger (2003:154) indicate that:

> Front line workers are responsible for many of the most central activities of public agencies, from determining program eligibility to allocating benefits, judging compliance, imposing sanctions and exempting individuals and businesses from penalties.

Goodsel (1981) illustrates that many citizens' experience with government arises from their interaction with SLBs and their experiences of public policy is a result of this interaction. Keiser (2003:3) argues that 'Many street level bureaucrats determine who gets benefits, how much they get and when they get them. In other words, street level bureaucrats determine who gets access to public policies and programs'. An examination of SLBs' behaviours or even their views about policy goals clearly illustrates the power of bureaucratic discretion on policy outcomes (Weissert, 1994; Clark-Daniels and Daniels, 1995; Meyers, Glaser and MacDonald, 1998). It is one of the main reasons why formulated policy is not always implemented or delivered as expected by politicians and higher-level administrators. Therefore, understanding SLBs' decision-making is essential for understanding public policies. As Lipsky (1980:13) explains:

> Street-level bureaucrats make policy in two related respects. They exercise wide discretion in decisions about citizens with whom they

interact. Then, when taken in concert, their individual actions add up to agency behaviour.

Lipsky (1980:3) examines what happens at the point where policy is translated into practice in various human service bureaucracies, such as schools, courts and welfare agencies, and he argues that, ultimately, policy implementation comes down to the people who actually implement it. In other words, Lipsky views policy from the perspective of the welfare state professionals involved in the delivery and suggests that the SLBs should be seen as part of the policy-making community. His argument is that:

> Public policy is not best understood as made in legislatures or top-floor suites of high ranking administrators because in important ways it is actually made in the crowded offices and daily encounters of street level workers.

The work of SLBs requires judgement and this cannot be reduced to a set of tight rules. As Lipsky (1980: 161) states, 'Street-level bureaucrats have discretion because the nature of service provision calls for human judgments that cannot be programmed and for which machines cannot substitute'. Keiser (2003: 5) argues that 'For many government programs, street-level bureaucrats must place citizens in categories to determine whether or not they should receive government benefits or punishments'. According to Prottas (1979), with these bureaucratic decisions it is not always clear whether individuals fit into these categories or not. Spicker (1995:150) argues that 'the process of implementation is complex, and in this process, rules have to be interpreted, practices developed, and judgments have to be made.' Discretion might be given to SLBs for other reasons, such as protection. It is often in the interests of superiors not to try and specify too clearly what SLBs should do, because then that leaves them vulnerable if policy fails hidden agendas that superiors may want but not be able to publicly specify. Hill (1993:11) states that:

> In a more sinister way hierarchies may leave discretionary decision making to fall into a specifically biased pattern - for example, involving racism. They leave the responsibility for action they accept, but will not publicly condone, in the hands of subordinates. When such behaviour is challenged, subordinates can take the blame.

According to Lipsky (1980), policy might be made by and certainly is affected by SLBs in three main ways:

1. Possession of information. Lipsky argues that SLBs have an effect on policy because they are the ones who feed information about needs and demands to their superiors.

2. Policy-making via discretion. According to Lipsky (1980), SLBs have a lot of discretion to decide who gets what from their agency/organisation. Their superiors cannot control their actions on the job all the time. For example, police officers can exercise discretion in terms of whom they stop and whom they do not and how they respond to the people they stop and so forth.

3. Cumulative action. Lipsky (1980) asks what happens when SLBs do not share the goals of their superiors or disagree with policy. He argues that in such cases what effectively emerges is the potential that policy, as it will be practised, will be in conflict with policy declarations or will even contradict policy declarations.

Scholars and researchers of policy implementation may debate as to whether or not the professional power of SLBs is still continuing to shape the process of delivering public services or is being curtailed by different implementation approaches. However, analysis of the relationship between SLBs and policy implementation in various social studies reveals evidence that the implementation process is affected primarily by the discretionary power of SLBs. It is also affected by various socioeconomic, political and cultural factors. For example, Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000:329) argue that despite the fact that rules permeate the jobs of SLBs, discretion prevails. They point out that 'In street-level work, discretion is inevitable'. Furthermore, they state that:

> Every aspect of street-level work is defined by rules and procedures ...
> yet rules and procedures provide only weak constraints on the loose
> parameters around street-level judgments. Street-level work is,
> ironically, rule saturated, not rule bound. (2000: 334)

The importance of SLBs' discretion in policy outcomes continues to be examined by scholars of implementation, despite the signals sent by politicians and administrators at higher levels of government (Keiser, 1999; Keiser and Soss, 1998; Weissert,1994). Kelly (1994:119) addresses policy implementation in the context of frameworks through which SLBs view the world. Her study of Californian schoolteachers and local workers in a state employment

agency focused on the beliefs and opinions of SLBs as conceptions of how the workers might carry out their tasks. She found that SLBs' judgements about justice are highly significant in how they might implement public policy and concludes that 'street-level workers orchestrate outcomes that are compatible with their visions of justice'.

Brehm and Gates (1997) argue that understanding the decision-making of SLBs is determined by their policy preferences and not by the administrative controls that their supervisors use to affect their decisions. Therefore, understanding SLBs' policy preferences is necessary in order to understand bureaucratic behaviour: as Keiser (2003:4) states, 'If we can discern bureaucrats' policy preferences, we can predict their behaviour'. Nevertheless, Keiser acknowledges that it is difficult to understand the bureaucrat's decisions in a state of uncertainty for various ways of thinking exist about the same circumstances or events (Feldmen, 1989: 5). To help understand SLBs' decision making and the factors that influence their preferences, Brehm and Gates (1997) identify three categories into which bureaucratic decisions fall:

1. Bureaucrats work. This means that bureaucrats make an effort to reach policy goals that contest that their policy makes goals.

2. Bureaucrats shirk. This means that bureaucrats exert effort on non-policy goals.

3. Bureaucrats sabotage. This means that bureaucrats exert effort accomplishing policy goals that differ from the goals of their policy

Keiser (2003) indicates that conceiving of bureaucratic decisions as working; shirking or sabotage is useful when what the public policy makers and bureaucrats want is not clouded by ambiguity. If policy actors are ambiguous in their feelings about policy, the distinction between work and sabotage becomes blurry.

SLBs in Education:

According to Weatherly and Lipsky (1977), teachers are the SLBs in the implementation of any education programme. They are at the end of the line affecting implementation. Studies and systematic researches in the last two decades have shown increasing evidence of the problem of policy implementation in the educational field (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1981; Hall, 1995). Odden (1991) argues that the early implementation research findings coupled with somewhat later findings on the local educational change

process conclude that local response was inherently at odds with state programme initiative. He insists that:

> If higher levels of government took policy initiatives, it was unlikely local educators would implement those policies in compliance with either the spirit, expectations, rules, regulations or the program components (1991:2).

Other studies have shown that implementation of policy is affected by various socio-economic, political and cultural factors. For example, Berends *et al.* (2001:72) indicate that 'The process of changing entire schools to improve students' learning opportunities is complex ánd difficult because so many actors are involved and so many factors have to be aligned to support change.' Hope (2002) identified a number of factors that influence the implementation of educational policy. Factors may include implementers' indifference or apathy towards the policy, lack of resources, insufficient time for implementation and disagreement not only about how to achieve results but also about the content and the aims of the policy itself. Hope (2002) suggests that the principal's or head teacher's recognition of these factors and their ability to negotiate them could lead to success of policy since principals are the dominant actors in every aspect of school life and their decision making and influence resound throughout the school and in the community. The important role of these bureaucrats stems from the fact that they are considered to be:

- Initiators; they get projects started.

- Innovators; they develop new ideas.

- Motivators; they exhort others to reach goals and objectives.

- Calculators; they plan for programmes and activities.

- Communicators; they disseminate information.

Principals are crucial when it comes to the effective implementation of educational policy. The introduction of a new policy into a school can create anxiety and concern among teachers and staff. 'What is expected of me?' is a question that takes centre stage for teachers and staff. Hope (2002) indicates that a new policy may entail the shifting or reestablishment of priorities. With the change in priorities, it is sometimes difficult to generate enthusiasm and redirect efforts, especially when commitment and resources

have already been mobilised to another plan or programme. Implementing a new policy may mean total reallocation of resources previously designated for a project that had teacher and staff support. Hope (2002) identifies a number of abilities that influence the implementation of educational policy at the local level:

- Conceptualise educational policy into a coherent vision

- Distinguish between benefits and liabilities.

- Motivate teachers and staff to accept and implement.

- Evaluate educational policy as an important element in the improvement of education.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented theoretical understanding and empirical work pertaining to the study of policy implementation. Early policy implementation research focused on the process of policy formation at the top level without giving due attention to policy implementation as an essential process at the lower level. Such policy studies provided a linear, hierarchical view of policy formation. Policies were thought to be developed by formal policymakers and then implemented and evaluated according to policy directives (Odden, 1991).

Over the last two decades, the focus has shifted from the policy formation process to centre on the complexities of policy implementation. Therefore, the second generation of policy studies, in the 1970's and 1980's, focused on the importance of the policy actor in the implementation process (Lipsky, 1976; Odden, 1991; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1981). These studies provided knowledge about the complexities of policy implementation but continued to view policy as a linear process beginning with formation and ending in evaluation. Nakamura and Smallwood (1980) offer a different perspective on the policy process, one in which the different linkages among policymakers, policy implementers and policy evaluators are not linear but circular and iterative in nature. In addition, Nakamura and Smallwood introduce a new actor in the policy implementation process, the intermediary. Intermediaries come in the form of local officials, constituency groups and policy consumers who share implementation power in their ability to garner support for or against policies.

This new focus on linkages and interactions between different policy actors has led to a new focus on the policy context. Policy context includes available resources (funds), characteristics of implementing agencies, communication of policy standards and other decisions within and among implementing agencies, incentives to promote compliance, support for those policies in the political environment, dispositions of implementing officials and economic and social conditions (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1981; Sinclair, 2001). These contextual issues are all factors in determining how successful policy outcomes will be. The factors highlighted in the literature also demonstrate that policy is defined neither by the policymaker nor by the policy constituent or consumer, but is instead defined by the interactions between the two. Implementation structures are varied and each variation brings with it different reasons for potential failure (Nakamura & Smallwood, 1980). Understanding what types of linkages exist and how they create the potential for success or failure are important in framing the study of education policy implementation.

Questions remain as to whether education policy implementation is grounded in what is practical and feasible. In addition, how the components associated with reducing the number of failures and dropouts at the secondary school level as defined by education policy can be successfully implemented is still unclear. The role and influence of the SLBs as implementers of education policy and the degree of political autonomy they experience may offer insight into the factors that contribute to the nature of the Saudi political system and the successful implementation of education policy. In the next chapter, the research methodology will be detailed.

CHAPTER FIVE
Research Methodology

5.1- Introduction

The general aim of this thesis is to explore the nature of power and autonomy within the Saudi political system, investigating the way in which SLBs in the Saudi MoE implement education policy. The thesis argues that *the Saudi Political System, being based on a monarchical model of government, avers that policy goals set by the centre at the policy gestation stage are closely adhered to throughout the policy-chain, up to and including the policy implementation stage by SLBs.* This argument is explored by investigating how education policy goals made by the centre (MoE) in the policy gestation stage are translated further down the policy-chain at the policy implementation stage by SLBs (secondary schools principals and their education managers). Particular attention is paid to the manner in which the policy of reducing the number of failures and drop-outs in secondary schools is implemented by SLBs in three local education authorities across Saudi Arabia and the degree of devolved power or political autonomy experienced by those bureaucrats in the implementation stage. These three local authorities are:

- The General Administration for Education in the Makah Region - the City of Jeddah.

- The General Administration for Education in the Riyadh Region - the City of Riyadh.

- The General Administration for Education in the Eastern Region - the City of Dammam

These three cities were chosen for historical, political and economical reasons. They are the major cities in Saudi Arabia with the biggest local governments in terms of area, population and economic activities. Moreover, education in these three cities started significantly earlier than in other regions of Saudi Arabia. In addition to its prime industrial and commercial centre, Jeddah was chosen because it is the most historical and commercial city in the Hejaz region[56], where formal education began early, even before it became a part of Saudi Arabia. In fact, the entire Hejaz region outweighs other regions in terms of the importance of education because of the existence of the two Holy Mosques, and it has become a forum for Muslim scholars and preachers. Riyadh, on the other hand,

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[56] The Hejaz region is located in the west of Saudi Arabia and consists of Jeddah, Makah, Medina and other cities.

was chosen because it is the biggest city in the country and the political capital. It is the centre of religious authority and of government, and most of the ministries offices and government organizations are located there. Dammam was chosen because it is the most industrial city with the biggest port exporting the oil. Moreover, education in Dammam was influenced in the early stages by western oil companies. Furthermore, these three cities represent the western, eastern and central regions of Saudi Arabia and their different cultures, norms and social status.

This chapter presents and discusses the methods and procedures employed in the research, providing an explanation for the research design and methodologies and a rationale for the choice of methods. The chapter includes a description of the research tools, the data collection methods and the analysis techniques used to explore the themes that emerged from the data collected. The chapter is divided into different sections. The first section focuses on the nature and relevance of the research strategy and the approach utilised to address the research questions in a comprehensive way. The second section provides a description of the data collection method and its strength and weakness in addition to a detailed account of the data collection tools and sampling techniques. In section three, the study settings, including population and participants, are described in more detail. How the collected data was analysed is explained in section four. In section five, the ethical issues are considered while in section six the tools that were used to collect the data are examined in terms of validity and reliability.

5.2- The Research Strategy- Nature and Relevance

This study utilised a naturalistic inquiry (qualitative approach) method and it took place within an interpretive research model. A naturalistic inquiry is conducted in a natural setting, using natural methods in natural ways by people who have a natural interest in what they are studying. According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000: 19), a naturalistic researcher believes that 'the social world can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated'. This research utilised this approach since its purpose was to explore, understand and explain a current situation (Bryman 2001). Moreover, this approach aims to look at multiple social interactions and, therefore, in 'all instances of sociobehavioral inquiry, the naturalistic paradigm is the paradigm of choice' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:260).

Lincoln and Guba (1985), Robson (1993), Creswell (2003b) and other social researchers identify a range of characteristics associated with a naturalistic inquiry and indicate procedures to follow when conducting such research. These highly interdependent and coherent descriptions can be utilised in the undertaking of naturalistic research. This study was no different from other studies that have employed such an approach in that it conducted the research in a natural setting, collected information from people as the main source of data, employed qualitative methods and a case study approach in the data collection and analysis stages, constantly comparing emerging patterns and themes and interpreting them.

Moving from the general to the more specific leads to the interpretive paradigm, which Neuman (2003:80) argues is 'sensitive to context, uses various methods to get inside the ways others see the world and is more concerned with achieving an empathic understanding than with testing laws of human behaviour'.The interpretative paradigm emphasises the importance of understanding the social world by examining the participants' perspective and how they construct meaning in natural settings (Bryman, 2001; Neuman, 2003). In the interpretive paradigm, the researcher plays a crucial role. The researcher goes through a detailed examination of a text, which could be an oral conversation, written words or even a picture, in order to discover embedded meaning in it and interpret the findings. Such interpretation is inevitably shaped by the researcher own experiences and background (Creswell 2003b; Neuman, 2003). It is generally accepted in many areas of research that the nature of the research questions, aims and objectives will indicate what approach and methods should be used. This research therefore has a number of themes it sets out to explore:

- To explore and understand the nature of the Saudi political system and the power relationship between the centre and local government.

- To provide a thorough analysis of the nature and evolution of the Saudi public education system and its practices.

- To examine how SLBs translate education policy into action in their daily work.

- To account for possible variation between policy set by the centre and its implementation at the local level.

- To explore the degree of power and autonomy experienced by SLBs in the implementation stage.

- To examine power relations within different levels of bureaucracy at the MoE.

- To examine SLBs understanding and beliefs with regards to education policy.

- To explore the reasons behind the shifting of SLBs perspectives on the implementation of education policy.

Hence, it can be seen that this study intends to look at the perceptions, feelings and views of the key actors involved. This requires an understanding of how people construct meaning from situations, and this meaning is naturally conveyed via a discussion or interaction with people. The qualitative approach is a suitable choice in this study because qualitative methods lend themselves to research that attempts to understand the complex nature of people's experiences, feelings and emotions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998b), which are difficult to measure using quantitative methods (Babbie, 2001b; Silverman, 2001). Moreover, qualitative research is concerned with understanding the nature of the problem and allows an in-depth analysis (Yin, 2003). Merriam (1998:6) argues that 'qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world'. This methodological approach takes into consideration the importance of understanding the social, cultural and historical context of the actors under study in order to facilitate knowledgeable interpretations. However, raising the researcher's awareness of the context can only be achieved through social engagement with participants obtainable through utilising qualitative methods. Neuman (2003, p.146) explains this clearly as follows:

> Qualitative researchers emphasise the social context for understanding the social world. They hold that the meaning of a social action or statement depends, in an important way, on the context in which it appears. When a researcher removes an event, social action, answer to a question or conversation from the social context in which it appears or ignores the context, social meaning and significance are distorted.

A case study approach was used to collect the data for this research. The case study is one of the most widely used qualitative data collection methods in many areas of social inquiry (Gomm & Hammersley, 2000). Case study strategy usually follows naturalistic modes of inquiry because the main objective is to discover the relationship between different interpretations and build an understanding of the meaning of experiences. Vogt (1999: 34) indicates that:

This strategy is generally seen to be 'gathering and analyzing data about an individual example as a way of studying a broader phenomenon. This is done on the assumption that the example (the "case") is in some way typical of the broader phenomenon.

Vogt (1999: 34) claims that 'the advantage of the case-study method is that it allows more intensive analysis of specific empirical details'. Yin (1994: 9) states that 'the case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence: documents, artefacts, interviews, questionnaires and observations'. He argues that it is preferable to use a case study when a 'how or a why question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control'. Yin (1994) differentiates between three types of case studies: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory studies. According to Tellis (1997), in exploratory case studies fieldwork and data collection may be undertaken prior to definition of the research questions and hypotheses. Descriptive case studies require a descriptive theory to be developed before starting the project whilst explanatory cases are suitable for doing causal studies. Case study techniques have been used in government studies to determine whether particular programmes are efficient or if the goals are being met (Tellis, 1997).

Various research strategies, with underlying theoretical perspectives, have been developed in the sphere of social science, and it is important to stress that each has its strengths and weaknesses. The researcher's decision to choose a particular method(s) for a particular study will take these into account as well as a number of issues, including resources. Ultimately, he/she will choose the approach that he/she believes to be the best, most practical and ethical one to achieve the research aims and objectives. The strengths of the naturalistic approach methodology chosen for this study include the fact that people are studied in their natural environments with the focus on eliciting deeper understanding of their meaning and construction of their world, which, in turn, facilitates presentation of a more realistic view of the situation under study. However, the researcher should not limit him/her self to the interpretations and meanings of situations involved participants find themselves in but should rather try to step back and consider the interpretations within a wider picture. The danger of a naturalistic approach arises from the researcher plunging into participants' interpretations and

understanding of the world without investigating the factors which influenced their understanding (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

5.3- Research Methods

The research is concerned with SLBs' views on, feelings about and perceptions of the implementation of education policy, especially policy on reducing the number of failures and drop-outs in secondary schools. The most suitable way to explore and understand their perceptions is to utilise data collection tools usually associated with qualitative approaches, such as interviews, since such tools concentrate on social interactions and socially constructed meanings and have special focus on the individual. In order to gain a better understanding of the research methods used, it is useful to provide a description of the data collection procedure.

The study was carried out through conducting semi-structured interviews with secondary schools principals and their education managers (SLBs) in three different local education authorities across Saudi Arabia, namely Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam, as well with senior officials at the Ministry of Education (MoE). Interviews with those bureaucrats aimed to elicit information about their views regarding education policy and the way it was being implemented as well as their perceptions of the degree of political autonomy they experienced during the implementation process. The duration of each interview was between 45 minutes and one hour. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Subsequently, each transcript was independently read several times so that the data became familiar and the researcher could make sense of it. Detailed information on issues related to the research method, such as school selection, sampling technique and ensuring the validity and reliability of the research tools are discussed in later sections of this chapter. The following sections describe the research instruments.

5.3.1- Interviews

Qualitative interviews are a way to share ideas, engage in dialogue and solve problems. The interview technique is considered to be the most important instrument of the case study approach. It is 'probably the most widely employed method in qualitative research' (Brayman 2004:319). The philosophy of the qualitative interview depends on its search for understanding and interpretation of the social phenomena (Warren, 1988). Interviews

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encourage respondents to talk about feelings, attitudes and opinions and are frequently employed in exploratory research to provide in-depth narrative information. Such exploratory research seeks to understand the subjective interpretations of the meaning of what the interviewees say and the story behind their experiences (Kvale, 1996).

There are different types of interviews for different research purposes. McKerman (1996:129) states that there are three main types of interviews, which can be identified in terms of their content and organisation, namely structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. In structured interviews, the interviewer uses a list of specific questions and does not deviate from the wording of such questions. Questions are often fixed response types, meaning that no elaboration in either questions or answers is allowed. In semi-structured or open-ended interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:251), the interviewer has set questions he or she asks of all interviewees but also allows the respondents to raise issues and questions as the interview progresses. The interviewer can branch off from the specific core questions to explore in-depth information and probe according to the way the interview proceeds, allowing for limited elaboration.

When using an unstructured interview, the issues and topics to be discussed are left entirely to the interviewee. Unstructured interviews are flexible, containing no pre-planned questions and placing few restrictions on the respondent's answers. Verma and Beard (1981:114) refer to unstructured interviews as being conducted through conversation, which can be continuous and informal. In this type of interview much depends on the rapport the interviewer is able to establish, his/her sensitivity to the interviewee's feelings and the ability to avoid remarks likely to arouse anxiety or to embarrass the interviewee.

The interviews used in this research were semi-structured or open-ended. The semi-structured interview was chosen because it has the advantage of being reasonably objective while still permitting a more thorough understanding of the respondent's opinions and the reasons behind them (Borg & Gall, 1989:452). Bryman (2008: 319) indicates that in qualitative research 'there is an emphasis on greater generality in the formulation of initial research ideas and on interviewees' own perspectives'.

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According to Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2000) interviews are conducted to provide important data on research issues. Furthermore, in their model for the assessment of policy implementation Morris and Gibbon (1987) suggest that interviews and document analysis provide a wide-ranging understanding of the implementation process. In this case, interviewing SLBs elicited their views on various issues related to education policy and its implementation, providing in-depth information crucial to the implementation of education policy. This study is important since via interviewing SLBs it their elicited their views on various issues related to education and thus gained information crucial to the implementation of education policy. Furthermore, it is significant since it is thought to be the first in this particular setting dealing with the cited specific issues. As a consequence, little was known about the issues under investigation.

5.3.2- Strengths and Limitations of Interviews

The strengths of semi-structured interviewing arise from the fact that it:

- Allows SLBs to describe what is meaningful or important to them using their own words rather than being restricted to predetermined categories; thus, they may feel more relaxed.

- Allows the interviewer to probe for more details and ensure SLBs are interpreting questions the way they are intended.

- Gives the interviewer the flexibility to use his/her knowledge, expertise and interpersonal skills to explore interesting or unexpected ideas or themes raised by interviewees.

- Provides the interviewer with an opportunity to observe non-verbal behaviour.

- Provides the interviewer with an opportunity to correct and clarify misunderstanding.

- Is suitable for discussing more complex issues because the interviewer, being present, can assist in answering the questions.

- Allows for more reaction to personalities, moods and interpersonal dynamics between the researcher and the SLBs.

Despite its advantages, interviewing has its limitations: there is generally room for considerable bias in terms of what questions are asked and how the answers are interpreted; the interviewer may need to acquire domain knowledge in order to know what questions to ask; what people say often differs from what they actually do; and questions with content involving "politics, criticism, and personal opinion" could bias the

response (Fowler and Mangione, 1990). The limitations of interviews in this study were that the SLBs may have felt their anonymity was compromised, despite assurances to the contrary, and they may have felt uncomfortable with this, working in a political setting as they did. Furthermore, the SLBs needed to free up some time for the interview to take place, which may have caused inconvenience. Both these factors may have made the SLBs feel less inclined to co-operate and thus may have affected their responses. Finally, analysing, interpreting and translating the interviews from Arabic to English was challenging and very time consuming.

5.3.3-Interviews Design

The interview conducted in this research was semi-structured with open-ended questions to provide more flexibility for both the researcher to ask extra questions and for the participant to offer more information (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). It was divided into four parts covering the four main themes of the study: policy background, policy formulation, policy implementation and policy auditing and measurement. To elicit their spontaneous views, SLBs were firstly asked a few general questions, for example the date the school was established, the number of students and the number of staff and teachers. They were then introduced to the research themes. The questions asked in the interview were all derived from the study's research questions. Table 5.1 presents general information regarding the schools selected in the three cities in terms of the year they were established, the number of students and so on.

Table 5.1: *Statistics of School's Selected for the Study*

City	School	Year Established	Number of Students	Number of Teachers
	School No-1	1975	560	70
	School No-2	2000	570	38
Jeddah	School No-3	1982	557	42
	School No-4	1996	725	45
	School No-5	2006	300	25
	School No-6	1992	722	54
	School No-1	1990	350	45
	School No-2	1996	300	25
Riyadh	School No-3	2006	800	50
	School No-4	2000	130	28
	School No-5	1997	180	23
	School No-6	1994	229	27
	School No-1	1980	270	55
	School No-2	1980	3000	250
Dammam	School No-3	1970	3050	240
	School No-4	1990	725	46
	School No-5	1994	518	42
	School No-6	1972	605	47

The first part of the interview covered the theme related to policy background and focused on eliciting SLBs views on the origins and evolution of education policy and the factors influencing its development and change overtime. The second part concentrated on investigating the involvement of SLBs in policy design and decision making. It also attempted to elicit their views on the clarity of policy in terms of goals, objectives and targets as well as policy stability in terms of strategies, programmes and trends. The third part of the interview was designed to elicit information regarding policy implementation; the existence of rules, regulations, procedures and operational guidance; the degree of political autonomy exercised by SLBs in their daily work; the factors influencing their decisions; and the obstacles encountered during implementation. The fourth part was concerned with eliciting information regarding the policy measurement tools, that is the feedback process and the mechanisms that exist to measure policy output and assess whether targets have been met. In addition, the fourth part aimed to elicit information regarding the level of communication between the different layers of bureaucracy within the MoE.

5.3.4- Interviews Implementation

The interviews followed a schedule, were recorded by a high quality digital recorder and were limited to between 45 and 60 minutes. For ethical reasons, all participants received a letter signed by the researcher explaining the goal of the interview and assuring them of the confidentiality of their responses. An introductory information sheet was issued to each of the participants being interviewed before the interview took place. It was thought important to introduce participants to the topics to be covered in the interview prior to the interviewing process for two main reasons: first, to ease any anxiety regarding the interview since interviewees would know in advance what it was all about and, second, to allow interviewees some time to reflect on the topics so they could provide well thought out answers.

The number of interviewees and their roles were decided in advance. The researcher chose actors playing important roles in the education policy process from the policy's gestation to implementation stages. Firstly, schools principals were chosen according to their direct involvement and daily hands on implementation of the policy. Secondly, managers of education in the three local authorities were chosen according to their administrative position in the departments of education and their influence on the implementation process. Thirdly, senior officials were chosen from three majors departments involved in policy gestation, namely the GMEP, the GDME and the GMTA. The details of participating principals of schools, managers of education and senior officials can be found in section 5.5.

During each school visit, the researcher tried to gain a better understanding of the school environment by touring the schools and becoming familiar with the infrastructure and equipment. During these school tours, the researcher had the opportunity to talk to some of the teachers and administrators, and such conversations offered an insightful view of the situation. However, only the scheduled interviews were recorded whilst other conversations were noted down in memos and notes at the end of the school visit. It is important to point out that these conversations and tours were very helpful during the analysis of interviews because they offered the researcher access to the environment the schools' principals were referring to, resulting in a better understanding and interpretation of their responses. Following the tours and general introduction to the schools' setting, the

interviews were undertaken. Most of the interviews followed the pre-planned schedule; however, prompting was used when necessary.

5.4- Piloting and Implementation

The MoE sent a letter to Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam local education authorities informing them of the aims and objectives of the study and asking for their cooperation and assistance in the matter. The three local education authorities, in turn, sent letters to all schools participating in this research, asking them to assist the researcher in his fieldwork activities, namely interviews and data collection.

Fieldwork activity was pre-planned, and the goal was to conduct one interview each day. Nevertheless, the starting time and interview location varied among participants. For instance, while most of the school principals were interviewed at their respective schools during working hours in the morning and afternoon, other school principals had to be interviewed in the evening at their homes. The latter came about due to suggestions from the participants. This allowed flexibility and created a friendly atmosphere between the researcher and the participants that resulted in rich and valuable data. The education managers were interviewed in their offices in the General Department of Education (GDE) in the three regions. The interviews with the senior officials were conducted in their offices at the Ministry of Education in Riyadh City. The researcher followed up with individual study participants to clarify comments made during the course of the interview when necessary. At the end of the fieldwork activity, the researcher handed a signed letter to all the school principals and education managers as well as to the senior officials expressing his appreciation for their cooperation and assistance.

The interview questions were translated into Arabic. This translation was carefully conducted to ensure conceptual equivalence of the wording of the translated questions. The researcher was aware of the pitfalls of word-to-word translation and adopted a strategy whereby the translation ensured the meaning was not lost during translation from English to Arabic. Arabic standard language was endorsed as the platform for translation. This was deemed important to avoid any colloquial speech or slang phrases that might offend or limit understanding of the questions' content.

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5.5- Sampling Technique

Qualitative studies usually use a much smaller sample size than quantitative studies (Fraenkel & Wallen 2006). As Barbour (2001:115) points out, this is because 'rather than aspiring to statistical generalisability or representativeness, qualitative research usually aims to reflect the diversity within a given population'. Moreover, qualitative data is time-consuming and expensive to acquire, transcribe and analyse, and, hence, a smaller sample size is more practical (Babbie 2001b; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison 2000). A range of different sampling techniques are available for qualitative researchers, which include: convenience sampling, purposive sampling, "snowballing" and theoretical sampling (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison 2000; Creswell 2003a; Sarantakos 1998b). In this research a purposive sampling technique was used to collect the data. Interviewees were chosen due to their roles in policymaking, administrative position and educational responsibilities as well as their direct involvement in the implementation of education policy. A total of 30 educational bureaucrats were invited to participate. Eighteen interviewees were secondary school principals from three main cities in Saudi Arabia, so six interviewees from each city. All interviewees had a minimum educational level of university or a teacher's college degree; four participants had a PhD degree and six had a Masters degree. Nine of the thirty participants were educational managers, three from each educational authority, each holding different positions and having different responsibilities. Three of the total numbers of bureaucrats participating in this study were senior officials at the MoE. Table 5.2 shows the number of participants in each city at the local level of bureaucracy as well as at the centre.

Table 5.2: *Distribution of the Participants Involved in the Study*

City	Secondary Schools Principals	Managers of Education	Seniors officials
Jeddah	6	3	
Riyadh	6	3	3
Dammam	6	3	
Total	18	9	3

The school principals interviewed in this study were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling (Polit & Hunglar, 1999: 284). It is a method where the researcher selects the participants subjectively. The

researcher picks a sample that he/she believes is representative of the population of interest. Thus, participants are not selected randomly but according to the judgement of the interviewer. The advantage of this technique is that it increases the diversity of samples and enables the investigator to search for different properties. Purposive sampling stems from the idea that the research process is one of "discovery" rather than of testing hypotheses. It is a strategy that Lincoln & Guba (1985) describe as emergent and sequential. Almost like a detective, the researcher follows a trail of clues in a particular direction until the questions have been answered and things can be explained (Robson, 1993).

The researcher already knew something about the people chosen to partake in this study and deliberately selected school principals who had some experience of policy implementation in one form or another because it was assumed they would produce the most valuable data. The secondary school principals were directly involved in implementation activities and it was expected that they would be able to provide rich information regarding the way in which policy was translated into action and describe accurately the challenges they encountered in their daily work. In effect, they were selected with a specific purpose in mind due to particular qualities and their relevance to the topic of investigation.

5.6- Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis stage is a very important aspect of the research since it changes the raw data obtained from the data collection tools into meaningful information. This change or transformation of data is a characteristic of qualitative data analysis, which is described as an interactive procedure (Creswell 2003a; Denzin & Lincoln 2003a). The researcher had the opportunity to become well acquainted with the data as he did the interviews himself and personally transcribed them. The researcher read the text and listened to the tapes many times to ensure familiarity with the material, then transcribed each interview by hand, typed it up and then translated it from Arabic to English. In the meantime, the researcher prepared field notes with theoretical and methodological notations interspersed throughout. This process allowed the researcher to experience each interview at least twice, that is in-person and via written notes. The researcher then transferred all of the interviews into segments representing complete thoughts on a single question. This step was followed by breaking all the transcribed interviews into coded segments representing complete thought

statements. The researcher coded the transcribed interviews according to themes coinciding with the questions. These themes are listed below:

- Background for education policy; evolution and development.
- Policy making and participation.
- Policy targets; clarity and stability.
- Policy implementation; reducing the number of failures and drop-outs policy in secondary schools.
- Variation in implementation.
- Policy monitoring; measurement and feedback.

In order to explore emerging themes and allow counting and sorting of the themes, all of the coding interview segments were transferred from word processing format onto a tally sheet or spreadsheet. In all the interviews, the text that represented each theme was marked as a block in the spreadsheet. Placing each block of text and its identifying number into a spreadsheet enabled the researcher to create axle tables to allow summary counting of each theme. In other words, this allowed the researcher to assess how many different themes were mentioned at least once in a single interview. The spreadsheet format enabled similarly coded themes to be sorted together, thus allowing the examination of text from all interviews representing a single theme. A theme may have occurred several times within an interview but, for purposes of analysis, each theme was counted only once per interview.

In addition to the semi-structure interview being conducted with bureaucrats in different status positions within the MoE, secondary data presented in documents generated from both the SCEP and the MoE was considered. This secondary data was used to describe the characteristics of education policy, including secondary school policy. These documents were analysed and used to supplement and corroborate information gleaned from the interviews. This approach of collecting and analysing information (primary and secondary source) is described a triangulation, which is referred to as multi-methodological collection of data. Guba (1981:87) describes triangulation as 'collecting data from a variety of perspectives, using a variety of methods', and he argues that the strength of triangulation is that:

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Two or more methods are teamed in such a way that the weakness of one is compensated by the strengths of another. But it is clear that if similar results are found using different methods, the case for stability is also strengthened (1981:86).

A similar argument is provided by Jick (1979: 603), who states that 'triangulation may be used not only to examine the same phenomenon from multiple perspectives but also to enrich our understanding by allowing for new or deeper dimensions to emerge'. It has been argued that the concept of triangulation can be applied to both methodological triangulation and theoretical triangulation. In general terms, methodological triangulation can be used for a number of purposes:

- To collect different types of information, for example qualitative and quantitative, primary and secondary.

- When two or more researchers are using the same method, for example observation, their observations can be compared to see if they agree that they have seen the same things in the same ways.

- To check that data collected in one form, for example through a structured interview, is both reliable and valid.

- To verify/confirm that any data collected is accurate.

5.7 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues related to the study were carefully considered, and the researcher complied with the standards set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the University of Sheffield because any action regarded as unethical could have jeopardised the study's reliability and consistency. In addition, Saudi people are not acquainted with social science research to the same extent as people in Europe or the USA and, therefore, the researcher had to take steps to assure people of his genuine intentions in carrying out the research. Before the empirical work commenced, the researcher informed the MoE and the General Departments of Education in the three cities about the aims and purposes of the research, and their permission was sought for the researcher to gain access to the school principals, who received letters from the authority asking them to cooperate with the researcher. The researcher gave detailed information and full explanations to those wanting to know more about the nature of the

study, making every effort to ensure the data collection process went smoothly. The participants were informed about the aims and purposes of the research in two ways: firstly, verbally from the researcher and, secondly, in writing, where a brief explanation about the aims and objectives of the study was included. The written contents also assured teachers that their identity would be withheld, sought their approval for recording the interviews, explained their right to withdraw from the research at any time and reminded them of the importance of answering questions honestly to ensure the validity of the research. The researcher and all others involved in the research complied with the University of Sheffield's ethical requirements and assured all research participants that data elicited from them would be treated in the strictest confidence and any information gathered would be used for research purposes only.

5.8 Validity and Reliability of the Data

Validity and reliability are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in the qualitative paradigm (Golafshani, 2003). According to Hammersley (1990), the validity or truthfulness of any research is the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers. It has been argued that the validity and reliability of qualitative research is affected by the researcher's perspective, which may be biased. The way to eliminate such bias and increase the researcher truthfulness of a proposition about some social phenomenon (Denzin, 1978) is to use triangulation. Creswell & Miller (2000: 126) define triangulation as 'a validity procedure where the researcher searches for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study'.

In this study, issues related to validity and reliability were considered in the interview phase. The study's validity was ensured through utilising the constant comparative method, which is one of several techniques that aim to look critically at data in order to come up with more valid findings (Silverman 2000; Silverman 2001). In practice, the analysis started with small chunks of the interview transcripts, identified emerging themes and then tried to find other instances where the same theme occurred. For instance, one school principal in the Riyadh educational authority mentioned change of official position as a factor hindering policy stability. The researcher then searched through the data to find other instances where such change was also considered to be a hindering factor. Hammersley

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(1992:67) defines reliability as 'the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions'. The study's reliability was maintained by pre-testing the standardised interview schedule to ensure that participants would understand the questions similarly and that the questions contained no uncertainty or ambiguity that might affect the responses. The study's reliability was further maintained by comparing similar chunks from the interview transcripts derived from the other cities' case studies (Silverman 2001).

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has presented an account of the study's methods, design and rationale. It has also presented a detailed account of how the empirical work was carried out, including a description of the research phase (a preliminary qualitative). Data analysis methods have also been explained. Every effort was made throughout the study to ensure consistency and comprehensiveness. Aims, objectives and research questions were carefully linked to a suitable research design and methods that would assist in fulfilling the aims, addressing the objectives and answering the questions. The research has a number of themes it sets out to explore:

- To explore and understand the nature of the Saudi political system and the power relationship between the centre and local government.

- To provide a thorough analysis of the nature and evolution of the Saudi public education system and its practices.

- To examine how SLBs translate education policy into action in their daily work.

- To account for possible variation between policy set by the centre and its implementation at the local level.

- To explore the degree of power and autonomy experienced by SLBs in the implementation stage.

- To examine power relations within different levels of bureaucracy at the MoE.

- To examine SLBs understanding and beliefs with regards to education policy.

- To explore the reasons behind the shifting of SLBs perspectives on the implementation of education policy.

These themes were explored by using semi-structured interviews with SLBs (education managers and secondary schools principals) at Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam cities as well as with officials at the MoE level. The next chapter embarks on the analysis of data derived from interviews with SLBs at local level and officials at the central level. It also present the findings derived from the data generated by the questionnaire.

CHAPTER 6

Jeddah Education Authority

6.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, the aim of this thesis is to explore the nature of power and autonomy in the Saudi political system by investigating the way in which education policy is implemented by bureaucrats at the local level. The main theme is the nature of the Saudi political system and the power relationship between the central and local government in implementation of education policy. The emphasis of this chapter is thus on examining the implementation stage. It therefore investigates how secondary school principals and education managers (the SLBs/ 'street-level bureaucrats') further down the policy-chain implement the policy of reducing the amount of failure and drop-out in the secondary schools in Jeddah city, and the degree of devolved power or political autonomy they experienced in the implementation process. The key objective themes of this chapter are outlined in table 6.1.

Table 6.1: *Key Themes of Analysis of Jeddah Education Authority*

- To investigate the argument that: *the nature of the Saudi Political System, based as it is on a monarchical model of government, avers that policy goals set centrally at the policy gestation stage are closely adhered to by SLBs throughout the policy-chain, up to and including the policy implementation stage by SLBs.*
- To answer the core question which is: *To what extent the education policy been set in the centre is implemented by SLBs at the local level in the Saudi political system.* And the following sub research questions:
- What is the nature of education policy and how has it evolved and developed over time?
- What perceptions do SLBs in Jeddah city have about education policy objectives?
- How do education policy targets or goals translate into practice by SLBs in Jeddah city?
- How could the relationship between power and autonomy within different levels of bureaucracies in the MoE be explained?
- What evaluation and measurement techniques are employed in secondary school education?

The themes addressed in this case study will explore a variety of policy areas including:
- Background of education policy; the evolution and development of policy over time.
- Policymaking formation; participation in policy processes; clarity, stability and continuity of policy targets and goals; the existence of secondary school policy and its features.
- Policy implementation; power and autonomy available for SLBs in the implementation process; communication between different levels of bureaucracy; discrepancies in implementation.
- Policy monitoring, including measurements of policy outcome, standards to be achieved, feedback from lower-level bureaucrats.

It is important to point out here that Jeddah city was chosen for conducting the research in the first place because in addition to its being a prime industrial and commercial centre, it is the most historical and commercial city in the Hejaz region[57], where formal education began, even before it became a part of Saudi Arabia. In fact, the entire Hejaz region outweighs all others in its importance in education through the presence of the two Holy Mosques and its having become a forum for Muslim scholars and preachers. After the Hejaz region[58] came under the rule of the Saudi dynasty and nearly in 1925, education activities there expanded and the first school of for overseas missions' specifically designed to train and prepare students for further study outside the country (Trial and Winder 1950), was opened in the city. Within that time (nearly 1945), the number of elementary and secondary schools in the al-Hejaz province had greatly increased. Trial and Winder (1950:125) indicated that: 'There are a total of thirty-nine primary schools in Saudi Arabia, of which ten are private, and of which twenty-two are located in Al-Hejaz'. As can been seen in Table 6.2, a large proportion of schools are in Al-Hejaz province (twenty-nine out of forty-six).

Table 6.2: *Distribution of Elementary and Secondary Schools by Province in Saudi in 1945*

Province	Elementary schools		Secondary schools	
	Private	Government	Private	Government
Al-Hejaz	10	12	3	4
Najd		6		
Asir		5		
Al-Ahsa		6		
Total	10	29	3	4

Source: History of Education Journal, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1950), p. 130

This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first presents a profile of Jeddah City including history, religion, demography and other information of relevance to the case study. This information is important in understanding the nature of power relations between the central government and the local authority in the light of such factors. It also outlines the education authority's structure, discusses local government in the city and includes statistical data on secondary schools at state, regional and city levels. The second part comprises the empirical study made among the SLBs in Jeddah City, as well as the

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[57] Hejaz region in the west of Saudi Arabia, consisting of Jeddah, Makah, Medina and other cities
[58] Jeddah is the major city in the Hejaz region

officials at the top level of the Saudi Ministry of Education (MoE). The section identifies themes related to the nature of education policy (reducing the average number of failures and drop-outs at all educational levels by raising educational standards. in secondary schools) and the way in which such a policy is implemented. This will help in providing a more detailed understanding of the nature of the Saudi political system and how the relationship of power can be explained in the Saudi context.

6.2 Profile of Jeddah City

The city of Jeddah (see figure 6.1) lies on the western coast of Saudi Arabia and is the second largest in the country after Riyadh (the capital) with a population of over 3.5 million people. It is the country's largest and most important port and is also the economic capital, with major international companies and a huge variety of local businesses.

Figure 6.1: *Map of Saudi Arabia - Jeddah City*
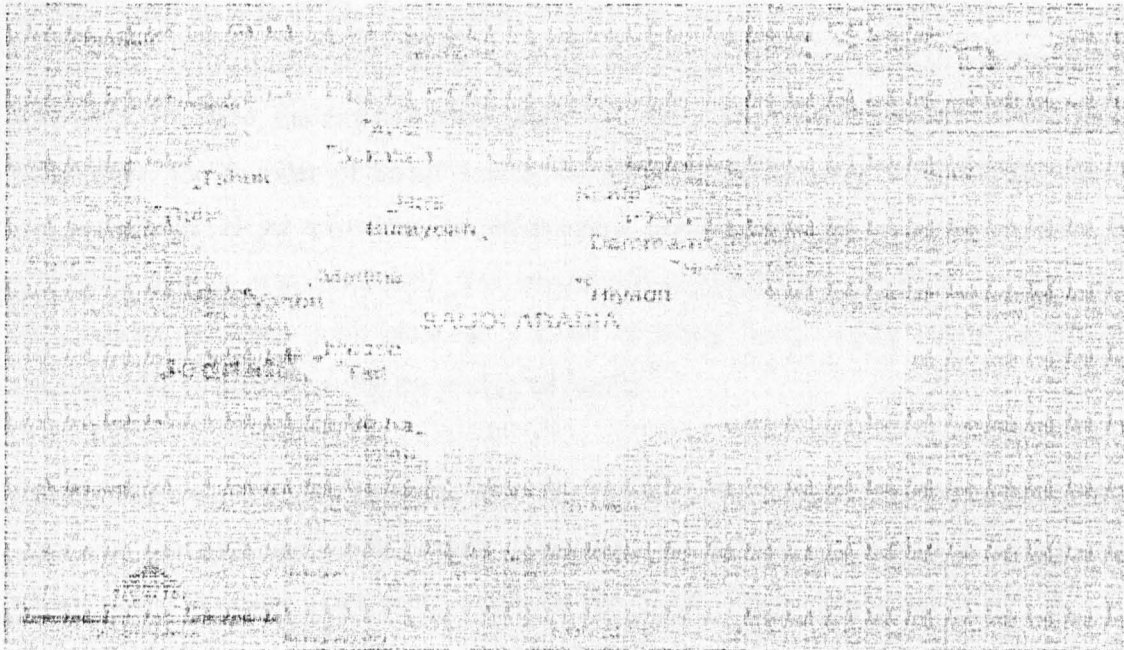
Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jeddah,_Saudi_Arabia_locator_map.png

Jeddah is situated on the west coast of the Red Sea and extends for approximately 80 km north to south along the coastline. The strategic location of the city, as a key trade point between west Asia and north Africa, defines the city as a major urban centre of business, not only in the western region of Saudi Arabia, but across both continents (Daghistani 1993).

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The existing literature (Al-Ansary 1982; Daghistani 1993; Farsy 1995; Al-Harbi 2003) suggests that the city has had a long history since it was founded by an Arab tribe as a port for the fishing trade 800 years ago. A buoyant period in the history of the city was when it was transformed into an Islamic port to receive Muslim pilgrims on their way to Makah and Medina (the holy cities for Muslims). This was in 647 A.H (around 1200 A.D) under Othman Ibn Affan[59] in the fourth Caliph Muslim era (Farsy 1991). This transformation marked a turning point in the city's history, not only because of the possibilities for commerce but also because of the arrival of millions of pilgrims from all over the world with different ethnicities and backgrounds, many of whom took residence and had an impact on social, cultural and economic life (Yosuf 2006).

The importance of the city continued throughout the historical epochs of the Mamluk Sultanate, the Ottoman Empire, the first Saudi state and the Kingdom of Hejaz, until it became the most prominent commercial urban centre with the establishment of the modern Saudi state in 1932. In the 16th century, the city was conquered by the Ottoman Empire and fortified with stone walls, and then remained under the authority of the Turks until 1915. By 1924, the city had come under the rule of the Al-Sa'ud Dynasty when King Abdul-Aziz, the founder of Saudi Arabia, conquered Jeddah along with Makah, which was known as Hejaz province. In subsequent periods, the role of Jeddah City in peninsular politics was minimised. The subdivision of the historic province of Hejaz into many smaller provinces took place, as a result of which Jeddah came under the Makah province, with Makah becoming the provincial capital[60].

The literature on the city suggests that the religious movement that began in central Arabia in the mid-eighteenth century influenced its cultural environment. Commonly known as the Wahhabi movement, it enabled Ibn Sa'ud (King Abdul-Aziz 1876-1953) to conquer Jeddah along with Makah and Medina (known as the Hijaz area) in 1924-1925 (Keane and Facey, 2007). Niblock (2006:11) indicates that:

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[59] Fourth Muslim ruler after the death of the Prophet Mohammad
[60] http://www.asiarooms.com/travel-guide/saudi-arabia/jeddah/jeddah-overview/history-of-jeddah.html

> Historically, Wahhabism has been strongest in central Arabia (Najd), while most of the inhabitants of al-Hasa in the east of the peninsula have been Shiites, the Hijaz has hosted a wide range of Sufi sects and non-Wahhabi Sunni trends.

This wide range of schools of Islam, including the Hanbali and Shafi'i schools, influenced the culture of Jeddah City and had a major impact on the Jeddah society. These religious and social dynamics made the city much more culturally distinct than most Saudi cities, especially Riyadh the political capital, characterised by geographical isolation and a high degree of homogeneous and strict religious issues (Yosuf 2006). Jeddah City is considered a liberal city, despite the historical and cultural sites that it preserves. One explanation is the location of the city, since it is near the ports. The city enjoys a multicultural and multi-ethnic ambiance. For over a thousand years, Jeddah has received millions of pilgrims of different ethnicities and backgrounds, from Africa, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Europe and the Middle East, many of whom remained, became citizens of the city and shared their cultures. As a result, Jeddah is a much more cosmopolitan and ethnically diverse city than most Saudi cities and its culture is more eclectic in nature. Different nationalities of Muslims often subscribe to different sects of Islam and the presence of these sects in Hejazi culture has helped make the city traditionally more tolerant than other cities in the country.[61] These characteristics of the city contributed to the establishment of a solid base for economic activities. Daghistani (1993:4) argues that the general level of economic activities in the city increased dramatically after:

> The discovery and export of oil in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia...and because of its traditional role as the country's principal port, Jeddah benefited most from the increased volume of imports, and began a period of sustained growth and change which has not yet ended.

6.2.1 Local Government - Education Authority

As was seen in Chapter 2, Saudi Arabia is a monarchical system with a king who performs the dual role of head of state and of the government and who appoints ministers. The Council of Ministers, in cooperation with the Consultative Council, is responsible for drafting policies for different sectors of the Saudi economy and social development, and for overseeing their implementation, including education.

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[61] http://juo.jeddah.gov.sa/en/Content/jeddah_brief.asp

The Council of Ministers comprises 24 ministries headed by ministers appointed by the king for four-year terms and reporting directly to the King. In 1992, the Saudi government initiated a wide range of political, economical and social reforms. Among these was that of the system of provincial government, implemented in 1993, by which the country is divided into 13 administrative provinces or local authorities (Emirates) for which the Ministry of the Interior is responsible.

Each is governed by an Amir[62] (governor) appointed by the King. The larger, more populous emirates are subdivided into a number of governorates and centres. Governors report directly to the Ministry of the Interior about anything that concerns the provinces. Most of the governors are part of the royal family and have their own offices in the capital cities of the provinces. They are also the commanders of the police and of the Saudi Arabian National Guard units and supervise the recruitment of local men for these security forces in their localities. The governors follow the example of the King by also having Majlis – people considered as links between the authorities and the people[63].

Each province (Emirate) consists of a number of governorates cities, and towns. The city is headed by a mayor, appointed by the king on the recommendation of the Minister of the Interior, and who reports to the governor of the province. The primary objective of the governor and his staff is to administer the region in line with the public policy and regulations of the State. The governor's primary responsibilities include the maintenance of public security, order and stability, and the guaranteeing of individual rights and freedoms within the framework of the Shari'a and governmental regulations, in addition to the promotion of social and economic development in the region (Al-Mehaimeed 1993). The governor runs the business of local government with provincial administrative power to oversee local affairs. Aba-Namay (1993:309) describes the governor's power as dependent on his personality and relationship with the King. He argues that:

> The distribution of power between central and local powers has been
> ambiguous and indefinite. The personality of the King, as well as that of

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[62] Prince, usually from the royal family
[63] United Nations Development Programme. *Programme on governance in the Arab region. Local government, Saudi Arabia* [Online]. Available at: http://www.pogar.org/countries/theme.asp?th=6&cid=16#sub5 [accessed 6 December 2009]

the Amir[64], plays a significant role in determining the power of the locality in relation to the centre.

The governor is assisted by a provincial council composed of governmental departments and a ten-member council of prominent status appointed for four-year renewable terms (Aba-Namay, 1993). Figure 6.2 shows the hierarchal structure and the relationship of power between the centre and local government (Makah region-Jeddah city).

Figure 6.2: *Central and Local Government Hierarchical Structure in Saudi Arabia*
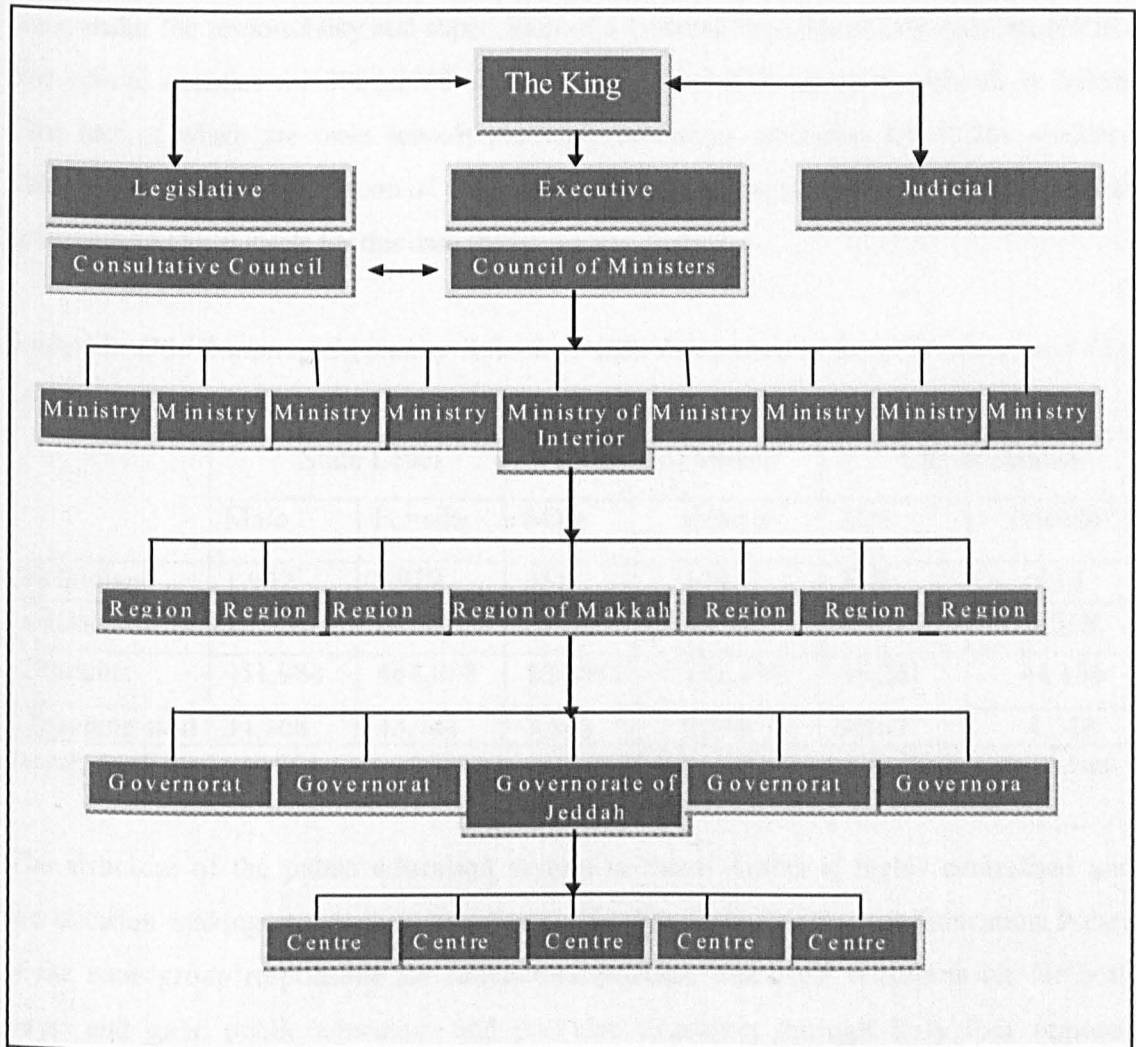
Education in Saudi Arabia is provided through multiple agencies, three of which are the main government ones. These are the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) and the General Organisation of Technical Education and Vocational Training (GOTEVT) supervised by the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs (MMRA) (GEG, 2002). There are also other ministries involved in the education process, the Ministry

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[64] Amir means Prince

of Defence and the National Guard, which provide education to their staff and/or their children. The MoE in Saudi Arabia supervises about 90% of schools and public education while other governmental departments supervise about 4% of schools. Just over 6% of schools are controlled by the private sector (MoE, 1996).

Public education in Saudi Arabia comprises three stages: primary for six years, middle-intermediate for three years and secondary for another three years. The schools in each city come under the responsibility and supervision of a General Department of Education (GDE). The official statistics for 2007-2008 show that there are 233 secondary schools in Jeddah City, half of which are male schools providing secondary education for 45,261 students. Table 6.3 shows the distribution of secondary schools, classes, students and teaching staff at both state and local levels for this case study.

Table 6.3: *Distribution of Secondary Schools (Public Education) at State, Province, and City Level*

	State Level		Province of Makah		City of Jeddah	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Schools	1,932	1,929	355	379	115	118
Classes	15,586	16,031	3,461	3,577	1,431	1,538
Students	451,984	464,888	108,681	101,199	45,261	44,136
Teaching staff	34,768	38,741	7,548	9,576	3,057	4,318

Source: Saudi Ministry of Education (2008) http://212.71.35.4/openshare/englishcon/Statistics/index.html

The structure of the public education system in Saudi Arabia is highly centralised and the decision making structure is top-down. The Supreme Council for Education Policy is the main group responsible for educational policies. The MoE is responsible for both boys' and girls' public education and provides education through forty four regional education departments across the country which report to the Deputy Minister of Education, who in turn reports to the Minister. However, the regional departments supervise education in the cities and centres.

To sum up, the aim of this chapter is to investigate the way in which the policy of reducing the number of failures and drop-outs in the secondary schools is implemented

by their principals and education managers in Jeddah city. It also seeks to investigate their degree of political autonomy in the implementation process. The above section presents a profile of Jeddah City including history, religion and demography. This information is important in understanding the nature of power relationship between the central government and the local authority in the light of such factors. It also outlines the education authority's structure, discusses the local government in the city and includes statistical data on secondary schools at state, regional and city levels.

6.3 Analysis of education policy implementation for Jeddah City

This section presents the results of the field interviews with secondary school principals, education managers at the local level in Jeddah City and officials at the top-level (MoE). The interviews and the content of the questionnaire were designed to provide information from the respondents' own interpretation of the nature of education policy, with specific reference to reducing the amount of failure and drop-out in secondary schools and the way in which this policy is implemented.

The themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews were categorised into four major groups. The first presents the respondents' views, understanding and beliefs about the policy origins, evolution and the nature of policy change over time. The second, those about policymaking, involvement in policy initiation and formulation, clarity, stability, and continuity of policy aims, goals, rules and regulations. The third, those about policy implementation, including power and autonomy of street-level bureaucrats, communication between the three tiers of education bureaucracies, and the possible variations in the implementation. The fourth, those about policy monitoring, including measurements of policy outcome, standards to be achieved, feedback from lower-level bureaucrats and areas in which the education policy process needs improvement. Table 6.4 shows these sets of themes generated from the analysis of the interviews with SLBs in Jeddah city and seniors at the MoE.

Table 6.4: *Themes from Analysis of Interviews in Jeddah City*

Policy Cycle	Themes
Policy evolution, and development	Building Muslim citizens' character supported by knowledge
	Integrating different education systems in one centralised system
	Increasing level of education, development of curricula and teaching facilities
	Meeting country's development needs after unification
	Stable framework and aims of policy
	Change in rules and regulations, programmes and plans
Policy making process	No participation of SLBs in policy decision
	Lack of procedural guidance, regulations and rules
	Lack of stability, continuity (lack of institutional or systematic work)
	Policy for secondary school exists.
Policy implementation	Lack of formal autonomy in implementation process
	Partly formal power in implementation process
	Discretionary power involved
	Negative administrative relationships with directorate of education
	Positive administrative relationships with directorate of education
	Variations in implementation within regions and cities
Policy monitoring	Lack of measurement tools, standards or benchmarks to be achieved
	Exam results and school records are available tools to measure policy output
	Reduced repetition and drop-out but low level of education attainment

6.3.1 Policy Evolution and Development

The picture that emerged from the interviews with six secondary school principals and three managers of education in Jeddah city, as well as with three top-level officials at the MoE, suggested a number of significant issues related to the nature of education policy and the way in which it is implemented. For example, regarding concerns about the ideas and the evolution of education policy as well as the development and change of policy over time, the interviews suggested confusion, mixed views and misunderstanding among the respondents. Some believe that the idea of the education

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policy stemmed from the need to build the character of model Muslim citizens and support them with knowledge. This view is best represented in the responses of school principal No. 3 in Jeddah city who argued that:

> The idea came from the state, which recognises the importance of education in the life of both individuals and society, and therefore a consistent policy was developed to guide the output of education towards building a Muslim citizen's character and to provide him with knowledge to be productive in his work and responsible towards his society (SPr-3)[65]

Other respondents, to a significant degree, believed that the idea of the education policy stemmed from the need to integrate different education systems into one centralised system, since the regions had different educational systems before the unification of the country. They argue that there are many factors which constitute education policy, including economic, religious and social. A flavour of this view is captured in the following response:

> There was a need to standardise the different education systems to cope with the development programmes initiated as a results of the rise in the state revenue from oil in that period......the education policy was influenced by religion, culture, and economic factors which are highly influential in saudi society and play a role in making the education policy (SPr-1).

There was a variety of responses to questions concerning how individual actors understood the evolution of the policy. A number felt that the idea of the policy arose after the country was unified and its purpose was to develop education and enhance curricula, teaching and concepts for the sake of building the nation. This view is typified by the response of school principal No. 2 who argued that:

> The policy idea began after the unification of the country in the reign of King Abdul Aziz. The aim was to raise the level of education, the development of curricula, ways of teaching and other topics relating to education to meet the country's need for development (SPr-2)

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[65] SPr-3: School Principal no.3

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Despite these mixed views regarding the evolution of the policy, there was agreement among the respondents that the general framework and the aims of the education policy were stable and had not changed with time. However, they still believed that there was a positive change in education policy in programmes and plans, direction and infrastructures, as well as organisation and curricula. For example, some respondents saw the change and the development of this policy in educational infrastructures and organisations, such as the expansion in building new universities, colleges and institutes. They cited an example of the integration of boys' and girls' education into one ministry rather than two, which was the case before 1990, as evidence of such a change in educational organisations. This view is clear from the following response:

> There has been a positive change in education policy, especially at the beginning of the nineties when education saw a significant expansion in universities, colleges and institutes, as well as improvements in the level of girls' education, which was merged with boys' education in one ministry. I think there has been significant improvement, but it is moving slowly (Mgr-3)[66].

Other respondents saw the change in this policy in the transition from traditional and religious education to modern education, at all levels:

> There is no doubt that the policy of education has changed over time. There has been a shift from normal and religious education to more developed education in all phases of studies, including secondary education (SPr- 2).

Of the respondents who deviated from the above perspectives, some argued that the policy itself had not changed, but rather that there had been different interpretations and applications of the policy by both implementers and officials at the MoE. The following response captures this view:

> The basic policy is still just the same. The change has happened in the understanding and application of the education policy at both Ministry and implementers' level; each implementer has a different interpretation of the same policy (SPr-5).

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[66] Manager of education, no.3

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These differing perspectives and arguments, generated from interviews with SLBs in Jeddah City, regarding the nature and development of education policy in Saudi Arabia, highlight two important issues:

1. Despite variations in the understanding of the interviewees regarding the idea behind the existing education policy in the Kingdom, the common link between the respondents' viewpoints was that the education policy developed since the country's unification aims to integrate the different education systems founded before the unification of the country under one central authority to direct the education output towards the country's development (e.g. social, economic...etc.).

2. Although there is a consensus between the respondents that the general framework and aims of the education policy have been fixed without any change since its formulation following the nation's unification, the policy has gone through significant changes in infrastructures and organisation and in its components, such as curricula, teaching and facilities.

6.3.2 Policymaking - Initiations and Formulation

In policy initiation and formulation, the picture which emerged from the interviews suggested other mixed views, understanding and opinions about policymaking, involvement in policy initiation and formulation, clarity, stability and the continuity of policy aims, goals, rules and regulations. For example, concerns were expressed regarding participation in policy formulation, and it appears from the information elicited during interviews that, except for those at senior level at the MoE who are involved in the formulation process according to their specialisation, neither secondary school principals nor education managers in Jeddah City have any role in this process. The interviews suggested that the system is highly centralised, following a strict top-down approach. This means that the education policy is "decided and formulated" centrally by SCEP at the state level[67] with no room for the involvement of school principals or education managers in policy making. The above view is best explained in the following responses:

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[67] The Supreme Committee for education policy (SCEP) is a government committee headed by the King and/or the Crown Prince. Its function is to oversee education policy and set objectives, targets and trends for education. Many state agencies, such as Planning, Finance, General Education and Higher Education are involved in this committee.

The principal of a secondary school has no role in the making of educational policy. He is just an executive person who implements the instructions of the ministry (SPr-4).

I do not have a key role in the formulation of educational policy. We in the education department only apply educational policy, but we do sometimes make recommendations and proposals to the higher level (Mgr-2).

A few respondents indicated that they were involved indirectly in policymaking by providing opinions, suggestions or even recommendations, but it appears that their contributions are mostly not considered. The response of school principal No: 3 is an example of this view:

At the end of each academic year, there is an educational meeting for school principals to discuss what has been accomplished and what the school plans are for next year. This meeting presents recommendations for the development and renovation process for the coming years, but I am not sure if such recommendations are ever considered at the top level (SPr-3).

Interestingly, those at the MoE level confirmed this claim. They indicated that neither the Directorate of Education nor the principals of secondary schools take part in education policymaking. According to the response of senior No 2:

They don't participate or have any roles in policy-making, they only implement what is decided by the Ministry, but some of their opinions might be noted from their involvement in the work of some committees (Senior-2)[68].

With respect to the clarity and stability of education policy, the picture that emerged shows mixed views and perspectives among the respondents. Although the respondents broadly agreed that the general framework and aims of education policy were stable and clear, the most common problem mentioned was that changes in the policy occurred in the rules and regulations issued by the policymakers at ministerial level. From their perspective, education policy has not been translated into clear guidance or procedures to

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[68] Top level official at MoE

be followed. The interviewees suggested that this caused ambiguity and confusion among them when it came to the implementation of the policy, which in their view lacks clear procedures, regulations, measurement tools, and guidance. In addition, there is a perceived lack of stability in terms of the programs initiated by the MoE. The following provides an indication of the type of responses given:

> The education policy framework is clear and so are its objectives, but the procedures or the mechanisms that should lead to achieving these policies are not accurate or specific. In the end I can tell that there are no mechanisms or criteria for achieving this policy (SPr-2).

> The education policy outlines are fixed, but we are moving around them. If the policy were codified to include clear, specific goals and procedures, our education would become totally different (SPr-4).
> The policy of public education is comprehensible to us, but not formulated with clear guidance or procedures; perhaps it is left to the implementers (Mgr-2).

Two senior officials at the MoE surprisingly confirm the above claims. From their perspective, the policy is ambiguous and unclear. One of those seniors insisted that:

> Not all of the decisions are clear, nor even easy to implement. For example, the Ministry started to implement 'continuous assessment' (ongoing evaluation) 10 years ago. Most, if not all, teachers are using a very different system; teachers do not understand the philosophy and the regulations of ongoing evaluation (Senior-2).

His colleague, meanwhile, claimed that:

> If we are talking about the policy that we have now, I would conclude that there is no clear policy to be implemented. What we have are just rules to make the job easier (Senior-3).

The other important issue that emerged from the interviews is that the education policy is not stable. As time has passed, its trends and directions have lacked continuity and stability. For example, some respondents insisted that the policy always shifts when officials at the top level change. The response of school principal No 1 represents this view:

The former minister had a specific way in which he wanted things done, and when he was replaced by a new minister, our work became totally different, as the latter came with his own vision and priorities in terms of programmes. So what we were doing under the former minister was totally changed with the coming of the present minister (Spr-1).

Other respondents argued that, even though the national objectives of education policy were stable, the procedures and regulations issued by the MoE over time were frequently changed. The essence of their view could be captured from the following response:

The policy is fixed by the Higher Supreme Committee for Education Policy, but the procedures and regulations issued by the MoE over time are frequently changed....we are not operating on the basis of institutional work; we are working on the foundations of the personal convictions of directors (Mgr-3).

In contrast to the perceptions of stability and clarity in education policy given above, other SLBs indicated that the policy was stable and clear, and that neither the policy nor the organisation structures had changed. They argued that the problem lay either in the fact that the implementers' interpretation had led to differences in implementation, or in the preparation of the implementers, but not in the policy itself. The following responses express these views:

The policy, as a general framework, is stable and detailed in terms of the regulations provided by the Ministry, but the problem comes from the implementers' understanding of these regulations, which makes the implementation different from one area to another (SPr-6).

The basic policy is set out and remains unchanged, but there are differences in the understanding of the policy and in its application, both at the Ministry and in the educational field (SPr-5).

The clearest example of the conflicting views regarding the clarity and stability of education policy in Saudi Arabia can be seen in the respondents' understanding of the secondary schools' policy and its salient features. Some SLBs felt that the policy for secondary education is clearly defined and that the most important features of this policy are the preparation of students for the job market to support the country's development plans, as well as the need to prepare students for academic life. The following two responses are typical of this view:

> The policy for secondary education is generally specified and clear, and
> its salient features are to prepare the students for the labour market, to
> be active members of society and to prepare students for university and
> higher education (SPr-3).
> The preparation of students in high school depends on two important
> things. First, to prepare a student to be a good citizen, Second, to
> involve him in development, either in the labour market or in higher
> education (Mgr-1).

Other respondents' views differed from those expressed above. They believed that the goal of the policy for secondary education is academic rather than vocational. A flavour of this view is captured in the following response:

> The secondary schools policy does not focus on preparing students for
> the labour market, but instead focuses on cultural information only
> (SPr-4).

It was interesting to note that two high-level officials presented different views regarding not only the clarity and stability of the policy but the existence of the secondary education policy. While the first claimed that there was no particular policy for high schools as opposed to other grades, the second indicated that there was a specific policy for secondary education. The later suggested that the policy presented new curricula, books, new reports and new ways of passing from one stage to another which was different from the previous system. However, both agreed that the secondary education policy has not been fully nor widely implemented:

> The Ministry has started to apply a new system and policy for high
> schools but these are still experimental procedures (Senior-3).
> A new curriculum, books, a new report, and a new way of passing from
> one stage to another exists as a new policy, but so far it has been applied
> to only 40 secondary schools in the country (Senior-2).

These contrasting perspectives, generated from interviews with bureaucrats dealing with the three levels of education at the MoE, suggested a degree of confusion and ambiguity among the respondents. This ambiguity, as the respondents revealed, was attributed to the lack of clear procedures and guidelines to be followed in the implementation of the education policy. More importantly, it was attributed to the vagueness of this policy's objectives, targets, and goals.

6.3.3 Policy Implementation

The picture that emerged from the interviews with SLBs in Jeddah city and top officials at the MoE, suggested a number of important issues related to the implementation process. These include the degree of power and autonomy experienced by SLBs in the implementation stage, the extent of communication between the different tiers of education bureaucracies (secondary school principals and managers of education at the middle level and seniors at the top level) and the variation in the implementation of education policy from one region or province to another. For example, with respect to the power and the formal autonomy of SLBs, a few respondents claimed that they had the authority to rectify school problems or design school programmes, such as:

> We have the power to solve the school's problems, to dismiss the headmaster and absolute authority with regard to development and training programmes for teachers (Mgr-1).

> The school principal has competence in the process of internal school work and in the process of finding mechanisms. This is what differentiates schools from each other (SPr-3).

Most respondents claimed that they had no formal autonomy or power at all in the implementation process. For example, they expressed dissatisfaction with the absence of power in deciding the skills of those working at the school, including the teaching staff, student advisors and assistants or administrative staff at schools. They argued that, despite what was written in the policy regarding a school principals' authority, it was unlikely to be implemented in practice. Their responses included the following statements:

> According to the education policy, the headmaster has the power to transfer a teacher who is not displaying the skills or experience to cope with the vision of the headmaster in development and teaching at the school. But the reality is that a teacher cannot be transferred unless he agrees to a move. Therefore, the power is on paper only (SPr-4).

> Although there is room on paper for us, in practice this is not the case. We are crippled, as our room for manoeuvre is extremely limited and we cannot translate our own ideas and programmes into reality without the approval of higher authorities, whether at the regional or the ministerial level (SPr-1).

Those at the MoE level confirmed that neither the directors of education nor the principals of secondary schools had any degree of power in the implementation of education policy, nor even in deciding the minimum standards for students to be achieved in secondary schools.

> Education managers implement what they receive from the Ministry in the form of orders, such as acceptance of a specific number of students. They do not even have the freedom to determine the age of a student's acceptance; they literally carry out the Ministry's instructions, to the letter (Senior- 3).

Interestingly, although the SLBs in Jeddah City have no formal power, the picture that emerged from their interviews suggested that the lack of such power, as well as the lack of a clear mechanism for policy implementation, leaves the principals with little choice but to exercise discretionary power in their daily work. In assessing the degree of power (discretion) SLBs have, the wide range of responses centred on the school principal's personality and attitudes, as well as on his ability to determine his school's plans within the regulations set by the Ministry. In their responses, statements such as these were common:

> Autonomy is relative and varies from one school manager to another. What is applied in this school, for example, may be different from other schools, because the general standard varies between schools, as does the headmaster's personality and to what extent he is an independent person. Thus he tries to adapt the regulations to the plans of the school (SPr-2).

A clear example, mentioned by some respondents, in which principals exercise their professional discretion and autonomy, is seen in the area of admissions policy for secondary schools. They indicated that:

> The admissions policy of secondary schools stresses that the maximum capacity of the class is thirty-five students. Sometimes, under certain conditions, such as increased population in a school's catchment area, class numbers may increase to forty or forty-five students, and this depends on the school's circumstances and the principal's decisions (SPr-2).

In justifying their action of practising discretion, some SLBs insisted that this is not in conflict with the general aims or the objectives of the policy; it is a question of taking the interests of students or the larger community into consideration. They made remarks such as:

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Sometimes my actions may violate some of the guidelines, but they satisfy the overall objectives in a different way. However, this depends on the personality and the culture of the school principal, as well as the extent of his commitment to collective opinion regarding the management of the school. This sometimes reduces accountability if it happens (SPr-4).

The regulations stipulate that students who fail to appear for a test should be excluded from taking the test unless they have a legitimate reason for having missed it. School principals sometimes bend these rules for the sake of student and school interests. This, at the same time, does not contradict with the general aims of education (SPr-6).

The SLBs' discretion in the implementation of education policy seems, however, to be understandable by top-level officials. They argue that the lack of a clear system and guidance for implementation lies behind the use of discretion by implementers. Responses included:

It's hard to give an answer but what I can say is that it depends on the person who is in charge. The reason is that there is no clear system; everything is based on opinion in our education (Senior-1).

Another important issue that emerged from the interviews was that SLBs are working without adequate resources. Some participants argued that the lack of qualified teachers did not help them in implementing school programmes. The remarks made included points such as:

One basic element to take into account is the human factor, such as teachers. When we want to implement a programme or a certain plan in the school, we will not find teachers who are trained or qualified to implement that program (SPr-6).

Other respondents insisted that their decisions in implementing education policy were influenced by the school environment. They expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of school infrastructure, finances and even the authority to do their job. Important points made in their arguments on these issues included:

In school work, many things can affect the decision of the principal. For example, the lack of government buildings, the school budget, the absence of power by which I can hire employees or transfer unsuitable teachers, all these affect my decisions when I practise my job (SPr-1).

In regard to the relationship between school principals and education managers at the middle level of administration, as well as with top officials at the ministerial level, and the nature of communication between the three tiers of education authorities, the picture which emerged suggested contrasting perspectives. A few SLBs see their relationship with education managers at the middle level as positive and they argue that there are three to four consultative meetings with the regional directors of education throughout the year to exchange views regarding schools and education matters. Their statements included comments such as:

> Many suggestions and ideas that I send to the Department of Education are considered. This does not mean things are guaranteed to be achievable, because it depends on officials at the Ministry and on financial conditions (SPr-4).

However, the most common views of SLB suggested that the relations between school principals and managers at the Department of Education are limited to the giving and receiving of order and instructions. Principals of secondary schools made the point that the managers of education in Jeddah City tend to be mainly concerned with realising the objectives as seen by the MoE without giving due concern to their professional capacity in undertaking their work or to the degree of autonomy needed to perform their school work efficiently. For example:

> Any advice or suggestions proposed by school principals to education departments may be considered as complaints. Therefore, it is better for school principals to remain silent, because if they raise such issues, officials will regard them as poor administrators who are unable to solve their schools' problems. This creates a kind of prevailing thought in the community, especially in school departments, where you are regarded as competent as long as you solve your school's problems, even if it is in a wrong way (SPr-2).

Or to not giving due concern to their schools' needs. Typical of this view was the following statement:

> Maintenance works at the school cannot be performed unless the headmaster tracks and keeps calling the Department of Education, even though it is not his job. In addition, regarding the provision of books, we have to go to the authorities and beg them to give us books (SPr-6).

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Another important point which emerged from the interviews, concerning communication between lower and middle levels of administration, was that some SLBs have little trust in managers, in regard to ideas and suggestions being sent to them from school principals. The following statement captured their views:

> There were some failures in the relationships with managers at the Department of Education. Some of them, when receiving suggestions or recommendations from the field, either hid them or adopted them, claiming them as their own ideas (SPr-5).

Or in terms of job security:

> Unfortunately, we are working without security. It is not guaranteed, because although you are probably working diligently and honestly, if you make an error unintentionally, the positive things you have done never count; everyone becomes cautious and only works within the system (SPr-6).

Or even in terms of the mechanism of choosing education leaders:

> We live in crises regarding choosing an education leader; the leader is there, but the process of choosing the leader involves suspicion and mistrust because the selection mechanism is undeclared and unknown (Mgr-2).

However, interviews with top-level officials suggested different perspectives in describing the relationship between education managers at the middle and top levels. They indicated that:

> There is no general description that could explain the relationship between the two levels, but it is enough to know that the system is very centralised, so the relationship is mostly passive (Senior-3).

> The centralisation in the Ministry's work does not allow the independence of directors of education to implement instructions and regulations not enacted by the Ministry. Thus, the relationship could be described as personal rather than practical (Senior-1)

The different arguments given above suggested poor communication between the various tiers of the educational establishment. Poor communication between local and top level

staff within education authorities was cited as the most serious aspect of this problem, particularly in the giving of orders and their execution. In other words, school principals appear to accept that the managers at the middle level provide directives and orders but they may not share their opinions regarding their schools. The interviews showed that there are differences between secondary school principals and middle/local and top-level people within educational authorities. Lipsky (1980: 16) indicated that:

> Most analysts take for granted that the work of lower-level participants will more or less conform to what is expected of them. Organisational theorists recognise that there will always be some slippage between orders and the carrying out of orders, but the slippage is usually attributed to poor communication or workers' residual, and not terribly important, disagreement with organisational goals.

It could be argued, judging from the responses of school principals at the street level of bureaucracy, that the middle and top-level staff within the education authorities frequently talk about achieving results consistent with policy objectives without paying due attention to how these are translated into practice in the field. It is also argued that, while middle and top-level authorities tend to be result-oriented, street-level bureaucrats, as is the case with the principals of secondary schools in this study, are always shown to be having 'a 'role interest' in securing the requirements of completing the job (Lipsky, 1980:19).

Regarding variations in the implementation of education policy, the picture that emerged suggested different perspectives among the respondents. A few respondents believed that implementation varies not only between regions but also between individuals:

> We have all carried out policy objectives and each one of us implements policy according to his own understanding of these objectives. Therefore, application varies from person to person. (SPr-4)

However, the most common opinion that emerged from the interviews suggested that there was no variation between the regions in policy application. SLBs argued that the centralised system of the work of the MoE prevents such a discrepancy:

> I believe that the application of the policy is similar in all regions, because this policy is formulated at the Ministry and the Departments of Education are just implementers of this policy (Spr-3).

> There is no variation between public schools in terms of application of policy, simply because all of them must apply the same rules and instructions. However, differences might be found in some large private schools (Spr-1).

A top-level official confirms the view that suggested an expectation of the strict application of education policy. He indicated that:

> School principals and directors of education strictly apply the policy in compliance with written legislation and they are held accountable for non-implementation (Senior-2).

To sum up, the different arguments presented by the respondents regarding policy implementation show that street level bureaucrats run their schools without having any formal power or independence. As a result, they exercise a high degree of discretionary power in their daily work because the policy itself has not been translated into clear guidelines or procedures to help them in the implementation process. The differing viewpoints of respondents also highlight a lack of effective communication between the different tiers of bureaucracy within the MoE. School principals described the relationship with the middle and top levels as one of carrying out directives and orders rather than one of cooperation and involvement in decisions. No variation between the regions in terms of implementation was found in the school principals' responses.

6.3.4- Policy Monitoring

As noted in Chapter 4, policy monitoring is an important stage in the policy cycle. It represents an on-going activity to track policy progress against planned tasks and provide regular overviews of the implementation of policy activities in input delivery, work schedules, targeted outputs, etc. Nabris (2002) indicated that:

> Effective monitoring needs adequate planning, baseline data, indicators of performance, and results and practical implementation mechanisms that include actions such as field visits, stakeholder meetings, documentation of project activities, regular reporting, etc.. Project monitoring is normally carried out by project management staff and other stakeholders.

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It is recognised that the policy makers in any organisation need to know the extent to which the policy is meeting its objectives and leading to its intended aim. However, the picture that emerged from the interviews with secondary school principals and managers of education in Jeddah City, as well as with top-level officials at the MoE, suggested mixed views and confusion in monitoring and evaluation of the education policy (reducing levels of failure and drop-out in secondary schools). For example, some participants believed that there were tools to measure the outcome of the policy. They cited an example of the new grade system for secondary schools imposed by the Ministry in 1998. In their opinion, such a system has helped reduce the levels of failure and drop-out in schools by changing the way students are promoted from one stage to another. This is done according to their performance and the school's evaluation, but not according to success or failure within the examination system, the method previously used to evaluate students' achievements. However, they expressed dissatisfaction about their achievements as a result of applying this new system:

> The measurement is only based on the percentage of failure and success...Now, after the implementation of the new system of cumulative rates and reduction of minimum marks, failure or drop-out has become very low but this negatively affects the level of knowledge the students have (Spr-3).

> I believe that this policy has contradicting directions; the policy has ensured a reduction in leakage and has even come to control the economics of education. But it has caused a problem in the field because the level of achievement in some subjects is very low. (Mgr-3)

This group of opinions as mentioned above suggested that the measurement of the policy's outcomes still depended on the students' results (pass or fail) at the end of the academic year:

> There are no clear or specific measurements to evaluate the policy except the students' results at the end of the year. How many students pass the test and how many fail are the only measurements that we have (SPr-4).

Within the above category of respondents who claimed that the school statistical data is the real measurement of the policy outcome whether the policy is success or fail, they indicated that such data are sent to the middle level of administration and then to the MoE. However, they were not clear about how they do this task:

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We have instructions from the Ministry to measure the output of the school and the achievement of the goals. Each year we send the results of such measurements in the form of statistics to the Department of Education. The department then summarises these and report it to the Ministry (SPr-1).

Interestingly, some respondents at the middle level argued that the feedback of policy target achievements was obtained from different actors. Their responses included statements such as:

We have annual meetings with students, school principals, directors of supervisory centres and the Director of Education, to criticise the school's performance and to learn the views of students about the school principal and teachers. This gives feedback to determine whether what we had planned for has been achieved or not (Mgr-1).

Other participants indicated that, since there was no clear standard to be achieved in this education policy, it was difficult to measure outcomes. They argued that the policy lacked standard or clear measurement tools to ascertain whether the targets set had been achieved or not:

There is no mechanism to determine the results of the policy. It is left to the implementer to apply policy according to his own perspective...Academic supervision plays a negative role because supervisors don't check that the targets set have been achieved, rather they focus on administrative matters (SPr-6).

We do not have criteria or mechanisms for measurement of achievement of goals, but we have statistics showing that the drop-out percentage in the secondary school is very low (SPr- 2).

Interestingly, the picture that emerged from the responses of top-level interviewees suggested a lack of clear and well-defined mechanisms regarding policy monitoring, follow-up and feedback. According to one such respondent:

It's hard to give an answer, but what I can say is that it depends on the person who is in charge. The reason for that is that there is no clear system; everything is based on opinion (Senior-1).

Another high-level employee's opinion was that:

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The mechanisms of the educational policy depend on the culture and the influence of the Ministry official and not on scientific methodology (Senior-2).

The different arguments presented here suggested that there is no clear mechanism for monitoring education policy. The picture which emerged showed a lack of clear procedures or methods for collecting information on the extent to which education policy goals are being achieved. It also suggested that the standard to be achieved in education policy is missing. Hogwood and Gunn (1984:220) indicate that:

> Fully effective monitoring will require initial specification of what programme delivery should involve; one cannot measure deviations from standards which are not specified. This involves linking program goals to the objectives of the policy

Judging by the interviews with different levels of bureaucrats at the Ministry of Education (MoE), it seems that education policy objectives and targets are vague and not specified in a measureable form. This is clear from the variety of perspectives and views provided by bureaucrats concerning policy objectives. Lipsky (1980:40) indicates that:

> The ambiguity and unclarity of goals and the unavailability of appropriate performance measures in street-level bureaucracies is of fundamental importance not only to workers' job experience, but also to managers' ability to exercise control over policy.

6.4 Findings and Conclusion

This case study has explored the way in which public education policy (reducing the number of failures and drop-outs in secondary schools), formulated centrally by the Saudi government, translates into action by SLBs in Jeddah City. It also examines the degree of political autonomy they experienced in the implementation process. The results of the study suggested a number of important issues relating to the nature of education policy in Saudi Arabia and the way in which it is implemented, as well as that of power relationships between different levels of bureaucracies. The issues that emerged were found to relate mainly to some key and principal aspects of the policy process, including policy formulation, implementation and monitoring. Table 6.5 shows the findings in the key

thematic areas generated from the interviews with different bureaucrats in the three tiers of bureaucracy at the MoE regarding the implementation of education policy.

Table 6.5: *Themes of Education Policy Implementation in Jeddah City*

Thematic Areas	Jeddah	Riyadh	Dammam
Policymaking process	Centralised		
Policy stability	Unstable		
Goal clarity	Ambiguous		
SLB discretion	High		
Central monitoring and Controlling	Poor		

- *The policymaking process is undertaken at ministerial level with no participation or feedback from educators at the local level.*

Education policy in Saudi Arabia, as the evidence implies, is designed and adopted centrally by the SCEP. This government committee "serves as a major reference that delineates the objectives, plans and programs of education at its various levels for general and higher education" (GEG, 2002: 8). Education policy is made using a top-down approach. This means that when policy decisions are made by the SCEP, policy make its way through a hierarchal structure to the MoE, which is responsible for translating policy objectives and goals into procedures, regulations and rules, as well as setting mechanisms for implementation and monitoring the outcomes of the policy. SLBs in Jeddah city have no role or any sort of participation or involvement in deciding or designing the policy. This indicates that the communication and transmission of policy decisions between the centre (MoE) and the local government (Department of Education and secondary school principals) are poor or limited. In other words, there is a missing link between the central level and the local level. This gap between the two levels, as the study revealed, can be attributed mainly to the centralised nature of the education system, which prevents regions from possessing full powers in educational matters, such as curricula, education programmes, employment and budgets.

- *The objectives, goals, and tasks of the education policy tend to be ambiguous, vague, and/or conflicting.*

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The findings show that the education policy is general in its aims and objectives. Hence, it is seen to be lacking clarity in its language, rules and regulations, and with no clear mechanisms or guidance for implementation, monitoring, evaluation or feedback. The analysis revealed evidence that the policy is written in general statements and most of its goals are not identified clearly. It could be argued that the transmission of policy to implementers and target groups and the subsequent implementation depends partly on the clarity of the policy and partly on clear and frequent communication within the policy process. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Mazmanian and Sabatier (1981:50) argue that:

> Clarity is important for two reasons. Most obviously, it helps to determine how well implementers and target groups understand what is expected of them. More subtly, ambiguity provides a means for negatively inclined judges or bureaucrats to evade the intent of policies through deliberate misinterpretation.

This ambiguity in education policy makes SLBs in Jeddah city working in jobs with 'conflicting and ambiguous goals', as Lipsky (1980: 40) described the environment of SLB works. This ambiguity in policy goals however arises, 'because the conflicts that existed when programs were originally developed were submerged; or because they have accumulated by accretion and have never been rationalised, and it remains functional for the agency not to confront its goals conflict' (Lipsky 1980: 41). This view has been supported by the argument of Stone (1997), who insists that policy goals have multiple meanings and often conflict and that this means public policy is seen as a paradox.

- *SLBs exercise a high degree of discretionary power in the implementation of education policy*

The study shows that SLBs in Jeddah city have no formal power or authority to perform their job. This was in fact due to the nature of the policy making process in the education system, which is characterised by a high degree of pluralisation of power at the MoE level in order to assert greater control over education policy. Richards and Smith (2000:4) rightly argued that:

> The core executive possesses both the resources and strategic-learning capabilites to reshape its existing capacities and to develop new forms

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of intervention, in order to sustain its position as the dominant actor in the policymaking arena.

However, despite the very few respondents who claimed that they have a sort of formal power in dealing with schools' problems, the findings reveal that SLBs in Jeddah city exercise a high degree of discretionary power during the implementation of education policy. Their discretion power of discretion was due to the generalised nature of the policy, its poor clarity and ambiguity, and its lack of mechanisms for implementation, monitoring, feedback or evaluation. Lipsky (1980:40) insists that

> The clearer the goals and the better developed the performance measures, the more finely-tuned guidance can be. The less clear the goals and the less accurate the feedback, the more individuals in a bureaucracy will be on their own.

The second factor behind the discretionary power exercised by SLBs in Jeddah city when they practise implementation is the poor communication and differences between them and those at the MoE. The lack of constructive communication between the different levels of bureaucracies within the MoE (secondary school principals, managers of education and officials at the MoE) affects the successful implementation of education policy in the sense that principals and teachers are central to meaningful educational change and they need to share their views with local and central authorities in order to achieve successful implementation. Hogwood and Gunn (1984:205) indicate that perfect communication and co-ordination of the various elements or agencies involved in the programme are a precondition for perfect implementation.

The third factor that caused the high degree of discretionary power exercised by SLBs in Jeddah city during the implementation of education policy is the insufficient resources and differences in priorities of schools' works. The workplace uncertainties that SLBs in Jeddah City confront in implementing education policy lead to a high degree of discretionary power which is due to individual interpretation of rules and regulations issued by the MoE. This ultimately leads to variability in implementation and, subsequently, differences in policy output, which deviate from the MoE original intentions. Lipsky (1980:18) observes that:

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The fact that street-level bureaucrats must exercise discretion in
processing large amounts of work with inadequate resources means that
they must develop shortcuts and simplifications to cope with the
pressure of responsibility.

The fourth factor is the nature of the tasks performed by SLBs in Jeddah city which
characterise them as professionals, and their professionalism plays a distinct role in the
degree of discretion they use in implementing the education policy or making decisions.
Blakemore (2003:115) suggested that, what actually happens on the ground is often
determined by the effectiveness of civil servants at the national level, or by the amount of
cooperation shown by local officials or by professionals such as teachers'. Generally,
discretion appears to be strongly associated with the degree of professionalism of street-
level bureaucrats. The more professional the latter, the more discretion they exercise and
vice versa. Lipsky (1980:15) indicates that:

Certain characteristics of the jobs of street-level bureaucrats make it
difficult, if not impossible, to severely reduce discretion. They involve
complex tasks for which elaboration of rules, guidelines or instructions
cannot circumscribe the alternatives.

- *The education policy has no clear mechanisms for monitoring or for standards to be*
  achieved.

The findings reveal a lack of a clear mechanism and tools for measurement with regard to
monitoring the education policy. There is a lack of procedures needed for collecting
information about the extent to which education policy goals are being achieved.
Furthermore, the education policy's goals and objectives are not specified in a
measureable form. The findings also show that there is no standard to be achieved or to
measure against in education policy. Poor communication and feedback process between
policymakers and implementers are cited as the most serious problem. The evidence
implies a missing link between the different levels of bureaucracy within the MoE in
measuring and evaluating the policy output. There is a lack of specification of activities
involved in delivering the policy, identifying policy output and setting standards for
measurement. This situation is in contrast with the task of monitoring the policy's aims to
avoid implementation failure. However, it has been argued that specifying the activities

involved in delivering the policy, as well as identifying the policy output, are preconditions for successful implementation. These tasks are supposed to be considered at the policy designing stage. Hogwood and Gunn (1984:220) indicate that:

> Fully effective monitoring will require initial specification of what program delivery should involve; one cannot measure deviations from standards which are not specified. This involves linking program goals to the objectives of the policy.

However, sometimes ambiguity in policy goals was meant to combine different views of stakeholders to start the programme. Hogwood and Gunn (1984:222) also indicate that:

> Vagueness in goals or concentration on immediate operational goals can be a consequence of divergences in views about policy objectives. Often, support from many quarters is necessary to get a programme off the ground and this may be better met by vague statements on which all can agree.

This is consistent with Lipsky (1980:40), who indicated that: 'public service goals also tend to have an idealized dimension that make them difficult to achieve and confusing and complicated to approach.

- *The policy goals made by the centre at the policy gestation stage are not closely translated further down the policy chain at the policy implementation stage*

The findings indicate that during the formulation stage, policy objectives and aims are not translated into clear rules, regulations or guidance to be followed by the bureaucrats at the local level who are responsible for translating the policy into action. This led to a high degree of discretionary power due to individual interpretation of rules and regulations issued by the MoE. The consequence is variability in implementation and, subsequently, differences in terms of policy output which deviate from the MoE original intentions.
There is an indication of policy failure with respect to the implementation of the education policy. The failure can be seen in the gap between policy formulation and implementation. This failure can be attributed to the fact that the policy is not put into effect as intended by the MoE because the SLBs in Jeddah city are working in uncertain environments, including ambiguity in goals, rules and regulations of education policy and 'their best efforts could

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not overcome obstacles to effective implementation over which they had little or no control'. (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984:197). This type of failure is described by Hogwood and Gunn (1984) as non-implementation. However, the failure of the education policy is due neither to poor execution nor bad luck but rather to the fact that 'the policy itself was bad, in the sense of being based upon inadequate information, defective reasoning or hopelessly unrealistic assumptions (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984:197).

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the way in which the education policy of reducing the number of failures and drop outs in secondary schools implemented by SLBs (secondary schools principals and education managers) in Jeddah city and the degree of autonomy they exercise in their daily work. The findings revealed that the policymaking process is highly centralised without participation of SLBs in policy design or decision. Although the findings suggest that the general framework of the education policy remains immutable, individual perspectives on and interpretations of the policy differ among SLBs in the city.

It was expected to find compliance and more adherences from the SLBs in Jeddah city to the policy goals and therefore implementation according to policymakers' intent. This expectation was due to the fact that the city is a much more cosmopolitan and ethnically diverse city than most Saudi cities and its culture is more eclectic in nature. Moreover, education was started in the city even before it becomes a part of Saudi Arabia. All these characteristics of the city expected to influence the perceptions, behaviors, and decision of SLBs and their commitment to implement the education policy professionally and efficiently. What has been found is that SLBs in Jeddah city implement the policy according to their interpretation and understanding of the rules and regulations issued by the MoE. The findings indicated that they exercise sizeable degree of discretionary power in the implementation of the policy. This lead to various versions of implementation and, therefore, to different policy outcomes that might not be consistent with the policy makers' intent at the MoE. This is due to the policy's overall lack of clarity concerning operational guidance, rules and regulations, standards to be achieved and mechanisms for monitoring and auditing.

CHAPTER 7

Riyadh Education Authority

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the way in which education policy (reducing the number of failures and dropouts in secondary schools) determined centrally by the MoE has been implemented further down the policy-chain by SLBs in Jeddah city and the degree of autonomy the latter have in the implementation process. The main finding of the chapter suggested variation between policymakers' intentions at the MoE level and the actual practice of SLBs at the local level. This was due to a sizeable degree of discretionary power exercised by SLBs as a result of ambiguity and confusion of the education policy which lacks clear rules, procedures, operational guidance and mechanism for auditing and follow-up. The importance of this finding is that it is opposed the hypothetical image of the authoritarian and top-down nature of the Saudi political system in which policy made at the centre is closely translated further down the policy-chain at the policy implementation stage by the SLBs. This chapter explores the degree to which the same policy (reducing the number of failures and dropouts at secondary school level) has been implemented in Riyadh city and the autonomy which SLBs have in translating the policy into action. The key themes of this chapter are outlined in table7.1.

Table 7.1: *Key Themes of Analysis of Riyadh Education Authority*

- To examine the argument of this thesis that: *the nature of the Saudi Political System, based as it is on a monarchical model of government, avers that policy goals set by the centre at the policy gestation stage are closely adhered to throughout the policy-chain, up to and including the policy implementation stage, by SLBs* in a different environment (different city and different implementers' perceptions) and whether the findings are consistent with the findings of Jeddah city.
- To explore possible variation not only between central and local but also between the regions in regard to policy implementation and how this could be explained.
- To identify themes relating to the nature of education policy in which to explore a variety of areas of policy including:
- Background of education policy; the evolution and development of policy over time
- Policymaking formation; participation in policy processes; clarity, stability, and continuity of policy targets and goals; existence of secondary school policy and its features
- Policy implementation; power and autonomy of SLBs in the implementation process; communication between different levels of bureaucracy; discrepancy in implementation Policy monitoring, including measurements of policy outcome, standards to be achieved, feedback from lower-level bureaucrats.

Riyadh was chosen as the second city for the study as the biggest in the country and the political capital. It is the centre of both government and religious authority, where most of the Ministries, including the MoE, and the government organisations are found. Riyadh has a more conservative culture than other cities in Saudi, especially Jeddah and Dammam, due to the presence of a Najdi society mostly influenced by tribal values. These political and cultural elements may affect the behaviours of SLBs and accordingly the implementation process.

The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first provides an overview of the history, religion, culture and demography of Riyadh City. Such information helps in understanding the nature of power relationship between the central government and the local authority and therefore in identifying factors that might influence the decision of the SLBs when they practice implementation. The second part presents the empirical study that been conducted and administered among SLBs in Riyadh city (secondary schools' principals and managers of education). In this part, SLBs' perspectives, views and understanding of different issues of education policy including the implementation stage are presented and analysed. Themes related to the nature of education policy and the way in which such policy is implemented are identified. This will help in understanding the nature of the Saudi political system and how the relationship of power can be explained within the Saudi context.

7.2 Profile of Riyadh City

As one of the largest cities in the country, Riyadh has been the capital of Saudi Arabia since it was founded during the reign of the second Saudi state (1823-1891). Riyadh is located (see figure 7.1) in the very interior of the country along a green river bed, which in addition to sources of underground water, has allowed a rich agriculture (Garba, 2004).

Figure 7.1: Map of *Saudi Arabia - Riyadh City*
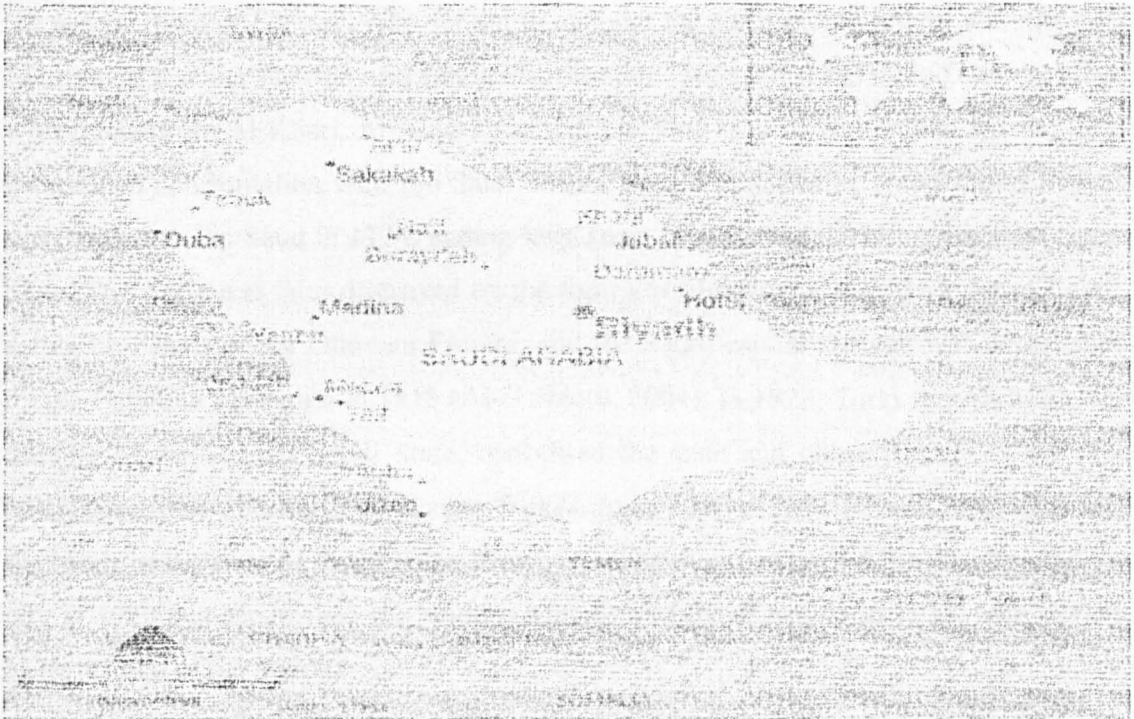
The literature on the city (Helms,1981; Facey,1992; Peterson,1993; Al-Juhany,2002; Al-Hathloul, 2004; Garba, 2004) suggested that, historically, Riyadh was a town called Hajr, founded by an Arabic tribe called Banu Hanifa[69] and served as the capital of a province in the centre of Arabia called Al-Yamamah. Al-Juhany, (2002:120) indicated that:

> During the Umayyad and Abbasid eras, the governors of Al-Yamamah province were responsible for most of central and eastern Arabia....Ibn Battuta, the North African traveler in the 14th century, described Hajr as the main city of Al-Yamamah, with canals and trees with most of its inhabitants belongs to Banu Hanifa tribe.

The earliest known reference to the area by the name Riyadh comes from a 17th-century chronicler reporting on an event from the year 1590. The history of the city indicated that in 1737 it had become controlled by Deham Ibn Dawwas, a refugee from the neighbouring area called Manfuha. He had then built a single wall to encircle the various quarters of Riyadh, making them effectively a single town (Garba, 2004). In 1744,

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[69] Banu Hanifa was an ancient Arab tribe inhabiting the area of Al-Yamamah in the central region of modern-day Saudi Arabia. The tribe belonged to the great Rabi'ah branch of North Arabian tribes, which also included 'Anizzah, Abd al-Qays, Bakr, and Taghlib (Khan, 1980).

Muhammad Ibn Abdel Wahhab formed an alliance with Muhammad Ibn Saud, ruler of the nearby town of Diriyah, who set out to conquer the surrounding region with the goal of bringing it under the rule of a single Islamic state (Peterson, 1993). Ibn Dawwas allied with forces from Al Kharj, Al Ahsa and the Banu Yam clan of Najran and led the most determined confrontation with Ibn Saud. When he was defeated he escaped and Riyadh surrendered to Ibn Saud in 1774, ending long years of wars and declaring the First Saudi State. This State was later destroyed by the forces of Muhammad Ali, the ruler of Egypt, acting on behalf of the Ottoman Empire, and the Saudi capital Diriyah was demolished by the Egyptian campaign in 1818 (Al-Hathloul, 2004). In 1823, Turki Ibn Abdallah, the founder of the Second Saudi State, revitalised the state and chose Riyadh as the new capital. Because of struggles between Turki's grandsons, in 1891 Riyadh had fallen into the hands of the rival Al Rashid clan. However, King Abdul-Aziz Ibn Saud recaptured the city in 1902 and established the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, with Riyadh as the capital of the nation.

Riyadh, though having a long history, it was by the early 1900s a small tribal enclave. The city started its development in 1902 with the initiation of a movement by King Abdul-Aziz that ultimately led to the establishment of Saudi Arabia as a country in 1933. Garba (2004) indicated that Riyadh remained as the capital of the country, though some national government activities were based in Jeddah in the Hijaz region. However, from 1933, the dynamics of growth changed as Riyadh started growing faster and its population increased significantly. According to Al-Hathloul, (2004), the city grew at an annual rate of about 5% between 1930 and 1950 and about 7–8% between 1950 and 1970. The speed and scale of Riyadh's transformation since then, particularly during the 1970s, has had few parallels. From a walled city of less than 1 square in 1920, it has grown into an expansive modern capital of 1,500 squares (Al-Hathloul, 2004). The population of Riyadh exceeded 4 million according to 2003 estimation. Estimated at 46,000, 160,000 and 350,000 in 1940, 1960 and 1970, respectively, Riyadh thus had one of the fastest growth rates of any city in the world (Garba, 2003:598).

Riyadh province has an area of 412,000 km², making it the second largest province in both area (behind the Eastern province) and population (behind Makah province). More than 75% of its population resides within Riyadh. According to the 2004 census,

1,728,840 of the province's population were non-Saudi (approximately 31%) of whom 1,444,500 lived in the provincial capital, Riyadh. Alkhedheiri (2002:74) argued that: 'The people of the city were living a tribal lifestyle that more or less they had been living for a very long time, with the city's economy focused on small-scale agriculture and nomadic livestock husbandry'.

The original population, of Najdi lineage, has long been blended with groups from all over Arabia as well as foreign nationals[70]. Economically, trade and grazing had a special importance in Najad, that is midway to Riyadh, as the city was a commercial centre connecting the east of the Arabian Peninsula with its west, south and north. However, the economy of Riyadh is connected to national administration, financial activities and other industries activities include food processing, an oil refinery and chemical and plastics factories (Alkhedheiri, 2002).

7.2.1 Local Government - Education Authority

Riyadh Province is one of the thirteen provinces that make up the local government of Saudi Arabia. Its capital is the city of Riyadh, which is also the national capital, and its local government and education authority structures are very similar to those of the other provinces in Saudi Arabia (see Chapter 6 for more details about the structure of both local government and education authority in province/region).

7.3 Analysis of Education Policy Implementation for Riyadh City

This part of the chapter presents the results of the interviews with SLBs (secondary school principals and managers of education) in the city of Riyadh, as well as with senior officials at the MoE. The aim was to gain insight into the nature of education policy and to elicit information from the respondents' own interpretation of the way in which those bureaucrats at the local level (SLBs) implement the policy of reducing the amount of failure and drop-out in secondary schools and the political autonomy they have in the implementation stage.

Following the same procedures as in Chapter 6 in identifying and categorising the themes emerging from the analysis of the interviews, four major groups were identified, representing various policy areas. The first demonstrates themes related to the

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[70] http://looklex.com/e.o/riyadh.htm

interviewees' understanding, views, and beliefs about the origins and evolution of the education policy and the nature of change in the policy over time. The second presents perspectives and attitudes regarding the policymaking process, including interviewees' role and involvement in policy initiation and formulation. It also presents their views about the clarity, stability and continuity of the policy in policy aims, goals, rules and regulations. The third shows the respondents' views on policy implementation, including the power and autonomy of SLBs, the communication line between the various levels of bureaucracies within the MoE and the variations in policy implementation. The fourth group of themes demonstrates the respondents' perspectives on policy auditing, monitoring and feedback, standards to be achieved. Table 7.2 presents the groups of themes that emerged from the interviews with SLBs in Riyadh city and the top officials at the MoE.

Table 7.2: *Themes from Analysis of Interviews in Riyadh City*

Policy Cycle	Themes
Policy evolution and development	Integrating different education systems in one centralised system
	Meeting country's development plans
	Religion, social, economic factors influence education policy
	Stable framework of policy
	Change in trends, programmes, plans, rules and regulations
Policymaking process	No involvement of SLBs in policy decisions
	Policy lack of operational guidance, regulations and rules
	Policy lack of stability and continuity (lack of institutional work)
	Specific policy for secondary education
Policy implementation	Lack of formal power in implementation stage
	Relative political power in implementation stage
	Implementation influenced by social and culture issues
	Negative administrative relationships with managers of education
	Good administrative relationships with managers of education
	Variations in implementation within regions
Policy monitoring	Lack of policy measurement, standards or benchmarks to be achieved
	Exam results and school records are only tools for measurements
	Reduced repetition and dropout but low level of education achievements

7.3.1 Policy Evolution and Development

The analysis of the interviews with the secondary schools principals and the managers of education in Riyadh City revealed a number of main issues associated with the nature of education policy and the way in which it is implemented. For instance, regarding concern about the evolution of education policy and the idea behind it, as well as the development and change of the policy over time, the picture that emerges reveals misunderstanding, confusion and mixed views among the respondents. It shows that some respondents think that the idea of the education policy arose from the need to integrate the different education systems established in the Arabian Peninsula before the unification of the country. They cited that the Hejaz area for example has a different education system generated from the Ottoman Empire and the kingdom of Hejaz that differs from the system founded in Najd[71]. The response of school principal No. 5 in Riyadh city presents such a view:

> Before the unification of the country, there were different curricula, programmes, teaching and education systems among the country.....after the unification, the government felt that these systems needed to be unified under one system to control and direct the education process in the country's interest. Hence, the education policy emerged (SPr-5).

A significant number of respondents believed that the country's need for development was the major factor behind the idea of the education policy. In their perspectives, the idea arose from the state realisation that education is a major component of building a modern nation. Therefore, the government set an educational policy to cope with the development of the country and to transfer the Saudi society from an urban to a civil society. They think that the policy was influenced by cultural, social and political factors. A flavour of these views is captured in the following responses:

> The educational policy has been developed as part of a strategy for building a modern state. This strategy required shifting the Saudi society from rural society to civil society. Therefore, the educational planning is seen as one of the main elements in realising the needs of Saudi modern economy and society (Mgr-1).

> The country has specific cultural components represented in specific Arab Islamic orientation. The political transformations experienced in the Arab region and the conflict between the two camps -east and the

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[71] Centre of Saudi Arabia

west - and between the theory of Arab nationalism and Islamic theory had an impact in determining education policy in Saudi Arabia (Mgr-2).

Although the above are various views concerning the idea of the education policy and its evolution, there is a consistency among the respondents in Riyadh city that the policy framework and its general aims are both clear and stable and have not changed with time. These views are similar to the views of their colleagues in Jeddah city. They cited that there was a gradual change in the development of education policy presented in the expansion in education infrastructures including schools, curricula, programmes and the improvement of education quality, which is evidence of positive change in the policy over time. The essence of this view is reflected in the following response:

> There was a gradual change, begun by focusing on the expansion of the educational base through the establishment of schools in various villages and towns. Then it moved to focus on the curriculum to include scientific, literary as well as religious courses, then moved on to the quality of education...etc (SPr-1).

Other respondents believe that the change in policy happened in the rules and regulations issued by the MoE. They argue that although the general framework of the policy is fixed and stable since it has been established, there was a change in the regulations and procedures that explain the policy as well as change in the curricula and facilities. The following response presents this view:

> The general framework of the education policy is fixed without change and its goals too, but what has changed is the legislation and procedures governing the educational process. In addition, there is a change in the curricula and the ways of improving performance for both teachers and students (SPr- 2).

The above different views and arguments emerged from the interviews with SLBs in Riyadh city regarding the nature and development of education policy, indicates that although there was a variation in the understanding and perspectives of SLBs in Riyadh city concerning the idea, evolution and the nature of change in education policy, the common perspective is that the education policy has evolved from the need to assist the development of the country and to transfer the Saudi society from urban to civil society. It also indicated that the education policy has gone through considerable changes in

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infrastructures and organisation and in its components, such as curricula, teaching and facilities... etc., despite there having been a consensus among the respondents that the general framework and the aims of education policy have been fixed without any change since they were developed.

7.3.2 Policymaking - Initiations and Formulation

The interviews with SLBs in Riyadh city suggested consistence in perspectives and sometimes different views regarding policy initiation and formulation. This includes the involvement of SLBs in policymaking, clarity, stability and continuity of education policy. For example, concerns were expressed regarding participation in policy-making. Except for one respondent in the education department who indicated that he does in fact participate in policy formulation and takes an active part in this process through his suggestions and recommendations as a member of the Higher Council of Education (HCE), all the other SLBs in Riyadh city indicated that neither secondary school principals nor education managers have any role in the policymaking process. Similar to their colleagues' in Jeddah city, they pointed out that the education policy is "decided and formulated" centrally by top ranking officials and politicians at the state level by the SCEP, with no room for both middle and lower level bureaucrats in the policy-making stage. Their perspectives could be captured from the following responses:

> I don't think that the principal of a secondary school has any role in the making of educational policy. The policy is decided by the Supreme Committee for Education Policy which is headed by the King (SPr-4).

> The middle and lower administration's employees don't get involved in policy making. They just execute what they receive from the ministry. Even their opinion is not considered in designing the policy or setting its goals or targets (Mgr-2).

As seen in the previous chapter, officials at the MoE confirmed that neither the Directorate of Education nor the principals of secondary schools take part in education policymaking.

The clarity and stability of the education policy was an issue that shows mixed views and various perspectives among the respondents in Riyadh city. Although the most common answer among the respondents was that the general framework and aims of education

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policy were clear, some respondents predominantly believed that there was ambiguity in the policy in rules and regulations issued by the MoE. From their perspective, education policy has not been translated into clear guidance or procedures to be followed. The interviewees suggested that this ambiguity caused confusion among them when it came to the implementation of the policy, which in their view lacks clear procedures, regulations, measurement tools and guidance. The following provides an indication of the type of responses given:

> The objectives of the education policy are clear but you may need more details during the implementation. For example, sometimes you find difficulty in how to implement a certain issue. In some cases, we have to wait for specific instructions or guidelines from the Ministry or the educational department to clarify the issue and the implementation procedures needing to be followed (SPr-1).

> The policy is clear, but some of the imbalance is in the instructions that sometimes have left some confusion, particularly with people involved in the implementation. Those people are different in their understanding, skills and ability when they practise the implementation (SPr-3).

> In the ministry, we have an interest in computer technology and computer-related subjects. This interest has not been accompanied by organised action and a breakdown of structured and time-specific plans for the implementation of this issue ...we are working on this trend but without a systematic and accurate work leading to accomplish this desire/interest (Mgr-2).

However, a few respondents argued that even the general framework of the policy is not as clear or as specific as it should be. They felt that the aims and the targets of the education policy are written in general and vague statements presenting the political authority's views. The following response shows these perspectives:

> The vision and the objectives of the education policy are a construction of broad portrait formulations of certain words. It is simply a bright title to give impression about the vision of the political elite, with no means of educational sense or context. If who sets the educational policy is related to education, then our policy will be very different and lead to impressive results (SPr-4).

Perhaps the clearest example of the conflicting views regarding the clarity of the education policy in Saudi Arabia can be seen in the respondents' understanding of the

secondary schools' policy and its salient features. Some respondents believed that there is no specific policy for secondary school which differs from other educational stages. They argued that the exception is that the secondary schools' policy priorities are to build the character of a good citizen, then prepare him for vocational work, more than focusing on academic matters. A flavour of these views could be captured in the following response:

> I think the secondary education policy is not distinct from other stages (middle and primary). The goals are general for all the education stages. We are preparing students to be strong in faith and religion and belonging to the homeland as well as preparing him/her for technical work (SPr-5).

Other respondents to a greater extent believed that the policy for secondary education is clearly defined and the most important features are the preparation of students for the job market and academic life:

> Yes, there are specific targets for secondary education. Its obvious features are: to prepare the student for the university stage, to give the student some basic skills needed for the labour market and to encourage creativity in the personality of the student (SPr-1).

As we saw in Jeddah city, such mixed views about the clarity of education policy were also found among top-level officials at the MoE when they express different views not only about the clarity and stability of the policy but also about the existence of the secondary education. However, in contrast to the above perspectives regarding policy clarity, policy stability generated agreement perspectives among the respondents who argued that although the policy framework is stable with no major change, what have been changed are the priorities, convictions and the enthusiasm of the officials towards a specific programme or policy. The spirit of this view could be captured from the response of school principal No: 1 who indicated that:

> The outline of the educational policy is fixed, but the conviction of the official or his enthusiasm towards a specific issue may weaken to some extent. For example, the official might focus on how to defeat terrorism and pay less attention to the issue of educational achievements or might focus on the theme of reaching the largest percentage of success for students and ignore the issue of students' training and preparation for the labour market and so forth (SPr-1).

Other respondents saw the issue from a different angle and argued that, even though the national objectives of education policy were fixed and could not be changed with time, there is no institutional work in the Ministry operations. They considered the frequent changes in trends, strategies, rules and regulations that happened with each change of a top official as evidence of an unstable policy. In their view, the institutional work in the Ministry operations is missing. The following response reflects this:

> The policy as broad lines doesn't change. The change happened in some strategies and projects associated with individuals. When an individual position changes, the project is stopped and support becomes weaker... a replacement person starts looking for a project that will link to his name and bear his name. Accordingly, a new policy starts.... There is no institutional work; it is just individual projects (SPr-4).

These consistencies and contrasting perspectives generated from the interviews with SLBs in Riyadh city suggested confusion and ambiguity among the respondents about the education policy-making process. The ambiguity, as the respondents revealed, was attributed to the vagueness of policy objectives, targets and goals, as well as the lack of clear procedures and guidelines to be followed in the implementation stage.

7.3.3 Policy Implementation

The interviews with SLBs (secondary school principals and education managers) in Riyadh city as well as with the senior level at the MoE suggested a number of important concerns associated with the policy implementation process. These included

• Degree of power and autonomy of SLBs in practising policy,

• Lack of clear communication between the three tiers of education bureaucracies (secondary school principals and education managers at the local level and senior officials at the state level).

• Variation in implementation between regions/provinces

Regarding the degree of political autonomy exercised by SLBs in the implementation of education policy, the picture that emerged from the interviews with secondary schools principals and education managers in Riyadh city reflected various views and perspectives. For instance, a few respondents indicated that they have power to make the

final decision regarding failure in a school's performance or the remedial measures needed to rectify a school's problems:

> Yes, I have a wide authority not only to deal with school problems but with different education matters across the province. I can make the final decision to meet the failure in school performance or to address and solve any problems that might face any school (MGr-1).

Others claimed that their powers are relative and depend on the nature of the problem/aspect the school might encounter as well as on the types of rules and regulations (policy) needing to be applied. To clarify their points, they mentioned two examples. The first is the school environment, specifically the school building (constructions). This, they argue, requires financial and administrative powers beyond their authority and about which they could do nothing. On the other hand, the relocation of teachers did lie within their power and they could make a decision about it. The following answer captures the essence of their views:

> If the case related to school building issues, then the ministry has to approve it because this exceeds our financial and administrative authority. However, if the cases deal with teacher's issues, then we can take a decision. For example, if we find that there are 40 or 50 teachers in a secondary school and ten of them constitute an obstacle to the school, then we can transfer the ten teachers at one time (Mgr-2).

The second example they cited is the applying of rules and regulations. In their perspectives, some rules and regulations give a school principal some space for movement during the implementation practice. Accordingly, their judgments and interpretation constitute some degree of discretionary power. The following statements clarify the example:

> In the education policy, there is an objective that I can interpret it in my way, while my colleague could understand it differently. Therefore, there is some flexibility in some of the regulations in terms of interpretation (SPr-2)

> The degree of autonomy depends on the level and the sensitivity of the policy needing to be applied. At the lower level, there is a freedom in applying some regulations and initiatives. For example, the students' evaluations rules must be strictly applied, but within these rules, there is

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a part left to the school management to choose the actions for implementing this part (SPr-5).

A great number of participants stated that they had no authority or power at all in the implementation of the policy. They articulated disappointment about losing the academic sense of their duties. They feel that the school administrators' jobs became a procedural job according to the department of education instructions. They pointed out that the Department of Education produced a booklet called *Procedural Guide to School Director*. It includes very specific administrative rules to accept students, the way of indexing the files, the educational activity and the school committees and how it is formed...etc. This perspective is best described in the following statements:

> There is no independency for the school principal. Although, there was a promise and desire in the ministry to delegate power to school principals, when it came to reality, it has not been activated. The margin of freedom and movement is very narrow to the extent that school principals have become more administrators than educational leaders (SPr-4).

> A school's principal does not have a lot of margin for movement. As educational commander, he should be given vast authority educationally, financially and in regulatory matters to lead the education process in his school......any project or programme he wants to implement must be approved by the Department of Education (SPr-1).

The lack of political autonomy in the implementation process presented in some responses was, surprisingly, confirmed by top-level officials in the MoE. As in the Jeddah case, those officials at the centre confirmed that neither the directors of education nor the principals of secondary schools had any degree of power or political independency in translating the policy into action and their role is to execute what they receive from the MoE.

Despite the variation in the views of SLBs in Riyadh city regarding the degree of power in the lower level operations, the important issue which emerged from the interviews is that the secondary school principals in Riyadh city exercise a sizeable degree of discretion when implementing education policy. Their discretionary powers (individual judgments) are influenced by different factors such as the school environment. Some SLBs believe in the influence of a school's environment on their decisions. They argued that school district and class of residents influence their decisions. To clarify this point,

they argued that if the school is located in a district that inhabited by a high rank officials, some school's principals might think twice before taking decision that might affect those official's suns or relatives. They implied that the principal in this case either want to avoid the consequence of the confrontation with such powerful officials or to seek for establishing a relationship with such officials for his own benefit. Such views are implicitly found in the response of school principal No: 3 who indicated that:

> The learning environment such as teachers, students and neighbourhoods, contributes to a particular decision or action. For example, the principal of a school in Al-Nahdah district may act differently for many reasons from the principal of a school in Al-Olaya[72] district about the same problem. Hence, the nature of the local community affects the resolution and therefore the application of the policy (SPr-3).

It is also influenced by personal convictions; SLBs believe that the application of certain rules depends on how it serves their schools' interest. In justifying their actions and the impact of such a factor on their decisions, they insisted that applying some rules might affect and harm the interests of school, teachers and/or students.The essence of such views could be captured in the following responses:

> It is up to my conviction and the type of law or procedure needing to be applied and whether it serves the school's interest or not. I will give you an example. If I receive regulations or instructions regarding the absence of the students or the lateness of the teachers, surely, I will be enthusiastic to apply them, because it serves me in controlling the school operations. Sometimes you feel that some laws and regulations are harmful or do not determine the benefit educationally. In this case, I do not apply it. I am applying what I believe is right even if it is against the formal rules (SPr-2).

> The impression and the reaction of teachers or student's parents are important to me when I apply a particular action. Sometimes, when I receive instructions and feel that no one is tracking these instructions or orders, I never apply it. Because applying rules sometimes creates negative and strong reaction from both teachers and students' parents and I don't want to lose their loyalty to the school (SPr-1).

Among the factors influencing the decision of SLBs is the Saudi culture and the nature of the relationship between the authority and the society; SLBs in Riyadh city widely believed that

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[72] Al-Nahdah and Al-Olaya are two districts in Riyadh city. While the first represents low income class residents, the second presents top class residents including government officials and merchants.

the dominant culture in society plays an important role in influencing their decisions. In their remarks, they made statements such as these:

> Although in the past ten years its role had been minimised, the social factor and its influence on the decisions of implementation is the most important factor in our country. For example, there was a social pressure to open schools in small villages and in abandonment, even without enough number of students. These pressures have caused a significant waste of resources (Mgr-2).

> The social relations have a positive or negative impact in implementing decisions. The social relations can overcome the system sometimes and that is a challenge to the policy implementers. There may be a violation of rules and regulations leading to implementation failure. This is due to the influence of the social factor such as nepotism or favouritism (SPr-5).

The other important issue that emerged from the interviews with SLBs in Riyadh city and which suggests contrasting perspectives is the communication between the three tiers of education authorities. This includes the relationship between the SLBs and the education managers at the middle level of administration as well as with the top officials at the ministerial level. The picture which emerged suggested that few SLBs see their relationship with education managers as positive. They argue that there is cooperation on education issues between them and education managers as well as acceptance of the ideas and suggestions raised by school principals:

> In general, I can say that the relationship with the managers in the Department of Education is good. Sometimes when I raise suggestions or a programme that I feel serves the education or the school, they take it into consideration and discuss it with me. The problem is at the ministry level; most of the time they just ignore such suggestions or ideas (SPr-2).

The most common views of SLBs in Riyadh city suggested that the relations between school principals and managers in the Department of Education are limited to an instructional form only. SLBs see themselves as receivers of orders from the top level without any chance for their opinion to be considered in matters related to their schools affairs. Such views could be captured from the following answer:

> The relationship with the education department is a top-bottom communication. We are just recipients and implementers of orders and instructions. No initiatives or ideas or even feedback from both middle and top level administrator (SPr-4)

The above views were supported by top officials at the MoE. As in the Jeddah study, the interviews with top-level officials suggested that the relationships between educational managers at the middle level and the top level (ministerial level) are influenced by the centralised system which characterises not only the nature of decisions but also the functions and tasks in the MoE. According them, such a system does not allow the independence of the directors of education to implement instructions and regulations not enacted by the MoE.

The different arguments above highlighted the issue of poor communication between the various tiers of the educational establishment. Poor communication with local and top educational authorities was cited as the most serious aspect. The relationship between the two is likely to be giving orders and executing the orders. Although SLBs accept that the top-level officials provide directives and orders, they are disappointed about not sharing with them opinions on the implementation and the constraints they face in practising their job. In fact, the interviews showed that there are differences between SLBs at the local level and top-level educational authorities.

Concerning the variation in the implementation of education policy, the picture that emerged from the interviews with SLBs in Riyadh city suggested different views among the respondents. For example, a few respondents believed that there is a variation in the implementation between the regions. In their perspectives, the variation is due to individual creativity, which certainly produces different results and therefore policy output. The following answer presents this view:

> When you talk about the overall objectives, there are no differences, because all supposed to be similar. But the differences sometimes are in the practices because practices create creativity which leads to variation among individuals and between regions in terms of final outcome (Mgr-3).

Other respondents widely believe that there were no variations between the regions in policy implementation. In their perspectives, the centralised nature of the education system in Saudi Arabia prevents such discrepancy. They believe that the school principals apply the same rules and follow the same structures issued by the MoE:

> I think that the application of the policy is similar in all regions, because the policy is made in the ministry and the departments of education are just implementers of this policy...the work of schools are like the work in any industrial project with similar task and daily practices (SPr-3).

Those top-level officials at the MoE confirmed the views of the majority of SLBs who suggested strict application of education policy. As in the Jeddah study, officials in the top level indicated that school principals and directors of education strictly apply the policy in compliance with written legislation and they are held accountable for non-implementation. To sum up, the above different views and understanding generated from the interviews with SLBs in Riyadh city, as well as from those with senior officials at the MoE, regarding the application of education policy, show that SLBs have little or no formal power or independency to operate their schools. Instead, they exercise a good amount of discretionary power in their daily work in translating the policy into action. According to the information elicited in the interviews, their discretionary power is mainly influenced by different factors which are personal convictions, school environment and Saudi culture. The information also shows a lack of effective communication between the different tiers of bureaucracy within the MoE. School principals described the relationship with the middle and top levels as directives and orders due to the nature of the education system with its strict top-down approach for policy making, including the application of a centralisation system in the work of the MoE. No variations between the regions in policy implementation were found in the school principals' responses.

7.3.4 Policy Monitoring

The picture generated from the interviews with SLBs in Riyadh city regarding policy monitoring and evaluation suggested similar views among the respondents. There was an agreement that the MoE is taking seriously the matter of reducing the number of failures and dropouts in all levels as its priority. Most if not all the respondents believe in the potential of such policy to achieve its aims. In their perspectives, the success of the

policy is mainly due to the new examination system[73] imposed by the Ministry since 1998. Such a system helped in reducing the amount of failure and dropout in schools through changing the way students are promoted from one stage to another according to their performance and the school's evaluation but not according to the exam system (previously used to evaluate students' achievements). However, respondents expressed dissatisfaction with students' academic achievements as a result of applying this system (policy). The core of these views could be captured in the following responses:

> There are studies and ongoing scientific research by the Ministry to raise the internal efficiency of education by reducing repetition and dropout rates at the secondary level. In my view, the dropout rate is small because the reduction of grade allows students to pass from one grade to another without difficulty. The problem is that such a system unfortunately did not lead to a higher level of academic achievement for students (SPr-1).

> The important question is whether, in the measurement process, there is a link between the standards of education and the level of leakage or failure. I think there is nothing precise or a clear answer in this area, but the adjustment system of examinations (the evaluation system) being applied now is one of the most important efforts for reducing the amount of withdrawal and failure in the secondary stage (Mgr-2).

With regard to the existence of mechanisms and tools to measure the policy outcome and to ensure that policy goals and objectives are achieved, the view emerged to suggest a lack of specific, clear and reliable measurement tools. There was a consensus among the respondents that there was no clear standard to be achieved in the education policy. Therefore, it was difficult to measure the policy outcomes or to make a final judgement whether the policy is achieving its aim or not. However, most of the respondents indicated that the mechanism to measure the results depended on the school policy. The essence of their perspective could be captured in the following response:

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[73] The objective of the new examination system is to streamline the student achievement evaluation procedures and processes at all the general education stages and its equivalents (GED, 2002). The student is evaluated according to activities in the first and second terms as well as tests at the end of those terms. The student mark in the first term is calculated by adding his test marks to those accumulated from participation in class and other activities such as projects, homework...etc., during the term. The student is deemed successful in the subject if he obtains the minimum mark on condition that he sits for the subject examination in both terms. The student is deemed successful in passing his class in the following cases:
1) If he obtains the prescribed minimum mark in all subjects
2) If he obtains the minimum mark in all the subjects except one and gets at least 60% of the passing marks in this subject, on condition that the mentioned subject is not religious science (GED,2000:17-20)

> I think the measurement tools for reduction of repetition and dropout at the secondary level depend on the procedures applied by both the school director and educational supervisor who manage the course. There is no standard to be achieved in our education system. The whole processes rely on the opinions of school staff and the impact of their personalities that are varying from one school to another (SPr-6).

To a great extent, respondents indicated that the only tools to measure the policy of reducing the amount of failure and dropout in the secondary school and whether it has achieved its aims or not are the school statistics which shows the student results (pass or fail) at the end of the academic year. The following answer presents such views:

> There is no specific mechanism. It is a discretionary process represented in school statistics taken under the responsibility of the students' supervisor. It depends on the number of students passing the level... For example, when we have 100 students successfully passing from primary, then how many students will start in the elementary stage? Assume 100 or 95 and accordingly we can assess precisely if there is a leakage or not (SPr-3).

As indicated in the previous chapter on the Jeddah study, the picture that emerged from the returns of top-level respondents suggested a lack of clear and well-defined mechanisms as regards policy monitoring, follow-up and feedback. In their answers, the measurement of policy outcome depends on two factors: the person who is in charge in implementation and the culture and the impression of the official at the MoE. These factors according to the top-level officials' views were due to the fact that there is no clear system or scientific methodology to use in monitoring and evaluating the education policy.

To sum up, the different arguments presented above suggest that there is no clear mechanism for monitoring the education policy. The picture that emerged showed a lack of clear procedures or methods to collect information about the extent to which education policy goals are being achieved. It also suggested that the standard to be achieved in education policy is missing. However, it seems from the interviews with different levels of bureaucrats in the MoE that the education policy objectives and targets are vague and not specified in measurable form. This is clear from the variety of perspectives and views provided by bureaucrats concerning policy objectives.

7.4 Findings and Conclusion

This chapter has explored the way in which public education policy (reducing the level of failure and dropout in secondary schools), formulated centrally by the Saudi government, is translated into action by street-level bureaucrats (SLBs), the secondary school principals and education managers, in Riyadh City. The study examined the degree of political autonomy experienced by SLBs, as well as the perspectives of senior officials at the MoE regarding the implementation process. The results of the study highlighted a number of important issues relating to the nature of education policy in Saudi Arabia and the way in which it is implemented, as well as the nature of power relationships between different levels of bureaucracies. The issues that emerged were found mainly to relate to some key and principal aspects of the policy process, including policy formulation, implementation and policy monitoring and feedback. Table 7.3 shows the thematic areas of education policy and the summarised findings of the studies in both Jeddah and Riyadh educational authorities.

Table 7.3 *Themes of Education Policy Implementation in Riyadh and Jeddah Cities*

Thematic Areas	Jeddah	Riyadh	Dammam
Policymaking process	Centralised	Centralised	
Policy stability	Unstable	Unstable	
Goal clarity	Ambiguous	Ambiguous	
SLBs' discretion	High	Moderate	
Central monitoring and Controlling	Poor	Poor	

The findings of the study suggested the following issues:

- *SLBs in Riyadh city have no role in the policymaking of education policy*

Education policy in Saudi Arabia, as the results revealed, is formulated and adopted centrally by the HCEP. This government committee 'serves as a major reference that delineates the objectives, plans and programs of education at its various levels for general and higher education' (G E G, 2002: 8). Therefore, the education policy is addressed to a strict top-down approach for policymaking. In practice, when policy decisions are made by the SCEP at the top level, they make their way through a hierarchal structure to the MoE, which is responsible for translating policy objectives and goals into procedures, regulations and rules, as well as setting mechanisms for implementation and monitoring

the outcomes of the policy. The policy then moves through a policy chain of command to bureaucrats at the local level responsible for translating policy into action.

The study suggested that those bureaucrats in Riyadh city local government (secondary school principals and education managers) have no role or any sort of participation or involvement in deciding or designing the education policy or feedback. In fact, this means that the communication and transmission of policy decisions between the MoE and the bureaucrats at the local level are poor or limited. In other words, there is arguably a missing link in policymaking between the central level and the local level. This gap between the two levels, as the study revealed, can be attributed mainly to the centralisation of the education system, which prevents regions from possessing full powers in educational matters such as curricula, education programmes, employment and budgets.

- *The education policy tends to be ambiguous, vague and/or conflicting as well as lacking clarity and stability.*

The study suggested that the national objectives and the general framework of the educational policy are clear and stable without any change. It also suggested that the policy is written in general statements reflecting the political elite perspectives but not importantly the educational perspective. However, the education policy tends to be ambiguous. This ambiguity as the study indicated came from the fact that the policy targets, goals and aims were not translated to clear guidance, procedure and instructions to help SLBs at the local level to implement the policy effectively. According to the study, the policy lacks a bench mark or standard against which to measure itself. In other words, there are no clear mechanisms and tools to measure the policy outcome or whether the target set has been met. The study also suggested that the education policy lacked stability. Strategies, projects and programmes, rules and regulations are frequently changed according to the change in individuals' positions at the top level. It could be argued that the transmission of policy to implementers and target groups depends partly on the clarity of the policy and on clear and frequent communication within the policy process.

The interviews indicated that the SLBs in Riyadh city are typically implementing education policy with ambiguous goals and objectives. Lipsky (1980: 41), suggested that this ambiguity in policy goals arises 'because the conflicts that existed when programs were originally developed were submerged; or because they have accumulated by accretion and

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have never been rationalized, and it remains functional for the agency not to confront its goals' conflict'. Hogwood and Gunn (1984:204) aligned with the essence of the above argument about the conflict and ambiguity in education policy goals. They stated that:

> Most research studies suggested that, in real life, the objectives of organization or programmes are often difficult to identify or are couched in vague and evasive terms. Even 'official' objectives, where they exist, may not be compatible with one another and the possibility of conflict or confusion is increased when professional or other groups proliferate their own 'unofficial' goals within a programme.

It has also been supported by the argument of Stone (1997), who insists that policy goals have multiple meanings and often conflict, which means that public policy, is seen as a paradox.

- *Schools' environment and cultural factors influence decisions and behaviours of SLBs.*

The analysis revealed that SLBs in Riyadh city exercise a sizeable amount of discretion power and self-interpretation of rules and regulations in their daily work. Their decisions and behaviors were influences by different factors. These factors, as the study suggested, include school environment, such as school district including class of residents and the nature of local community. All these affect the resolution of school's principals and therefore the application of the education policy. The second factor affecting the decision of street level bureaucrats in Riyadh city is the personal convictions. The study shows that the application of certain rules depends on how its serves the schools' interest. SLBs insisted that applying some rules might affect and harm the interest of school and teachers or even students. Therefore, they are applying what they believe is right even if it is against the formal rules. The third factor as the study suggested is the Saudi culture. To a broad extent, SLBs decisions and behaviors in Riyadh city are influenced by the dominant culture of the Saudi society. The study suggested that relativism/family connections and favouritism are playing an important role in influencing their decisions despite the fact that it violates the rules and regulations and lead to implementation failure.

- *No clear mechanism for policy evaluation and monitoring; a lack of tools to measure policy outcome, feedback process, as well as lack of established standards to be measured against*

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The findings reveal that the tools and procedures needed for collecting information about the extent to which education policy goals are being achieved are lacking. However, the absence of standards to measure against as well as the non existence of clear mechanisms for policy measurements to ensure that the policy target have been met, had created a gap between the policy gestation stage at the centre level and the implementation at the local level. Furthermore, the education policy's goals and objectives are not clear and are not specified in a measureable form.

It is argued that monitoring the policy's aims is important to avoid implementation failure. Hence, there are preconditions for successful implementation as Hogwood and Gunn (1984) suggested. These preconditions require specifying the activities involved in delivering the policy, as well as identifying the policy output. All this is supposed to be considered at the policy design stage. Lipsky (1980:40) indicates that,

> The ambiguity and unclarity of goals and the unavailability of appropriate performance measures in street-level bureaucracies is of fundamental importance not only to workers' job experience, but also to managers' ability to exercise control over policy.

However, the study suggested that the only tool to measure whether the policy achieves its aims or not, is the school statistics, which shows the students' results (pass or fail) at the end of the academic year. Therefore, it is just a discretionary process represented in school statistics. Few respondents thought that measurements of policy outcome depend on the person in charges, as well as the culture and the impression of the MoE official. This dependency, as the study suggested, was because there is no clear system or scientific methodology to use in monitoring and evaluating the education policy.

- *The policy goals made by the centre at the policy gestation stage are not closely translated further down the policy chain at the policy implementation stage*

The study suggested that there is a lack of specification of activities involved in delivering the education policy, identifying policy output, and setting standards for measurement. Moreover, following the formulation stage, policy objectives and aims are not translated into clear rules, regulations, or guidance to be followed by the bureaucrats at the local level who are responsible for translating the policy into action. The workplace

uncertainties (policy ambiguity, school environment, and social factors) that school principals and education managers in Riyadh City confront in implementing education policy are found to be influencing their decisions and behavior and therefore lead to a high degree of discretionary power in practicing the policy. This is due to individual interpretation of rules and regulations issued by the MoE in the light of such uncertainties. This then led to variability in implementation and, subsequently, differences in terms of policy output, which deviate from the MoE's original intentions. Lipsky (1980: xii) argues that: 'the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures effectively *become* the public policies they carry out.' This view is supported by Evans and Harris (2004: 876) who state that: 'as a consequence, in their day-to-day work, street-level bureaucrats have to work out practical versions of public policy that can often look unlike official pronouncements'.

According to the study results, there is an indication of policy failure with respect to the implementation of the education policy. The failure can be seen in the gap between policy formulation and implementation. In other word, policy is not put into effect as MoE's intend because SLBs are working in uncertain environments including ambiguity in goals, rules, and regulations as well as, the impact of school environment and cultural factors on SLBs decisions and 'their best efforts could not overcome obstacles to effective implementation over which they had little or no control' (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984:197). However, this type of failure is described by Hogwood and Gunn (1984) as non-implementation. The failure of the education policy as the study suggested is due neither to bad execution nor bad luck but rather due to the fact that "the policy itself was bad, in the sense of being based upon inadequate information, defective reasoning or hopelessly unrealistic assumptions" (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984:197).

7.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore how SLBs (secondary school principals and education managers) in Riyadh City have implemented education policy that aimed to reduce the number of failures and dropouts at the secondary education level and the degree of power which SLBs have in the implementation stage. The central theme of the analysis was the nature of the power relationship between the centre and local government in

implementation and the autonomy exercised by SLBs in Riyadh city in translating the education policy into action.

The finding suggests that the education policy is designed and formulated centrally without involvement or participation from the bureaucrats at the local level. The policymaking is a top- down process and SLBs are just implementing what they receive from the centre in the form of orders and instructions. Despite the stable general framework of the education policy, the finding suggests lack of clarity of goals, rules, regulations and operational guidance to help implementers in achieving the policy goals. This leads to various individual interpretations and consequently to various versions of implementation that might not be consistent with the policy makers' intention at the MoE. The findings of the study contrast with the argument of this thesis that assumes SLBs in the implementation stage closely translate the policy made at the centre as the nature of the political system implies.

CHAPTER 8

Dammam Education Authority

8.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters have examined the degree to which education policy (reducing the number of failures and dropouts in secondary school) has been implemented by SLBs in Jeddah and Riyadh cities, respectively, and the degree of political autonomy SLBs in these cities exercise in their daily work. These two chapters suggested lack of clear goals, regulations, operational guidance and mechanisms to measure the policy outcome. This led to a sizeable degree of discretionary power exercised by SLBs in these cities in translating the education policy into action and therefore variation in the implementation of education policy. This chapter investigates how SLBs (schools principals and education managers) in Dammam city implement the policy of reducing the number of failures and dropouts in secondary schools and the political autonomy these bureaucrats exercise in the implementation stage. The aim is to explore subjects related to the nature of power and autonomy in the implementation of education policy and the factors that may hinder successful implementation at the local level. Table 8.1 outlined the key themes of this chapter

Table 8.1: *Key Themes of Analysis of Dammam Education Authority*

- To examine the argument that: *the nature of the Saudi Political System, based as it is on a monarchical model of government, avers that policy goals set by the centre at the policy gestation stage are closely adhered to throughout the policy-chain, up to and including the policy implementation stage, by SLBs* in a different social, culture, and bureaucratic environment.
- To compare the findings with the findings generated from Jeddah and Riyadh cities to see if there is a variation between the cities/regions in regard to implementation.
- To identify/explore themes related to a variety of areas of policy including:
- Background of education policy; the evolution and development of policy over time
- Policymaking formation; participation in policy processes; clarity, stability, and continuity of policy targets and goals; existence of secondary school policy and its features
- Policy implementation; power and autonomy of SLBs in the implementation process; communication between different levels of bureaucracy; discrepancy in implementation
- Policy monitoring, including measurements of policy outcome, standards to be achieved, feedback from lower-level bureaucrats.

The relevance of choice of the city of Dammam for the study is that it is the third largest in the country and the most industrialised, having the biggest port for oil exportation; education in Dammam was in fact influenced in its early stages by the presence of a western oil company. Importantly, the city represents the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, with slightly different culture, norms and social status, which could possibly influence the manner in which SLBs implement policy.

The chapter is divided into two main parts: The first presents a profile of Dammam city, including history, religion, demography and other information relevant to the case study. The second part comprises the empirical study among the SLBs in the City (secondary school principals and education managers).The section identifies themes related to the nature of education policy (reducing the number of failures and dropouts in secondary schools) and the way in which such policy is implemented. This will help in understanding the nature of the Saudi political system since the education policymaking process is a mirror of the nature of decision in the Saudi system and how the relationship of power can be explained within the Saudi context.

8.2 Profile of Dammam

Dammam is the third largest city in Saudi Arabia. It is the capital of the Eastern Province, the largest in the country, which extends over an area of 710,000 km^2 with a seaside of 560 km stretching along the Arabian Gulf (see figure 8.1).

Figures 8.1: *Map of Saudi Arabia - Dammam city*
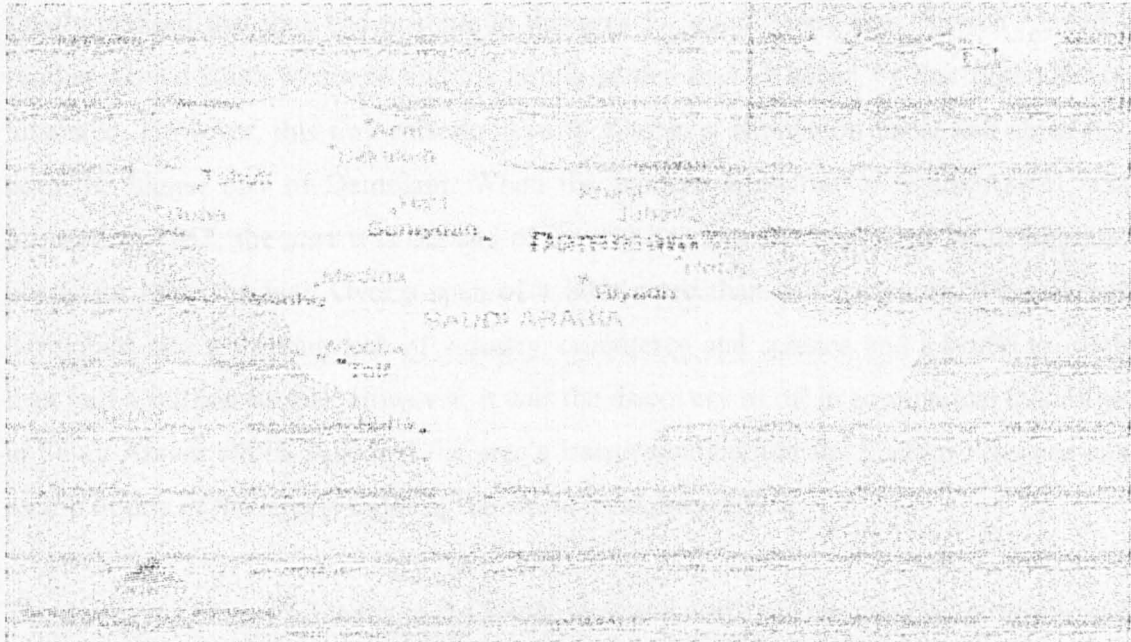
Source:http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dammam,_Saudi_Arabia_locator_map.png

The province however has borders with five countries: Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen. The city has the second largest port for import-export after Jeddah's. It is the administrative and industrial capital, as well as the centre of petroleum and natural gas production that provides 75% of budget revenues, 40% of the GDP and 90% of the export earnings of Saudi Arabia (Abu Madini, 2007). According to the 2003 estimation, the population of Eastern Province was 3.3 million. More than one-third of the population is clustered in Dammam city (Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2007).

The origin of the name 'Dammam' is controversial. Historians believe that Dammam was initially called "damdama" which means the sound of drums announcing the beginning or the end of the hunting season. Others say that the name was given according to the Arabic word "dawwama" (whirlpool) which indicated a nearby sea site that people usually had to avoid. Aside from the origins of the name, the information available indicated that a clan (Al Hassan) of the Al-Dawasir tribe and a number of Hewila families first inhabited the city in early 1923. The families, led by Sheikh Ahmed Ibn Adbullah Ibn Hassan Al-Dowsary, migrated from Bahrain and were given the chance to choose a land on which to settle by King Abdulaziz. Al-Dammam was immediately chosen for its proximity to the island of Bahrain as the clan hoped to head back there soon.

The British rule in the region made it very hard for these families to move on, so they finally realised that they had to settle in this area for good. Years later, Sheikh Ahmed's brother moved south where he and his family settled in Al-Khobar, by that time already inhabited. However, this tiny episode gave to Khobar a population boost and close ties with the bigger city of Dammam. When the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932, the area was the site of several hamlets that depended on fishing and pearls for their survival. Over a span of a little more than half a century, the area has developed into a thriving hub of industry, commerce and science and a home to more than half a million people. However, it was the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in Saudi Arabia which launched the area's transformation and the Eastern Province sits on top of one of the largest fields in the world (Aldosary, 2005).

The discovery of new oil fields to the south, west and north of Dammam in the 1940s and 1950s, which now account for a quarter of the world's proven oil reserves, triggered a building boom. Experts and technicians from throughout the Kingdom and the world gathered to help in searching for new oil fields and bringing them on-stream. New pipelines had to be installed, storage facilities built and jetties constructed to handle tankers. The growing number of experts working in Dhahran required the building of housing, hospitals, schools for their children and other amenities. Before long, Dhahran, the corporate headquarters of Saudi Aramco, the largest oil company in the world, was spilling out into the desert in all directions[74].

The growth of the oil industry in the region had a similar impact on the small fishing village of Dammam and the hamlet of Al-Khobar. Within two decades of the discovery of oil, the mud brick huts of the fisherman that crowded the shore and which constituted the only permanent dwellings in the area had given way to concrete buildings, modern housing, highways and landscaped streets. To the east of Dhahran on the Gulf coast, Al-Khobar briefly became the shipping point for Saudi Arabian crude oil to the refinery in Bahrain. In the years leading up to World War II, Saudi Arabian oil production was very limited and since the company had no refinery of its own, most of the oil was sent by small tankers to Bahrain. With the construction of a pipeline to Bahrain and the

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[74] http://www.the-saudi.net/saudi-arabia/dammam/Dammam%20City%20-%20Saudi%20Arabia.htm

subsequent expansion of the oil industry in the post-war years, the focus of the shipping and oil industries shifted away from Al-Khobar northward to Dammam and Ras Tanura, one of the largest oil storage and shipping centers in the world, 15 miles to the north of Dammam. As a result, Al-Khobar gradually found a new role as the commercial centre for the entire region.

The discovery of oil in Dhahran and nearby fields and the growing importance of the entire region affected Dammam more than any other city in Saudi Arabia. Within three decades, the sleepy little fishing village had become the capital of the Eastern Province. In many ways, the Dammam area has evolved as the link between Saudi Arabia and the outside world, exporting the Kingdom's products and importing its needs and thriving on the interaction between Saudi Arabia and other countries. The growth of the Saudi Arabian oil industry into the largest in the world brought about the rapid development of the region. As oil production increased, so did the number of people required to run the industry.

Post-1980s, Dammam was a separate city but so close to Al-Khobar and Dhahran that the traveller could pass from one to the other in a few minutes. With the continuing expansion of all parts of the Kingdom, the three towns inevitably merged into one, creating a single municipality and administrative entity known the Dammam Metropolitan Area. Therefore, it is argued that no area of the Middle East, or perhaps the world, has undergone such dramatic transformation in such a short period, as has the Dammam-Dhahran-Al-Khobar triangle in eastern Saudi[75].

8.2.1 Local Government- Education Authority

The local government and the education authority structures in the Eastern Province are very similar to the Provinces of Makah and Riyadh. All thirteen provinces that make up the local government of Saudi Arabia report to the Ministry of Interior and have the same authority, structures and responsibilities. This is true for the education authorities in all the provinces, with the exception that the Ministry of Education supervises them. Local government in the provinces, as well as the education authority structure and functions, is highlighted in Chapter 6, with more details of its structures and functions.

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[75] http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/dammam.htm

8.3 Analysis of education policy implementation for Dammam City

This section presents the results of the field interviews among street-level bureaucrats (SLBs) (secondary school principals and education managers) at the local level in Dammam city, as well as top-level officials at the MoE. The interviews and the content of the questionnaire were designed to provide information from the respondents' own interpretation on the nature of education policy, with specific reference to reducing the amount of failures and drop-outs in secondary schools and the way in which this policy is implemented. The themes emerging from the analysis of the interviews were again categorised into four major groups of respondents' views, understanding and beliefs. The first, about the policy's origins, evolution and the nature of policy change over time. The second, about policy making, involvement in policy initiation and formulation, clarity, stability, and continuity of policy aims, goals, rules and regulations. The third, about policy implementation, including the power and autonomy of street-level bureaucrats, communication between the three tiers of education bureaucracies and possible variations in the implementation. The fourth, about policy monitoring, including measurements of policy outcome, standards to be achieved, feedback from lower-level bureaucrats and areas in which the education policy process needs improvement. Table 8.2 presents the groups of themes that emerged from the interviews with SLBs in Dammam city and the top officials at the MoE.

Table 8.2: *Themes from Analysis of Interviews in Dammam City*

Policy Cycle	Themes
Policy evolution, and development	Religion is the base for education evolution
	Accomplishment of economic and social development of the country
	Incorporate diverse systems of education under one centralized system
	Stable framework of policy
	Change in trends, programmes, plans, rules and regulations
Policy making process	No participation of SLBs in policy decision
	lack of rules, regulations, and operational procedures
	Policy lacks stability and continuity (lack of institutional work)
	Specific policy for secondary education
Policy implementation	Lack of formal power in implementation stage
	Relative political power in implementation stage
	Implementation influenced by social and culture issues
	Negative administrative relationships with education managers
	Good administrative relationships with education managers
	Variations in implementation within regions
Policy monitoring	Lack of policy measurements, standards or benchmarks to be achieved
	Exam results and school records are the only tools for measurements
	Reduced repetition and dropout but low level of education achievements

8.3.1 Policy Evolution and Development

The information elicited from the interviews with SLBs (secondary school principals and education managers) in Dammam city suggested a number of major issues related to the nature of the education policy and the extent in which this policy is implemented by SLBs at the local level. On policy evolution and development, the information elicited provides various perspectives and understandings in relation to the education policy and how it developed and changed over time.

The ideas and the evolution of education policy generated mixed views among the respondents. Some, for instance, suggested that the idea of the education policy evolved from the Islamic religion, the national religion of the country. They argued that the aim of

education in Saudi emphasises Islamic values and how students are promoted to understand and maintain loyalty to Islam. Their view is clearly represented by school principal No: 4 who argued that:

> The idea of the Education policy in the kingdom was derived from Islam (the nation religion), as a faith, worship, ethics, law, rule and an integrated system of life.....when we review the educational policy as a whole; we find that the religion is the base......the policy focuses on the Islamic values more than on the knowledge itself (Spr-4).

Other respondents, to a significant degree, believed that social and economic factors are behind the idea of the education policy. They argue that the transformation of the society from a primitive to a modern one through the development programme was a priority of the government in the King Faisal era (1964-1975). Therefore the government adopted education policy to direct the outcome of education to achieve such objectives. A flavour of this view is captured in the following response:

> The education policy was introduced in the era of King Faisal to serve two purposes. First to reduce the illiteracy rate, especially as the Saudi society at that time could be described as a primitive society due to the lack of education, with the exception of some religious education in a few cities. Second, the community's education will contribute to achieving development goals set by government (SPr-6).

Although these views of two contrasting perspectives on the evolution of the education policy, there was an agreement among respondents that the general outline of the education policy was stable and had not changed with time. Respondents believed that the education policy had gone through important change in organisation, curricula, programmes and plans...etc. For example, some respondents saw the change and development of the policy in quality of education. They argued that the MoE focuses on the quality of education which has become more comprehensive to include teacher, student, learning environment...etc. The essence of these perspectives could be understood from the following response:

> In terms of change in education, I think that there was no widespread computer and technology use in schools as it is today. Thus, the curricula started taking into account the integration of technology into

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the process of education. For example, starting from the beginning of this year, students in all levels of education will be provided with a CD containing the curriculum required for such a stage (Mgr-1).

Other respondents saw the change in the education policy in the environment of education. They cited the example of the King Abdullah Project for the development of public education, which has been allocated approximately 9 billion dollars. This project, according to them, focused on four axes: first, the development of curricula; second, the retraining of all teachers in the Kingdom; third, improving the learning environment; fourth, the support of students' activities:

> Many changes occurred in our education. I think the biggest change is the King Abdullah project for the development of education that came as a result of the Kingdom's accession to the WTO. This step, however, required change in the preparation of students to fit well with the labour market requirements. In the past couple years, we started to develop the curricula to cope with this trend (SPr-2).

Other respondents differed slightly from the above perspectives; some argued that although education had been changed with the change of times, it has not kept pace with development in the era of information technology and global trade. They argued that several factors make it imperative to cope with such requirements. Among them is the gap between the policy formulation and its execution. The following response captures this view:

> I do think that we need more details in our education process about the fulfilments of technology and the globalisation era. It is true that the legislation in the ministry calls for the need to keep pace with technology in education, but the procedural steps and the implementation process still have a problem. The problem is due to the fact that there is no consistency in level of thinking between legislation and implementation levels (SPr-1).

These differing perspectives and arguments, generated from interviews with SLBs in Dammam city on the nature and development of education policy in Saudi Arabia, highlight two important issues:

1. Despite variations in the interviewees' understanding of the idea behind the existing education policy in the Kingdom, the common link between their viewpoints was that the education policy had been developed as a result of social and economic factors

represented in reducing the rate of illiteracy among citizens to participate effectively in the developments plans.

2. Although there is a consensus among the respondents that the general framework and the aims of the education policy have been fixed without any change since it was established in 1974, the policy has gone through significant changes in trends and, education environment, including curricula, teaching and facilities.

8.3.2 Policymaking - Initiation and Formulation

Education policy initiation and formulation is one of the main important issues which generated a range of views among the SLBs in Dammam city. The picture that emerged from the interviews suggested various understanding and opinions about:

- Involvement in policy initiation and formulation
- Stability and continuity of the policy's aims and objectives
- Clarity of policy's rules, regulations and operational guidance

Concerns were expressed regarding participation in policy formulation and it appears from the interviews with SLBs that neither secondary school principals nor education managers in the city of Dammam have any role in this process. Although a few respondents do see proposals and suggestions made by workers in the education field or the community in general submitted to the top level as a sort of participation in the policy decision. The large majority of respondents believe that the system is highly centralised, following a strict top-down approach. The interviews suggested that the education policy is "decided and formulated" centrally by top ranking officials and politicians at the state level (The Supreme Committee for Education Policy)[76], with no opportunity for the involvement of school principals or education managers in the policy making process. The above views are reflected as follows:

> My role in policymaking is very weak, because all the decisions come
> from the top to the bottom without getting benefit from the experience
> of the people working in the field. There might be some very few attempts

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[76] The Higher Committee is headed by the King and/or the Crown Prince. Its function is to oversee education policy and set objectives, targets and trends for education. Many state agencies, such as Planning, Finance, General Education and Higher Education, are involved in this committee.

to elicit the opinion of the principal of the school ... I said it is very few.
(SPr-4)

It is assumed that all those employed in education and the society in
general have a role in policy-making through proposals and studies
submitted to the departments of education which send them to the top level.
I consider such proposals and studies as a sort of participation in policy-
making. (Mgr-2)

One respondent indicated that he is involved directly in the policy formulation through his
membership of the Ministry Council. As indicated in Chapter 6, this Council is headed by the
Minister of Education, with a membership of senior officials in the ministry and two of the
directors of education, specifically the directors of education in Riyadh and the eastern
region. Manager No (1) described the duty of the Ministry Council as the following:

The Ministry Council is a Council of resolutions. Each suggestion from the
field is transferred to this Council and the Council considers all of the
recommendations and takes the necessary decisions. (MGr-1)

Some respondents argued that they were involved indirectly in policymaking by
providing opinions, suggestions or even recommendations. For example:

We don't participate in the formulation of public education policy,
but we contribute through suggestions, proposals and developments
ideas. Sometimes, the Ministry consider this contribution and
sometimes not. (SPr-3)

Three years ago, the ministry launched a ten-year plan for education. It
requested the directorates of education in the regions to provide every
possible help in planning for the next ten years. This action in my
opinion indicated the partnership in the preparation of the policy of
public education. (MGr-3)

Despite the claims of the few respondents regarding their indirect involvement in
policymaking, and as seen in the Jeddah study, seniors at the MoE confirmed that neither
the Directorate of Education nor the principals of secondary schools take part in
education policy making. They argue that SLBs only implement what the Ministry
decides, although some of their opinions might be noted through their involvement in the
work of some committees.

In the clarity and stability of education policy, the picture that emerged shows mixed views and perspectives among the respondents. Although SLBs in Dammam city broadly agreed that the general framework and aims of education policy were stable and clear, the most common problem they mentioned was that the policy lacks an operational guide and clear procedures to be followed. The interviewees suggested that this caused ambiguity and confusion among them when it came to the implementation of the policy. For example:

> The general objectives of education policy are clear and precise, but there is a missing link between the policy and its implementation. I think this gap has two flows. First, the translation of policy into practice through procedural guidance or explanatory memoranda does not exist. Second, implementation is not linked to the goals of the policy. It is just a day to day, work for work, completion but not designed to achieve goals. (SPr-2)

> The education policy's document has no ambiguity, whether in its concepts or in its preparation. But when this policy goes to the base of the pyramid (implementation level), implementers faced problems presenting a non-clear policy in terms of rules and regulations. (Mgr-2)

The above claims, surprisingly, were confirmed by two of the three senior officials at the MoE, as indicated in Chapters 6 and 7. Their perspectives were that the policy is ambiguous because decisions are not clearly stated for implementers, which created an opportunity for personal interpretation in the application process. However, the other important issue emerging from the interviews is that the education policy is not stable. As time has passed, its trends and directions have lacked continuity and stability. For example, some respondents insisted that decisions and projects always shift when officials at the top level change. The response of school principal (No: 4) represents this view. He indicated that:

> Policy always changes with the change of individuals and some policies changes fundamentally. I have experienced some of the decisions and projects that were stopped when the person who initiated it left his position. When he was there, he was working and devoted his attention to the implementation of such projects and programmes. (SPr-4)

To support their arguments on the instability of the education policy, some respondents cited the secondary school policy as an example. They argued that despite the salient

features of the policy, the policy itself went through many changes during the past years. The following responses present the essence of such views:

> The reality is that the secondary education has been in transition for the past three years. The secondary schools' developed system started last year, followed by the new cumulative system applied recently, which means that the third year grade depends on the grade attained in the second year, in addition to the decentralisation of the secondary level tests. All this development is meant to prepare the student well for the university environment as well as the working environment. (SPr-2)

> In fact, there is confusion in the secondary level policy. The evidence of that is the large number of regulations during the past ten years produced by the development process for secondary education. This is because of the generalities of the policy's goals to the extent that the implementers have started to use many methods of application in order to achieve the goals set. (SPr-1)

But the majority of respondents argued that, despite the stable framework and the national objectives of the education policy, the MoE took responsibility for translating these national objectives into action with a lack of systematic and institutional work. They insisted that the operational objectives are changing rapidly, causing confusion for the work in education. They cited that once an individual was changed or moved, objectives and mechanisms changed accordingly. According to their perspectives, this process is confusing and frustrating. This sense of frustration was reflected in the following views:

> I think that if we apply the idea implemented in some States which have two ministers for the same ministry (political and executive), then we will have stable policy, because any change in the political minister's position does not affect the existing work in operational terms. The imbalance is coming from the fact that changing the minister leads fully to a change in the ministry's philosophy. (SPr-2)

> I hope that the policy in place is progressive so that every new official can continue and start from the point where his colleague stops. Our problem is that there is no systematic and consistent work. We don't feel that such work exists because whenever a new person comes, he starts according to his way. (SPr-5)

As mentioned in the previous Jeddah and Riyadh case studies, the clarity and stability of the education policy also generated different views among the high-level officials at the

MoE. For example, one senior level claimed that there was no particular policy for high schools as opposed to other grades. The second senior indicated that there was a specific policy for secondary education. He reported that the policy for secondary education presented in the new curricula, books, new reports and the new ways of passing from one stage to another, was different from the previous system that depended on the exam grade at the end of the year. However, both agreed that the secondary education policy has not been fully nor widely implemented.

To sum up, these contrasting perspectives, generated from interviews with bureaucrats in Dammam city, suggested a degree of confusion and ambiguity among the respondents about their participation in policy decision-making and the clarity and stability of the education policy. This confusion and ambiguity was attributed to the lack of clear procedures and guidelines for policy implementation. It was also felt that the lack of policy continuity and the absence of systematic and institutional work in the MoE compounded this problem.

8.3.3 Policy Implementation

The picture that emerged from the interviews with SLBs in Dammam city, as well as with the top-level officials at the MoE, suggested a number of important issues related to the implementation process. These include:

- The extent and nature of the power and autonomy experienced by SLBs in the implementation stage
- Communication between the three tiers of education bureaucracies (secondary school principals at the lower level, managers of education at the middle level and seniors at the top level).
- Variation in the implementation of education policy between the regions/provinces.

Regarding the power and the formal autonomy of SLBs, the picture that emerged suggested various views and perspectives among respondents in Dammam city. Some claimed that they had a sizeable amount of authority to deal with various education aspects including schools' problems. They express satisfaction about the level of power delegated to them at the local level from the top. However, they acknowledged that their power is an exception to apply the "quality in education" programme in their schools. This programme, designed

and adopted at MoE level to increase the education standards in Saudi Arabia and Dammam city, was chosen to test the programme efficiency in its early stage and before applying it nationally. The respondents revealed that seven public secondary schools in the city were selected and granted a wide range of power to test the idea of further empowerment and authority in relation to administrative, financial and educational matters. The results will be compared with the results of the powers granted last year to see the impact on the ground and whether further delegation of powers to school's principal should be made accordingly. For example:

> In terms of power, I think there is good room to move to achieve the general objectives. For instance, the Department of Education in the Eastern Region is the only educational department in the kingdom selected for application of "the quality of education". Thus it is not possible to apply that programme unless you have the power and authority to help you achieve the policy objectives. (Mgr-3)

Among the respondents who saw the autonomy of school principals from different angles, they argued that the amount of power and autonomy is relative to some extent, depending on the type of school and whether it is private or government. In their perspective, there is room for freedom, but this was more limited in public schools than in private ones. They cited that, for public schools, the situation is different because any change of curricula or additional classes and activities means an increase in teacher numbers, salaries, expenses...etc. As one principal observed:

> I worked as a school director in both public and private education (private schools). For private schools there is a good independency, with support from the Ministry. For example, in private school, we apply different methods and curricula from the ones in public school. This curriculum is approved by the Ministry in the primary grades in mathematics, science, English, computers...etc. There is more room for movement in controlling programmes and courses in the private school than in the public school (SPr-2)

In contrast, in secondary schools, most principals claimed that they had no formal autonomy or power at all in the implementation process. They argued that their thoughts and suggestions as school principals should not exceed the limits of instructions and directives given by the ministry. Such instructions, in their views, constrained them and

did not lead to innovative thinking. However, they expressed dissatisfaction about the power granted to them in the implementation stage and argued that although the power is very limited, what is written or described as power of implementers was unlikely to be implemented in practice. They cited an example that choosing those working at the school including the administrative staff and teachers is among the responsibilities of a school principal. In practice, school principal opinion is not considered in this case. Their responses included the following statements:

> Power, power, power, I have heard this phrase repeated often and often for many years and, when you think of it, you find nothing........despite the very limited authority, some of which is written as a "school principal's power", it is not considered in the implementation. I will give you a very clear example; there is a prerogative for the school principal to have a role in determining which assistants will work with him. The reality is that a school principal's opinion is never considered in this matter or in other matters such as the suitability of teachers (SPr-4)

> We suffer from lack of authority. We are moving in a defined area between red lines. Any crossing of these lines means trouble for school principals. I think that moving within these lines leads to failure in terms of results. I wish to be given more room for creativity, where a teacher can move and act... Don't restrict him. If you do so, he will remain in a specific context of information and behaviour. (SPr-5)

Those at the highest level at the MoE confirmed emphatically, as mentioned in Chapters 6 and 7, that neither the directors of education nor the principals of secondary schools had any degree of power over the implementation of education policy or were able to decide the minimum standards for students to achieve in secondary schools. However, as indicated above, the education managers implement what they receive from the Ministry in the form of orders. Unlike their colleagues in Jeddah and Riyadh cities, SLBs in Dammam city did not explicitly mention that they exercised discretionary power in translating the education policy into action. However, they acknowledged that their decisions might be affected by different factors such as school environment; as an example, they indicated that when they receive instructions to apply/or set up a development plan for student activities, application of such plans is sometimes not possible due to the lack of space (laboratories, playground, facilities) at the school. Other factors mentioned are personal conviction or judgement about an issue or specific schools' matter. SLBs argue that sometimes they recognise that the public interest

requires non-implementation of the policy decision because in the field they might observe things that could not be seen by the decision maker at the top level. Among the factors mentioned which might affect the decisions of SLBs in Dammam city are the social impacts that have a role in influencing the application of policy. Moreover, this depends on the final judgement of school principals.

> Most schools are not equipped in terms of size and design, such as laboratories, playground...etc. so, you cannot apply some programmes or activities required by the Ministry. Unfortunately, the Ministry does not consider the differences between schools. They just want to see results on the ground, disregarding the difficulties you are faced with in your school. (SPr-1)

As seen in Chapter 6, those in the top level at the MoE recognised that the lack of a clear system and guidance for implementation explains the use of discretion by implementers. They argued that the implementation process depends on the person in charge; as they put it, "everything is based on opinion in our education."

In terms of the relationship between school principals and education managers (SLBs) at the local level, as well as with top officials at the ministerial level, and the nature of communication between the three tiers of education authorities, the picture that emerged suggested contrasting perspectives. Some respondents argued that it is enough to know that the nature of communication between the local and the state level is reflected in a top-down approach to policy making. It is one-way communication without participation from the local level in decision-making:

> The missing link may occur when making a decision and sending it out to the field without participation of the implementers or knowing their opinion. I think the overlooking of the implementers' participation in the policy planning is one of the main reasons for lack of success of the application. (Mgr-1)

Other respondents saw the relationship between the ministry and the local level from a different perspective. They argued that the ministry did not have sufficient confidence to trust both education managers and school principals at the local level. However, they insist that the ministry did not develop a system to give them an area of autonomy and mobility in the application of policy but at the same time counts on them to ensure that no violations occur during the implementation process. For example:

If we want to nominate an educational supervisor, the ministry must be represented by a member of the educational committee responsible for the procedural process for dealing with such case. What does this mean? It means that the educational administration is not trusted on this point. (Mgr-3)

There is a lack of confidence from the ministry in the field...the ministry left the director of education to act according to his vision. He is the trustworthy person in the field and his opinion is not questionable. During the seventeen years of my work in schools, I don't remember one day that the ministry called me or asked for a meeting or discussed any educational issue. (SPr-1)

On the relationship between SLBs in Dammam city, some respondents see their relationship with education managers as positive and they argue that there is a good relationship and cooperation with the Directorate of Education in acceptance of the school principal's ideas and suggestions. However, they indicated that the nature of this relationship depends on the character of the director of education and his beliefs of the importance of the idea or project to be implemented. As one principal observed:

I think there are good operational relationships between us, good and rapid response, and positive aspects in the acceptance of ideas and their development. These trends are significantly better than in previous times and they have developed well and improved yearly. (SPr-2)

Other respondents suggested that the relations between school principals and managers at the Department of Education are limited to the giving and receiving of instructions. They argued that they are only recipients and part of their duties is just to send statistics and information to the Department of Education. They express dissatisfaction about the directorate of education for not giving due concern to their schools' needs. Interestingly, they acknowledged that most of their school's problems were resolved through personal connections. Typical of this view were the following statements:

There must be communication with the Director of Education ...two meeting in the year is not enough. If there are no constant relations between both the managers of education and schools, I would expect a gap, as well as people's enthusiasm to implement the decisions will be weakened...Unfortunately, on the ground, there is no real analogy between the parties. (SPr-4)

Very weak relationship, there are gaps between us. For example, when I request maintenance for air-conditioning, it takes a long time for it to be fixed, even if it is an emergency. Also, if there is a supervisor in my school who is not qualified because he lacks training and experience enables him to do school work efficiently, and I request to transfer him, they never approve my request.....I sometimes use my personal relations with my colleagues in the directorate or in the ministry to solve such problems. (SPr-5)

However, as presented in Chapter 6, the views of top-level officials tend to support the assumption that the personal connections and human relations in general dictate the relationship between education managers at the middle level and the top level (ministerial level).They indicated that the centralisation in the Ministry's work does not allow the independence of directors of education to implement instructions and regulations not enacted by the Ministry. Thus, the relationship could be described as a personal rather than a work relationship.

The different arguments given above suggested poor communication between the various tiers of the educational establishment. Poor communication and mistrust between local and top level staff within education authorities was cited as the most serious aspect of this problem, particularly in the giving of orders and their execution. In other words, school principals appear to accept that the managers at the middle level and officials at the top level provide directives and orders but they may not share their opinions regarding their schools. The interviews highlighted the differences between SLBs and middle/local and top-level people within the MoE. The lack of communication between the different levels of bureaucracy did necessarily suggest a conflict with the goal of education set by the ministry.

It has been argued, judging from the responses of school principals at the street level of bureaucracy, that the middle and top-level staff within the education authorities frequently talk about achieving results consistent with policy objectives but without paying due attention to how these are translated into practice in the field. It is also argued that, while middle and top-level authorities tend to be result-oriented, SLBs, as is the case with the principals of secondary schools in this study, are always shown to be having "a 'role interest' in securing the requirements of completing the job."(Lipsky, 1980:19)

In variations in the implementation of education policy, the picture that emerged suggested that there is almost a unanimous view among the respondents that there is variation in the application of education policy between the regions. This contrast, as the respondents revealed, is because there is no clear mechanism and guidance for policy application. Therefore, each administration has its own way and methods to apply policy according to individual's interpretation:

> The policy is constant, but the differences in the branches are a normal matter. Even at the school level, are all schools working on the same plan? The departments of education have independency and therefore various applications. As far as the goal is known and specific, the facility might differ. Whether by plane, car or train, you will reach your goal. (Mgr-1)

> Yes, there is considerable variation between regions in the process of policy implementation. Of course the policy is definitely fixed, but the manager of such an educational institution differs from other managers in terms of application process and methods. For instance, a number of managers work successively in the department of education in Eastern Region, the only difference among them is the way of thinking and understanding of the application of policy. (SPr-2)

Some respondents claimed that the variation between the regions could be seen not only in the implementation, but also in the projects and budgets allocated to the region. From this view, this depends on the educational director's personality and the level of connection with the ministry officials. The discrepancy between the departments of education is there and this affects the application of the policy. The evidence of the discrepancy is that the ministry's view towards the region is different in terms of budget and authority. Such views were presented in the following statement:

> Sometimes you find an educational directorate taking the big portion of the cake while another takes nothing, and this is due to the power of the Director of Education and his relationship with the ministry. (SPr-3)

The above views about the existence of variation between the regions in education policy implementation contradict the views of some officials at the top level. As seen in Chapter 6, those at the ministry level suggested that school principals and directors of education at the local level strictly apply the policy in compliance with the rules and regulations issued by the MoE and are held accountable for non-implementation of policy.

To sum up, the different arguments presented by the respondents regarding policy implementation show that SLBs run their schools without having any formal power or independence. As a result, their decisions are influenced by different factors such as school environment, social influence and personal conviction. The differing viewpoints of respondents also highlight a lack of effective communication between the different tiers of bureaucracy within the MoE. School principals described the relationship with the middle and top levels as one consisting of carrying out directives and orders rather than one of cooperation and involvement in decisions. Lack of confidence in bureaucrats at the local level was one of the main problems revealed by the respondents. Variation between the regions in implementation was an anonymous answer among the school principals' responses.

8.3.4 Policy Monitoring

The picture that emerged from the interviews with SLBs in Dammam city, as well as with top-level officials at the MoE, suggested various views on monitoring and evaluating education policy (reducing levels of failure and dropout in secondary schools). For instance, some respondents indicated that the policy lacks a clear mechanism and effective tools to measure the policy outcome. They added that neither standards to measure against nor feedback from the local level exist in the education policy. As one principal observed:

> There is no specific mechanism for measuring the results. In my view, the measurement tools are a judgemental matter that is different from one area to another and from one person to another...the problem is that the Ministry pays more attention to the way it will spend the huge budget in the next year than to setting educational standards to be achieved or considering the views of educators at the local level. (Mgr-2)

Other respondents indicated that the measurement tools available are still predominantly based on the students' results (pass or fail) at the end of the academic year. Interestingly, among the respondents were some who argued that it is difficult to measure some goals of the education policy or to ensure that the goal is achieved. The following response presents that view:

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No mechanism or tools to measure the achievement of the policy on the ground except the grades system which depends on the rate of success and failure. Nevertheless, there are other aspects of education that are difficult to measure. I will give you an example. Deepening the belonging and loyalty to the country was emphasised in the education policy. The question is how to measure the loyalty to the homeland? (SPr-3)

However, despite the lack of clear measurement tools mentioned in most of the SLBs' responses, there is a view amongst the majority that the policy of reducing the number of failures and dropouts in the secondary schools had achieved its aims even without using measurement tools. They argued that the new grade system for secondary schools imposed by the Ministry in 1998 has helped reduce the levels of failure and dropout in schools by changing the way students are promoted from one stage to another. This is done according to their performance and the school's evaluation, not the success or failure within the examination system, the method previously used to evaluate students' achievements. However, respondents expressed dissatisfaction with students' academic achievements as a result of applying this system:

In the old system, success of first-grade in secondary schools was a big challenge, but now it becomes easier with the reduced grades system which has led to very big reduction in repetition and dropout. Unfortunately, this did not lead to a high standard of education. For example, the issue of evaluating students at the secondary level, I think it is an inappropriate method because the evaluation requires integrity and sometimes leads to inaccurate results. In other words, there is no test to determine the student effort. (Spr-6)

The above views on the lack of clear mechanisms and procedures to measure the policy output and whether the policy goals are met, as well as the lack of standards to measure against, were supported by the views of officials at the top level. As seen in Chapter 6, seniors in the MoE indicated that the policy lacks clear and well-defined mechanisms for follow-up and feedback systems. They indicated that measurement depends on the person who is in charge, as well as on the culture and the influence of the Ministry official, but not on specific targets or other measurements.

The different arguments presented here suggested that there is no clear mechanism for monitoring education policy. It revealed a lack of clear procedures or methods for collecting

information on the extent to which education policy goals are being achieved. It also suggested that the standard to be achieved in education policy is missing. Judging by the interviews with different levels of bureaucrats at the MoE, it seems that education policy objectives and targets are vague and not specified in a measureable form. This is clear from the variety of perspectives and views provided by bureaucrats concerning policy objectives.

8.4 Findings and Conclusion

This study has explored the way in which public education policy (reducing the amount of failure and dropout in secondary schools), formulated centrally by the Saudi government, is translated into action by SLBs in DEA. It also examined the degree of political autonomy experienced by different levels of bureaucrats (secondary school principals, education managers and seniors at the top level in the MoE.)

The results of the study suggested a number of important issues related to the nature of education policy in Saudi Arabia and the way in which it is implemented, as well as the nature of power relationships between different levels of bureaucracies. The issues that emerged were found mainly to relate to some key and principal aspects of the policy process, including policy formulation, implementation and monitoring. Table 8.3 shows the thematic areas of education policy and the findings of the studies in Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam educational authorities.

Table 8.3: *Themes of Education Policy Implementation in Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam*

Thematic Areas	Jeddah	Riyadh	Dammam
Policymaking process	Centralised	Centralised	Centralised
Policy stability	Unstable	Unstable	Unstable
Goal clarity	Ambiguous	Ambiguous	Ambiguous
SLBs discretion	High	Moderate	Moderate
Central monitoring and Controlling	Poor	Poor	Poor

The findings of the study suggested the following issues:

- *Education policymaking is undertaken at the centre with no involvement of bureaucrats at local level.*

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Education policy in Saudi Arabia, as the study suggested, is designed and adopted centrally by the Supreme Committee for Education Policy. This government committee "serves as a major reference that delineates the objectives, plans and programs of education at its various levels for general and higher education" (G E G, 2002: 8). The study indicated that the education policy is following a strict top-down approach for policy making which means practically that when policy is adopted in the centre by The SCEP, it moves through the hierarchical structure to the MoE which is responsible for translating policy objectives and goals into procedures, regulations and rules, as well as setting up mechanisms for implementation of the policy and monitoring its outcomes, and then through the policy chain to the bureaucrats responsible for implementation at the local level.

According to the study, those bureaucrats in local government (secondary school principals and managers of education) have no role or any sort of participation in deciding or designing the policy. This indicates, as the study suggested, that the communication and transmission of policy decisions between the centre (MoE) and local employees (Department of Education and secondary school principals in DEA) are poor or limited. In other words, the link between the central level and the local level is missing. This gap between the two levels, as the study revealed, can be attributed mainly to the nature of the education system that depends on the centralisation of decision making which prevents regions from possessing full powers in educational matters, such as curricula, education programmes, employment, budgets...etc.

- *Education policy tends to be ambiguous; objectives, goals, and tasks are vague and/or conflicting.*

The findings suggested that the policy is written in general and vague statements about goals and objectives. Hence, it is seen to be lacking clarity in its language, rules and regulations. The study suggested that the policy has no clear mechanisms or guidance for implementation, monitoring, evaluation or feedback. The lack of such tools creates confusion among the implementers of how they will apply the policy and therefore a good degree of discretionary power in the implementation process, leading ultimately to different outcomes that might also differ from those the policy makers intend. The study also suggested that the policy is not stable and therefore changes frequently with the

changes of positions and individuals. In other words, there is a lack of institutional work in the MoE tasks. However, according to the literature of policy implementation, the transmission of policy to implementers and target groups depends partly on the clarity of the policy and partly on clear and frequent communication within the policy process.

It seems from the findings of the whole study that the SLBs in Dammam city are typically working in jobs with 'conflicting and ambiguous goals' (Lipsky 1980: 40). This ambiguity in policy goals arises, "because the conflicts that existed when programs were originally developed were submerged; or because they have accumulated by accretion and have never been rationalized, and it remains functional for the agency not to confront its goals conflict" (Lipsky 1980: 41). Hogwood and Gunn (1984:204) see the conflict and ambiguity in the policy goals from another angle. They insist that:

> Most research studies suggested that, in real life, the objectives of organization or programmes are often difficult to identify or are couched in vague and evasive terms. Even 'official' objectives, where they exist, may not be compatible with one another and the possibility of conflict or confusion is increased when professional or other groups proliferate their own 'unofficial' goals within a programme.

Stone (1997), also, has a different perspective regarding the conflict in the goals of policy. He argues that policy goals have multiple meanings and often conflict and that this means public policy is seen as a paradox.

- *Exceptional formal power for managers of education at DEA and school principals' decision influenced by various factors*

The study demonstrated that the managers of education in DEA had been given exceptional authority to apply the "quality in education" approach introduced by the MoE. This enables managers of education and some secondary school principals (the project being run in some schools as a test) to exercise greater power in the implementation process than the authority given to other educational directorates in regions. However, despite this exceptional authority, school principals in DEA, as the study suggested, still have no political autonomy/formal power to perform their job. As explained in the past two chapters, this was due to the nature of the political system in Saudi Arabia, which is

characterised by a high degree of pluralisation of power at the centre in order to assert greater control over policy.

Despite the absence of formal authority given to school principals to implement policy, the findings revealed that their decisions are affected by different factors. Among them are school environment relating to buildings, laboratories, playground...etc.. Oyaid (2009: 30) indicated that "the school environment has many entities, such as teachers, students, staff, parents, resources, curricula, facilities, finance, regulations, and policies, which all interact and influence each other, creating continuous development and change within the school." School principals' judgement about the public interest is also considered as being among the factors that impact on the policy application. The study also revealed that the Saudi culture influences the decision of school principals.

- *Lack of clear mechanisms for monitoring and standards to measure against for the education policy*

The study suggested that the education policy's goals and objectives are not clear and not specified in a measurable form. However, sometimes ambiguity in policy goals were meant by to combined different views of stakeholders to start the programme. Hogwood and Gunn (1984:222) indicate that:

> Vagueness in goals or concentration on immediate operational goals can be a consequence of divergences in views about policy objectives. Often, support from many quarters is necessary to get a programme off the ground, and this may be better met by vague statements on which all can agree.

This is consistent with Lipsky (1980:40), who indicated that: "...public service goals also tend to have an idealized dimension that make them difficult to achieve and confusing and complicated to approach". The findings also show that there is no standard to be achieved or to measure against in education policy. Hogwood and Gunn (1984:220) indicate that: "Fully effective monitoring will require initial specification of what program delivery should involve; one cannot measure deviations from standards which are not specified. This involves linking program goals to the objectives of the policy." The study also demonstrated that the tools and procedures needed for collecting

information about the extent to which education policy goals are being achieved, are lacking. These elements are not clarified at the level of the MoE. It is argued that monitoring the policy's aims is important in order to avoid implementation failure. Hogwood and Gunn (1984) suggested that there are preconditions for successful implementation. These preconditions require specifying the activities involved in delivering the policy, as well as identifying the policy output. All this is supposed to be considered at the policy designing stage.

- *The policy goals made by the centre at the policy gestation stage are not closely translated further down the policy chain at the policy implementation stage*

The findings indicate that there is a lack of specification of activities involved in delivering the policy, identifying policy output, and setting standards for measurement. Moreover, during the formulation stage, policy objectives and aims are not translated into clear rules, regulations or guidance to be followed by the bureaucrats at the local level who are responsible for translating the policy into action.

The workplace uncertainties that school principals and education managers in Dammam city confront in implementing education policy lead to a high degree of discretionary power, and this is due to individual interpretation of rules and regulations issued by the MoE. This ultimately leads to variability in implementation and, subsequently, differences in terms of policy output, which deviate from the MoE's original intentions. Lipsky (1980: xii) argues that:

> The decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures effectively *become* the public policies they carry out.

This view is supported by Evans and Harris (2004: 876) who state that: 'as a consequence, in their day-to-day work, street-level bureaucrats have to work out practical versions of public policy that can often look unlike official pronouncements.' There is an indication of policy failure with respect to the implementation of the education policy. The failure can be clearly seen in the gap between policy formulation and implementation. This failure can be attributed to the fact that the policy is not put into effect as intended by the MoE because the implementers (secondary school principals

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and education managers) are working in uncertain environments, including ambiguity in goals, rules and regulations of education policy and, 'their best efforts could not overcome obstacles to effective implementation over which they had little or no control' (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984:197). This type of failure is described by Hogwood and Gunn (1984) as a non-implementation. However, the failure of the education policy is due neither to bad execution nor bad luck but rather due to the fact that 'the policy itself was bad, in the sense of being based upon inadequate information, defective reasoning or hopelessly unrealistic assumptions' (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984:197).

8.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore how secondary school principals (street level bureaucrats) and education managers in DEA in Saudi Arabia have implemented education policy, which aimed to reduce the average level of failure and dropout at the secondary education level by raising educational standards. Specifically, the emphasis was on investigating how actors further down the policy-chain (secondary school principals) operate, and the degree of devolved power or political autonomy experienced by different levels of bureaucrats (secondary school principals, education managers' and top-level officials) within the Saudi MoE. The central theme of the analysis was the nature of the Saudi political system and the power relationships between the three tiers of the educational establishment in the Saudi state.

This research is significant, because studying the implementation of education policy is important from the point of view that the success of any policy depends on how it is implemented. The results are limited in that the study was conducted in DEA, with particular emphasis on the implementation process at the secondary school level. Therefore, any generalizations credited on the basis of study outputs to other school levels would be restrictive. This research contributes to the understanding of the nature of the Saudi political system and the power relations involved in implementing education policy at local and school levels. Furthermore, the research provides a contemporary framework for investigating policy implementation procedures. The question was posed as to what happens to the policy goals made by the 'centre' (MoE), at the policy gestation stage, when these move further down the policy-chain, at the policy implementation stage. The general framework of the education policy itself remains immutable, but

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individual perspectives and interpretations of this policy differ, leading to various versions of implementation and, therefore, to different policy outcomes that might not be consistent with the policy makers' intent. This is due to the policy's overall lack of clarity concerning operational guidance, rules and regulations, standards to be achieved and mechanisms for monitoring and auditing. The results demonstrate that there is an urgent need for the Saudi MoE to acknowledge the fact that the successful implementation of secondary school policy is largely related to the participation of local level bureaucrats in policymaking. Thus, the objective of the MoE should be to involve school principals, teachers and education managers in policymaking.

Chapter Nine

The Current Nature of the Saudi State
An analysis

9.1 Introduction

Relating back to the introduction of the thesis, the aim of the study was to obtain original insights into the nature of the Saudi political system and examine the power relationship between central and local government within the Saudi model of governance. More clearly, the study aimed to investigate the relationship between policy design at the centre and its implementation at the local level as well as the extent of devolved power or political autonomy experienced by SLBs in the implementation stage.

The main argument of the thesis is that: *The nature of the Saudi Political System, based as it is on a monarchical model of government, assumes that policy goals set centrally at the policy gestation stage are closely adhered to by SLBs at the policy implementation stage.* This argument was explored by investigating how actors further down the policy-chain, the SLBs (secondary school principals and their education managers), in three main cities with different local authorities, namely in Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam, operate, and the degree of political autonomy they experience in translating the educational policy to public service. To accomplish this aim, the thesis seeks to answer the core question that is: *To what extent the SLBs adhered to education policy goals in the implementation stage?* It also seeks to answer the sub questions that generate from the core question and is designed to elicit information regarding various aspect of education policy.

The main argument of this chapter is that policy decision making in the Saudi political system is a centralised process following a distinct top-down model. Evidence from the study revealed that the power is concentrated at the centre, with little or no delegation of power to the local level. Nevertheless, in practice, a sizable degree of autonomy in policy implementation was observed. Evidence revealed that the SLBs at the local level exercise a wide range of discretionary power in the implementation of policies, leading to variation not only between policy design-formulation and implementation but also within the regions at the local level. This is explained by the nature of the Saudi governance

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structure and, more particularly, the education policy itself, which lacks clear objectives, instruction, rules, procedures and mechanisms for monitoring and feedback. These findings challenge the perceived image of the authoritarian and top-down nature of the Saudi political system in which policy made by the centre is closely translated further down the policy-chain at the policy implementation stage by SLBs.

The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part present analysis of the results that emerged from the three case studies of Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam cities and the contribution of each to the aims of the study. It also provides analysis of these results in relation to the research questions and/or the research's main themes. The second part presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study. This part starts by providing a summary of the research and main findings, followed by the strengths and limitations of the study and ends with a brief section on implications and recommendations for further research.

9.2 Analysis of Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam Education Authorities

This section presents the analysis/findings with regard to the empirical evidence generated from primary sources and interviews with secondary school principals and education managers (SLBs) in the three local education authorities as well as with officials at the MoE. The material gathered from eighteen secondary school principals, nine educational managers and three senior officials provided a broad picture of the extent to which the policy of reducing the number of failures and drop outs in secondary schools is implemented and the degree of political autonomy experienced by different level of bureaucracy within the MoE. The analysis of the three education authorities (Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam) helps to make clear how SLBs in each authority contribute to the main objectives of the study and, more importantly, if there was variation across these cities in terms of the implementation of education policy.

The analysis revealed different views among SLBs regarding the nature of education policy and the implementation stage in specific. While a few SLBs in the three education authorities (Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam) expressed a good impression and were satisfied with the education policy, the majority of SLBs revealed unsatisfactory and disagreeable views about the policy in general and its implementation in specific. Such unsatisfactory views were presented in the responses of school's principals more than in

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the responses of education managers. This could be because schools' principals had experienced difficulties, obstacles and challenges associated with their daily work in translating the policy into action. Such difficulties and challenges were evident mainly in the lack of clear and stable policy, financial resources and the lack of formal power enabling them to achieve policy goals. It could perhaps be predicted that such environment-uncertainties would influence their views. Meanwhile, education managers seemed to be less involved in the daily implementation of policy and, therefore, were not in the position as moderators between the MoE and the school principals to criticize the policy or expose its defects. In other words, they considered themselves to be representatives of the MoE in terms of overseeing the application of the policy and, of course, tried to blame schools' principals for not implementing the policy according to the MoE intend rather than the policy itself. However, SLBs expressed their dissatisfaction via a wide range of statements when they described their views on education policy. The interviews material revealed that their views were closely related to some key and principle aspects of the nature of education policy, including policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and feedback. To this end, the key themes emerged from the analysis of the Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam educational authorities will be discussed and analysed in the light of the following:

9.2.1 Policy Background (evolution, development, and change over time)

The analysis of the interviews that were conducted with SLBs in Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam cities revealed various views regarding the evolution and development of education policy, not only within the regions-cities but also within each city. For example, a few respondents in Jeddah city indicated that education policy evolved from the Islamic religion as the religion of the state and, therefore, there was a need to build the character of model Muslim citizens supported by knowledge. Similar views were found in the responses of a few SLBs in Dammam city, who indicated that the education policy was influenced by Islam. Their view focuses on the Islamic concept that it is right to prepare students to understand and be loyal to Islam and to provide them with knowledge so that they will be effective in their work and responsible members of society. Such views, however, contradict the views that emerged from the interviews of a few SLBs in Riyadh city, who believed that education policy arose from the need to integrate the different education systems established in the Arabian Peninsula before the

unification of the country. However, the wide range of views among these cities contrasted with the above views. The majority of respondents departed from an organisation point as a factor behind the evolution of education policy. There was a belief that the education policy stemmed from the need to integrate different education systems founded in the Arabian Peninsula before the unification of the country in 1933 into one centralized system. SLBs in the three cities indicated that the Hejaz region, for example, has an educational system generated from the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Hejaz that came after the Ottomans, which differs from the system founded in Najd (in the middle of Saudi Arabia). Hence, there was an attitude amongst the majority of the SLBs that the government integrated these systems under one centralised authority to control and manage the education process and use it to transform Saudi society from a primitive to a modern society through the development of social and economic programmes. Interestingly and despite these different views about the evolution of education policy, the essence of both views is derived from the education policy documents, which states in Article No. (28) that the primary goal of education in Saudi Arabia is 'to have the student understand Islam in a correct and comprehensive manner.....to furnish the student with the values, teaching, and ideals of Islam.....to develop society economically, socially, and culturally' (SCEP, 1980: 10).

In terms of the development and change in the education policy, the analysis revealed a large number of similarities in the views of SLBs in the three cities regarding the policy framework and its general aims, which are both clear and stable and have not changed over time. Evidence from the study of the three cities also revealed a high degree of consistency among the SLBs that education policy went through substantial and significant changes in terms of its organization, infrastructure and curriculum. For example, SLBs in Jeddah city indicated that the clearest example of change at the organizational level can be seen in the integration of girls and boys education under one Ministry in 2002. This integration did not change the statutes of the separation between boys and girls in schools that characterise the Saudi education system. Similar views were found in Riyadh city and revealed that the change in education policy could be seen in the expansion of school-building, programmes and activities that have over time come to include many educational aspects, such as quality of education, curriculums, education facilities...etc. SLBs in Dammam city expressed similar views when they saw the

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"Quality of Education Programme" that was applied recently as an example of change in the policy, especially in the sense that such programme had been extended to include teachers, students and the learning environment in general.

9.2.2 Policymaking-Initiations and Formulation

The interviews with SLBs in the three cities suggested consistency though sometimes different views regarding policy initiation and formulation. For instance, a few respondents in Jeddah city indicated that they were involved indirectly in policymaking by providing opinions, suggestions or even recommendations. Similar views were found in the responses of a few SLBs in Dammam city, who participate in policy decision making, in the proposals and suggestions made by bureaucrats at the lower level of administration or even those at the community level that are submitted to the top level. However, none of the SLBs in Riyadh city claimed such involvement in the policymaking process, although one respondent indicated that he participated directly in policy formulation and took an active part in this process as a member of the Higher Council of Education (HCE)[77]. This important claim was also made by one respondent in Dammam city, who said he was a member of the HCE. Surprisingly, none of the SLBs in Jeddah city were found to be a member of the HCE. In contrast with these similar views, the majority of SLBs in the three cities indicated that neither secondary school principals nor education managers have any role in the policymaking process. In their view, education policy is designed and adopted centrally by the Supreme Committee for Education Policy[78] (SCEP) and formulated by the MoE with no involvement of middle and lower level bureaucrats at the policy-making stage. The absence of SLBs in policy decision making was confirmed by senior officials at the MoE.

With respect to the clarity and stability of education policy, there was a general agreement among the SLBs in Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam cities that the general framework of education policy was stable and clear and had not changed with time. However, the picture that emerged from the interviews conducted with SLBs in these cities showed mixed views

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[77] This council reviews and approves policies, programmes, and plans as well as takes necessary action regarding education policy issues (MoE, 2007)

[78] The Supreme Committee for Education Policy is a government committee that "...serves as a major reference that delineates the objectives, plans and programs of education at its various levels for general and higher education" (General Education Guide, 2002: 8)

and different perspectives regarding the clarity and stability of the education policy in general. For example, in Jeddah city, some SLBs indicated that the policy was stable and clear and that neither the policy nor the organisational structures had changed. They argued that the problem lay either in the fact that the implementers' interpretation led to differences in implementation or in the preparation of the implementers but not in the policy itself. In Riyadh city, a few respondents argued that even the general framework of the policy is not as clear or as specific as it should be. They felt that the aims and the targets of the education policy are written in general and vague statements present the political authority's views.

In contrast with the above views, the majority of SLBs in Jeddah city indicated that the policy was general in its goals and objectives. Evidence suggested that the objectives, goals and tasks of education policy are ambiguous, vague and/or conflicting. SLBs in the city indicated that individual perspectives on and interpretation of the policy is varied, leading to different versions of implementation and, therefore, to different policy outcomes that might not be consistent with policy makers' intention. Similarly, SLBs in Riyadh city indicated that education policy is not clearly specified in a framework document and is ambiguous in terms of principles/items, goals and objectives. The majority of the SLBs in Riyadh were of the opinion that the policy is written in general statements and pragmatic language that leads to differences in understanding and interpretation. In their view, the policy has a lack of operational structure and guidance to help implementers achieve the policy goals. Moreover, the administrative procedures for translating policy aims into practice are not clear or specified in operational terms. Consistently, SLBs in Dammam city revealed that the education policy is ambiguous and lacking in explanatory detail, operational guidelines and clear procedures to be followed during the implementation process. In their point of view, education policy is confusing and does not include clear mechanisms to help implementers achieve policy aims. These views were, surprisingly, supported by top-level officials at the MoE, who claimed that education policy is ambiguous and unclear because decisions are not specified and rules are not clarified for implementers and, therefore, these tend not to be understood. This ambiguity, they argued, leads to a personal interpretation of the policy at the implementation stage.

In terms of the stability of education policy, the analysis revealed similar views among SLBs in the three cities. There was strong evidence that education policy is not stable and

frequently changes according to the changes in individuals and position in the higher echelons of decision-making. For example, SLBs in Jeddah city argued that as time has passed, policy trends and directions have lacked continuity and stability. They insisted that the policy always shifts when the officials at the top level change. Similarly, the analysis of SLBs in Riyadh city revealed that the policy is not stable or continuous in its directions, strategies and programmes. Education policy was often viewed as changing as a result of a change in higher officials. Similar to their colleagues in Jeddah city, SLBs in Riyadh believed that there was a lack of systematic work in the education process. The same views were found in the analysis of the interviews of SLBs in Dammam city who insisted that the operational objectives were changing rapidly, causing confusion for the workers in education. They said that once an individual was changed or moved, objectives and mechanisms changed accordingly. In their view, the MoE took responsibility for translating these national objectives into action with a lack of systematic and institutional work.

The above mixed views regarding the clarity and stability of the education policy were clearly presented in the conflicting views among the SLBs in the three cities regarding the secondary schools' policy and its salient features. For example, some SLBs in Jeddah city felt that the policy for secondary education is clearly defined and that the most important features are the preparation of students for the job market to support the country's development plans as well as the need to prepare students for academic life. Others believed that the goal of the policy for secondary education is academic rather than vocational. In contrast with this view, some respondents in Riyadh city believed that there is no specific secondary school policy that differs from other educational stages. They argued that secondary schools' policy priorities are to build the character of a good citizen, then prepare pupils for vocational work rather than focusing on academic matters. SLBs in Dammam city deviated from the above perspectives and focused on the change and development of the policy overtime. They argued that despite the salient features of the policy, the policy itself had gone through many changes in the past years. They cited the decentralisation of the final exam for secondary level, the cumulative grade system and the development of text and curricula as examples of unstable and unclear policy. Interestingly, such mixed views were found among top-level officials at the MoE. Two seniors presented different views regarding not only the clarity and stability of the policy but also the existence of secondary education policy. While the first

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claimed that there was no particular policy for high schools as opposed to other grades, the second indicated that there was a specific policy for secondary education. The latter suggested that the policy presented new curricula, books, reports and ways of passing from one stage to another which were different from the previous system.

9.2.3 Policy Implementation

The analysis of the interviews of SLBs in Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam cities revealed a number of themes related to the implementation of education policy: the degree of power and autonomy experienced by SLBs in the implementation stage; the nature of communication between the different tiers of education bureaucracy (secondary school principals and managers of education at the local level and officials at the top level); and the variation in implementation between the regions.

With respect to the power and formal autonomy of SLBs, a few respondents in Jeddah city claimed that they had full authority to take the decisions necessary to rectify school problems. Some of these claimed they had the authority to design school programmes and adopt education activities within the school. Similar views were found in the response of a few SLBs in Riyadh city, who indicated that they had the power to make the final decision regarding failure in a school's performance or the remedial measures needed to rectify a school's problems. Within those, a few SLBs argues that their powers were relative and depended on the nature of the problem/issue the school might encounter as well as the type of policy to be applied. Another similarity was generated from the views of SLBs in Dammam city, who claimed that they had a sizeable amount of authority to deal with various education aspects, including schools' problems. They expressed satisfaction with the level of power delegated to them to apply the "quality in education" programme in their schools. This programme was designed and adopted by the MoE to increase education standards in Saudi Arabia, and Dammam city was chosen to test the programme in its early stages.

In contrast to the above views and perspectives, the majority of SLBs in the three cities revealed that they had no formal autonomy or power at all in the implementation process. For example, SLBs in Jeddah city expressed dissatisfaction with the absence of authority that would enable them to implement the policy effectively. They indicated that they had

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no power even in deciding the skills of those working at the school (teaching staff, student advisors and assistants or administrative staff). They argued that,what was written in the policy regarding a school principals' authority was unlikely to be implemented in practice. Similar views were expressed by the majority of SLBs in Riyadh city. They articulated disappointment regarding losing the academic sense of their duties. They felt that the school administrators' jobs had become a procedural job according to the department of education instructions. They pointed out that the Department of Education produced a booklet called *Procedural Guide to School Director*. This booklet includes very specific administrative rules regarding acceptance of students, indexing files, educational activity, the formation of school committees and so on. The majority of responses in Dammam city revealed the same views and feelings regarding the lack of power and autonomy they experienced in the implementation stage. The claimed that their freedom in the implementation process could not exceed the limits of instructions and directives given by the ministry. Such instructions, in their view, constrained them and did not lead to innovative thinking. Furthermore, they expressed dissatisfaction regarding the power granted to them in the implementation stage, argueing that they had no power or very limited power, which was really just on paper.

Despite the variation in views regarding the power and political autonomy of SLBs in the implementation process, evidence from the interviews of SLBs in the three cities revealed that SLBs were exercising a sizeable degree of discretionary power in practising implementation. SLBs used their own judgment and interpretation of policy rules and regulations to implement the policy or to deal with different school's circumstances they encountered in their daily work. Evidence from the study of Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam cities revealed that different factors influence the decision of SLBs and, therefore, increase the opportunity to use discretionary power in the implementation of education policy. For example, in Jeddah city, SLBs indicated that the lack of clear objectives and goals as well as the guidelines and operational procedures to be followed during the implementation process leave them with no choice but to use their own interpretation and understanding of the rules and regulations to apply the policy. SLBs in Riyadh city said much the same, indicating that their discretionary power was mainly related to the implementation of internal and external factors. In their view, internal factors were related to the ambiguity of policy goals and

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objectives, which were not clearly identified and translated into clear guidelines and operational procedures during the formulation stage to help them achieve policy goals. External factors were related to the impact of the school environment and community culture on their decisions. Unlike their counterparts in Jeddah and Riyadh cities, SLBs in Dammam city did not state explicitly that they exercised discretionary power in translating the education policy into action. Meanwhile, they implied that the lack of school environment/infrastructure (laboratories, playground, facilities...etc) sometimes hindered them from applying instructions or setting up a development plan for student activities. Therefore, their decisions regarding the implementation might be affected by such circumstances. It was interesting to find that the lack of power and political autonomy in the implementation of education policy at the local level is confirmed by top-level officials in the MoE. Officials at the centre confirmed that neither the directors of education nor the principals of secondary schools had any degree of power or political independency in translating the policy into action, nor even in deciding the minimum standards for students to achieve in secondary schools, and their role is to execute what they receive from the MoE. However, the MoE seem to understand why SLBs use discretionary power in translating the policy into action. They argue that the lack of a clear system and guidance for implementation lies behind the use of discretion by implementers at the local level.

Regarding communication and the relationship between school principals and education managers at the lower level as well as with top officials at the ministerial level, the interviews revealed mixed views among the SLBs in the three cities. While some SLBs saw the relationship with their managers in the middle level of administration as good and cooperative, most suggested that the relationship between school principals and managers at the Department of Education is weak and limited to the giving and receiving of orders and instructions. For instance, a few SLBs in Jeddah city saw their relationship with education managers in a positive way, mentioning that there are three to four consultative meetings with the regional directors of education throughout the year to exchange views regarding schools and education matters. Similar views was found in the response of SLBs in both Riyadh and Dammam cities, who argue that there is a good relationship with education managers and a degree of cooperation on education issues as well as a good rate of acceptance of the ideas and suggestions raised by school principals.

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However, those SLBs in the three cities indicated that the nature of the relationship with education managers depends on the character of the manager and his beliefs regarding the importance of the idea or project to be implemented.

These views, however, contradicted with the views of the majority of SLBs in the three cities, who saw the relationship between the three levels of bureaucracy in the MoE as limited to instructional only. The majority argued that the nature of communication between the local and the state level is the result of a top-down approach to policy making; it is one-way communication without participation from the local level in decision-making. For example, principals of secondary schools in Jeddah city made the point that the managers of education in Jeddah City tend to be mainly concerned with realising the objectives as seen by the MoE without giving due concern to their professional capacity in undertaking their work or to the degree of autonomy needed to perform their school work efficiently. More importantly, some SLBs in the city expressed little trust in managers with regard to ideas and suggestions being sent to them from school principals. Similar views were revealed in the responses of SLBs in Riyadh city, who saw themselves as receivers of orders from the top level without any chance for their opinion to be considered in matters related to their school's affairs. Such views differed slightly from the perspectives of SLBs in Dammam city regarding the nature of the relationship between central and local authorities. Those in Dammam city saw the relationship between the ministry and the local level from a different perspective. They argued that the ministry did not have sufficient confidence to trust both education managers and school principals at the local level and stated that the ministry had not developed a system to give them any autonomy or flexibility in the application of policy and at the same time counted on them to ensure that no violations occurred during the implementation process. These views were supported by officials at the MoE, who suggested that the relationships between educational managers at the local level and the top level (ministerial) were influenced by the centralised nature of the education system, which dictates not only the nature of decisions but also the functions and tasks in the MoE. Such a system, according to the MoE officials, does not allow directors of education to implement instructions and regulations not given by the MoE independently. Concerning the variation in the implementation of education policy, the picture that emerged from the interviews with SLBs in the three cities revealed different views and mixed opinions. For

instance, a few respondents' in Jeddah and Riyadh city believed that implementation of the policy varies not only between regions but also between individuals. They argued that the variation in the application of the policy was due to individual understanding and creativity, which certainly produces different results and, therefore, policy output. These views were similar to those of the majority of SLBs in Dammam city, who stated that that the variation is due to the lack of clear mechanisms and guidance for policy application and, therefore, each administration has its own way of applying policy according to the individual's interpretation. However, SLBs in Dammam city claimed that the variation between the regions could be seen not only in the implementation but also in the projects and budgets allocated to the region. In their view, this depends on the educational director's personality and the level of connection with ministry officials.

The above views regarding the existence of the variation in the implementation of education policy contradicted with the views of the majority of SLBs in Jeddah and Riyadh, who generally believed that there were no variations between the regions in policy application. SLBs in these two cities argued that the centralised nature of the education policy and the hierarchal structure that dictates the work of the MoE prevents such discrepancy between the regions. They believed that the school principals apply the same rules and follow the same structures. Interestingly, these views about the non existence of variation between the regions were consistent with the views of officials at the top level. Those at the ministry level suggested that school principals and directors of education at the local level strictly apply the policy in compliance with the rules and regulations issued by the MoE and are held accountable for non-implementation of policy.

9.2.4 Policy monitoring

The information elicited from the interviews of SLBs in Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam cities, as well as from top-level officials at the MoE, revealed mixed views and some confusion in terms of the monitoring of education policy in general and of the policy on reducing the number of failures and drop-outs in secondary schools specifically. For example, some SLBs in Jeddah city believed that there were tools to measure the outcomes of the policy. They cited the example of a new grade system for secondary schools that was imposed by the Ministry in 1998. In their opinion, such a system has helped reduce the numbers of failures and drop-outs in schools by changing the way

students are promoted from one stage to another. In their view, the school statistical data is the measures policy outcome, and this is sent to the middle level of administration and then to the MoE. Similar views were expressed by some SLBs in Riyadh city, who indicated that the tools to measure the success of the policy on reducing the number of failures and dropouts in secondary schools are the school statistics, which shows the student results (pass or fail) at the end of the academic year. The views of some SLBs in Dammam city concurred, with some respondents indicating that the measurement tools available were still predominantly based on the students' results (pass or fail) at the end of the academic year. Despite the above similarity in the views of SLBs, evidence from the study of the three cities revealed that the policy of reducing the number of failures and dropouts in secondary schools had achieved its aims even without using measurement tools. SLBs in the three cities, argued that the new grade system for secondary schools had reduced the number of failures and dropouts in schools by changing the way students are promoted from one stage to another. They added that this is according to the student performance and the school's evaluation rather than success or failure within the examination system, the method previously used to evaluate students' achievements. However, there was evidence of dissatisfaction among the SLBs in the cities under study regarding students' academic achievements as a result of applying this system.

In contrast with the above views, the majority of SLBs in the three cities suggested that the education policy lacked a clear mechanism and effective tools to measure the policy outcome. Evidence from the study of the three cities revealed a lack of clear procedures and methods for collecting information on the extent to which education policy goals are achieved. In other words, there is a lack of specification of activities involved in delivering the policy, identifying policy output and setting standards for measurement. It was also revealed that neither standards to measure against nor feedback from the local level existed in the education policy. SLBs indicated that, since there was no clear standard to be achieved in this education policy, it was difficult to measure the policy outcomes or to make a final judgment whether the policy was achieving its aim or not. They cited the poor communication and feedback process between top level and implementers at the local level as the most serious problem. The evidence implies a missing link between the different levels of bureaucracy within the MoE in measuring

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and evaluating the policy output. Surprisingly, officials at the Ministry level supported these views and argued that the measurement of policy outcome depends on the person who is in charge of the implementation as well as the culture and impression of the official at the MoE. These views, according to the top-level officials, were due to the fact that there is no clear system or well designed methodology to use in monitoring and evaluating the education policy. Table 9.1 summarizes the above views and shows the themes that emerged from the study of the three cities.

Table 9.1: *Comparison of Themes Emerging Within Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam Cities*

Themes	Jeddah	Riyadh	Dammam
Religious factors behind education policy	✓	☒	✓
Integration of different education systems behind education policy	✓	✓	☒
Social and economic factors behind education policy	☒	✓	✓
Positive change in organisations, infrastructures and curricula	✓	✓	✓
Policy clarity in terms of goals and objectives	☒	☒	☒
Policy clarity in terms of regulations, procedures and guidance	☒	☒	☒
Policy stability in terms of programmes and direction	☒	☒	☒
Policy continuity-institutional work in the MoE operations	☒	☒	☒
Participation of education managers in policymaking	☒	✓	✓
Participation of secondary school principals in policymaking	☒	☒	☒
SLBs exercise discretionary power in the implementation process	✓	✓	✓
Influence of school's environment on implementer's decisions	☒	✓	✓
Influence of culture on implementer's decision	☒	✓	✓
Variation between policy design and implementation	✓	✓	✓
Variation in implementation between the regions	☒	☒	✓
Clear mechanism and tools for measurement	☒	☒	☒
Existence of standard to be achieved or to measure progress against	☒	☒	☒

9.3 The Analysis in Relation to the Research Questions

The aim of the thesis is to explore the nature of power and autonomy in the Saudi political system in regard to the implementation of education policy. The specific policy that this thesis has examined concerns reducing the number of failures and dropout rates in the secondary schools. The primary objective is to investigate how actors further down the policy-chain, the SLBs (secondary school principals and their education managers) in three main cities with different local authorities, namely in Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam, operate and the degree of political autonomy they experience in the implementation stage. Such an objective helps to answer these research questions:

- What is the nature of the public policy system in Saudi Arabia, with specific reference to education policy, and how does it function?

- What perceptions do SLBs have of education policy objectives?

- How are education policy targets and goals translated into action in a public service context at the MoE?

- How can relations of power and autonomy within the MoE be explained?

- Where and why in the delivery chain might misinterpretation occur within the levels of bureaucracy?

- What evaluation and measurement techniques are employed in secondary school education?

- What major problems are encountered by SLBs in the implementation of education policy?

To this point, this section has presented the analysis/findings of the study that was conducted in the three cities. The section has discussed the themes that emerged from the interviews with SLBs at the local level as well as with top-level officials at the MoE. The themes that emerged were related to the nature of education policy and included policy formulation, policy implementation, and policy monitoring and feedback. The finding will be discussed in the light of the aforementioned questions and the aims of the study. However, before commencing with such a discussion, it is important to emphasise that the information elicited from the interviews with SLBs and the second source revealed similar views and consistent perspectives among the SLBs in the three cities regarding

education policy in general and the implementation of policy in specific. The only difference between the views of SLBs was identified in the priorities and interpretation in relation to their answers. For example, while few respondents in Jeddah and Dammam cities believed in the influence of the Islamic religion on the evolution of education policy, the majority of respondents in the three cities believed it had been influenced by the needs to integrate the different education systems established in the Arabian Peninsula before the unification of the country and to use education to promote the country's social and economic development. Both these views are consistent with the primary goals of education, which are 'to have the student understand Islam in a correct and comprehensive manner.....and to develop society economically, socially, and culturally' (SCEP, 1980: 10). Table 9.2 shows the range and order of views among the three cities.

Table 9.2: *Priorities and Order of Views of SLBs in Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam*

City	The range of views of SLBs in the three cities	
	Views of SLBs (few)	**Views of SLBs (majority)**
Jeddah	Islamic perspective behind the evolution of the policy	Integration of various education system behind the policy
Riyadh	Integration of various education systems behind the policy	Social and economic development behind the evolution of the policy
Dammam	Islamic perspective behind the evolution of the policy	Social and economic development behind the evolution of the policy

Such similarity and overlaps in the views of SLBs could be explained by the influence of the centralised education system, with its hierarchical structure, and the distribution of power between the MoE and the education authorities at the local level. Accordingly, it was expected that the SLBs in the three cities would receive the same instructions and orders from the MoE and, therefore, apply the same procedures and regulations during the implementation of the policy. Moreover, SLBs in the three cities work in similar school environments and confront the same workplace problems, such as the lack of autonomy, the lack of financial resources, including budgetary constraints, and, more importantly, the lack of clear guidance and operational procedures that would enable them to implement the policy successfully. Therefore, it is to be expected that they would have similar feelings, views and perceptions regarding education policy and its implementation.

After analysing the information that generated from the interviews of the SLBs in the three local authorities as well as from the top level officials at the MoE and the information of the primary sources, the themes emerged provided answers to the research questions proposed by this study. For example regarding the question of *what is the nature of the public policy system in Saudi Arabia, with specific reference to the education policy, and how does it function?*. The analysis of the study revealed lack of awareness and deep knowledge and understanding regarding the roots of the education policy and how it is evolved, developed, and changed overtime. Evidence suggested mixed views and understanding not only between the regions but also between the SLBs in the same city. Three views emerged from the study and indicated that the idea and the evolution of the education policy have been influenced by religious element, economic, or/and organisational element. The contribution and the influence of each element on the evolution of the policy were varied. For instance, some SLBs believed in the influence of economic and social elements on the idea and the evolution of the policy, others departed from organisational point and believe in the integration of different educational systems into one centralised system as a factor behind the idea of the policy, others respondents believed in the economic and social development as the pressures and demands that led to and shaped the present policy. As can be seen, this variation in views reflects various backgrounds and an individual understanding of the origins of the policy and the factors contributes to its evolution. The finding revealed that the large proportion of SLBs in three cities was aware of the existence of education policy, but little proportion viewed the document of the policy. It seems from the finding that the SLBs were not much influenced by MoE policies due to the low awareness of the policies in general and education policy in specific. This finding however is closely aligned with Al-Mengash (2006) study which found that the lack of awareness of educational policies was one of several reasons for not applying the policies correctly, therefore not achieving their aims. Such analysis/ finding however is supported by the argument of Redha (1998) who indicated that education policies in Saudi Arabia have not fully aware off and not included in the curricula of teacher's preparation for the various stages.

The analysis also revealed stable and clear general framework of the education policy that have not been change overtime although policy passed through several stages of development and modernization since its inception in 1964. Evidence suggested that there are

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certain basic principles that continue to be the pillars of the policy for education and never be changed. These basic principles driven from Islamic beliefs and culture and constitute the underlying philosophy for the objectives and the goals of education policy in Saudi Arabia. Despite the stability of the policy framework, the policy itself went through significant change and development in terms of organization, infrastructure, and curriculum. For example, at the organizational level the change can be seen by the integration of girls and boys education under one Ministry in 2002. In fact, before that date the girls education was under the responsibility of the general presidency for girls education which is government organisation supervised mostly by religious establishment. However, this integration did not change the statutes of the separation between boys and girls in schools that characterise the Saudi education system. Change in the education infrastructure can be recognises by the expansion of school-building, programmes, facilities...etc in all regions across the country. One of the important finding revealed by the study is that not only the education policy went through substantial change, but also the education system itself. The fundamental change was to be seen in the move from traditional heavily religion-based education, to a more modern formal education where schools for all and a modern curriculum were introduced.

The findings of the study revealed that the nature of the education policy in Saudi system is a centralised process following a classic top down approach to policy making. This means that the power is concentrated at the centre which possesses the power over policymaking and, therefore, claims the ability to control the behaviour of SLBs to ensure successful implementation. As Richards and Smith (2000:4) observed:

> The core executive possesses both the resources and strategic-learning
> capabilities to reshape its existing capacities and to develop new forms
> of intervention, in order to sustain its position as the dominant actor in
> the policymaking arena.

However, evidence from the study revealed that the design and the decisions of education policy are made at the central level with no participation or involvement in policymaking on the part of SLBs at the local level. The analysis revealed that the policy is designed and adopted by the supreme committee for education policy (SCEP) that a government committee 'serves as a major reference that delineates the objectives, plans and programs

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of education at its various levels for general and higher education' (GEG, 2002: 8). The finding indicated that when the national objectives and goals of education identified/set by the committee, the policy moves through a hierarchal structure to the MoE, which is responsible for formulating and adopting the policy. However, when the policy is regulated at the Ministry level, it moves down through a hierarchical chain of command to the directorates of education in the regions/provinces and then on to secondary schools principals for implementation. Al-Romy (2002) emphasised the importance of moving from policy formulation phases to the implementation phase because written and published policies will have no impact or influence without proper implementation procedures. He argued that educational policy works as a guideline for decision-makers at different management levels, and writing it down is a step that should be taken to ensure the aims are fulfilled. Otherwise, it will be a worthless policy.

The analysis shows that there are forty-two directorates of education throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia works as a link between the local schools and the MoE. Evidence revealed that neither education directors nor school principals in Saudi Arabia participate in the committees and councils responsible for setting out the policy for education. All SLBs involved in this study unanimously indicated such a lack of involvement. This lack of participation in policymaking suggested that the policy was made with no consultation or feedback from educators at the local level and therefore, their opinions, suggestions, and recommendations are not considered in the formulation stage. Rather, they are provided with instructions and orders from the top level to implement policy although the centre lacks information and mechanism to understand what the actual circumstances in the field are. Hence, there is a missing link between the Ministry level and that of the SLBs. The analysis revealed that the SLBs in the three cities accept the formal structure of the educational authority but not to say that they share the same perspectives and attitudes regarding specific aspects of education policy. There was an attitude amongst the majority of the SLBs that the top level (MoE) talk frequently about achieving results consistent with policy objectives, without paying due attention to how it should be translated into reality in the local level. This finding is supported by the argument of Hunter and Marks (2002:6) who observed that: 'Policy failure or an implementation gap can occur when policy imposed from the centre with no thought given to how it might be perceived or received at local level'. However, it

became apparent from the evidence that excluding SLBs from participation in policy decisions led to them developing unsatisfactory feelings toward education policy in general. SLBs expressed dissatisfaction regarding the negligence of their role in policy decisions and blamed the MoE for not considering their views and suggestions especially they think that they could recognise things in the field that could not been seen by those at the top level. It could be argued that SLBs have substantial experience gleaned from their daily interaction with the school environment and various educational matters and this enabled them not only to participate effectively in the policymaking process but also to influence the policy implementation in many ways. Therefore, their involvement in education policymaking is likely to increase their acceptance and creates satisfaction feeling and perceptions toward the policy in general and, therefore, increase the opportunity for successful implementation.

Regarding the question of *what perceptions do SLBs have of education policy goals and objectives ?* The analysis revealed that the education policy in Saudi Arabia is tends to be ambiguous, vague, and conflicting as well as lacking of continuity and stability. Clarity and accuracy of education policy as Matar, (1984) suggested, means that the policy statements and words should be clear and unambiguous, specific and concrete, out of redundancies, rhetoric, and unsusceptible to more than interpretation. The more carefully, developed, and properly chosen words, the more effective policy is. The finding suggested that the policy is written in general statements without clear goals and objectives need to be achieved or identification of tasks and priorities need to be operated. There was a feeling amongst the majority of SLBs in the three local authorities that the policy's goals and objectives are lacking of clear definition. Almost all of the SLBs participated in this study believed that the policy in the formulation stage had not been properly translated into regulations, clear procedures, and operational guidelines to enable them to implement the policy effectively. The guidelines they suggest involved the need for detailed plans and operational structures to help achieve the policy goals and should accompanied with effective supervision procedures mechanisms to ensure compliance with the rules and regulations for successful application of the education policy. Evidence from the secondary source of data specifically the education policy document supported such finding. For example, Article (99) of the document stated that among the goals of secondary education is:

> Achieving the fulfilment for the general Islamic homeland and for the nation's (Saudi Arabia) in specific, so as to cope with the age of student that characterised by sublimation in perspective, looking forward to the perches, and strength in the body (education policy document:1995:19)

As can be seen from this Article, it has revealed two problems. The first is the rhetoric nature of the article, the length and the use of way with words rather than brevity and focus, and the general broad meaning and expectation of the goal. The second is that the lack of clear rules and procedures to be followed to achieve this goal, and more importantly the difficulty to measure statistically the students loyalty and fulfilment to Islamic world or even to their home country. Another example of ambiguity and vagueness in education policy document could be seen in article (107) of the secondary education goals. The article stated that among the goals is to 'build the positive awareness that enabled student to confront destructive ideas and misleading trends' (education policy document: 1995:19). The question involved here is how the awareness could be build and according to what basis, in addition, what destructive ideas means and how students between destructive and non-destructive ideas and so on. As we see in this article, it is written in a comprehensive terms and not followed by details or analysed to sub-targets to explain the main objective in a procedural manner. However, such findings are closely aligned with the study of Al-Mengash (2006:18) of which she analysed the contents and principles of education policy document in Saudi Arabia and found that:

> The texts structures of some items of the policy document are particularly problematic. It had characterized by repetitive, non - clarity, redundancy and lack of accuracy in terminology, lack of coherence and sequencing of ideas, lack of realism, and the rhetorical predominance of some of its clauses.

It also consistence with the study of Al-Mesouri (1992) of which he analysed the general objectives in the light of the Islamic nature of the education system and found that some objectives of education policy did not achieved and therefore recommended the re-formulation of educational policy and review the curriculum in the light of these objectives. However, such findings are strengthen by the argument of Al-Salloum (1995) who insists that some of the terms of the policy document do not represent the optimum way of what should be in such an important document in terms of drafting and compilation of its items and arrange of its ideas. It also supported by the argument of Al-Ghamdi (2002) who

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indicated that the reasons behind the deficiency/ inefficiency of the educational policies in many Arab countries including Saudi Arabia is not due primarily to the lack of potentials and resources, but because the policies of education in these countries are not clear. However, it has been argued that the policy should be formulated accurately and carefully to avoid uncertainty and generality and to rationalise the decisions and actions that lead to the desire objectives. For example, Al-Ghamdi (2002:75) identified some characteristics of effective educational policy and argues that the policy should be:

> clear so as not to be interpreted according to circumstances, well known and understood by all workers in the field of education, flexible enough to allow workers in the educational field to act and respond to the change in the internal or external circumstances and limited and not conflict with the general policy of the State or with the social and moral values.

The other important finding of the study is that the education policy in Saudi Arabia is not stable and lack of continuity in terms of trends, priorities, and programmes. In addition, there is after change in policy, but the Saudi system (MoE) should lend itself to policy continuity. The finding revealed that education policy always shifts when officials at the highest level change. Most of the SLBs involved in the study stated that the institutional work[79] in the MoE was missing. The analysis showed a strong correlation between changes in higher officials especially Ministers level, and changes in policies, programmes, priorities and strategies. In other word, the general outlines of the policy do not change but officials at the top level change their orientation or put more emphasis on a certain issue and pay less attention to another This could be explain that each "Minister" usually with his working team have ideas, projects and programmes agenda need to be implemented either for their belief that the existing plans and programs doesn't lead to the achievement of education goals and therefore must be changed or reduced, or to the desire that the new projects will be attributed to the minister and will hold his name after being transferred or retired from work. In both cases the minister use his ministerial power to allocate time, facilities, and financial resources to accomplish such projects disregard the ongoing projects and programmes. Now when replaced by a new Minister, things became totally different as the second came with his own different vision and priorities and the changes start again. According to Rutan (1999), Policymakers must

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[79] Institutional work in this case means continuous programmes and long strategic plans despite the change in officials' position

make the commitment to stay focused on the agreed upon policy goals and should only make significant changes to the policy after careful consideration on the overall implications and consequences of the change. The organization should maintain a balance between ongoing policy activities and working on new policy initiatives. That is, that problems with implementation often occur when orgnisations concentrate on new policy developments and in the process forget the main objectives of policy that underlie previously formulated policy.

In terms of the question of *how goals and objectives of education policy translated into action in a public service context at the local level?* The analysis of the study revealed very limited independent or no autonomy at the local level of bureaucracy in regard to the implementation of education policy. SLBs (education managers and schools principals) lack autonomy and power in running the affairs of schools or take a decision in regard to curricula, staff, and administrative issues without referring to the MoE. Evidence suggested that they do not have enough margins for movement rather they execute/implement what top-level administration asks them to do. This finding strengthens by the argument of Al Salloom (1996: 61) who indicates that the education system needs to be more flexible and suggests that: 'school districts need more autonomy and authority to adapt programmes, to address their student's needs, and to prepare them either for college or employment'. However, evidence indicates that the lack of political autonomy was attributed mainly to the centralised nature of the education system, which characterised by a high degree of concentration of power at the centre with less fragmentation of power at the regional level. As mentioned in chapter two, the nature of the policy decision in Saudi system is a top down process and accordingly, education policymaking is made at the MoE level and SLBs at the local level supposedly apply the rules, structures and orders issued by the MoE. This control of policy from the side of the centre was supported by the argument of Oyaid (2009: 175) who observed that:

> The MoE manages all local education authorities and schools centrally, no school or education authority is able to launch an initiative, introduce a new policy, or finance a project without prior consent from the Ministry. Hence, head teachers are specifically guided and directed by the MoE as regards their managerial role, even their day-to-day activities, and the same applies to teachers who are used to being told what to do.

The study also revealed that such lack of autonomy in the implementation process associated with the lack of clear policy in terms of goals, objectives, procedures and guidance to be followed in translating the policy to action, have had created a sizeable degree of discretionary power exercised by SLBs in their daily work. The study suggests that SLBs exercise significant discretion in a range of ways that directly influence the implementation of education policy. Evidence suggested that this had unintended consequences for the work of SLBs. It is likely that the education policy is implemented according to implementer's interpretation and understanding of what the policy means to them and to their judgment as to what is in their school's interests, but not to clear regulations and procedural guidance leading to the achievement of policy goals. This individual interpretations and judgments were expected to lead to different policy outcomes that might differ from policymaker's intended. This results in a poor and uneven practice and creates a gap between policy formulation and policy implementation at the local level and therefore variations between regions in terms of policy output. There is an indication that each directorate of education in region have used different mechanism and ways to implement the policy according to their understanding of the rules and regulations. However, such ambiguity in policy as Matland (1995:145) indicated is often responsible for implementation failure:

> In top-down models, goal clarity is an important independent variable that directly affects policy success. Goal ambiguity is seen as synthesizing implementation literature leading to misunderstanding and uncertainty and therefore often is culpable in implementation failure.

The discretion power of SLBs as the study suggested is due not only to the policy ambiguity or the lack of formal autonomy but also to various factors that influence the decision of SLBs at the implementation stage. Evidence revealed strong influence of school environment, society's culture, and SLBs' beliefs as to what constitutes their School's best interest, on the decision of implementation. For example, the effect of school environment on the policy application was presented in the lack of school facilities such as laboratories, play ground, classes, and qualified teacher which all affect the decision of school principal. With the lack of such elements principal cannot implement some policy decisions. More importantly, the study showed that the neighbourhood in which the school serves as well as the class of residents have an impact

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on the decision of school principal. Decision of School principal in neighbourhood and district with high rank officials is likely to be in the side/benefit of those officials[80] because principal either want to maintain a good relation with those officials in a hope that he will need them in one day (favouritism) or to avoid confrontation with those officials because the unfavourable consequences he expect. This finding closely supported by the argument of Lipsky (1980:18) who indicated that:

> Street level bureaucrats work in situations that often require responses to the human dimensions of situations. They have discretion because the accepted definitions of their tasks call for sensitive observation and judgment, which are not reducible to programmed formats.

The evidence also revealed that part of the discretion power exercised by SLBs in the implementation of policy is related to the fact that they are professionals in their field. School principals and teachers in general have competence and technical skills enabled them to reach students in a meaningful way, developing innovative approaches to mandated content while motivating, engaging, and inspiring young adult minds to prepare for ever-advancing technology (Allan, Gordon, Iverson, 2006). Hence, the degree of discretionary powers SLBs experience in their daily work is significantly influenced by their professional skills. There is a correlation between the discretion powers exercised by the SLBs and their degree of professionalism as Lipsky (1980:15) suggested:

> Certain characteristics of the jobs of street-level bureaucrats make it difficult, if not impossible, to severely reduce discretion. They involve complex tasks for which elaboration of rules, guidelines, or instructions cannot circumscribe the alternatives. In other words, discretion appears to be strongly associated with the degree of professionalism of street-level bureaucrats. The more professional the street-level bureaucrat, the more discretion he exercises and vice versa.

The study also revealed poor communication between the various levels of bureaucracy within the MoE. There was a missing link between the centre and local level in regard to policy implementation. Evidence suggested that the relationship between schools level and middle administration takes a form of giving directives and orders and its execution rather than cooperation, sharing opinion, and integration of efforts to achieve policy

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[80] Whom their sons or relatives studying at the school

goals. On the other hand the relationship between the middle and the top is not far from this form except the little degree of autonomy and power that regulated to the middle administration in some administrative issues. There was impression at the schools level that the middle and top administration concerns only about achieving results consistent with policy objectives without paying due attention to how these are translated into practice at the schools level.

In regard to the question of *what evaluation and measurement techniques are employed in MoE and especially in secondary school education?* The study suggested that the education policy has no clear mechanisms for monitoring the policy output or to know if the goals set has been achieved. Evidence revealed that the education policy's goals and objectives are not specified in a measurable form. There was a lack of clear and well-defined mechanisms for monitoring the policy, follow-up and feedback, as well as lack of educational standards to be achieved or to measure progress against. In other word, the on-going activity to trace a policy's progress and to provide a regular oversight of the implementation in terms of input delivery, work schedules, and targeted outputs was absent in the work of MoE. Evidence stresses on the absence of appropriate and effective tools for collecting the information about the extent to which the policy is meeting its objectives or leading to its desired effects. It seems that such activities were not clarified at the formulation stage at the MoE, although it is a precondition for successful implementation. This failure to identify the activities involved in delivering the policy, as well as the lack of identifying the policy output and setting standard to be achieved or to measure against were seen as one of the biggest problem in the design of education policy in Saudi Arabia. Such findings are supported by the argument of Hogwood and Gunn (1984:220) who stated that:

> Fully effective monitoring will require initial specification of what program delivery should involve; one cannot measure deviations from standards, which are not specified. This involves linking program goals to the objectives of the policy.

The analysis of the study also revealed that school statistics which shows the students' results (pass or fail) at the end of the academic year is, the only tools available to measure whether the education policy (reducing the number of failures and dropout rates in

secondary schools) had achieved its aims or not. The higher percentage of successful rate the more likely the policy achieves its aims. Therefore, it is just a discretionary process illustrated in school statistics. It becomes apparent from the analysis that the measurement of policy outcome and as described by a senior level in the centre is depends on the person in charge, as well as the culture and the impressions of the officials at the MoE. These dependencies, as the study suggested, were due to the fact that there is no clear system or mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the policy. This finding is closely align with the study of Almengash (2006) of which indicated that there was no item or clear policy that calls for evaluation and review the educational policy from time to time or when the needs arises to do so. Her study found that the policy never went through evaluation since its established 40 years ago to make sure of its capability to meet the needs of the Saudi society and to keep pace with international developments in education.

In what is a state-centric, top-down system, it was surprising to find such a lack of activated auditing and monitoring system to trace the implementation of the policy. The evidence indicates that monitoring education policy has been neglected and there was a weak interest and commitment to the policy monitoring process by both the MoE and the local education authorities. Furthermore, the analysis revealed no tradition or practice in terms of carrying out, sharing, discussing and using the results of the policy's monitoring and assessment activities among the MoE, the directorates of education, and the schools at the local level. This lack of effective tools and mechanism for monitoring occurred despite the existence of special department in the MoE called the General Directorate of Measurement and Evaluation (GDME). From secondary source of data collected, the tasks of GDME are laying of standards for elements of the educational system (school leadership, teacher, curriculum, student, school environment); construction of educational, psychological and social tests and scales; conducting training and support of continuous vocational growth; evaluation of scholastic and educational performance; an evaluation of programs and projects. Although the GDME is responsible for the evaluation of programs, projects, and educational performance, there is strong evidence that the role of such department in performing these tasks is mostly theoretical. Therefore, their works depend on the reports received from the directorates of education in the various regions. The directorates of education are hold accountable for not submitting reports and data regarding the schools achievements to the GDME.

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Evidence from the study suggested that the department lack of a systematic process designed not only to collect information about the implementation and the degree of which goals achieved, but also to exercise control and power about the action required if performance deviates unjustifiably from what is desired. Importantly, the measurement process of the policy's output received little attention at the MoE. It seems that the decisions makers are not interesting to trace policy activities at the local level and weather the goals are met. Hogwood and Gunn (1984) indicate that for managerial and political reasons government may be unwilling to take the action which the monitoring information would otherwise indicate. However, to understand the relation between the GDME and the decision makers at the MoE, one senior official clearly illustrated that:

> No one in the Ministry asks about the assessment of a program or wants to
> know the details. For acknowledgement only some officials may want to
> see the results....If evaluation report on a specific project is requested, let's
> say about the tests project; no one of the decision makers is interested or
> even asks about the impact of the project on the directorate of education or
> the students in a particular area.....The role of the department is to present
> the results only. Who benefits from these findings? I do not know, and as I
> said, no one in the ministry request for such results.

This situation indicates poor communication and absence of feedback between the centre and local and more importantly between the different departments within the MoE. This missing link created a gap between decision makers and the realty of the implementation of the policy at the local level. As Hogwood and Gunn (1984:221) argue:

> If policymakers have no idea about what is 'going on out there' they
> are unable to judge whether anything relevant is happening at all or to
> measure the coast of programme delivery relative to the outputs. In
> such circumstances policies become hopeful signals sent out to the
> periphery of the policy delivery system which are incapable of being
> effectively monitored.

Although the various findings revealed by this study about the nature of education policy and the degree in which the policy implement by SLBs at the local level, the above findings regarding the lack of activated monitoring and auditing system for education policy in Saudi Arabia is seen as the main contribution of this thesis.

9.4 Summary of the Research and Main Findings

This study aimed to explore and understand the nature of power and autonomy within the Saudi political system. In doing so, the study investigated the way in which public education policy (reducing the number of failure and dropout policy at the secondary schools level), implemented in three different local authorities a cross Saudi Arabia. More specifically, the study aimed to investigate how actors further down the policy-chain, the SLBs (secondary school's principals and their education managers) in Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam cities operated, and the degree of devolved power or political autonomy they experienced in the implementation process. The study's aims were:

- To explore and understand the nature of the Saudi political system and the power relationship between the centre and local government.

- To provide a thorough analysis of the nature and evolution of the Saudi public education system and its practices.

- To examine how SLBs translate education policy into action in their daily work.

- To account for possible variation between policy set by the centre and its implementation at the local level.

- To explore the degree of power and autonomy experienced by SLBs in the implementation stage.

- To examine power relations within different levels of bureaucracy at the MoE.

- To examine SLBs understanding and beliefs with regards to education policy.

- To explore the reasons behind the shifting of SLBs perspectives on the implementation of education policy.

The main argument of the study was *The nature of the Saudi Political System, based as it is on a monarchical model of government, assumes that policy goals set centrally at the policy gestation stage are closely adhered to by SLBs at the policy implementation stage..* This is, then, in contrast with the literature from liberal democracies, more specifically the United Kingdom and the United States concerning implementation problems in the policy process. However, in order to explore the nature of the power relationship between the centre and the local in regard to the implementation of education policy and therefore pursue the aims of the study, the central question that was in need to be answer was: *To what extent the SLBs adhered to education policy goals in the implementation stage?* The research's

methodology is designed to answer the research questions through conducting semi-structured interviews, which were analysed using thematic analysis approach resulting in patterns and themes related to various area of education policy. The core themes round which conclusion organised were categorised into four groups include policy background (evolution, development, and change overtime); policy formulation include clarity, stability of education policy, and participation of SLBs in policymaking; policy implementation include power and autonomy of SLBs in the implementation stage, relationship between different level of bureaucracy within the MoE, and factors hindering successful implementation; and policy monitoring include auditing, feedback, and standard to be achieved or to measure against. The study findings managed to answer the following sub questions and fulfil the aims and objectives of the research. The study found the following main points:

- *What is the nature of the public policy system in Saudi Arabia, with specific reference to education policy, and how does it function?*

The evolution and development of the education policy in Saudi Arabia is influenced by religious, economic, social, and organisational factors. The policy driven from Islamic religion which the formal religion of the state and the guidance of its policies and implementation. The state initiated the policy to integrate various educational systems[81] that found before the unification of the country under one centralised system to direct the education output to the social and economic development. The general framework of the policy had not change overtime but significant change happened in education infrastructure, organisations, curriculums...etc.

- *What perceptions do SLBs and their managers have of education policy objectives?*

The education policy is formulates at the MoE with no participation or involvement of bureaucrats at the local level in policymaking process. The MoE setting policy's goals and objectives, rules, regulations, as well as mechanism for measurement, auditing, and feedback. Following a top down approach for policymaking, the policy move down through hierarchical structure to SLBs at the regional level who in charge of

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[81] Before the unification of the country in 1933, the Hejaz region (the west part of Saudi Arabia) had a different educational system generated from the Ottomans and the kingdom of Hejaz. This system is differ from the one in the middle (Riyadh) and the East part (Dammam)

implementing the policy. The lack of participation in policymaking created a gap between policy formulation and implementation which led to implementation problems. Part of the issue lies in the fact that policymakers have not understood the circumstances surrounded the implementation at the local level including the discretion power of SLBs in translating the policy to action.

- *How are education policy targets and goals translated into action in a public service context at the MoE?*

The education policy tends to be ambiguous, vague, and conflicting as well as lacking continuity and stability. The policy is not clear and consistent in terms of goals, objectives, and programs. There is a lack of clear rules, regulations, and operational guidance enabled the implementers achieves the policy goals. Moreover, the policy is not stable and often changes according to the change of officials at the Ministry level. Changes frequently happened in policy programmes, trends, and strategies. There were strong indications of lack of institutional work in the MoE's operations.

- *How can relations of power and autonomy within the MoE be explained?*

The SLBs at the regional level have no formal power or independency in the implementation of education policy. Instead, they exercise sizeable degree of discretionary power in their daily work. Their discretionary powers were found to be associated with the unclarity of policy's rules and regulations. SLBs used their understanding and own interpretations of policy and what it means to them. The discretionary powers experienced by SLBs during the implementation process led to varieties of applications of the policy and therefore different policy outputs between the regions/provinces, which might not be consistent with policymakers' intention in the MoE.

- *Where and why in the delivery chain might misinterpretation occur within the levels of bureaucracy?*

The problem with education policy starts from the top level. During the formulation stage, the policy is not translated to clear objectives and goals accompanied with rules, regulations, and operational structures enables implementers' achieves policy goals. Moreover, the activities in the implementation stage are not specific or identified when the

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policy is designed. The policy is written in general statements because those in the top level involved in policymaking are lack of adequate information. This problem reflects on the behavior and decisions of SLBs at the implementation stage. SLB implement the policy according to their interpretation and understanding of what the policy mean to them but not according to clear mechanism lead to achieve policy goals.

- *What evaluation and measurement techniques are employed in secondary school education?*

The education policy has no clear mechanisms for monitoring or standards to be achieved or to measure against. There is a shortage in tools or mechanism to collect information and data regarding achievements of education policy and whether objectives had been met. Furthermore, there is a lack of effective communication between the MoE and the directorates of education at the regional level regarding policy feedback. There is indication of weak interest and commitment to the policy's monitoring process in addition to a weak culture of carrying out, sharing, discussing and using the results of policy's monitoring and assessment activities among educational authorities and organisations at both centre and local levels.

- *What major problems are encountered by SLBs in the implementation of education policy?*

SLBs encountered major challenge and problems during the translation of policy to action. Lack of participation in policy decision, lack of power and autonomy to perform their job, lack of financial resources, and lack of effective communication with middle and top level of administration all contributes to major challenges faced SLBs in the implementation stage.

9.5 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

9.5.1 Strengths

This study set out to offers an original account and to contribute to the nature of power and autonomy in the Saudi system by attempting to establish literature in this field. It is the first study at the local level that provides findings on education policy implementation, seeking to understand the relation of power between the centre and local government as indication of the nature of the Saudi political system. The study has offered evidence on the perceptions and views of SLBs towards the education policy in general and the way in which the policy of reducing the number of failure and drop out in

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secondary schools is implemented in specific. The study has identified factors affecting the education policy implementation, which contribute to the nature limited literature on the nature of the Saudi political system in terms of relations of power and autonomy and its impact on social policies delivery. This information can added to the knowledge of education policymakers in Saudi Arabia of the current perceptions of SLBs; in addition, it has several implications for the development of education policy; and will also reveal some recommendation that helps achieves successful implementation of education policy. Another identifiable strength of the study is its ability to adapt semi structured-interviews as a data collection instrument, and how this research technique was developed in the study to better suit the Saudi context, reflecting, in turn on actual perceptions and practices of local level bureaucrats of policy implementation. Moreover, although this study has drawn mostly from Western based literature in both the review of related research and interpretation of findings; it, nevertheless, confirmed that similar patterns of policy implementation problems, perceptions and views of SLBs, and factors affecting implementation exist in Saudi schools as in other countries.

9.5.2 Limitations

The study was geographically confined to Saudi SLBs (education managers and secondary school principals) employed by the MoE in the three largest local educational authorities in the country (Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam); namely, those who are involved in translating and converting the policy into action. As a result, this has not included school principals in the private or military sectors because these two sectors are governed by their own internal regulations and procedures. For data collection purposes, data was solely gathered for this study from male principals and managers using semi-structured interviews. If there had been time and resources available, the study could have been extended to include female SLBs; furthermore, it would have been possible to obtain multi-gender's (female secondary schools principals) in-depth information to augment the current results and to ascertain whether the research findings were generalised or were specific to the male SLBs working at the three large local education authorities participating in the study. However, given the constraints of time and resources available for the study, it was considered essential to select male bureaucrats from the three largest regions/cities instead of drawing a sample from both male and female bureaucrats in the same regions. In addition, the study could have been usefully

expanded to cover teachers' perspectives regarding the policy and its implementation as well as the differences between principals' and teachers' views could have been examined. Moreover, a comparison between educational managers, schools' principals, and teachers' views might have assisted in creating an effective methodology for implementing the education policy, which policymakers should consider other policy areas to tell us more about whether issues raised in education occur elsewhere when formulating policies in order to achieve such successful implementation.

9.6 Implications and Recommendations for Further Research

In view of the findings derived from this study and its conclusions, the following recommendations for education policy and its implementation are outlined. They are mainly related to strategies that can be considered by policy makers to improve the effectiveness of policy implementation.

Lessons drawing from the study:

- The MoE should raise awareness of the education policy in general among educationalists by distributing the Educational Policy Document to departments of education and schools and by asking SLBs to work towards fulfilling the document's aims and objectives and to report any difficulties that face them together with their own recommendations for immediate follow-up.

- The MoE should involve SLBs and establishments within the Saudi society in workshops to create blueprints of educational targets and objectives as well as in forming educational plans, programs and improving the policies to cope with the challenges and developments in this era.

- The MoE should use a range of methods to encourage SLBs to participate in policy formulation to ensure that the targets set have been met and therefore the successful implementation of education policy.

- The MoE should create an education policy that is built on reliable, clear, and stable policies and strategies, depending on modern techniques, making the applicable and methodological structure a base for the educational process. This includes updating policies of education and revising its aims, emphasising its constants, and continuous assessment of its programs.

- In this study, policy ambiguity was considered a major hindrance to successful implementation. The policy makers in the MoE should start setting clear and achievable targets and objectives and more importantly combine them with operational guidance to be followed by implementers to avoid misinterpretation during the implementation process.

- The MoE should start addressing the issue of altering plans by changing officials and adopting the institutional work in the MoE and its organisations that supervises education so avoiding the element of surprise in the educational system, and steer away from rapid decisions, which creates problems and leads to mixing priorities and loosing focus on key aims.

- The MoE should delegate power, more authority, and enough flexibility to the educational departments in regions and schools' principals to manage and run their schools and that includes financial matters.

- The study identified a need for measurement and auditing system. Hence, the MoE should set an educational standard to be achieved or to measure against. This will help in determining whether the policy achieved its aims or not.

- The MoE should establish/identify an independent organisation to be responsible for the activation and improvement of the assessment mechanisms and monitoring of the education policy and its outputs, and to participate in the improvement of education policy.

It has been argued that research studies often generate issues that are of further interest to researchers. Therefore, future studies can build on the results of this study to enrich existing knowledge in the area of policy implementation. It is clear from this research that the education policy implementation especially in Saudi Arabia has challenges, obstacles, and far complex processes and therefore research approach to this problematic process needs to be expanded to include other policy area. However, a study using observation techniques combined with other methods, such as interviews, could provide deeper insight into the decision, behaviour, and practices of SLBs in regard the implementation of education policy. It also could obtain first hand information regarding factors supporting and hindering their practices and to evaluate the extent of their influence on the implementation of the policy. Comparing the views of policymakers regarding the implementation of education policy with those of SLBs would reveal interesting comparisons and assist in bridging the gap between policy formulation and its implementation.

This study was conducted in three main educational authorities in the largest three cities in Saudi Arabia. There are forty three other educational authorities in Saudi Arabia and these needs to be researched. When conducting a study like the present one, rural and urban areas and teachers could be included to confirm its findings and provide a complete picture of SLBs perceptions and views regarding the way to which education policy implementing. The researcher hopes that this study will encourage other researchers to conduct follow-up research in the field of implementation of Saudi education policy. Lack of clear mechanism for education policy measurement and auditing is questionable matters and further research should therefore be encouraged and welcomed.

9.7 Conclusion

This study offers an opportunity to explore the nature of power and autonomy in the Saudi political system in regard to public policy implementation, and how the power relationship between the central government and the regional level could be explained. Specifically, the study examines and addresses the issues associated with the way in which public education policy (reducing the number of failure and dropout policy in secondary schools) in Saudi Arabia is implementing by SLBs and the degree of devolved power or political autonomy they experience in the implementation process.

Based on document analyses and the interviews of SLBs and officials at the top level, there is evidence to suggest that the policy goals made by the centre at the policy gestation stage are not closely translated further down the policy chain at the policy implementation stage. There was evidence of variation between intended policy goals and its implementation at the local level. The variation was due to the lack of clear and stable policy, operational guidance aiming to assist implementers with the achievement of the policy's goals, and absence of tools and mechanisms to measure the policy output. It is also due to the absence of communication and effective feedback between the MoE and the educators at the local level. Therefore, SLBs at the local level implement the policy according to their interpretation and understanding of the rules and regulations set by the MoE and that adversely affecting the implementation output and led to variation not only between policy formulation and execution but also between regions and cities across Saudi Arabia.

These findings indicates that although in theory the authoritarian and the top-down nature of the Saudi political system that assumes strict adherence and close translation to the policy been set at the centre by SLBs at the local level, the actual practice of policy implementation contrasts this notion. Although, the wider changes in the political system specifically in the power structure and the performance of the government major institutions due to the 1992 political reforms, the State (MoE) failed not only to developed education policy that clear and specific in terms of goals and objectives but in creating and applying an effective mechanism to practically translate these goals and objectives into reality. The reforms were aimed to enhance public participation in policymaking and decentralise authority by granting considerable financial and administrative independence to the local government. However, the findings revealed that such changes are not activated in practical sense. The MoE is still controlling the policymaking process and did not give the opportunity for bureaucrats in the local level to participate in the formulation of the policy or present their opinion about education policies and the possibility of application on the ground since they know the difficulties they face every day in reaching the goals set by the MoE. This lack of participation has created a gap between policy formulation and implementation and created implementation problems because policymakers are not aware of the situations surrounded the implementation at the local level. This failure of the state to develop education policy without an effective transmission mechanism is confirm the nature of the hierarchical structure and the centralisation of power in the MoE work. Importantly, it emphasizes the lack of government channels to activate the political reform or a follow-up mechanism, which indicates the theoretical nature of the political reform. This explains by the slow process adopted by the MoE to delegate power to the local authority. These issues emerging from the study are consistent with the general implementation literature concerning implementation problems. In other word, the policy formulation, the perspectives of the SLBs toward the policy, the communication of the goals of the policy, the interpretation of those goals by SLBs, and the discretion power of SLBs and its influence on the implementation, point to the lessons learned from previous policy implementation studies (Nakamura & Smallwood, 1980; Odden, 1991; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1981).

In addition to all major findings of this study, there are two very important outcomes highlighted. The first outcome is related to the fact that the research has been undertaken with reference to both Western and Saudi-based literature resulting in a study that combines both, and recognising the different contributions both make. This study attempted to bring these two literatures together using a comprehensive framework. To explain this, the researcher exercised cultural combination to show how western literature in regard to policy implementation could help frame such a study, and how the context of the study in Saudi Arabia reflects back on the literature from which the framing is being derived. Therefore, it is a two way process in which the Western and Saudi literature inform each other. Throughout the study, the influences of these two literatures are re-assessed and integrated into the study setting, which is important to significantly enhance the comprehensiveness of the study outcomes.

The second outcome of the study is related to the link between the present and the future. The study highlights the importance of learning from SLBs current practices and incorporating their views in regard to education policy and its implementation. It is therefore felt to be important that the policy makers at the MoE as they have the ultimate power to shape and influence the educational policy, should take into consideration the views of SLBs, and involve them in the process of policymaking. This relationship, based on dialogue between policymakers and SLBs, is practiced and reflected in western studies, but it does not hold true at present in Saudi Arabia. By promoting dialogue and interaction between the MoE and the SLBs at the local level, it is likely to ensure that educational policy outputs match policy makers' intentions, leading to the successful implementation of the public education policy in Saudi Arabia.

This thesis has focused on the implementation of education policy. The theoretical contribution of this thesis lies mainly in how power and autonomy can be explained in the Saudi political system and how power relationship between the central government and local level reflects on the implementation of public policies. The empirical contribution concerns the impact of such relationship on the extent in which education policy implement by SLBs and how it is to be in consistence with policymakers intend. The value of the thesis concerns the nature of the system and the power structure and thereby the implementation process and the forces hinder achieving policy goals. In the

introductory chapter, the importance of studying and learning more about the nature of power structure in the Saudi system and therefore its impact on the implementation of public education policy was addressed. In relation to the argument that was put forward in that chapter, it is important to learn more about the extent in which the policy implement according to the centre intend. If we know how SLBs implements the education policy and what the degree of autonomy they experience at the local level, it should be easier to know how to suggest methods and ways to improve implementation conditions and therefore the effectiveness of MoE in delivering education services.

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APPENDIX (1)

Interviews Questions- Secondary Schools Principals

Question1: How long has the school been established?

Question2: How many students are there in your school?

Question3: How many teachers are there in your school?

Question4: Where were the ideas of education policy coming from? and what were the pressures, demands shaping the policy?

Question5: How do you understand the nature of the policy change over time?

Question6: Who were the key Actors involved in the policy?

Question7: Do you participate or take part, in any form, in the process of policy-making?

Question8: Does education policy clearly define and regulate in a form easily understood by implementers? Explain.

Question9: How much autonomy and power do you have in deciding standards, goals, measures and funding to meet the requirements of the policy?

Question10: Do you have the authority in making the final decision regarding the failure in the performance of school and in deciding the necessary remedial measures needed to rectify such a problem?

Question11: To what extent you think that policies and procedures may changes with the change of persons and official positions?

Question12: Is there any specific policy for secondary education and if it exist what its salient features?

Question13: Is there any measure to reduce rate of failure and dropout in secondary schools?

Question14: How do you evaluate the degree of autonomy that managers have in rectifying school problems, and do principals have autonomy in running their school ?

Question15: To what extent you think there is a variation in the implementation between regions or cities?

Question16: How do you explain your relation with the managers of education in your city?

Question17: Do you think there is an important question related to this study not been asked?

APPENDIX (2)

Interviews Questions- Managers of Education

Question1: Where were the ideas of education policy coming from? and what were the pressures, demands shaping the policy?

Question2: How do you understand the nature of the policy change over time?

Question3: Who were the key Actors involved in the policy?

Question4: Do you participate or take part, in any form, in the process of policy-making?

Question5: Does education policy clearly define and regulate in a form easily understood by implementers? Explain

Question6: How much autonomy and power do you have in deciding standards, goals, measures and funding to meet the requirements of the policy?

Question7: In your opinion where in the policy chain misunderstanding may occurs?

Question8: To what extent you think that policies and procedures may changes with the change of persons and official positions?

Question9: Is there any specific policy for secondary education and if it exist what its salient features?

Question10: Is there any measure to reduce rate of failure and dropout in secondary schools?

Question11: How do you evaluate the degree of autonomy that managers have in rectifying school problems, and do principals have autonomy in running their school ?

Question12: To what extent you think there is a variation in the implementation between different regions or cities?

Question13: How do you explain your relation with the managers of education in your city?

Question14: Do you think there is an important question related to this study not been asked?

APPENDIX (3)

Interviews questions- centre level

Question 1: What areas of policy-making are you involved in?

Question 2: Dose the education policy clearly defines and regulated in a form that easy to be understood by implementers? Explain.

Question 3: Is there any mechanism for policy monitoring, follow up, and feedback?

Question 4: Is there any specific education policy for secondary schooling? If yes, what are the main features of such policy?

Question 5: Is this policy translated into specific targets, goals, and measures to achieve them?

Question 6: Is there any specific policy and policy measures for reducing failure and drop-out rate and for improving performance and standards?

Question 7: Do managers of education in the regions and school's principals participate in policy making?

Question 8: Regarding failure, drop-out and improvement of educational standard and performance of high school students, does the policy set clear goals and measures progress toward them?

Question 9: Do managers and principals have a degree of autonomy to decide what minimum standards must all students achieved in subjects and other aspects?

Question 10: To what extent you think the policy is implemented according to the policy-making intend?

Question 11: How do you describe the relationship with the managers of education?

Question 12: In your opinion where in the policy cycle misunderstand may occurs ?

Question 13: Are there any areas in which the education policy process could be improved upon?