Understanding the GCC Education Sector – a country by country guide

Country Profile: KSA

This series of infographics provides a country by country overview of the education sector in the GCC.

The current nature of policy review and strategic overhaul in Saudi Arabia mean that the mechanisms for delivering education in the coming years are in flux. The initial education related objectives laid out in Vision 2030 challenge all elements of the system to improve on historical performance and prepare the country’s workforce for a diversified and knowledge-based economy. How will the Kingdom’s providers, regulators and funders respond? Can an environment be created that will attract the private sector, seen as being key to funding capacity and raising quality?
# Overview of the education sector

Figure 1: Structure of Saudi Arabia’s education system (as of autumn 2016)\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>British system</th>
<th>American system</th>
<th>Saudi system</th>
<th>KSA key regulators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18+</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>Ministry of Education (MoE) merged with Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Technical &amp; Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>10 – 12</td>
<td>Colleges of Excellence (COE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>7 – 12</td>
<td>Saudi Skills Standards (SSS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>7 – 9</td>
<td>Education Evaluation Commission (EEC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>includes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Public Evaluation Commission (PEEC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>7 – 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- National Commission for Academic Accreditation &amp; Assessment (NCAA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td>- National Center for Assessment in Higher Education (Qiyas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1 – 6</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td>- TVTC (Awards &amp; Evaluation Dept.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pre-primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>FS 1 – FS 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) UNESCO; PwC analysis
Figure 2: Population growth in the Kingdom is forecast to accelerate over the next decade, and this, alongside increasing participation, will put pressure on provision\(^2\)

![Population growth graph]

Figure 3: While annual disposable income grew at 3% between 2009 and 2015, its growth is expected to slow to 2% between 2016 and 2030. Despite this slowdown, even the poorest residents will have 25% more disposable income in 2030 than they have today in real terms.

Forecast real growth in annual disposable income by decile, 2016-2030\(^3\)

![Disposable income growth graph]

Figure 4: The Kingdom’s primary education has slightly improved its position in global competitiveness rankings, but can other education indicators follow in order to improve overall long-term competitiveness and quality?

Global Competitiveness Index rankings comparison, 2015-16 vs. 2016-17\(^4\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Global Competitiveness Index</th>
<th>2015-16</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>25(^{th})</td>
<td>29(^{th})</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of primary education</td>
<td>72(^{th})</td>
<td>64(^{th})</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of higher education</td>
<td>47(^{th})</td>
<td>48(^{th})</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary education enrolment</td>
<td>35(^{th})</td>
<td>52(^{th})</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary education enrolment</td>
<td>7(^{th})</td>
<td>24(^{th})</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary education enrolment</td>
<td>44(^{th})</td>
<td>44(^{th})</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: KSA has seen a decline in its international testing results and a major effort is needed to reach National Transformation Program (NTP) 2020 targets\(^5\)

![International testing results graph]

\(^2\)UN; PwC analysis
\(^3\)Euromonitor; PwC analysis
\(^4\)WEF (2016-17 (rank/138 countries) previous PISA assessments); PwC analysis and 2015-16 (rank/140); PwC analysis
\(^5\)TIMSS; PIRLS; OECD (2016 PIRLS results forthcoming; 15-year olds did not participate in previous PISA assessments); PwC analysis
Higher Education

Figure 6: Despite a recent dip, the 18-24 Saudi population is set to increase. If enrolment rates follow, around 125,000 additional seats will be required by 2020. Initial indications on policy direction for the already high enrolment rate combined with budgetary caution on capital expenditure suggest that any growth in capacity is most likely to come from the private sector.

18-24 Saudi population & higher education enrolment by year and school type

Figure 7: Public higher education institutions still dominate enrolment, however for KSA to reach its NTP target of 15% of students in non-government higher education by 2020 (from 6% today), the private sector will need to increase both capacity and quality to attract students.

Top-5 private and public higher education institutions by enrolment, 2014

Figure 8: There is significant work to be done, particularly in research, for the Kingdom to reach its Vision 2030 commitment to have at least five Saudi Universities among the top 200 universities in international rankings.

Number of KSA institutions and ranking in the top 200 universities, 2012 & 2016
Figure 9: 12% (190,000+) of all students enrolled in university in 2014 went abroad to study, with the US being the destination of choice. However with tightening restrictions on visa and scholarship qualification, could there be additional demand for domestic private provision?

Number of Saudi students studying abroad by country, 2014\(^9\)

**Canada**
2014: 14,721 students (7% private, 93% scholarship)
2009-2014 student change: +64%

**USA**
2014: 110,423 students (12% private, 88% scholarship)
2009-2014 student change: +355%

**UK**
2014: 17,451 students (9% private, 91% scholarship)
2009-2014 student change: +15%

**Arab countries**
2014: 14,917 students (52% private, 48% scholarship)
2009-2014 student change: -18%

**Europe**
2014: 8,775 students (6% private, 94% scholarship)
2009-2014 student change: +99%

**Asia**
2014: 6,728 students (15% private, 85% scholarship)
2009-2014 student change: +158%

**Australia**
2014: 10,517 students (8% private, 92% scholarship)
2009-2014 student change: 46%

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Figure 10: For those Saudi students studying abroad, the fields of business, engineering and health remain the top choices

Number of Saudi students studying abroad by field of study, 2014\(^9\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of Study</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business &amp; Management</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informatics</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Education</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^9\)MoE; PwC analysis
\(^9\)MoE; PwC analysis
Grade 1-12 Education

Figure 11: Unless a significant shift occurs, private sector enrolment is unlikely to exceed 12% of students by 2020 despite the government’s longstanding aspiration for private provision to rise to 25%

6-18 population & grade 1-12 enrolment by school type

Figure 12: At current growth rates, over a million additional seats in grades 1-12 will be needed by 2020, of which 150,000 should come from around 800 new private schools

Grade 1-12 enrolment by school type and level

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11 MoE; UN; PwC analysis
12 MoE; PwC analysis (2016-20 seat estimate; *based on 2014 average private school size per grade level)

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MoE; UN; PwC analysis
MoE; PwC analysis (2016-20 seat estimate; *based on 2014 average private school size per grade level)
Figure 13: The total number of private schools in the Kingdom grew 3% between 2012 and 2014 with the northwest regions (Tabuk, Jawf, Madinah) leading the way in foreign-curriculum school growth rates and the southern regions (Asir, Jizan, Najran) in national-curriculum schools. Riyadh has the most private schools and has overtaken Makkah in terms of the number of its foreign-curriculum schools.

Grade 1-12 number of private schools by curriculum and region, 2012-14\textsuperscript{13} (N.B.: x-axis scale varies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Religious</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Rel.</th>
<th>Nat.</th>
<th>For.</th>
<th>Total % of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Borders</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabuk (12%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jawf (9%)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madinah (18%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>164</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makkah (-2%)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asir (4%)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jizan (16%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najran (19%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Province</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{13}MoE, PwC analysis (data is based on currently available information; excludes special, adult, and non-traditional “mukararat” secondary education schools)
Figure 14: The strongest growth in school numbers is coming from the private sector at the primary level where public provision has declined. Government support for increased private sector participation needs to have an impact across age ranges to meet its targets.

Grade 1-12 number of schools by school type and level, 2012-14

Kindergarten

Figure 15: Nearly 80,000 additional seats are expected by 2020 based on current growth rates. However, to reach its NTP 2020 target of 27.2% enrolment in kindergarten (3-6 year olds), a total of about 430,000 additional seats will be required.

3-6 population & kindergarten enrolment

Technical and Vocational Education & Training (TVET)

Figure 16: The Kingdom is aiming to equip more Saudi youth with advanced technical skills at public technical colleges, evident in the growth in the number of both male and female colleges.

Enrolment and number of public training institutions by type, 2011-14
Figure 17: Male enrolment in private training institutes has witnessed continuous growth at a rate of 15% per annum since 2011 while female enrolment has been stable during the same period.

Enrolment and number of training institutes by type, 2011-14

Figure 18: KSA key players in private education

Key players

Key national entities
- Ministry of Education (MoE)
- Technical & Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC)
- Colleges of Excellence (COE)
- Saudi Skills Standards (SSS)
- Education Evaluation Commission (EEC)
- Ministry of Commerce & Investment (MoCI)

Key players (higher education & TVET)
Higher Education Institutions
- Al-Faisal University
- Dar Al-Uloom University
- Dar Al-Hekma University
- Effat University
- Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University
- Prince Sultan University

Technical and Vocational Education & Training (TVET)
- International Technical Colleges
- National Industrial Training Institute
- Saudi Petroleum Services Polytechnic

Key players (K-12)
- Al-Hussan Education & Training
- International Schools Group
- Ma’arif for Education & Training
- Arrowad Group
- Al-Khaleej Training & Education
- Tadrees Holding
- Kingdom Schools Company

Note: TVTC: PwC analysis
Note: PwC analysis (list is not exhaustive)
Contacts

PwC works nationally and internationally in the education sector with governments, agencies and private sector organisations. If you want to talk to our Middle East team of dedicated specialists who focus exclusively on the education sector, please get in touch.

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