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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Educational Reform and Advancement, Learning, and Privatization "An Analytical Review on the Case of Hail City"

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ABSTRACT

Privatization is integral to Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which seeks to diversify the economy and diminish the nation's dependence on oil. Hail City recognized for its cultural legacy and strategic position, offers distinctive prospects for educational reform and advancement. This research offers an analytical assessment of the effects of privatization on the education system in Hail. The discussion initiates with the overarching consequences of privatization on educational systems and its potential to improve learning results. The research subsequently emphasizes possible sectors where private investment might enhance educational infrastructure, curriculum development, and access to excellent education. Furthermore, it examines the provincial government's attempts to tackle issues, including unregulated building, which may impede the formation of educational institutions. The results highlight the significance of education in promoting socio-economic development and equipping future generations for the knowledge-based economy anticipated in Vision 2030.

INTRODUCTION

Education is fundamental to a nation's development, serving a crucial function in equipping future generations for social and economic issues. The advancement of the education system in Saudi Arabia is crucial for the nation's long-term objectives, especially Vision 2030, which aims to diversify the economy and diminish reliance on oil. An effective education system cultivates innovation, improves worker competencies, and equips individuals to participate in the nation's expanding knowledge-based economy (Al-Mogbel, 2014; Al-Khresheh et al., 2024).

An essential element of educational advancement is curriculum revision. Saudi Arabia has increasingly acknowledged the need to reform and revise the curriculum to align with global norms,(Alshahrani & Abu-Alghayth, 2023; Saleekongchai et al., 2024). This entails the adoption of innovative pedagogical approaches, the integration of technology within educational environments, and the prioritization of critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving competencies. The existing curriculum is sometimes seen as antiquated, excessively prioritizing rote memorization, hence constraining students' capacity to thrive in a swiftly evolving environment. Consequently, curriculum creation is vital for synchronizing educational outputs with the requirements of the contemporary job market,(Alshahrani & Abu-Alghayth, 2023; Alshareef, 2022; Hassan, et al., 2022).

Notwithstanding reform initiatives, the Saudi education system encounters several problems. A notable concern is the disparity between policy and execution. Numerous projects aimed at modernizing education often face challenges, including inadequate teacher preparation, opposition to change, and infrastructure constraints. Moreover, discrepancies in educational quality between urban and rural regions, as well as between public and private institutions, hinder the attainment of fair educational progress (Al-Mogbel, 2014; Esmail, 2020; Essa & Harvey, 2022; Al-Khresheh et al., 2024).

On the other hand, Globalization has created a climate of investment, in which foreign investors from around the world are incentivized to invest in developing nations. Governments in developing nations are racing to capitalize on the rapid growth of foreign direct investment (FDI) flows to developing nations (Haudi, et al., 2020; Jam et al., 2018). Foreign investors invest in other nations for a variety of reasons, including lower labor costs, higher returns, and tax breaks. For example, a Japanese company might build an assembly plant in Mexico, and an American software company might open a sales office in Dubai. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United States, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, China, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Singapore, Switzerland, Ireland, and Germany received the most FDI in 2020. From 2019 to 2020, total reported FDI positions increased by $2.2 trillion, or 6% (Giroud & Ivarsson, 2020; UNCTAD, 2021). While some nations have established an advanced FDI promotion complex with accumulated experience, other developing nations are racing to join the game (Abdouli & Hammami, 2020) - Figure (1).

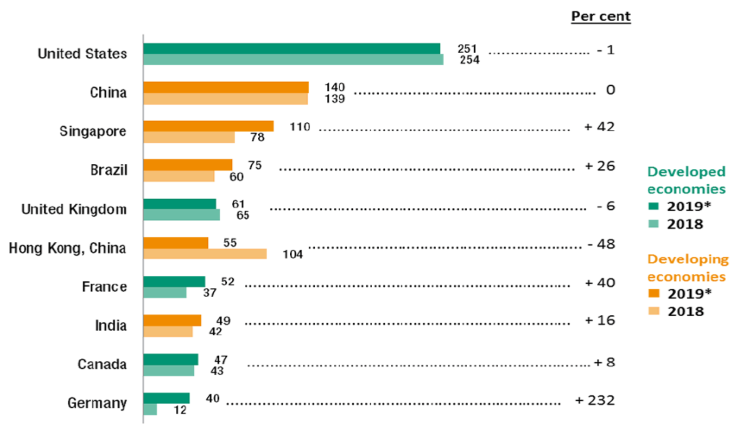

Figure (1): FDI inflows: top 10 host economies, 2018 and 2019

Source: UNCTAD

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has positioned itself as a country with generous incentives to attract foreign direct investment, particularly value-added foreign direct investment, (Algraini, & McIntyre-Mills, 2018; Esmail, 2020; Singh, et al., 2022). Currently, since the introduction of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, attempts have increased to achieve a global ranking index for attracting foreign direct investment. Tax collection and economic growth are greatly influenced by foreign direct investment; it is worth emphasizing. However, earlier research on the Saudi environment lacked micro-scoping potential and constraints associated with attracting foreign direct investment based on a state-by-state examination, since they concentrated on a single country or a small number of countries with the same development pattern. (Juma, et al.,2021; Samargandi, et al., 2022). Therefore, there is potential to investigate investment prospects in Saudi Arabia, particularly in the City of Hail (Samargandi, et al., 2022).

The primary objective of this paper is to investigate the opportunities and challenges of attracting foreign direct investment to the City of Hail in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study will shed light on the competitive advantages and potential in investment opportunities in the City of Hail, and it will provide recommendations regarding the opportunities and challenges in the investment of Hail potential.

The study is organized according to the method of analytic review, beginning with an introduction to the essential component of the current review article and proceeding to a survey of the theoretical perspective of foreign direct investment. In addition to presenting facts and interpretations regarding the significance of foreign direct investment in supporting economic growth, this study will also explain the factors of FDI in order to explain the FDI status in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Prior to the conclusion of the study, a substantial segment would examine the investment in Hail City. The latter sections of the paper will cover some of the most significant aspects of investment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including obstacles, and will conclude with suggestions for enhancing the status of investment in Hail City.

Research Objectives

This study is aimed at investigating the relationship between education and curriculum development in Hail Province, Saudi Arabia, as it pertains to the country's educational system and its capacity to attract investments, especially within the framework of economic diversification and Vision 2030. This research will evaluate the impact of educational changes on fostering an appealing environment for foreign direct investment (FDI) and how educational investment might mitigate local problems. Therefore, the primary objectives are:

- Examine the present condition of educational advancement and curriculum reform in Hail Province.
- Elucidate the prospects and difficulties related to enhancing the education system to facilitate foreign direct investment and socio-economic development.
- Provide proposals for tackling the issues of educational reform and augmenting the role of education in attracting investment to Hail Province.

The report is an excellent resource for individuals who are interested about the proliferation of investment in Hail, and it may support current initiatives for the development of Hail provenance. This report provides current information regarding Hail investment.

Theoretical Background and FDI

Economists have discussed about the importance of FDI in the literature using a range of assumptions. First, in 1966, when US companies began to become production-driven, Vernon proposed a production cycle theory, which postulated that there are four stages of production cycles: innovation, growth, maturity, and decline, assuming that advancements in technology could be replicated by another country, thereby necessitating the launch of a local business in the designated countries to preserve market shares (Denisia, 1998). Second, Itagaki and Cushman proposed in 1981 that currency stability is vital for attracting foreign direct investment. They determined that dollar appreciation had led to a 25 percent decline in FDI, thus foreign exchange became a significant deterrent to FDI (Das, 2014). Thirdly, the notion of internalization, which explains the advantages that some corporations may have over their rivals, motivates firms to seek out FDI opportunities (Vasyechko, 2012). Worthy of note the theory of internationalization has been the subject of ongoing academic advancement (Axinn & Matthyssens, 2002), It was deficient in many aspects, particularly in terms of entry mode's speed and range. Professor Dunning produced a theory in 1973, 1980, and 1988 that described FDI as a result of ownership, location, and internalization with an emphasis on cost and profit margin advantages over rival firms (Jones, et al., 2018; Wu, et al., 2019). In conclusion, despite the fact that numerous researchers have attempted to explain FDI from various perspectives, it is evident that there is no consensus regarding the factors that influence FDI. Therefore, a case study analysis is required if the purpose is to describe the potential of a single city to attract foreign direct investment.

Importance of FDI to Economic Growth

FDI has empirically demonstrated to be a significant determinant of economic growth through tax collection, job creation, and technology advancement. This is because FDI is one of the most common reasons for inviting FDI to a country or state: to increase economic growth (Antonietti & Franco, 2021; Ibrahim & Acquah, 2020). In 2001, FDI inflows fell by more than half, from $1.5 trillion in 2000 to $735 billion, a decrease of more than 50 percent (Nations, 2006). However, the rate of decline is contingent on the country's level of development, whether developing or developed. Therefore, the importance of recruiting FDI has expedited the signing of free trade agreements between nations during the past decade, as many nations continue to improve their trade norms in order to compete for FDI (Ambaw & Sim, 2018; Ta et al., 2020). Initially, many nations were concerned about the effects of foreign direct investment (FDI) on their small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), as multinational firms dominated national economies through their technological and financial prowess. Later, these nations agreed to enhance their legislation and infrastructure while working to strengthen their SME sectors (Fillat & Woerz, 2011; Sumner, 2005).

Noteworthy is that FDI inflows to emerging nations were low compared to major industrialized nations such as the US, UK, JAPAN, and EU (Ab, et al., 2013). According to statistics only 12% of the total FDI financial flows is received by developing countries, (Overseas Development Institute [ODI], 1997) the reasons could be attributed to regulations' weakness, political instability and the atmosphere of investment (Kasasbeh, et al., 2018). Furthermore, FDI inflows favor one region over another. For example, FDI inflows in Asia favors China, Hong Kong, and South Korea, statistics released in 2001 by UNCATD showed that 80% of FDI inflows in Asia go to the said countries (Liang, et al., 2021). Likewise, in Latin America 66% of FDI inflows went to Brazil, Argentina and Mexico whereas 50% of FDI in Africa goes to Angola, Egypt and Nigeria. Political stability and political risk are considered the most important factors contributing the low flow of FDI to developing countries (UNCTAD, 2020).

FDI in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is one of the major players in the oil market, and since the launch of Vision 2030, the country has experienced rapid advancements in government regulations and technology adoption (Juma, et al., 2021). The Vision's objectives have stated that FDI must be a top priority in its plans towards moving from oil dependent country to an economy with varieties of inputs. Indeed, the country intends to improve its world ranking in FDI competing to reach the normal rating of FDI out of GDP. Worth noting, in 2018 the FDI increased by 199.34%, in 2019 the FDI experienced a 7.43% increase from 2018. In addition, the World Bank annual report about doing business in 2020 showed that KSA jumped 30 spots (Juma, et al., 2021).The country's intention to attract FDI involved using a policy reformation that considers World Trade Organization (WTO) guidelines, privatization of many government services, and adoption of high-level technology (Samargandi, et al., 2022). In numbers, almost 25% of every country in the Arab Middle East's GDP was generated by Saudi Arabia in 2002. During the period, private capital flows into the Middle East totaled $8.5 billion, compared to $59.4 billion in Asia, $31.9 billion in Europe, and $46.3 billion in Latin America. (Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency [SAMA], 2002,25). According to FDI researchers, the main factors driving investment in Saudi Arabia are cost factors, market factors, infrastructure, and technological factors, as well as political and legal factors. Saudi Arabia also received FDI from countries with large populations, long distances from Saudi Arabia, and high per capita incomes (Juma, et al., 2021).

In 2000, the formation of an investment authority agency took place intending to accelerate FDI inflow into the Kingdom, since then many improvements have been performed to ease the process, the initiatives include tax alleviation for some years followed by providing factories and land for the starting of the project (BinSaeed, 2021a). As a result, the FDI experienced an improvement reaching a ranking level. However, the concern over the impact of FDI on the local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and localizations of workers is addressed by many scholars in articles about microscopic FDI in KSA. Another point, the FDI inflow in developed countries is related mostly to the process of merger and acquisition. Well, in KSA merger and acquisition is considered at low level compared with other countries particularly the developed ones, even compared with some developing ones (Kadi, 2017). For example, in India which recorded a solid barrier to entry norms Walmart e-commerce had managed to take over Flipkart e-commerce. However, it’s not the case in KSA only; it’s known for all Arab countries (Kalyani, 2019).

Several factors could be contributing to the low level of activity, such as in the Arab world, it is common to have company structures that resemble those in Europe, a family-run business that is not intended to be sold to outsiders, in addition, there are not enough publicly listed companies that meet foreign standards share of market, profitability and return on investment are some of the investors' criteria (Agudze & Ibhagui, 2021).

FDI Regulation in KSA

As mentioned earlier, the establishment of the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) marks the one-stop shop offering the information and the required documentation for getting investment approval, speeding up the process to reach approximately 30 days (BinSaeed, 2021b). Worth noting, the authority includes representatives from 16 government agencies. Furthermore, the authority offered lower taxation thresholds, no limits on the number of losses that could be carried forward, the ability to obtain Saudi financing at full concession levels from the Saudi Industrial Development Fund (SIDF), and 100% foreign ownership of the company employees. That shows foreign could launch their company as the local Saudi could do with an exception on the level of taxation on profit (Alfalih & Bel Hadj, 2020).

However, the Saudi investment law has been in revision since the start of SAGIA. In terms of taxation rate it was mandatory to pay taxes according to the profit the corporation made for example if the profit was more than 100,000 Saudi Riyals and below 500,000 Saudi Riyals the tax rate is 35%, 1 US Dollar equals 3.75 Saudi Riyals. In the new amendment of the law, the rate is 25% on any amount below 100,000 and 30% on any amount generated (Alyami, 2017). Another amendment is related to the presence of a Saudi individual in the ownership of the corporation, this previously was mandatory to receive loans or own land by foreign investors, these conditions are removed in the current amendment of investment law, and foreign investors could own land, get loans and fully on his company(Asiri, 2017).

certain concerns addressed by researchers previously which had been amended such as prohibiting foreign direct investors from investing in insurance companies and some production facilities, these restrictions are removed. In survey about the perception of corporation managers conducted by (Albassam, 2015) Saudi managers welcome the FDI initiatives by the government but they expressed their concern over its ability to transfer technology, protect local companies and solve employment problems.

FDI in Hail City

Micro-scoping investment in KSA necessitates an understanding of each city's potential for attracting FDI. However, we have noticed that studies focus on FDI in KSA using a macro-view rather than delving into each city's investment potential. As a result, we chose Hail as the location for our case study to gain a better understanding of the potential and challenges associated with the investment environment and investment growth in the City of Hail. However, in terms of empirical evidence about FDI in Hail, we discovered that literature about FDI in Hail is rare and extremely low, despite information and data available from the SAGA (Almahasna, 2012).

City Information

The city of Hail is located in the north of KSA, eight hour driving to reach Jordan. The city has a population of 731,147 plus 120,000 KM2 in land area. The city is selected by the Future Saudi Cities Program as a city that has a potential of strategic development. According to city profile of Hail "The cities have been selected based on their different population sizes, geographic distribution, and a range of criteria based on capacities and economic potential to create a more balanced regional development among the cities of Saudi Arabia".

In terms of the contribution of Hail City to the country's gross domestic production, Hail contributed 1% in 2012, if we exclude oil and gas from the country's GDP the contribution rate could reach 2%, most of this contribution is generated from trade 26%, and construction and building sector 17%.

Potential Sectors to Attract FDI in Hail

In Hail City tourism, agricultural and mining sectors are the future key potentials opportunities for FDI inflow particularly in the WADI network, Hail potential tourism locations include Aja Mountain Rang lying on the West of the city, the Samara Mountain and the WADI ADER crossing though the center of the city. In addition, the location of Hail city could act as transportation hub or a transit hub for airlines as well as care and buses, the city location in the middle of the way between Kuwait, Iraq, Jordon, and other cities in the Kingdom could be used as a stop by station providing facilities and attracting visitors. In the agricultural sector, the chances are available to invest in the production of agricultural crops, food processing, the manufacturing of agricultural equipment, and other related agricultural businesses. Furthermore, the location of Hail City is a strategic location of agricultural products' distribution and reproduction.

In relation to tourism potential, Hail City is rich with historical sites; two sites have been recognized by UNESCO, the Zubaida Trail and Al Kufi Pilgrimage Route. Therefore, the potential of those sites could enhance the plans of Vision 2030 by creating a tourism atmosphere directed to Euro and Western visitors in particular. Furthermore, one of the key potentials in Hail is the mining sector which contains a high volume of raw material related to magnetite in a quantity close to 4.5 million tons. In addition, Kaolin is found with an approximate quantity of 30 million tons. The mining sector is important as a raw material forming the ingredients of many products.

Legal Aspects of Attracting FDI

The legal environment in Hail has undergone three periods of reformation, with the majority of these reformations focusing on reshaping the city to prevent its extension and spread into metropolitan regions. In reality, phases 1, 2, and 3 of legal reforms have educated contractors on the building process and laws.

Authorities in the kingdom have observed that many undeveloped plots of land are being held for resale when values rise. Therefore, the whole land tax has been levied on landowners who have not constructed their land. Thus, additional land would be developed, and the supply of dwellings would exceed demand.

All of the kingdom's FDI rules apply to the city of Hail; the only distinction is that other cities' FDI restrictions do not cover the same industries as those in Hail. Furthermore, with the consent of the investment authorities, foreign direct investors might control their company outright. If the investor so desires, he may open a branch office in Hail without having to deal with any paperwork or partnership complications. As an added benefit, a one-stop shop for all ministries, the FDI license application procedure will grant work visas to those who apply via it.

Privatizing Universities in Hail

Privatizing universities is a controversial topic, with proponents arguing that it can lead to improved quality of education, increased efficiency, and greater access to education. Opponents argue that privatization can lead to increased tuition fees, decreased quality of education, and a decline in public funding for higher education.

In the context of Hail, there are several potential benefits to privatizing universities. First, it could help to improve the quality of education. Private universities are typically more innovative and responsive to the needs of students and employers than public universities. They are also more likely to attract top talent from around the world. Second, privatizing universities could help to reduce the cost of education. Private universities are typically more efficient than public universities and can charge tuition fees to offset their costs. This could make education more affordable for students and their families. Third, privatizing universities could help to expand access to education. Private universities can be established in areas where there are no public universities. They can also offer a wider range of programs and courses than public universities.

However, there are also several potential drawbacks to privatizing universities in Hail. First, it could lead to increased inequality. Students from wealthy families can afford to attend private universities, while students from poorer families will be limited to attending public universities. This could lead to a widening gap in educational attainment and economic opportunity. Second, privatizing universities could lead to a decline in the quality of education at public universities. If the government is no longer funding universities, they may be forced to cut costs, which could lead to a decrease in the quality of education. Third, privatizing universities could lead to the commercialization of education. Private universities may be more focused on generating profits than on providing a quality education to their students. This could lead to a decline in the overall quality of education in the country.

CONCLUSION

We discovered in this critical review paper that FDI in Hail is low in terms of literature review, review, or case studies. As a result, rather than discussing Hail FDI as a point in a full report related to KSA, we have examined it to explore potential opportunities. We discovered an intriguing fact. To begin, Hail has four potential investment sectors: transportation, tourism, agriculture, and mining. The Hail authorities are doing an excellent job of restructuring the city's buildings, roads, and water routes to adhere to international building and construction standards. We have noticed that investment permissions are easier to obtain than they were previously due to the Vision-2030 directive, which states that FDI is highly valued by the authority as non-oil income (Abowardah, et al., 2024; Algraini, 2021; Algraini & McIntyre-Mills, 2018).

Recommendations

It is difficult to say if Saudi Arabia's Hail City is ready for education privatization. Several considerations must be considered, including the existing status of the education system, the availability of private investment, and the public's willingness to privatize. On the one hand, privatizing the education sector in Hail City has a lot of potential advantages. It might, for example, contribute to enhanced educational quality, increased creativity, and increased efficiency. It may also assist in lowering the government's budgetary burden.

However, there are several possible downsides to consider. Privatization, for example, may create inequality since private schools are not always affordable for all students. It may also lead to a reduction in educational quality, since private schools may be more concerned with money than with offering a high-quality education. Furthermore, it is critical to guarantee that any privatization is done in a fashion that is transparent to the public and does not result in a loss of control over the education system.

Overall, the choice to privatize the education sector in Hail City is a complicated one that should be decided case by case. Before planning, it is critical to thoroughly assess the prospective advantages and downsides. We have discovered that FDI rules are common between cities in KSA. Well, we are advocating that select emerging cities like Hail should be given a chance of uniqueness in terms of FDI permission. Furthermore, Hail should build a separate media platform to sell the FDI chances aside from other cities due to the congested media platform speaking about FDI in KSA. Furthermore, the statistics accessible concerning FDI in Saudi are considerable but empirical and qualitative studies investigating FDI depending on City are few. We recommend future scholars to continue our study by undertaking a qualitative study on the topic of FDI inflow to Hail City.

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