

# Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Privatization of Education in Saudi Arabia

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## ABSTRACT

There are increasing global trends in the privatization of general education, which is considered one of the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030 for improving the quality of education. This study, with its potential to influence policy decisions, investigated teachers' attitudes toward the privatization of public education. This descriptive-analytical study uses data collected via an online questionnaire consisting of five developed scales. The research sample included 428 high school teachers in Saudi Arabia who were chosen randomly. It also explores the statistically significant differences between the responses of secondary school teachers, according to variables (gender, qualification, and years of experience), regarding the privatization of education. The finding demonstrated that teachers' overall level of attitudes "somewhat" agree with the privatization of education. Teachers agreed that the privatization of education threatens the teachers and administrators of job security, and contracting is the most appropriate form of privatization. The privatization of education contributes to reducing the quality of education. The results also show that there are statistically significant differences in favour of male teachers found regarding the gender variable between the study members, with no statistically significant differences found between the sample members according to qualification and years of experience.

**Keywords:** Privatization of education, teachers' attitudes, education in Saudi Arabia, Vision 2030.

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Education is recognized as a fundamental human right and a vital public good, which is the foundation of nations' social, cultural, political, and economic development. The role of education is investing in public education and emphasizing the central importance of preparing citizens for their future in a knowledge society, especially in Saudi Arabia (Alharbi, 2021). Therefore, there needs to be a system that aligns with global standards to have the future the nation dreams about (AlHarbi, 2021). However, the education sector typically faces the need for more financial constraints. Allocations for schools are usually insufficient for academic programs and the development needed. Al-Ajmi (2007) argued that these budgets are never enough in view of the vast range of diverse developmental demands. Similarly, Khalil (2006) notes that the existing budget, however substantial, is not adequate to meet all educational needs, indicating the necessity of a broader public-private partnership. This partnership is necessary for achieving national economic growth, mainly because it relates to the basis of the educational system, and this cooperation between the two sectors should be complementary rather than competitive.

Privatization has gained importance as a key strategy to enable successful public-private partnerships. According to Al-Fayez (2011), the public-private partnership will provide public interest coverage for all educational functions in line with policies and principles of free education. The goal is to prioritize spending better and improve equality, equity, and the quality of education services.

The shift to privatization is evident in several strategic development plans for privatization efforts. For example, the Tenth Development Plan states that the role of the private sector should be enhanced in education, and financing should be diversified to improve the financial efficiency of the industry (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2015). Also, the Ninth Development Plan notes that the pattern of educational privatization is different globally and can be seen in other structures (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010). Nevertheless, while education policy and goals remain largely state-driven in Saudi Arabia, there is a clear trajectory toward privatization under Saudi Vision 2030. The vision, introduced by the Council of Economic and Development

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Affairs in 2016, calls for privatizing a growing number of government services, including parts of education itself, instead of turning that job over to the private sector.

Economists argue that privatization helps decrease the financial burdens of state budgets, create a favourable investment environment, and increase economic efficiency to expand a private school's ownership base (TBC, 2017). Nonetheless, Pedró, Leroux, and Watanabe (2015) highlighted in their UNESCO report that government controls in developing countries have been unable to meet the quality of education of their populations. The trend toward privatization is global and particularly evident in the developed world, where education is increasingly being handed over to quasi-governmental entities that combine a public commitment to state principles with market efficiencies (Rizvi, 2016). This transition allows the private sector to play a significant educational and pedagogical role, rather than just a supportive one, in providing quality education.

Briefly, the push for privatizing education in Saudi Arabia is a strategic response to alleviate financial pressures and elevate educational standards. Integrating the private sector into the educational framework aims to achieve a more balanced, efficient, and high-quality educational system that can meet the nation's and its people's evolving needs. This approach not only addresses immediate financial and operational challenges but also sets the stage for sustainable educational development in line with Saudi Vision 2030, marking a significant shift towards a future where education is a shared responsibility between the state and the private sector, fostering a richer, more diverse learning environment for all. From the perspective of teachers, these are the most prominent elements of the educational system and its most important pillars.

It is clear from the above that the educational system needs reform. Therefore, the Kingdom has turned towards the privatization of education. In line with this direction, it is appropriate to know the opinions of male and female teachers towards privatization to understand their attitudes. Therefore, the attitudes of those working in general education toward the privatization of education should be studied. In light of this, the problem of the study can be formulated in the following questions: 1) What are the attitudes of high school teachers toward the privatization of general education in Saudi Arabia? 2) Are there statistically significant differences between the responses of high school teachers according to the variables gender, qualification, and years of experience toward the privatization of education?

### **Education Contribution to the Saudi Vision 2030**

On April 25, 2016, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, through the Council of Ministers, announced its approval of the grand

development plan of Vision 2030. This vision was launched from the country's strengths, such as Saudi Arabia's Arab and Islamic depth in the Islamic world, the state's leading investment power, and its strategic location. Vision 2030 relies on three main pillars, focusing on the Kingdom's strengths: 1) Vibrant Society: This pillar includes (Strong Values, Thriving Environment, and Solid Foundation); 2) Thriving Economy: This pillar encompasses (Rewarding Opportunities, Effective Investment, Attractive Competitiveness, and Optimized Location); Ambitious Nation: This pillar includes: (Effective Government and Responsible Citizen).

Vision 2030 was launched with all state sectors playing an essential and integrated role, and the educational sector is one of the sectors that play a vital role due to its close connection with society and its contributions to transforming the economy from a single-source dependency to an economy based on human capital (Vision2030, n.d). The education-related objectives of Vision 2030 (Ministry of Education, 2018) are as follows:

### **Educational Goals in Saudi Vision 2030**

- Instilling Positive Arab and Islamic Values
- Aligning Educational Outcomes with Labor Market Needs
- Developing Advanced Curricula
- Creating an Attractive and Positive Learning Environment
- Enhancing Student Participation in Gifted Programs
- Collaborating with the Private Sector
- Engaging parents in the Educational Process
- Equipping Students with Future Job Skills
- Improving Teacher Recruitment and Development
- Enhancing the Role of Teachers and Improving Their Qualifications
- Increasing Enrollment Rates in Early Childhood Education (Kindergartens)
- Elevating the Global Ranking of Saudi Universities
- Providing Educational Services to Various Segments of Society
- Offering Quality Education to Every Saudi Child
- Developing Occupational Standards for Each Educational Path
- Increasing Enrollment in Kindergarten
- Guiding Students Toward Suitable Career and Professional Options

The Ministry of Education plays a significant role in achieving Vision 2030 goals by building a strategic management office that adopts scientific methodologies to improve performance in planning processes at the educational system level (Hantool & Ahmed, 2023; Alharbi, 2021; Alharbi, 2024). Moreover, according to the Ministry of Education (2018), developing electronic systems would help regulate the privatization planning process and strengthen partnerships with government, private, and non-profit sectors and Saudi Vision 2030.

### Privatization on Education

One of Vision 2030's programs is privatization, and the Ministry of Education's contribution is essential to achieving its goals. Although involving the private sector in education is considered a global trend and has been adopted by some countries, its success varies from one country to another depending on the degree of private sector participation. Moreover, different countries utilize privatization in their educational system, such as the United States of America (House, 2018) and the United Kingdom (Muir, 2012). The success of this approach depends on several factors, including certain political, economic, and social conditions. This means that the success of the privatization experience in one country cannot be guaranteed based on its success in other countries due to the differing conditions in which it was implemented.

Many studies have looked at privatization in education from different aspects based on the study's objectives. For example, Al-Manie (2003) study addressed the need for privatizing education from the perspective of educators, and Nasir (2013) study and Al-Fawzan (2018) study focused on attitudes toward privatizing education. Nasir (2013) study aimed to identify teachers' attitudes in public secondary schools towards the privatization of public education. This was achieved by examining the social, economic, administrative, and technical impacts, understanding the most suitable method of privatization from the teachers' perspective, and identifying the most appropriate investor for the privatization of education.

A previous study focuses on the perspectives of educational leaders on the privatization of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in light of Vision 2030 (Al-Fawzan, 2018). The research of a sample of 100 school principals sought to understand the benefits of privatizing education in the field of educational administration and to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and obstacles that may arise from the privatization of public education. The study highlighted some benefits of privatizing education: reducing government spending on education, solving the problem of education funding, eliminating the bureaucracy of public sector systems,

achieving competitive advantages among schools, and implementing an effective administrative system to achieve excellence. In addition, the study mentioned the strengths that may result from the privatization of public education, which include improving the administrative performance of educational leaders, establishing a clear accountability system, striving to attract educational talents, making optimal use of information technology, and improving the educational efficiency of schools (Al-Fawzan, 2018).

Another study that looked at teachers' attitudes showed a low level of agreement on the privatization of education (Nasir, 2013). The results of a sample of 280 teachers indicated that the general attitude of teachers towards the expected economic, social, administrative, and technical impacts of education privatization was moderate. Therefore, the research reports that the overall level of perceived obstacles to the privatization of public education from the teachers' perspective was moderate. The suitable forms of privatization from the teachers' perspective were ranked as follows: contracting, vouchers, outsourcing, charter schools, tax credits, and finally, private sector ownership of schools. The study also revealed a high level of rejection among teachers towards foreign investors in the privatization of education. There was a statistically significant difference related to gender, favoring males, and no statistically significant differences attributed to teachers' characteristics, years of experience, or educational qualifications (Nasir, 2013).

Even if previous researchers examined various perspectives of teachers, administrators, and professors of higher education, there was little evidence of whether the participating teachers in high school supported the privatization of public education in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, this is one of the main areas for improvement in previous studies exploring teachers' views of privatization. In order to obtain more comprehensible and complete results, this study aimed to determine the attitudes of high school teachers toward the implementation of privatization in public education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and identify the statistically significant differences between the responses of high school teachers according to variables (gender, qualification, and years of experience) regarding the privatization of education.

## METHOD

### Research Design

This descriptive-analytical study was conducted among Saudi Arabia's teacher population in Riyadh. We created the questionnaire constructs after conducting a literature review of relevant research. Data was collected online through a

questionnaire sent to all high school teachers in Riyadh city by the Ministry of Education. Riyadh was chosen because it has the country's highest teacher population.

The target population comprised all (n=10,475), where (4,414) male teachers and (6,061) female teachers in Riyadh were sent a link to the questionnaire through the Ministry of Education. The study adopted a stratified sampling, and the minimum sample size was calculated using the (Krejcie & Morgan 1970) table. The sample size calculator arrived at (n=428) participants, where (266) 62% were female teachers and (162) 38% were male teachers.

**Measurement Tool and Data Analysis**

The authors developed the self-reported questionnaire according to the literature review related to the research objectives. It was developed in Arabic by A. A and then translated to English by M.S.A. to ensure its meaning and for the purpose of publication.

On the first page of the questionnaire, teachers were informed of the research background, objectives, target participants, and research methods. Participating teachers were informed about confidentiality during the research process, and they had the freedom to leave the study at any time; their information would be anonymous. The online consent form was obtained from the teachers who chose to participate in the study before proceeding with the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first one collected general information about the teachers who responded, including gender, degree level, and years of teaching experience. The second section involved four parts: the tendency toward the suitable approach to privatization in public education, the tendency toward the suitable form of privatization in public education, the tendency toward the benefits of privatization in public education, and the tendency toward the negative of privatization in public education.

**Independent Variables**

The demographic variables showed the characteristics of the population for gender: the total responses were (n=428 teachers), the number of males was (162), and the number of

female teachers was (266). The percentage reached (37.9%) for male teachers and (62.1%) for female teachers. The education variable was divided into bachelor's degree (n= 353 teachers) with (82.5%); graduated studies (n=61 teachers) with (14.3%); and other (n=14 teachers) with (3.3%). Work experiences were broken down into three categories: < 5 years, 5 years to < 10 years, and 10 years or more.

**Dependent Variables**

For the attitudes section, the respondents rated statements on 5 5-point Likert scale as follows: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, and 5=strongly agree. The validity and reliability of the study instruments were tested, and the findings proved that it was reliable and valid. The questionnaire addressed teachers' attitudes and had Cronbach's Alpha = 0.90, which indicated that the questionnaire was highly reliable, as shown in Table 1. (Taber, 2016) explains high-reliability coefficients range from 0.90 to 0.99, which makes it valid for achieving the study's objectives. The scale on items under teachers' attitudes showed a significant correlation with a total score of (p ≤0.05), which indicated that the questionnaire was valid.

The data analysis employed SPSS, and the frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were calculated for the research variables and the demographic factors. Independent t-tests were conducted to test the relationship between teachers' attitudes based on their gender.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Demographics**

Table 2 provides a detailed description of the demographic characteristics of a total sample of (n=428) participants, (162) male teachers, and (266) female teachers (Demographic characteristics of the study participants).

Approximately 62.1% of the sample was female, and 37.9% were male teachers. The majority of the participants (82.5%) held a bachelor's degree, and (41.3%) had a graduated degree, with the rest of the participants (3.3%) having other types of diplomas. With regard to the years of experience, the majority of the participants (77.3%) had 10 years or more

**Table 1: Cronbach's alpha coefficient to measure the stability of the questionnaire.**

<i>Part</i>	<i>Number of Questions</i>	<i>Cronbach Alpha</i>
General	25	0.99
The tendency toward the suitable approach to privatization in public education.	3	0.95
The tendency toward the suitable form of privatization in public education.	5	0.98
The tendency toward the benefits of privatization in public education.	15	0.98
The tendency toward the negative of privatization in public education.	2	0.97



of teaching experience, (17.1%) had between 5 to 10 years of experience, and (5.6%) had less than 5 years of experience.

**Table 2. Demographic characteristics of the participants**

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Education	353	82.5
Bachelor's		
Master or PhD	61	14.3
other	14	3.3
Years of experience		
< 5 years	24	5.6
5 years to < 10 years	73	17.1
10 years or more	331	77.3

**Teacher's Attitudes Toward Privatization in Public Education**

The first question states: "What are the attitudes of high school teachers toward the privatization of general education in Saudi Arabia?" To answer this question, frequencies and percentages were calculated, and means and standard deviations were used to rank the statements' priorities in the questionnaire's first axis (Table 3). For the accuracy of the means and standard deviations in determining the response intervals of the sample members, the overall level of agreement on each statement and the general average agreement on the entire axis were calculated.

According to Table (3), the first axis of the questionnaire consisted of 25 statements with means ranging from 3.812 to

**Table 3: Responses to attitudinal statements regarding privatization in public education.**

Statements	N (%)					Mean	standard deviation
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree		
1 the most appropriate method for privatization is complete privatization of public schools	135 (31.5)	96 (22.4)	100 (23.4)	57 (13.3)	40 (9.3)	2.46	1.31
2 the most appropriate approach to privatization is Partial privatization through diversifying funding methods within public schools	101 (23.6)	74 (17.3)	104 (24.3)	107 (25.0)	42 (9.8)	2.80	1.31
3 the most appropriate method for privatization is privatizing the school's management of public schools.	114 (26.6)	110 (26.6)	87 (20.3)	81 (18.9)	36 (8.4)	1.29	2.57
4 the most appropriate form of privatization is contracting with private entities to provide various services to the school (such as transportation, book printing, teacher training, meal provision, and building maintenance)	47 (10,7)	33 (7.7)	75 (17.5)	127 (29.7)	147 (34.3)	3,69	1.31
5 the most appropriate form of privatization is Managing through the government contracting with private institutions to run the school, with the government paying fees to those institutions	98 (22,9)	82 (19,2)	20,3 (87)	19,2 (82)	18,5 (79)	2,91	1,43
6 the most appropriate form of privatization is by Using educational vouchers provided by the government to parents with a monetary value, allowing parents to choose the school that matches the voucher they received.	104 (23,3)	116 (27,1)	88 (20,6)	69 (16,1)	51 (11,9)	2,64	1,33
7 the most appropriate form of privatization is Charter schools, which have independence in their systems and budgets while being accountable for their results	90 (21,0)	90 (21,0)	108 (25,2)	84 (19,6)	56 (13,1)	2,83	1,32

	<i>Statements</i>	<i>N (%)</i>					<i>Mean</i>	<i>standard deviation</i>
		<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>		
8	the most appropriate form of privatization is Ownership and management of schools by the private sector.	115 (26,9)	113 (26,4)	80 (18,7)	61 (14,3)	59 (13,8)	2,62	1,37
9	Privatization of education reduces government spending on education.	82 (19,2)	67 (15,7)	97 (22,7)	105 (24,5)	77 (18,0)	3,07	1,37
10	Privatization generally improves the quality of education	92 (21,5)	90 (21,0)	91 (21,3)	87 (20,3)	68 (15,9)	2,88	1,38
11	Privatization of education contributes to the financial stability of schools.	85 (19,9)	85 (19,9)	114 (26,6)	79 (18,5)	65 (15,2)	2,89	1,33
12	Privatization of education contributes to increasing the financial authority of educational administrations and schools in line with the conditions of each school.	79 (18,5)	76 (17,8)	110 (25,7)	91 (21,3)	72 (16,8)	3,00	1,34
13	Privatization of education contributes to increasing employment flexibility for graduates.	105 (24,5)	87 (20,3)	84 (19,6)	85 (19,9)	67 (15,7)	2,82	1,14
14	Privatization of education reduces the number of unproductive employees in schools.	80 (18,7)	73 (17,1)	86 (20,1)	99 (23,1)	90 (21,0)	3,11	1,41
15	Privatization of schools enhances the salaries and incentives for teachers.	95 (22,2)	83 (19,4)	85 (19,9)	81 (18,9)	84 (19,6)	2,94	1,43
16	Privatization of education threatens the job security of teachers and administrators.	27 (6,3)	41 (9,6)	89 (20,8)	102 (23,8)	169 (39,5)	3,81	1,23
17	Privatization of education attracts foreign investment to operate schools.	68 (15,9)	69 (16,1)	88 (20,2)	125 (29,2)	78 (18,2)	3,18	1,34
18	Privatization of education offers a variety of services that meet the needs of students and parents.	77 (18,0)	75 (17,5)	107 (25,0)	107 (25,0)	62 (14,5)	3,00	1,31
19	Privatization of education expands the participation and investment of the private sector in the field of education.	58 (13,6)	60 (14,0)	114 (26,6)	118 (27,6)	78 (18,2)	3,23	1,28
20	Privatization of education reduces disparities in educational standards among schools.	67 (15,7)	98 (22,9)	97 (22,7)	114 (26,6)	52 (12,1)	2,97	1,27
21	Privatization of education may contribute to lowering the quality of education in order to reduce costs and focus on profit.	42 (9,8)	74 (17,3)	85 (19,9)	106 (24,8)	121 (28,3)	3,44	1,32
22	Privatization of education contributes to increasing students' adherence to the school discipline policy.	88 (20,6)	95 (22,2)	112 (26,2)	80 (18,7)	53 (12,4)	2,80	1,30
23	Privatization of education contributes to achieving equity in educational opportunities.	97 (22,7)	104 (24,3)	108 (25,2)	82 (19,2)	37 (8,6)	2,67	1,26

Statements	N (%)					Mean	standard deviation
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree		
24 Privatization of education leads to increased attention to the education of students with special needs.	73 (17,1)	59 (13,8)	133 (31,1)	92 (21,5)	71 (16,6)	3,07	1,30
25 Privatization of education increases the enrollment rates of students in pre-school.	68 (15,9)	69 (16,1)	109 (25,5)	101 (23,6)	81 (18,9)	3,14	1,33

2.46m, which fall between (Agree) and (Disagree). Overall, the results indicated that the study participants' responses to the statements from the axis were within "somewhat agree." The mean score for the axis was (2.98) and (SD=1.33). This implies that teachers' attitudes toward the privatization of education are slightly positive. The researcher attributes this slight attitude to the sample's lack of knowledge and fear implied by the concept of privatization.

Statements regarding the "attitudes of high school teachers towards the application of privatization to public education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia." The statements: (16 - 4 - 21 - 19 - 17) received the highest ranks, as follows:

Statement number (16), "Privatization of education threatens the job security of teachers and administrators," Rated the highest agreement by teachers; their average response to this statement was (3.81), (SD = 1.23), agreeing on average with this statement. This suggests an agreement that the privatization of the education sector increases the insecurity of teachers' jobs, which may lead to their loss from the profession, a loss of commitment and trust for the institution they work for, or feelings of marginalization and exclusion from other, all that would affect their job performance.

The researcher refers to teachers who fear the possibility that the private sector would work to reduce salaries by attracting foreign workers or by offering their employees shorter-term contracts to increase profits. The result is consistent with Al-Manie (2003) study, which found that one of the expected problems with the privatization of education is the attrition of national teachers from the profession. It also aligns with Obaidat (2009) study, which identified the attrition of teachers from the profession as one of the prominent negative outcomes of privatization, and with Sayaf (2017) study, which noted that one of the main issues facing the privatization of education is the reluctance of public sector teachers to leave their government jobs and move to the private sector. Additionally, Al-Fawzan (2018) study highlighted that one of the weaknesses that may result from the privatization of education is the threat to job security for

teachers. Crawford & Hares (2021) study also found that one of the main obstacles to the partnership between the private and public sectors is the presence of negative attitudes towards this partnership among school employees.

Statement number (4) "Contracting with private entities to provide various services to the school (such as transportation, book printing, teacher training, food services, and building maintenance) is the most suitable form of privatization," received the second-highest agreement, according to the responses of teachers. The average response to this statement was (3.69) with a standard deviation of (1.31), which falls within the "agree" interval. This indicates that the sample members agree on a form of education privatization, which is contracting with the private sector. This form involves a partnership with the private sector to enhance the quality of educational services without compromising the independence of public schools while benefiting from private sector services.

This result is consistent with Al-Fayez (2011) study, which found that the sample members highly agreed on privatizing a package of educational services. It also aligns with Nasir (2013) study, which indicated that teachers agreed that contracting is the most suitable form of education privatization, and with Sayaf (2017) study, which noted that one of the key requirements that education privatization meets is allowing private sector companies to provide various services.

School transportation and building design are also supported by Michael (2008) study, which found that the most important services privatized by educational directorates are support services, including construction projects, legal services, and waste disposal. Heinz (2009) study also showed a need for additional funding for transportation, technology, and food services.

Statement number (21) "Privatization of education contributes to lowering the quality of education in order to reduce its cost and focus on profit," received the third-highest agreement according to teachers' responses. The average response to this statement was (3.44), with a standard

deviation of (1.32), which falls within the “agree” interval. This indicates that one of the most prominent negative attitudes of the study sample towards the application of privatization is the concern that the quality of education will be reduced to increase the financial profit of the private sector. They fear education will become a commercial field, compromising the right to quality education for all and limiting it to those who can afford it.

This result is consistent with Al-Manie (2003) study, which found that one of the main anticipated problems with privatization is transforming the teaching profession into a commercial enterprise. It also aligns with Al-Fawzan (2018) study, which concluded that one of the major weaknesses that could result from the privatization of public education is the focus on profit objectives over educational goals.

Statement number (19) “The expansion of education privatization increases the participation and investment of the private sector in the field of education,” received the fourth-highest agreement according to the responses of teachers. The average response to this statement was (3.23), with a standard deviation of (1.28), which falls within the “somewhat agree” interval. This suggests that education privatization will open doors for private sector participation and investment in education.

This result is consistent with Al-Otaibi (2005) study, which found a high possibility for the private sector to contribute to funding public education from the perspective of public education officials. It also aligns with Al-Qahtani (2008) study, which concluded that the sample members highly agreed on the appropriateness of public education activities for investment and highlighted the need for private sector investment in public education. Al-Fayez (2011) study also found that the study participants agreed on privatizing a package of educational services. Moreover, Al-Omari (2015) study indicated that one of the obstacles to privatization is the weakness of the systems and regulations that govern private sector contributions to funding education, as well as the misconception that education funding is solely the state's responsibility.

Statement number (17) “Education privatization attracts foreign investment to operate schools,” received the fifth-highest agreement according to the responses of teachers. The average response to this statement was (3.18), with a standard deviation of (1.14), which falls within the “somewhat agree” interval. The researcher attributes this to the sample members having more confidence in foreign investors with experience in the education sector than in Saudi investors, who are relatively new to the education investment market. They are not concerned about foreign investors influencing curriculum development or introducing values that do not align with Saudi society.

This result contrasts with Nasir (2013) study, which found that teachers were against bringing in foreign investors because they believed it would lead to foreign control over the national economy and educational decision-making related to state sovereignty and weaken government oversight of the education sector.

On the other hand, the statements numbered (1, 3, 8, 6, 23) received the lowest ranks among the “attitudes of high school teachers in Riyadh towards the application of privatization to public education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia” out of a total of 25 statements.

Statement number (1), “Complete privatization of public schools is the most suitable method of privatization,” ranked twenty-fifth among the statements according to teachers' responses. The average response to this statement was (2.46), with a standard deviation of (1.31), which falls within the “disagree” interval. The researcher believes that the extent of the negative attitudes of sample members to private ownership was due to their fear that the corporate sector might be using it as a tool for ownership of education. Teachers view that as extreme and, if not rigorously and constantly controlled, could negatively affect the overall educational system. The education sector is so vast that supervision in the private sector is considered to be difficult. This is particularly true when considering the overall privatization of education (education, administration, and funds), which ranked the lowest among the privatization methods in Nasir (2013) study.

Statement number (3): “Privatizing the management of public schools only is the most suitable method of privatization.” According to the teachers, it ranked 14th. The composite result of this statement was (2.57) mean, (1.29) standard deviation, placing it in the disagree range. This indicated that the participants do not have a positive attitude toward the way public schools are managed by private companies. The researcher sees this refusal as a rejection due to the ambiguity of administrative measures regarding the privatization of school administration. This is supported by Al-Majidil study (2013), which found that it is necessary to develop the administrative and financial systems and processes related to the application of recruitment of public schools and the development of an appropriate model in line with the environment and the kingdom's policy. The previous statement reveals negative attitudes toward full and management privatization. However, partial privatization ranked higher, specifically at position (19).

Statement number (8), “Private sector ownership and management of schools is the most suitable form of privatization,” ranked twenty-third among the statements according to teachers' responses. On average, the response to this statement was 2.62, with a standard deviation of 1.37;



**Table 4: The differences in the attitudes of the study sample according to the gender variable.**

Gender	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	162	3,10	0,95	2,040	426	0,042
Female	266	2,91	0,91			

the value is within the “somewhat agree” range. Responses by the sample members indicated low agreement on the form of privatization, in which the private sector owns and manages schools. This is because it is the only form that is not free and may burden families financially. An interesting finding from this study that is somewhat consistent with Nasir (2013) research is that teachers showed a low level of interest in the type of privatization, which entails the private sector owning and running the schools.

Statement number (6), “Using educational vouchers provided by the government to parents, who then choose the school that matches the value of the voucher they received, is the most suitable form of privatization,” ranked twenty-second among the statements according to teachers’ responses. The average response to the statement was 2.64 (SD 1.33), which falls within the “somewhat agree” interval. The researcher explains the low agreement of the sample members to the model of educational form of educational vouchers. In this form, the amount that is distributed to each student may not be higher than the average cost of private schools, thus causing a financial strain on families. Furthermore, private schools are not fully trusted to take over the burden of educating all students.

The previous statements indicate low agreement among the sample on these two forms of education privatization (educational vouchers and private sector ownership and management of schools). Instead, they had positive feelings about privatization through contracting.

Statement number (23) “Education privatization contributes to achieving educational opportunity equity” ranked twenty-first among the statements according to teachers’ responses. The average response to this statement is 2.67 with a standard deviation of 1.26, categorized in the “somewhat agree” interval. The researcher explained that this is due to the success of Saudi Arabia in extending education and taking education to all parts of the country, whether they are villages, mountainous locations, or other areas which are in distant places, as it is a basic human right guaranteed by the state (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). On the other hand, the private sector may be unprepared to incur losses in providing education in remote areas where the number of students is small, and the profit is even smaller. Thus hindering the achievement of equity in providing educational opportunities for all on an equal basis.

### **First: differences among teachers based on gender, qualification and experience**

to determine whether the responses from high school teachers to the privatization of public education were gendered (male, female, etc.) or not, an independent samples t-test was employed, in addition to a paired samples t-test for all the responses of high school teachers regarding privatization of public education as shown in Table (4).

Table (4) shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the responses of high school teachers according to the gender variable (male, female) in their attitudes towards the privatization of education. The t-value is 2.040, with a significant level of 0.042, which is less than 0.05. This suggests that analyses are going in the direction of the high mean (males), indicating that male teachers are more supportive than female teachers of privatizing public education. This could be due to the section of males, who potentially better understand the business and trade sector and the role of private sector partnerships.

### **Second: differences among the study sample according to the educational qualification**

To determine possible statistical differences among the high school teachers’ answers, taking into account the educational qualification variable (Bachelor, Postgraduate, Other), a one-way ANOVA test was performed concerning respondents’ attitudes toward the privatization of public education. Table (5) shows the outcomes.

It is evident from Table (5) that there are no statistically significant differences between the responses of high school teachers according to the educational qualification variable (Bachelor’s, Postgraduate, Other) regarding their attitudes towards the privatization of education. The F-value was (2.480) at a significant level of (0.085), which is greater than (0.05).

### **Third: differences in Responses of the Study Sample According to the Variable of Years of Experience**

A one-way ANOVA test was used to find the significance of the differences between the responses of high school teachers according to the years of experience variable (less than 5 years, 5 to 10 years, more than 10 years) regarding their attitudes

**Table 5: One-way ANOVA to find the significance of the differences in the attitudes of the study sample according to the educational qualification variable.**

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	(F-value)	(P-value)
Between Groups	4,247	2	2,124		
Within Groups	363,910	425	0,856	2,480	0,085
Total	368,158	427	-		

**Table 6: One-way ANOVA results to find the significance of the differences in the attitudes of the study sample according to the years of experience variable.**

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	(F-value)	(P-value)
Between Groups	4,209	2	2,105		
Within Groups	363,948	425	0,856	2,458	0,087
Total	368,158	427	-		

towards the privatization of public education. The results are shown in Table (6).

Table (6) shows no statistically significant differences between the responses of high school teachers according to the years of experience variable (less than 5 years, 5 to 10 years, more than 10 years) regarding their attitudes towards the privatization of education. The F-value was (2.458) at a significant level of (0.087), which is greater than (0.05).

## CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

This is among the few studies investigating teacher attitudes toward privatization in public schools in Saudi Arabia. The study highlighted the results of a sample of (428) high school teachers who joined the study and analyzed their responses to research questions. The findings suggest that the overall attitude level of the study sample "somewhat agrees" with the privatization of public education. Privatization of education as a threat to teachers and administration careers is one of the statements that most participating teachers are considering. Our study demonstrated that privatization of education could be the best fit for different services such as food programs, school transportation, building maintenance, and teachers' workshops and development courses. The result of this study suggests that teachers believe that privatization positively affects education by attracting more foreign investment to run schools, and as a result, the enrollment of students would increase, especially in early education. The findings are useful as a source of information for policymakers to consider when considering the privatization of public schools.

The study has some limitations that should be considered. First, the sample used in this research underrepresents male teachers, with more female teachers than male teachers. The gender difference may lead to bias in the findings. Moreover,

a few research studies directly address teachers' attitudes toward privatization in Saudi Arabia.

To overcome these constraints, further studies should consider a larger number of participants in different regions. Additionally, researchers should apply a different methodology beyond solely questionnaires or surveys to explore the teacher's perspective of privatization.

## Study Recommendations

Finally, recommendations can be drawn up for the study, and it is hoped that would help the decision-maker in the Ministry of Education. First, raising awareness about the importance of the privatization of education and the positive impacts of improving the quality of education. Second, developing a strategic plan to identify the need within the educational system to ensure that privatization aligns with it. Third, establishing national companies specialized in various fields such as school administration and school environment to meet the needs of school development. Lastly, encouraging the private sector to participate in the areas that are under privatization by the Ministry of Education.

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