IN LIGHT OF SAUDI VISION 2030: EXPLORING EDUCATIONAL LEADERS’ PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS IMPLEMENTING PRIVATIZATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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The study aimed to explore the perceptions of educational leaders toward implementing privatization in higher education in light of Saudi Vision 2030. The increasing demand for educational reforms in Saudi Arabia sparked the need for privatization. As a result, privatization seems the new trend promising to meet the educational needs of the Kingdom. This multiple-case research examined whether Saudi Arabian universities are ready to privatize based on the perceptions of the university leaders. The study selected the University of Bisha and the King Saud University to take part in the study. The study sampled 10 participants, five from each university to take part in the interview. The data was collected, coded, labeled, and analyzed using inductive coding in which all codes are extracted from the interview responses. The coded data were grouped into six themes namely (1) Privatization as cost-sharing, (2) Privatization as a strategy for independence and decentralization, (3) privatization as displacement, (4) privatization as local and foreign investment, (5) privatization as a nonprofit organization, and (6) Privatization as
an application of business concepts and techniques. The findings indicate that diversified income, corporate governance, stability in budgets, and alternative management styles are critical factors that promote privatization in Saudi Arabia. Besides universities planning to privatize or going through privatization like King Saud University faces challenges such as change management and invalidity and unreliability of privatization, among others as other studies may establish. However, regardless of the challenges, privatization is beneficial in financial independence and managerial independence. Findings also show that other universities like the University of Bisha have not been privatized due to factors such as resistance to change, and the unreliability of privatization. Lastly, the study shows that the Saudi government may take four steps to promote the privatization of higher education. The steps are identification of local and foreign investment opportunities, determining the validity and reliability of each project before privatizing, creating and implementing changes by training and preparing associated personnel adequately, and clearing any obstacles to privatization.