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# DEVELOPING THE DEANSHIP OF THE PREPARATORY YEAR AND SUPPORTING STUDIES IN SAUDI ARABIA

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### ABSTRACT

This study proposes a model for developing the Deanship of the Preparatory Year and Supporting Studies to align with the current and future changes in both public and higher education. It addresses the importance of preparatory year and foundation programmes in higher education to efficiently develop human resources within society. A descriptive approach was used to review and analyse literature. Concerning data collection, the study used focus groups and the expert panel method. In the suggested model, we argue that 'we learn to work', as one of the Saudi Vision 2030 principles, can support universities by investing in available human and physical resources to strengthen them. In conclusion, the ideal model of the preparatory year in the Saudi Arabia is a combined approach between the American and British models of the foundation year. The proposal merges local, regional, and international experiences considering the historical and institutional context of Saudi universities.

**Keywords:** Higher Education; Preparatory Year; Labour Market; Human Resources; Foundation Year; Universities.

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### INTRODUCTION

Delivering academic programmes is the core of target development at institutions of higher education. University students are genuine wealth; by their distinction, the university effectively achieves its current and future goals and implements its role in the educational field, scientific research, and

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community service. This success contributes to the achievement of comprehensive social development. Foundation programmes, with their forms including the preparatory year, have demonstrated high efficiency in improving students' scientific and practical abilities, competencies, and skills, which assist their implication in university life and promotes their academic achievement (Kirabo, 2014; Koch & Gardner, 2014; McMullen, 2014).

In prior studies, researchers have addressed many indicators that the preparatory year plays a pivotal role in preparing male and female students for studying and university life from many aspects (e.g., scientific, psychological, and social). This goal is among the core goals of the preparatory year; however, there are other goals related to the issues of raising the level of quality in university education (Aloqaili, 2014, p. 43). Specifically in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) universities, the preparatory year and its academic practices are limited to one academic year or semester. Most universities have implemented it under the supervision of a supported deanship, whether delivered by the private sector or contracted educational companies, and under full control of the university which provides it entirely as part of its academic programmes. This type of preparatory year implementation is limited to preparing students for the first academic year at university, while programmes aimed at subsequent years are dismissed.

The Deanship of the Preparatory Year and Supportive Studies (DPYSS) is responsible for teaching first year students at Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University (IAU). Students are enrolled in four tracks namely: health, engineering, science, humanities. In addition the DPYSS is responsible for first-year students in the community college (Dammam and Qatif cities), College of Applied Medical Sciences, and College of Sciences and Humanities (Jubail city).

Thus, the development of the DPYSS at IAU will ensure students' smooth transition to university and continuity and reduce dropout rates. In addition, it will prepare students for university and professional life that will help increase the internal efficiency of universities. The efforts to develop the preparatory year and improve its applied practices, inputs, processes, and outputs will contribute to achieve the objectives set by the Saudi Vision 2030 (SV 2030) for the development of education in general.

The SV 2030 is a comprehensive national plan of development. It expresses KSA's long-term goals based on empowering Saudi competencies. Its strategy is based on a staged new development which aims to create a bright society where all citizens can fulfil their dreams, hopes, and aspirations for economic success and prosperity in KSA. The study seeks to answer the following question: What is the suggested proposal for developing the DPYSS considering the SV 2030? Accordingly, this study will attempt to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the various experiences in applying for preparatory programmes in universities locally, regionally, and globally?
- 2) What is the model to be implemented in Preparatory year programmes in KSA considering the experiences of developed universities based on international rankings?
- 3) What is the suggested model for developing the DPYSS at IAU considering the SV 2030?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *The preparatory year in Saudi universities*

It is noteworthy that these local practices of the preparatory programme are different from other international practices. Specifically, the preparatory year in Saudi universities is generally intended to prepare students for a successful transition from high school to academic life at the university stage with two main objectives: (1) improving their level of the English language, and (2) developing students' abilities or competencies of academic achievement. Preparatory year programmes (PYPs) are aimed at decreasing student dropout by contributing to their academic success, as follows:

- Qualifying students for university life

- Exerting efforts to develop PYPs and improve their applied practices
- Improving inputs, processes, and outputs of PYPs

### ***The impact of the preparatory programme on students' achievements***

In an attempt to provide insights into the impact of the preparatory programme on students' achievements, McMullen (2014) concluded that there is an awareness among preparatory year students in Saudi universities regarding the impact and importance of this year in their preparation for academic life, especially in English language skills. Likewise, an evaluation study of the preparatory year at King Saud University was conducted by the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching in 2014, and it concluded that the preparatory year had a positive impact on the educational system in higher education institutions, and a significant role in students' academic performance. Furthermore, students reported achieving 74% of the preparatory year goals, with only 10% of students withdrawing from the preparatory year; however, the highest percentage of withdrawing students in American universities is in the first year (Koch & Gardner, 2014). Moreover, this study showed that student grades during the preparatory year as predictors of their achievement in the second year had the highest and strongest correlation with a comparison of student grades in three other tests, namely, the high school total average, the final test of high school achievement, and the general aptitude test. Moreover, there is a positive relationship between the completion of the PYP and student performance in academic courses in colleges with a deterioration in the performance of students who do not join the PYP (CELT, 2014). Conversely, many researchers have argued about the impact of the problems that preparatory year students face in Saudi universities regarding their admission to a programme that they do not desire. In addition, differences and gaps between academic systems at universities compared to high school systems, the poor level of some students in English before their admission to university, and the difficulty level of some courses in the preparatory year. Moreover, the lack of some students' ability to adapt to university life, the level of their motivation at university, the cost of course textbooks, a great number of assignments and assessment tasks required in some courses, and the weaknesses of academic, professional, and psychological advising lead to student withdrawal and dropout (Tashtoush, 2012; CELT, 2014; Alanqari, 2017; Darandari; Aladbulaziz; Faden, 2017).

Indeed, the Saudi's 2030 vision affirms the commitment to education that contributes to the advancement of the national economy by seeking to bridge the gaps between the output of the higher education system and the requirements of the local and international labour markets. Moreover, it asserts the development of public education and advises students towards appropriate professional careers by providing several opportunities for their rehabilitation and the flexibility to move between various educational tracks (Saudi vision 2030, 2016: 40).

### ***principles of developing the DPYSS at IAU***

Accordingly, the rationale for developing the Deanship of the Preparatory Year and Supportive Studies (DPYSS) at Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University (IAU) presents a number of principles, including: Contributing to raising quality assurance processes of higher education, bridging the gap between pre-university education and higher education, and the integration with the labour market in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) through alignment with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which refers to the organisational structure used to adapt, design, develop, and recognise the qualifications in KSA (ETEC, 2020, p. 8). More precisely, the fourth level of NQF parallels the DPYSS. This level states 'Associate diploma qualifications are granted at the post-secondary education level, either as an extension of general education after high school or for the purpose of employment in an administrative or professional field that requires limited experience in the job field. However, this academic degree is considered a deserving qualification; this level of study is usually proposed to provide learners with the

core foundations for future studies to acquire higher qualifications' (ETEC, 2020, p. 8).

The fourth level of required knowledge, skills, and values can be summarised as follows:

**Knowledge and understanding:** The alumnae will have a wide range of knowledge and theoretical and technical understanding with a level of depth in some specialised areas of work. Moreover, they will have an in-depth understanding of a set of facts, concepts, principles, methods, practices, tools, materials, and terminology related to the specialised areas of work. Further, they will possess basic knowledge of research methodologies, tools, and semi-directed investigations.

**Skills:** At this level, the alumnae will have a wide range of cognitive, practical, physical, and communication skills that can be classified as follows:

- **Cognitive skills:** using and adapting theoretical and practical knowledge to address complex issues or problems; solving critical and predictable problems by providing creative solutions; integrating knowledge and issues in a specific field by critically evaluating the problems; and merging of knowledge and opinions with a critical evaluation in a specific and clear context of the discipline or field of work, in addition to conducting research or investigation of problems at an advanced level.

- **Practical and physical skills** include the selection of appropriate processes, tools, materials, devices, and practical activities related to the discipline or field of work and performing practical tasks and procedures in relatively specific contexts in a specific field, related to the discipline or field of work.

- **Communication and information technology skills** include communicating in a variety of ways to convey knowledge and specialised skills to groups of audiences, using numerical data and relatively complex graphical representations to be interpreted in unfamiliar contexts related to the discipline or field of work, and using a large scale of digital technology tools, applications, and information for research, processing, compilation, and production of information and data.

**Values:** At this level, the new alumnae will be, in semi-directed contexts, aware of professional ethics, coexistence with others, positive adaptation to social challenges, and how to be a responsible citizen. Moreover, the alumnae will be able to self-manage learning and work, have the initiative to independently perform under indirect supervision, adapt to diverse work teams by assuming responsibility for performing tasks, work effectively to achieve team goals, and promote health, psychological, and social aspects.

Meanwhile, the development enables moving towards the new Law of Universities after an official approval to nominate three universities, namely, King Saud University, King Abdulaziz University, and IAU, to participate experimentally in the new system. The new system has been implemented to achieve the Vision 2030 requirements of empowerment, distinction, quality, and continuous development so that the university can be disciplined and independent in building its academic, financial, and administrative regulations, and approve its academic programmes considering the development required and job opportunities available locally in accordance with the approved general policies that have been accredited by the government through the Council of Universities Affairs (Council of University Affairs, 2021).

The development of the preparatory year is also required according to decision No. 88675, dated 1 May 2020, of the Saudi Minister of Education. This includes the approval of the national project of developing high school paths and academic specialisations that has many strategic objectives based on strengthening religious values and national identity, while keeping pace with the new global vision of the role of the intermediate and secondary stages of the educational ladder, targeting the removal of the essentials for the preparatory year in universities, expanding and diversifying learning opportunities for male and female students, as well as improving the efficiency of the secondary and intermediate education system by obtaining certificates of English language proficiency, providing a path to Sharia majors for the most distinguished, in addition to early student screening according to their orientations and abilities, and enabling learners qualified to work to graduate and continue their education (Ministry of Education, 2019).

## METHODS

### *Study design*

In this study, a descriptive and analytical approach relevant to the study objectives was used. This approach aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the reality and development of an issue by clearly describing its elements and determining the factors for its practice. Moreover, we analysed the conditions to draw valuable conclusions that promote the development of the field of study (Obaidat et al., 2020, p. 245). Firstly, the study procedures began by reviewing and analysing the theoretical background to achieve the study objectives. Secondly, a focus group was used. The group consists of five experts from various disciplines and backgrounds who participated in the development of PYPs in the Saudi context. This stage aimed to analyse their reflections on the research idea and the level of its applicability in the Saudi environment. These reflections on the proposed proposal were added to the second-stage questionnaire. The expert's questionnaire was sent to 60 experts from various disciplines and backgrounds taking into consideration the diversity of faculty members and international students. The percentage of responses was 66.6% (40 out of 60).

Given the objectives, 'purposive sampling' was used by selecting a group of experts. This selection was conducted based on several criteria; namely, they were required to have varied experiences of academic practices and leadership, with a focus on prior experience in PYPs, and academic or administrative experience in institutions dealing with preparatory year deanships, such as supportive deanships, colleges, the Education and Training Evaluation Commission (ETEC), and pre-university educational institutions. Selection was also conducted considering the diversity of experts' academic cultures.

### *Study instruments*

*Focus groups:* to collect participants' perspectives to answer the first study question and to select local, regional, and international universities to review their experiences in implementing preparatory programmes. Moreover, provided their opinion on the questionnaire content intended for the experts.

*Experts' questionnaire:* It was developed to collect their opinions and perspectives on the third question of the study and evaluating their perception on the development proposal presented to them in the first version by judging the extent of its applicability in the Saudi context. In the second study question the study experts provided their opinion about the appropriate model for implementing PYPs in Saudi universities according to the experiences of international universities in developed countries. The following models were presented:

The American model which reflects the current perspective of the independence of Saudi universities based on the new Saudi Universities Law that gives liberty to the universities to determine the appropriate model for applying the PYPs. The British model which applies the perspective of foundation programmes that is closely similar to what has been applied currently in most Saudi universities and aligns with the fourth level of the Saudi NQF. A model that combines both the American and British perspectives: This model is appropriate considering several arguments that support this combination of two international approaches, and the unique and different experiences of Saudi universities in terms of the historical and general context. The experts had a fourth option that they could select if they assumed that it was more suitable than the three approaches.

## RESULTS

### *What are the various experiences in applying preparatory programmes in universities locally, regionally, and globally?*

The focus group agreed that the preparatory programmes are applied in different models locally, regionally, and globally (Brian, 2019). Furthermore, it has been noted that the most common practice is that of academic programme model under the supervision of colleges, such as:

*King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (College of Support Studies):* In this model, the college offers a special programme for the preparatory year under the supervision of five academic departments. This college was founded in 2007 to provide basic courses of university programmes not covered by other colleges. It is responsible for improving the students' core knowledge, skills, competencies, and values to enable them to compete in the labour market and fulfil their role as leaders in their local communities through the programmes and courses offered. The college provides students with opportunities to plan their visions of the future by developing communication skills and enhancing their personal characteristics and positive behaviour (College of General Studies, 2021).

*United Arab Emirates University (university college):* In this model, new students are assisted in successfully transitioning from high school to academic life at university. The college presents students with the required information about academic and study programmes. Moreover, it trains them to use available resources, improve their abilities of self and life-long learning, and participate in various activities. The university college programme includes three main sections: the university foundation, student academic success, and general education. The majority of new students join the foundation programme and practice their activities in the laboratories of student academic success centres. Visiting academic advisers provide the required assistance. The academic success centre provides academic support to students during their university studies and assists them in choosing their study field. Simultaneously, students also study a general education programme. Accordingly, the university college model offers an integrated experience to students; more precisely, in the foundation programme, students study courses in detail, while in general education, the courses are delivered more generally and comprehensively. The university college works collaboratively with other colleges and the Deanship of Student Affairs to provide the perfect academic experience for students (University College, 2021).

*University College London:* In this model, the preparatory programme is presented by the Center for Languages and International Education (CLIE), which helps international students in their preparation for academic studies in the United Kingdom by offering them, on-campus in central London, a wide range of foundation courses and qualifications in English, and the core academic knowledge and skills needed to become a successful student at British universities (CLIE, 2021).

### ***What is the model to be implemented in PYPs in KSA considering the experiences of developed universities based on international rankings?***

The study experts presented their opinions, 75% agreed that the developed model combined American and British models, 19% selected the American model, and only 3% selected the British model. One suggested opinion was that the goals and shortages should be defined and analysed before choosing the appropriate model. Some comments of the experts were as follows:

The application of the British model requires reforming some of the practices being implemented in schools, for example, study plans and curricula after the primary stage must be reformulated and rehabilitated to produce social confidence among parents and students to accept non-academic directives and the concept of professional studies and its importance in building society.

Increasing awareness for the development of study plans of courses in PYPs to align with the social requirements and needs to meet the labour market approaches and NQF, which aims to improve students' qualifications and learning outcomes and requires those responsible for employment in different fields to recognise the core competences of the alumnae.

In the preparatory year, it is important to focus on general soft skills (transformational) to reduce the level of specialisation, especially given the rapid changes in labour markets and new professions, considering that many graduates may work in fields that do not require their study specialisation.

***What is the suggested model for developing the DPYSS at IAU considering the Saudi vision 2030?***

It was found that the study experts are generally convinced of the applicability of the suggested model to the Saudi context, 27% with a Very high level of approval, 54.1% with high approval, and 16.21% with a medium level of approval. None of them selected a poor level of approval, and one expert stated that the suggested proposal was not applicable.

Concerning the need to convert the Deanship of Preparatory Year into a university college that will award an associate diploma by applying academic accreditation standards, which will contribute to raising the level of academic performance as well as the effectiveness of the outcomes, the experts generally reported that they were convinced with the importance of this transition, where 32.4% showed a Very high level of approval, 37.8% with high approval, 16.2% disagreed, and 16.2% were neutral, while none of them strongly disagreed. Ultimately, 56.5% of the experts provided additional comments, with 62% providing developmental suggestions on how the proposal could be implemented. These suggestions and comments were integrated to build the final perception of the proposal as follows:

***Suggested model premises***

*Saudi Vision 2030*: The Kingdom's vision affirms the interest and the role of education in forming individuals, families, and society as an influential and core variable in supporting the national economy, as well as one of the concepts that promote investment in the most important resource, that is, human resources. This investment includes developing skills and supporting the capabilities of society members by adopting the alignment between the educational processes and the requirements of labour market, through the aspect of 'learn to do'. The vision emphasises continued investment in education and training to provide students with the required core knowledge and skills for future jobs. Moreover, efforts have been made to align the outcomes of the educational system with the requirements of the labour market (Saudi vision 2030, 2016, p. 36).

*National Qualifications Framework (2020)*: The suggested proposal aligns with the fourth level of NQF, which is parallel with the level of PYPs at university. This level of NQF specifies 'the degree of associate diploma, at the post of high school level, as an extension of general education or for professional and administrative qualification purposes, requires specialised experience. However, this degree is considered a final qualification; these studies are usually offered to provide students with the fundamental studies to obtain a higher education qualification' (ETEC, 2020, p. 24).

*High school paths and specialised academies project*: This project includes many strategic objectives that address the enhancement of Islamic values and national identity by keeping pace with the new global vision of intermediate and high schools at the educational level. In addition, this *project* aims to eliminate the need for PYPs at universities with the expansion and diversification of learning opportunities for all students to improve the efficiency of intermediate and high school levels. It seeks students to obtain proficiency certificates in English and provide a specific path for Sharia sciences to discover the most distinguished students. Moreover, an early selection of students is based on the orientations and abilities to enable students who qualify to work to graduate or continue their future education (Ministry of Education, 2019).

*The New Law of Universities*: Three universities, namely, King Saud University, King Abdulaziz University, and IAU, were included in the pilot implementation of the new system, which seeks to achieve the vision of His Highness the Crown Prince in empowerment, distinction, quality, and continuous development of Saudi universities. The new system provides a controlled independence to higher education institutions to build their academic, financial, and administrative regulations by approving academic programmes according to society development requirements and job opportunities, considering the general governmental policies of the University Affairs Council (2021).

These premises have been integrated with the Saudi Vision 2030 by making efforts to develop PYPs

through the improvement of their applied practices, inputs, processes, and outputs to enhance the level of students' continuity and reduce the dropout levels, which reflects the internal efficiency of universities by qualifying students for their academic and professional life.

### ***Suggested model foundations***

Rational (philosophical) foundation: Integration as a social and developmental requirement that Islamic values address.

Economic foundation: The sensible investment of human resources by an effective role of PYPs in supporting the national economy with its resources and experiences.

Professional foundation: By activating the role of universities in the Saudization of jobs at various levels and reducing unemployment rates.

### ***Objectives***

- 1) The sensible investment of university resources with an integration of the efforts of the ETEC through the NQF to achieve the Saudi Vision 2030.
- 2) The integration between general (pre-university) and university education by enhancing scientific knowledge and basic skills that students need in their future professions.
- 3) Qualifying university students to engage in the labour market at an early stage of their university life to achieve the culture of jobs that impact their future professional growth.
- 4) Providing opportunities to public education graduates to choose the appropriate opportunities that help them improve their knowledge, skills, and values to be able to compete in the labour market and fulfil their role as leaders in the local society.
- 5) Diversifying the sources of income for universities.

### ***Role of Deanship of Preparatory Year and supporting studies***

Provide learning domains to students according to the fourth level of NQF, which identifies learners' needs for core knowledge, understanding, skills, and values to obtain an associate diploma qualification (ETEC, 2020, p. 17).

Provide the essential courses in academic specialisations not covered by other colleges.

Improving the competencies of university students by enhancing 21st century skills to be able to effectively complete university studies and compete in the labour market and fulfil their role as leaders in the local society through available programmes and courses.

Awarding an associate diploma qualification, provided by the Deanship of Preparatory Year, which qualifies students to complete their studies at colleges, as well as for the purpose of qualification for employment in an administrative or professional field that requires limited experience in the job field. Likewise, this qualification requires the completion of at least (24) credit hours (unit), which takes a full-time academic year, or is equivalent to part-time higher education. In addition, this qualification is granted at the post-high school level as an extension of general education after high school, or for the purpose of qualification for employment in an administrative or professional field that requires limited experience in the job field. Although this degree is considered an eligible qualification, these studies are usually proposed to provide learners with the essential foundations of further academic qualification (ETEC, 2020, p. 24).

***Admission procedures for students***

Students could be admitted to preparatory year tracks to obtain the associate diploma degree according to one of the following:

Students admitted directly to obtain a bachelor's degree, according to university admission requirements:

- The students complete the PYP by passing all academic courses to obtain an associate diploma. Meanwhile, to achieve the conditions of admission to colleges in their track, they can be allocated colleges based on their requests.

- Students who finish the summer semester (the third semester) failing one or more courses and those with a GPA of less than 3 out of 5 will be allowed to:

A. Transfer to an Intermediate diploma program or advanced diploma program that offers tuition fees.

B. Repeating the courses, they failed in the next academic year as a last chance with tuition fees. In the case of passing all courses, they will obtain an associate diploma. Meanwhile, in the case of fulfilling the conditions of admission to colleges in their track, they can be allocated colleges based on their requests.

Students admitted directly to obtain a bachelor's degree, according to the admission requirements of university without joining the preparatory programme:

- They pass particular exams at the beginning of the academic year according to their tracks. These exams focus on the following courses: English language, communication skills, learning skills, and computer skills. The grades for basic science courses were taken from their scores in the achievement test. It should be noted that in the case of the humanities sciences track, these requirements include the courses of Arabic language and Islamic studies.

- The students are admitted directly to colleges according to their fulfilment of admission conditions.

- In the case of students' graduation under the project of high school paths and specialised academies, they will be admitted directly into the academic programmes of colleges according to their fulfilment of admission conditions.

Admission of students who have not achieved university conditions:

- They will be admitted with tuition fees to obtain an associate diploma if they pass the PYP.

- After awarding the associate diploma, it will be possible:

A. To be admitted in the available undergraduate programmes offered by college, at the same university, according to the conditions of these programmes, students' requests, and available vacancies.

B. Direct submission to all intermediate or advanced diploma programmes, as well as undergraduate programmes according to their track, in all Saudi universities according to the NQF.

***Standards & KPIs***

- Increasing the enrolment rate of university alumnae in the labour market
- Decreasing dropout and failure rates for students enrolled in academic programmes at colleges
- Increasing the financial income of university

***Recommendations of experts***

Restrict the number of admitted students from high school to the bachelor's degree to motivate students to join the labour market that does not require everyone who graduates from high school to complete their studies at the bachelor's level. This control of student numbers will save resources and time, as well as provide an opportunity that helps students start their professional productivity earlier.

The success of applying the suggested proposal depends on the ability to present different persuasive arguments, from what was previously presented, to students about the importance of the diploma degree

and its effective role in serving society and contributing to the building, progress, and prosperity of the state.

Awarding the associate diploma qualification to students who do not obtain the required rate for the desired path helps students administratively or professionally in jobs that require limited experience.

This proposal could be applicable if there is high demand and motivation from high school graduates for specific university programmes.

Reforming the deanship so as to be a university college, which provides an academic degree, conflicts with the purpose of qualifying students to study in academic programmes.

In the case of students' failure in the summer semester, they could have the opportunity to reset the courses in the same academic year without waiting for the next year.

The project of high school pathways aligns with many preparatory year courses which require more integration between the two approaches to avoid any variation or disparity in students' skills.

Vocational and technical colleges could be alternative opportunities for students who could not pass the PYP considering a successful prior experience in recruiting students of a PYP at King Saud University who showed a high level of achievement in technical colleges.

Additional fees can be applied if the withdrawal students request to appear for the final exam.

A centre for 21st century skills, which qualifies university alumnae and the local society in meeting the requirements of the labour market in several fields through partnerships with stakeholders will be established.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study proposes a perspective for developing the DPYSS to align with the current and future changes in both public and higher education. It addresses the importance of preparatory year and foundation programmes in higher education to efficiently prepare students as part of the development of human resources to meet the Saudi labour market needs according to SV 2030.

The focus group agreed that majority of PYPs in KSA are delivered through a deanship with few local exceptions which is different to regional and international practices which adopt different models that generally tend to be academic programmes linked to a college (Al-Otaibi, 2015; Alrayes, 2018; Brian, 2019)

The findings of this study revealed that most experts' participants choose the American and British combined model to be implemented in KSA's PYPs. This choice can be explained by the specificity unique to KSA's higher education context which is different from the American or the British but without neglecting the inclusion of international good practices which meet the Saudi context (Al-Otaibi, 2015; Alrayes, 2018; Brian, 2019).

The study experts were generally convinced of the applicability of the Suggested model to the Saudi context. They also insisted on the need and the importance to convert the DPYSS into a university college that will award an associate diploma.

Perhaps the reason for this consensus among the study experts is the current debate on the status of the PYPs in KSA, in which faculty members and students participate, regarding the importance of PYPs and their roles in improving the level of students as well as the negative impact on increasing the level of academic pressure on students (Abu Almaati, Issa, Ahmed, 2015; Alsulami et al., 2020; Fayed, Abdel Tawab, 2020).

## **LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The study was limited to building a suggested model for developing the DPYSS considering the Saudi Vision 2030. The study data was collected through 35 experts, and certainly, this sample is limited in

dealing with the field of study and the suggested model. Further studies need to be conducted involving students and faculty members employing a variety of methods, and larger sample to verify the results of the current study.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study proposes a model of the DPYSS to handle the current and future changes of the Saudi educational system in public and higher education from the perspective of the SV 2030. It also highlights the importance of developing human resources effectively by improving their skills, supporting their capabilities, and adapting the integration of the educational system's philosophy with the Saudi labour market that is driven by the principle of 'learn to work' emphasised by the SV 2030.

Meanwhile, the study contributes to the efforts behind the national rational of investing in human and material capabilities in the universities by providing a practical model. Moreover, the implementation of the model proposed in this study will contribute to qualify the alumnae according to the requirements of the labour market by providing them with the opportunity to obtain a qualification (Associate Diploma) that will enable them to access the Saudi labour market.

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