Examining the Impact of Privatisation on Educational Quality and Equity in Saudi Arabia: A Case Study of Jeddah's Private School Sector

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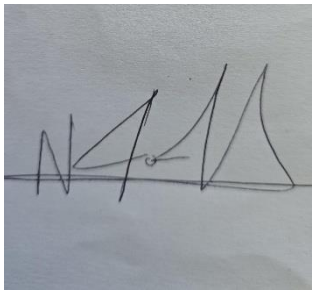
DECLARATION

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I hereby declare that the thesis entitled **Examining the Impact of Privatisation on Educational Quality and Equity in Saudi Arabia: A Case Study of Jeddah's Private School Sector** is my own original work and that all sources which I have consulted, cited or quoted have been duly acknowledged through complete and accurate referencing. I further certify that this thesis has been submitted to originality-checking software and that the resulting report meets the institution's prescribed requirements. I also affirm that this work, in whole or in part, has not been submitted previously for examination or for the purposes of obtaining any qualification at the University of South Africa (UNISA) or at any other higher education institution.



Signature: Naeema Foflonker

Date: 6 July 2026

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, students, colleagues, and friends.

To my family, thank you for your unwavering love, encouragement, patience, and support throughout this journey. Your belief in me gave me the strength to persevere through every challenge.

To my students, thank you for being a constant source of inspiration. Your enthusiasm for learning and your curiosity continually remind me of the importance of education and have strengthened my passion for teaching.

To my colleagues and friends, thank you for your encouragement, understanding, and support throughout this journey. Your kindness, motivation, and belief in my abilities have been deeply appreciated.

This achievement would not have been possible without your support, encouragement, and belief in me.

ABSTRACT

Educational privatisation has become an increasingly important feature of school education in Saudi Arabia as the country continues to implement the educational reforms associated with Vision 2030. While the expansion of the private sector has created greater educational choice and opportunities for learners, it has also raised important questions about educational quality and equity. Although private international schools have grown considerably in recent years, there remains limited research exploring how those most closely involved in these schools experience and perceive the effects of educational privatisation. This study therefore examined the impact of educational privatisation on educational quality and equity within Jeddah's private school sector.

The study adopted a qualitative case study design underpinned by Human Capital Theory. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten participants comprising school leaders, teachers, and parents from private international schools in Jeddah. The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, shared experiences, and differences in stakeholder perspectives.

The findings revealed four interconnected themes. Participants associated educational quality with English language proficiency, internationally recognised curricula, learner-centred teaching, as well as the development of critical thinking, communication, and independent learning. They also believed that international education could successfully coexist with Saudi cultural and religious values when schools maintained an appropriate balance between global educational practices and local identity. At the same time, participants described a growing reliance on supplementary academic support to meet the demands of international curricula. Although this additional support was generally viewed as beneficial for learner achievement, concerns were raised that unequal access to these opportunities could widen educational inequalities. Participants further viewed private international schools as making a positive contribution to the educational aspirations of Vision 2030 while recognising that affordability and accessibility remain important challenges.

Overall, the findings indicate that participants perceived educational privatisation as making a positive contribution to educational quality by broadening learning opportunities and supporting learner development. However, it also demonstrates that these benefits are not

experienced equally, as financial circumstances continue to influence access to private education and supplementary academic support. The study concludes that educational quality and equity should be regarded as complementary rather than competing priorities if the broader educational aspirations of Vision 2030 are to be realised. By examining stakeholder experiences within Jeddah's private international schools, the study contributes context-specific evidence to the growing body of literature on educational privatisation in Saudi Arabia and provides practical insights for policymakers, school leaders, and future researchers.

Keywords: Educational privatisation, Educational quality, Educational equity, Private international schools, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Vision 2030, Human Capital Theory

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ATL	Approaches to Learning
ETEC	Education and Training Evaluation Commission
IB	International Baccalaureate
IBO	International Baccalaureate Organization
MoE	Ministry of Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SES	Socio-economic Status
TA	Thematic Analysis
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNISA	University of South Africa

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION ii
DEDICATION iii
ABSTRACT iv
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 Background 2
1.3 Problem Statement 2
1.4 Rationale 4
1.5 Definition of Concepts 5
1.5.1 Privatisation 5
1.5.2 Education Equity 6
1.6 Literature Review 6
1.6.1 The Accessibility of Private Education 6
1.6.2 Privatisation and Social Inequality in Education 7
1.6.3 The Influence of Privatisation on Education Standards 7
1.7 Theoretical Framework 7
1.8 Location of the Study 9
1.9 Research Questions 9
1.9.1 Main Research Question 9
1.9.2 Secondary Research Questions 9
1.10 Aim and Objectives 9
1.10.1 Aim 9
1.10.2 Objectives 10
1.11 Research Methodology and Design 10
1.11.1 Research Design 10
1.11.2 Research Paradigm 10
1.11.3 Research Approach 11
1.11.4 Population and Sampling 11
1.11.5 Data Collection Methods 12

1.12 Trustworthiness 12
1.13 Ethical Considerations 13
1.14 Limitations of the Study 13
1.15 Conclusion 13
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 14
2.1 Introduction 14
2.2 Educational Access 15
2.2.1 Geographical Distribution of Private Schools 15
2.2.2 Financial Affordability and Educational Access 16
2.2.3 Admission Policies and Educational Access 17
2.3 Educational Equity 18
2.4 Privatisation and Social Inequality 19
2.5 The Influence of Privatisation on Educational Standards 21
2.6 Challenges of Educational Privatisation 22
2.7 Theoretical Framework 24
2.8 Chapter Summary 25
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN 27
3.1 Introduction 27
3.2 Research Design: Qualitative Case Study 27
3.3 Research Paradigm: Interpretivism 28
3.4 Research Approach: Qualitative Inquiry 29
3.5 Study Location: Al Salamah, Jeddah 29
3.6 Selection of Participants and Sampling 29
3.7 Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews 30
3.8 Researcher's Role and Positionality 30
3.9 Pilot Study 30
3.10 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis 31
3.11 Trustworthiness 31
3.11.1 Credibility 31
3.11.2 Dependability 32
3.11.3 Confirmability 32
3.11.4 Transferability 32

3.12 Ethical Considerations....32
3.13 Limitations....33
3.14 Conclusion....33
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION....34
4.1 Introduction....34
4.2 How Does Privatisation Influence Educational Standards in Jeddah?....37
4.2.1 English Language Proficiency as a Marker of Educational Quality....37
4.2.2 Parental Expectations Regarding Educational Quality, Reputation, and Social Positioning....39
4.2.3 Educational Standards Beyond Academic Achievement....41
4.3 Balancing International Educational Frameworks with Saudi National, Cultural, and Religious Identity....43
4.3.1 International Education as More Than English Language Acquisition....44
4.3.2 Balancing International Educational Frameworks with Saudi National, Cultural, and Religious Identity....47
4.3.3 Developing Global Competencies while Preserving National Identity....49
4.4 To What Extent Does Privatisation Contribute to Widening the Socio-Economic Divide in Educational Quality?....52
4.4.1 The Growing Reliance on Private Tutoring....53
4.4.2 Academic Pressures Driving Demand for Additional Support....57
4.4.3 Equity Implications of Access to Supplementary Educational Resources....61
CHAPTER FIVE: STUDY SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS....65
5.1 Introduction....65
5.2 Summary of the Research Study....65
5.3 Conclusions....66
5.3.1 Research Question One: How Does Privatisation Influence Educational Standards in Jeddah?....67
5.3.2 Research Question Two: In What Ways Does Privatisation Align with the Educational Goals Set Forth in Vision 2030?....68
5.3.3 Research Question Three: To What Extent Does Privatisation Contribute to Widening the Socio-Economic Divide in Educational Quality?....69
5.4 Recommendations....70
5.4.1 Recommendations Related to Educational Standards....71

5.4.2 Recommendations Related to Alignment with Vision 2030 71
5.4.3 Recommendations Related to Addressing the Socio-Economic Divide and Shadow Education 72
5.5 Limitations of the Study 72
5.6 Suggestions for Future Research 73
5.7 Concluding Remarks 75
REFERENCES 76
ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE 81
ANNEXURE B: PERMISSION FROM SCHOOL TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS 83
ANNEXURE C: CONSENT FORM 84
ANNEXURE D: INTERVIEW GUIDE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT AND LEADERSHIP 85
ANNEXURE E: INTERVIEW GUIDE TEACHERS 86
ANNEXURE F: INTERVIEW GUIDE PARENTS 87
ANNEXURE G: CERTIFICATE OF EDITING 88
ANNEXURE H: TURNITIN REPORT 89

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

What happens when education becomes a marketplace rather than a public service? This global question has become increasingly relevant as many countries adopt reforms aimed at transforming their education systems through privatisation and market principles.

Education marketisation has become an increasingly prominent feature of education reform in many countries and is frequently presented as a means of improving educational quality, efficiency, and parental choice. These reforms are commonly associated with neoliberal approaches that encourage competition, accountability, and greater private sector participation in education (Ball, 2020; Verger et al., 2022). In Saudi Arabia, educational reform has been closely linked to Vision 2030, which identifies education as a key driver of economic diversification and human capital development while promoting greater private sector participation in the education system (Ministry of Education, 2021; OECD, 2020). At the same time, national policy emphasises the importance of maintaining educational quality and equity as private sector participation continues to expand (Ministry of Education Saudi Arabia, 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

While the commodification of education as a response to perceived inefficiencies in the public sector is widely discussed, there is a significant amount of debate on the effects of commodified education on equity in education (i.e., that education should be equally available to all, irrespective of social class). The question of equity is particularly crucial in Saudi Arabia, where differences persist between public and private schools. Access to high-quality education is often influenced by geographic location and socioeconomic background, leading to concerns that increasing privatisation may exacerbate existing inequalities rather than resolve them. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2012) defines equity in education as the extent to which personal or social circumstances do not hinder a student's educational potential—an ideal that remains a challenge in the Saudi context.

This study investigated the impact of privatisation on the quality and equity of school education: a case study of Jeddah in the light of global experience. It asked whether privatisation serves the objectives of Vision 2030 or deepens social disparities. The study

examined the purported motivations behind privatisation policies and their effects on access, quality, and results on the ground. It was qualitative in nature, interviewing a variety of stakeholders in the new educational environment of Jeddah.

1.2 Background

The current study was informed by documented differences between public and private education within Saudi Arabia, particularly in relation to educational quality, access, as well as the distribution of educational resources. National reforms introduced through Vision 2030 have further increased interest in understanding how these differences are shaping educational opportunities within Jeddah. While Chubb and Moe (1990) argue that privatisation has the potential to improve efficiency and stimulate innovation, concerns remain regarding its implications for equitable access to high-quality education.

Human Capital Theory provided the primary theoretical lens for this study by viewing education as an investment that develops individuals' knowledge, skills, and productivity (Becker, 1994). This perspective aligns closely with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 agenda, which identifies education as a key driver of economic diversification and labour market development. According to the Ministry of Education (MoE) (2021), educational reform seeks to equip learners with the competencies needed to participate successfully in a competitive, knowledge-based economy. The OECD (2020) likewise emphasises that strengthening educational quality and learner outcomes is central to the country's long-term social and economic development. Guided by these perspectives, the present study explored how privatisation influences educational quality and equity within Jeddah's private school sector through the lens of Human Capital Theory.

1.3 Problem Statement

Education privatisation is already a global issue moving at a fast pace. This transformation involves governments withdrawing from direct oversight of schools and placing this responsibility in the hands of private organisations, which are expected to deliver education more efficiently and at a lower cost. Such logic aligns with neoliberal discourses advocating market-based remedies to improve educational achievement and competitiveness (Verger et al., 2016; Ball & Youdell, 2007; Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2018).

In Saudi Arabia, educational reform forms part of the broader Vision 2030 agenda, which seeks to diversify the economy while strengthening the role of the private sector in a range of strategic areas, including education. Within this framework, the MoE has identified private sector participation as one mechanism for improving educational quality, increasing efficiency, and supporting the long-term sustainability of the education system. At the same time, these reforms emphasise that educational development should remain aligned with national priorities and continue to promote equitable learning opportunities for all learners (Ministry of Education, 2021; OECD, 2020).

Despite these ambitions, the impact of privatisation on educational quality and educational equity remains widely debated. Supporters argue that greater competition can encourage innovation, accountability, and improved educational outcomes. Others contend that market-oriented reforms may widen existing inequalities when access to high-quality education is increasingly influenced by socio-economic circumstances rather than educational need. From this perspective, expanding private sector participation should be accompanied by effective regulation and a continued commitment to educational equity to ensure that improvements in quality do not come at the expense of fairness and social inclusion (Srivastava, 2020; Verger et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

Additionally, in many cases, private education in Saudi Arabia is associated with socio-economic advantage, creating concerns that learners from less privileged backgrounds may experience greater barriers to access. Ball and Youdell (2022) argue that market-oriented reforms may unintentionally reinforce existing inequalities when educational opportunities become closely linked to families' financial resources. Similarly, Aydarova (2021) notes that education reforms may produce uneven outcomes if issues of equity and inclusion are not addressed alongside improvements in quality. Research conducted across a range of educational contexts also suggests that market-based school choice policies may contribute to stratified educational systems in which learners from lower-income families have fewer opportunities for upward educational mobility (Srivastava, 2020; UNESCO, 2023). These concerns are particularly relevant within Jeddah, where the private education sector continues to expand as part of the wider educational reforms associated with Vision 2030.

Therefore, this study aimed to investigate how the privatisation of education in Jeddah aligns with—or diverges from—the objectives of Vision 2030, with particular attention to issues of

educational quality and equity. By scrutinising access, curriculum standards, and the role of socio-economic status (SES), the study sought to understand whether private sector provision improves quality or simply replicates existing disparities. It also critically explored the underlying motivations driving privatisation initiatives—whether they are primarily aimed at advancing educational outcomes or influenced by financial and market-based interests—and how these align with equitable benefit distribution across socio-economic groups.

Knowledge Gap and Research Contribution: While existing literature in Saudi Arabia has examined macro-level policy shifts under Vision 2030 (Ministry of Education, 2021; OECD, 2020) and general comparative structures between public and private education (Elyas & Picard, 2013), previous studies have primarily focused on high-level policy analysis or public-sector outcomes. What remains largely unexplored in empirical research is how those directly embedded in the private international school sector—specifically school leaders, teachers, and parents—subjectively experience and navigate the trade-offs between educational standards, global curricula, and social equity.

By investigating stakeholder perspectives within Jeddah's private international school context, this study bridges a critical empirical gap. Academically, it contributes context-specific qualitative evidence on the mechanisms of shadow education and social reproduction in Gulf educational marketisation. Practically, it provides actionable insights for policymakers (MoE and ETEC) and school administrators to align private sector growth with Vision 2030's dual objectives of educational excellence and social inclusion.

1.4 Rationale

This study was motivated by the concern that privatisation may threaten access to equity in Saudi education. While Vision 2030 places the private sector as a major partner in offering quality and sustainable education, the question arises whether such reforms really cater for all learners. In particular, there is the possibility that privatisation will perpetuate inequities among students from various socioeconomic backgrounds. For instance, children from richer households might attend better-resourced private schools, while those from poorer homes may have little or worse access to resources. This concern is especially important in Saudi Arabia, where education is closely tied to national development goals, and where Vision 2030 explicitly aims to promote equal opportunity. The question to be asked, then, is how this new direction is unfolding and whether it is truly working for children across all income levels.

There are already reports in the literature on privatisation creating fragmented education systems with access to and quality of education unevenly distributed across class (Verger et al., 2016; Lubienski, 2006). This sets an interesting background to gauge if the Saudi mode of privatisation fosters inclusive development or entrenches social exclusion.

This study was grounded on both the national need and the researcher's interest. In light of experiencing a public and private school education in Saudi Arabia, the researcher attempted to offer a fair comparison of both systems. On the one hand, privatisation is seen in some scholarly accounts as a source of efficiency and innovation (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Tooley, 2009), on the other, as tending to erode educational publicity and the opportunities of the marginalised (Ball & Youdell, 2007; Srivastava, 2020).

Redress of such limitations thus becomes necessary, and this study sought to address academic debates and policy discussions by providing evidence-based knowledge of the impact privatisation has had on education in Saudi Arabia. The study also intended to further narrow the space between Vision 2030's aspirations and present-day realities in education service delivery. In addition, the study will add to international studies on education policy through offering a Middle East case, an often-under-represented region in the literature (Aydarova, 2021; Verger et al., 2022). Ultimately, it is about informing ways to make high-quality education available and addressing to all children, regardless of background, and to national development imperatives.

1.5 Definition of Concepts

1.5.1 Privatisation

Privatisation in education involves the gradual transfer of control of education from the government to a private entity or to businesses. Privatisation includes a spectrum of activities from outsourcing of services to complete private ownership of schools (Levin, 2002). Ball and Youdell (2007) distinguish between endogenous privatisation, where private sector managerial practices are adopted in public education, and exogenous privatisation, in which education services are contracted to private providers. In the Saudi Arabian context, privatisation appears in the form of policies to promote private investment in education under the Vision 2030 initiative (Ministry of Education, 2021; Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2023).

1.5.2 Education Equity

Equity in education refers to the principle that all learners should have fair access to educational opportunities, resources, and outcomes, regardless of their socio-economic background, gender, geographic location, or other personal characteristics. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2012) defines educational equity as the extent to which personal or social circumstances do not hinder an individual's educational potential. Within the Saudi Arabian context, educational equity remains an important policy priority as ongoing educational reforms seek to expand access, improve quality, and ensure that all learners benefit from the opportunities created through Vision 2030 (Ministry of Education, 2021; OECD, 2020).

1.6 Literature Review

The literature review is included to place the study in academic context, identify gaps in the literature, and justify the focus of the investigation. A well-developed literature review demonstrates a candidate's familiarity with the topic and highlights areas requiring further research (Randolph, 2009; Snyder, 2019). It also allows researchers to critically engage with existing scholarship and position their study within broader academic discussions (Booth et al., 2021). This review focuses on how privatisation influences the accessibility, quality, and fairness of education, particularly within the context of Jeddah's private school sector.

1.6.1 The Accessibility of Private Education

Privatisation policies can significantly impact educational access, especially in societies with wide socio-economic disparities. Studies show that in many cases, privatisation restricts access to better-quality schools to families who can afford to pay (Lubienski, 2006; Srivastava, 2020). In Saudi Arabia, the expansion of private education has been concentrated largely within major urban centres, where demand for private schooling has increased alongside wider educational reforms associated with Vision 2030. Although this expansion has broadened educational choice for many families, access remains uneven, with affordability and geographic location continuing to influence participation in the private sector. Recent studies suggest that while privatisation has created new educational opportunities, it has not fully addressed the structural barriers that limit access for learners from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Consequently, expanding educational choice alone is unlikely to achieve greater educational equity unless supported by policies that promote inclusion and equitable access (OECD, 2020; Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

1.6.2 Privatisation and Social Inequality in Education

Research from both international and Saudi contexts suggests that privatisation can increase existing socio-economic inequalities in education. Ball and Youdell (2022) argue that market-based education systems often favour families with greater financial resources because they are in a stronger position to choose and afford private schooling. Verger et al. (2022) make a similar point, noting that competition can improve educational opportunities for some learners while widening differences for others when access depends largely on the ability to pay. In Saudi Arabia, the expansion of private education has therefore raised important questions about educational equity and social inclusion. As Srivastava (2020) explains, school choice policies that operate without appropriate regulation may contribute to educational systems in which learners' opportunities are increasingly shaped by their socio-economic circumstances. UNESCO (2023) likewise emphasises that expanding educational choice should be accompanied by policies that protect equitable access and support disadvantaged learners. These concerns are particularly relevant in Jeddah, where differences in household income and neighbourhood development may continue to influence educational opportunities.

1.6.3 The Influence of Privatisation on Education Standards

The quality of education provided by private schools remains the subject of considerable scholarly debate. Supporters argue that private providers can be more responsive, innovative, and flexible, potentially contributing to improvements in educational standards (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Tooley, 2009). Conversely, critics contend that market-driven approaches may encourage schools to prioritise efficiency, competition, and performance indicators at the expense of broader educational and developmental goals (Ball & Youdell, 2007; Verger et al., 2022). In Saudi Arabia, private schools continue to operate within a regulatory framework established by the MoE, which sets curriculum requirements and quality expectations. Nevertheless, maintaining consistent educational standards requires effective quality assurance, continuous monitoring, and robust accountability mechanisms. This suggests that privatisation alone does not guarantee improved educational quality and that sustained regulatory oversight remains essential to ensure that educational standards are maintained across all sectors (Ministry of Education, 2021; OECD, 2020; OECD, 2024).

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory provides the principal theoretical framework for this study because it offers a useful perspective for understanding the relationship between education and economic

development within the Saudi Arabian context. Originally developed by Theodore Schultz and later expanded by Gary Becker, the theory views education as an investment that enhances individuals' knowledge, skills, and productivity, thereby contributing to both personal advancement and wider economic growth. Becker (1994) argues that investment in education increases human capital, while Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2020) demonstrate that educational investment continues to generate significant economic and social returns for individuals and societies. These principles closely reflect the educational aspirations of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 agenda, which positions education as a key driver of national development.

This theory is particularly relevant to the present study because it aligns closely with the objectives of Vision 2030, which places a strong emphasis on enhancing educational outcomes to diversify the economy and bolster the private sector. From this perspective, education serves as both a public good and a strategic means of equipping citizens with the knowledge and skills needed to participate in a modern, knowledge-based economy. In order to contextualise the broader discussions surrounding privatisation, this study incorporated ideas from social reproduction theory and neoliberal theory in addition to its foundation in Human Capital Theory. According to Ball (2022) and Verger et al. (2022), neoliberal theory contends that bringing market competition into the classroom may improve efficiency and standards. However, critics like Srivastava and Noronha (2021) caution that it might favour more privileged social groups by putting economic objectives ahead of equity.

Similar to this, Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) social reproduction theory provides a sobering viewpoint, arguing that privatisation might exacerbate already-existing class-based disparities by granting unequal access to high-quality education (Lynch & Baker, 2021). Despite not being the primary theoretical framework for this study, these viewpoints aid in highlighting the possible dangers of privatisation in failing to deliver equitable outcomes—a central concern of this study.

In summary, Human Capital Theory serves as the central theoretical framework for this research because of its clear link to education policy, labour market needs, and national development—key concerns in the Saudi context. Supporting perspectives from neoliberalism and social reproduction theory were used to frame the broader academic debate but were not the primary lenses for analysis.

1.8 Location of the Study

The research took place in Jeddah, a major urban center in Saudi Arabia, with a particular emphasis on private schools in the city. This focus is important because private schools in Jeddah have experienced significant growth in recent years, largely due to the educational reforms introduced under the government's Vision 2030 initiative. By examining these institutions, the study aimed to gain insights into how privatisation is shaping the educational landscape and affecting students' experiences and outcomes.

Jeddah reflects many of the socio-economic dynamics observed across Saudi Arabia, including stark disparities in household income, living conditions, and access to quality education. The city includes both affluent districts where families can afford elite private schooling and lower-income areas where access to high-quality education is more limited. These differences are especially relevant as they can influence who benefits from the privatisation of education and who may be left behind. Jeddah's diverse population and socio-economic variation make it a valuable case through which to examine the equity implications of education privatisation, particularly in light of Vision 2030's goals for inclusive development.

1.9 Research Questions

1.9.1 Main Research Question

What impact does privatisation have on the quality and equity of education within Jeddah's private school sector?

1.9.2 Secondary Research Questions

1. How does privatisation influence educational standards in Jeddah?
2. In what ways does privatisation align with the educational goals set forth in Vision 2030?
3. To what extent does privatisation contribute to widening the socio-economic divide in educational quality?

1.10 Aim and Objectives

1.10.1 Aim

The primary aim of this research was to investigate how privatisation affects both the quality and equity of education in Jeddah's private school sector, and to assess whether these changes are in line with the objectives of Vision 2030.

1.10.2 Objectives

1. To examine the influence of privatisation on educational standards in Jeddah.
2. To investigate the accessibility of private education for learners from different socio-economic backgrounds in Jeddah.
3. To examine the role of privatisation in contributing to social inequality in education.

1.11 Research Methodology and Design

1.11.1 Research Design

Methodology refers to the overall framework and rationale guiding how research is conducted. It includes the selection of research design, approaches, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures that, together, ensure the study addresses its research questions effectively and coherently. In this study, the methodology was important as it provided the structured approach needed to explore the impact of privatisation on educational quality and equity in Jeddah's private school sector. A research design acts as the 'master plan' that connects the various components of the research process, including the selection of the research paradigm, strategy of inquiry, data gathering methods, and data analysis techniques (Creswell, 2014). Each element is chosen to align with the aims of the study, and to maintain consistency throughout the research. The following subsections will discuss the research paradigm, qualitative research approach, sampling strategy, and data collection and analysis methods used in the study.

1.11.2 Research Paradigm

This study adopted an interpretivist paradigm because it sought to understand how educational stakeholders experience and interpret privatisation within Jeddah's private school sector. Rather than assuming that there is a single objective reality, the interpretivist perspective recognises that individuals construct meaning through their experiences and interactions. This makes it particularly appropriate for exploring complex issues such as educational quality and equity, where different stakeholders may hold different perspectives. As Creswell (2014) explains, an interpretivist approach enables researchers to examine social phenomena within their natural settings and develop a deeper understanding of participants' experiences. Creswell and Creswell (2023) further emphasise that a coherent research design brings together the research paradigm, methodological approach, data collection methods, and analytical procedures so that each stage of the study remains aligned with its overall purpose.

1.11.3 Research Approach

This study adopted a qualitative research approach that is consistent with the interpretivist paradigm. A qualitative method of inquiry afforded the opportunity to explore and probe privatisation as it is experienced and subjectively perceived by educators, policymakers, and families. It allowed for a deep understanding of participants' perspectives, capturing the complex social and contextual factors that shape their experiences. A qualitative approach was particularly appropriate for this study because the aim was to understand the meanings, experiences, and perspectives that stakeholders attach to educational privatisation, aspects that could not be captured through numerical data alone. Creswell and Creswell (2023) explain that qualitative research enables researchers to explore complex social phenomena within their natural settings, while Denzin and Lincoln (2018) emphasise its value in examining the relationships and contextual influences that shape human experience. This approach therefore provided a rich understanding of how privatisation influences educational quality and educational equity within Jeddah's private school sector. Alternative approaches such as quantitative surveys or mixed methods were considered but deemed less suitable given the focus on participants' subjective experiences and meanings.

1.11.4 Population and Sampling

Population: The research population denotes the entire group from which a sample will be drawn. In educational research, this often includes students, teachers, administrators, and policymakers (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Yin, 2022). The population for this study consisted of educational stakeholders in Jeddah from both public and private schools, such as educational policymakers, school principals and parents. These organisations and individuals were well-positioned to understand firsthand—or through their professional lens—what the impact of privatisation has been on educational quality and equity in the local context.

Sampling: Sampling means choosing a sample from the population for analysis. In qualitative studies, researchers often use intentional methods to select participants who can provide rich, relevant, and detailed information (Palinkas et al., 2015). This study adopted a purposive (also known as intentional) sampling strategy to select 10 participants, divided into three groups: educational policymakers, school principals (from both public and private schools), and parents. These participant groups were chosen because each of them held unique insights and experiences related to educational privatisation, making their perspectives essential to fully understanding the phenomenon in Jeddah. This approach was appropriate because it enabled

the researcher to gather diverse and contrasting perspectives on how privatisation is experienced, as well as its impact on educational quality and equity in Jeddah.

1.11.5 Data Collection Methods

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for open-ended responses while still providing direction. This method was ideal for understanding participants' beliefs, experiences, and values regarding privatisation. Semi-structured interviews offer flexibility to explore unexpected insights while maintaining focus on key research topics (Adams, 2023; Kallio et al., 2023). Interviews were conducted in person or via online platforms, depending on accessibility and convenience. The interviews were recorded (with consent) and transcribed for thematic analysis (TA).

1.12 Trustworthiness

To ensure the reliability and rigor of this study, trustworthiness was established through four key aspects: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017).

Credibility refers to confidence in the truth of the findings and involves strategies such as prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking (Shenton, 2004; Elo et al., 2020). In this study, credibility was ensured by conducting member checking with participants to validate the accuracy of interpretations.

Dependability concerns the stability and consistency of the research process over time (Shenton, 2004; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This was addressed by maintaining a clear and detailed audit trail of all research activities, including data collection and analysis procedures.

Confirmability relates to the extent to which the findings are shaped by the participants and not influenced by researcher bias or personal motivations (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011; Connelly, 2021). This study adhered to confirmability through reflexive journaling and transparent documentation of decisions made during data analysis.

Transferability involves the degree to which the findings can be applied or generalised to other contexts or settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Levin, 2022). To facilitate transferability, the study provides thick, rich descriptions of the research context and participants, enabling readers to assess the applicability to similar educational settings.

These strategies align with contemporary qualitative research standards and contributed to producing trustworthy and credible findings relevant to educational privatisation in Jeddah (Nowell et al., 2017; Elo et al., 2020).

1.13 Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity is essential in research involving human participants. This study adhered strictly to the ethical guidelines established by the university's research ethics committee and to relevant national standards (Israel & Hay, 2022). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were fully informed about the purpose of the study, their rights, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process. All collected data will be securely stored and used exclusively for academic purposes, ensuring compliance with data protection regulations.

1.14 Limitations of the Study

The study faced certain limitations, such as potential biases in participant selection, difficulties accessing a diverse range of educational stakeholders in Jeddah, and the relatively limited existing research on privatisation within the Saudi Arabian context.

1.15 Conclusion

This research aimed to shed light on the effects of privatisation on the quality and equity of education, with a particular focus on Jeddah's private school sector. The findings will provide valuable insights and recommendations for policymakers and educators to consider in their efforts to enhance the educational landscape.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Chapter One introduced the study by examining the increasing role of educational privatisation and its implications for educational quality and equity within Jeddah's private school sector. It established the background of the study, presented the research problem and rationale, defined the key concepts, and outlined the research questions that guided the investigation. The chapter also justified the adoption of a qualitative research approach and situated the study within the broader educational reforms associated with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

Building on this foundation, the present chapter critically reviews the literature relating to educational privatisation and its influence on educational access, equity, and quality. Rather than presenting previous studies as isolated findings, the review examines how different scholars have interpreted the opportunities, challenges, and implications associated with increasing private sector participation in education. Particular attention is given to research undertaken within Saudi Arabia and to evidence that provides insight into the educational context of Jeddah.

The chapter begins by examining the concept of educational privatisation before exploring its relationship with educational access and equity, social inequality, and educational standards. It also considers the role of educational reform within the broader objectives of Vision 2030 and examines the extent to which private sector participation has contributed to improving educational outcomes while maintaining equitable opportunities for learners. Throughout the review, areas of agreement and disagreement in the literature are identified, and gaps in current knowledge are highlighted.

By critically evaluating the existing body of knowledge, this chapter establishes the theoretical and conceptual foundation for the study. It also demonstrates the need for further research into educational privatisation within Jeddah's private school sector, where limited empirical evidence continues to constrain understanding of how educational quality and equity are experienced by different stakeholders.

2.2 Educational Access

Educational access is widely recognised as a fundamental principle of equitable education systems. While the expansion of private education has increased the range of schooling options available to families in many countries, access is influenced by more than the availability of schools alone. Financial resources, geographical location, admission policies, and broader socio-economic circumstances all shape the extent to which learners are able to participate in and benefit from educational opportunities. Consequently, the relationship between educational privatisation and access remains an important area of debate within the literature.

These discussions have become increasingly significant in Saudi Arabia as educational reforms associated with Vision 2030 continue to encourage greater private sector participation. Although these reforms seek to improve educational quality and widen parental choice, researchers argue that expanding the number of private schools does not necessarily ensure equitable access for all learners. Existing evidence suggests that disparities in income, residential location, and institutional admission practices continue to influence educational opportunities. Examining these factors is therefore essential for understanding how educational privatisation shapes access to schooling within Jeddah's private school sector.

2.2.1 Geographical Distribution of Private Schools

The geographical location of schools is an important factor influencing educational access. Although the expansion of private education has increased the number of schooling options available to families, these opportunities are not distributed evenly across Jeddah. Many of the city's long-established private international schools are concentrated in more affluent neighbourhoods, making them more accessible to families who already live in these areas or who have the financial means to travel greater distances.

The literature suggests that the spatial distribution of schools may reinforce existing socio-economic inequalities. Verger et al. (2022) argue that when high-quality educational provision is concentrated within particular communities, access becomes increasingly associated with household income, residential location, and broader patterns of social advantage. In this context, geographical proximity may influence not only which schools families are able to consider but also the quality of education available to different groups of learners. As UNESCO (2023) notes, equitable access requires more than simply increasing the number of schools, it

also depends on ensuring that high-quality educational opportunities are available to learners from diverse communities.

Within Jeddah, these issues have become increasingly relevant as private sector participation continues to expand under Vision 2030. While educational reforms have widened parental choice, existing disparities in residential location may continue to influence which learners are able to benefit from these opportunities. The literature therefore suggests that improving educational access requires attention not only to school availability but also to how educational provision is distributed across different areas of the city.

2.2.2 Financial Affordability and Educational Access

Although the expansion of private education has increased the number of schools available to families, access remains closely linked to affordability. Tuition fees differ substantially across Jeddah's private school sector, particularly between local private schools and international schools offering foreign curricula. For many families, choosing a school is therefore influenced not only by educational preferences but also by financial circumstances. The opportunities created through educational reform are not experienced equally when the cost of accessing those opportunities differs considerably.

Affordability also extends beyond the payment of tuition fees. Families are frequently expected to meet additional expenses such as registration fees, uniforms, textbooks, transport, digital learning devices, and extracurricular activities. When these costs are considered together, the overall financial commitment may become a significant barrier for households with limited resources. UNESCO (2023) argues that improving access requires attention to both the direct and indirect costs associated with schooling, as these often determine whether learners are able to participate fully in educational opportunities.

Cost alone, however, does not determine the quality of schooling available to learners. Lower-fee private schools provide an important alternative for many families, yet the literature indicates that they may operate under different resource constraints. Variations in facilities, educational technology, learner support services, teacher experience, and extracurricular provision, means that educational experiences can differ considerably across the private sector. Simply increasing the number of private schools does not, therefore, eliminate disparities in educational access or educational quality.

This reflects a broader concern within the literature on educational privatisation. Ball and Youdell (2007) argue that market-oriented education systems may create differentiation between schools as competition encourages institutions to position themselves within different segments of the education market. While this may increase parental choice, it may also reinforce existing socio-economic inequalities because families with greater financial resources are better placed to access schools with stronger reputations and more extensive educational provision.

These issues remain particularly relevant in Saudi Arabia as Vision 2030 continues to encourage private sector participation in education. Expanding school choice has created new opportunities for many families, yet the literature suggests that meaningful educational access depends on more than increasing the number of available schools. Reducing financial barriers remains an important consideration if the benefits of educational reform are to be experienced more equitably across different socio-economic groups.

2.2.3 Admission Policies and Educational Access

Admission policies also influence access to private education and may shape which learners are able to secure places within particular schools. Unlike public schools, which generally enrol all eligible learners within their designated catchment areas, many private institutions establish their own admission criteria. These may include previous academic achievement, English language proficiency, entrance assessments, interviews, or behavioural expectations. While such requirements are commonly introduced to maintain academic standards, they may also affect access for learners whose educational backgrounds or personal circumstances differ from those typically expected by the school.

The literature raises important questions about whether these selection processes consistently promote equitable access. Verger et al. (2022) argue that market-oriented education systems may create barriers that are not always immediately visible. Rather than excluding learners directly, admission practices can favour those who have already benefitted from stronger educational preparation, greater parental support, or wider financial and social resources. In this way, school choice may appear to be widely available while remaining uneven in practice. The issue is therefore not whether schools should maintain academic standards, but rather, how those standards are implemented without creating unnecessary barriers to participation. UNESCO (2023) emphasises that educational systems should balance institutional autonomy

with policies that encourage inclusion and equitable access for all learners. Selection procedures that recognise diverse learner needs while maintaining high expectations are more likely to support both educational quality and equity.

These considerations have become increasingly significant in Jeddah as the private school sector continues to expand. Greater provision has undoubtedly widened parental choice, yet meaningful access depends on more than the number of schools available. Affordability, geographical location, and admission policies continue to influence which learners are able to benefit from the opportunities created through ongoing educational reform. Combined, these factors provide an important foundation for understanding the relationship between educational privatisation and equity, which is explored in the following section.

2.3 Educational Equity

Although educational access and equity are closely connected, they address different aspects of education. Access focuses on whether learners are able to enter and participate in schooling, whereas equity considers whether those learners have a fair opportunity to succeed once they are there. In the literature on educational privatisation, this distinction is important because increasing the number of available schools does not automatically ensure that all learners benefit equally from the opportunities created through educational reform.

The relationship between private sector participation and educational equity remains widely debated. Some scholars argue that expanding school choice allows families to identify learning environments that best meet their children's needs while encouraging schools to improve through greater competition. Others take a more cautious view, suggesting that these benefits are often experienced unevenly. Where household income, residential location, or admission policies influence access to high-quality schools, learners from less advantaged backgrounds may continue to face barriers that limit their educational opportunities (OECD, 2020; UNESCO, 2023).

Equity also extends beyond admission. Learners should have access to appropriately qualified teachers, suitable learning resources, effective academic support, and inclusive classroom practices that enable them to participate fully in school life. Simply enrolling learners in school is therefore not enough if differences in the quality of learning and support remain. As

UNESCO (2023) observes, meaningful educational reform should promote participation, inclusion, and successful learning outcomes alongside improved access.

These issues have become increasingly significant in Saudi Arabia as Vision 2030 continues to reshape the education sector. While the expansion of private education has created greater choice for many families, the literature indicates that maintaining equitable opportunities remains an ongoing challenge. Reducing disparities in participation and educational outcomes is therefore central to achieving the broader objectives of educational reform. Examining these concerns also provides a natural point of departure for considering how educational privatisation may contribute to wider patterns of social inequality, which is explored in the following section.

2.4 Privatisation and Social Inequality

Educational privatisation has implications that extend beyond the classroom. While expanding the private sector may increase educational choice, the literature continues to question whether these opportunities are experienced equally across society. A recurring concern is that differences in financial resources, social background, and access to information may influence who is able to benefit most from private education. Ball and Youdell (2007) argue that market-oriented reforms may unintentionally reinforce existing social advantages when access to high-quality schooling is closely linked to socio-economic circumstances. In Saudi Arabia, these concerns have become increasingly relevant as Vision 2030 seeks to strengthen educational quality while broadening educational opportunities for all learners (Ministry of Education, 2021; OECD, 2020).

An important issue emerging from the literature is the role of social capital. Educational decisions are not influenced by financial resources alone. Parents who possess stronger educational backgrounds, wider professional networks, or greater familiarity with the education system are often better equipped to compare schools, understand admission procedures, and identify opportunities that may not be equally visible to other families. Elyas and Picard (2013) suggest that unequal access to educational information may itself become a source of inequality, particularly where families are expected to navigate increasingly diverse schooling options.

This may also help explain why school reputation carries considerable weight in parental decision-making. For many families, the perceived quality of a school is shaped not only by academic outcomes but also by its reputation, social environment, peer networks, and future opportunities for learners. Viewed collectively, the literature suggests that these characteristics may become associated with particular social groups, allowing existing advantages to be reproduced over time. Verger et al. (2022) similarly argue that educational markets may strengthen social differentiation when highly regarded schools remain more accessible to families with greater financial and social resources. In this sense, expanding parental choice does not necessarily lead to more equitable educational outcomes.

The discussion, however, extends beyond reputation alone. Differences also exist within the private sector itself. Some schools operate with extensive resources, experienced teachers, modern facilities, and comprehensive learner support programmes, while others face far greater financial constraints. As a result, learners attending lower-fee schools may not always have access to the same educational experiences as those enrolled in more established institutions. Rather than reducing inequality automatically, the expansion of private education may create a more diverse market in which the quality of provision varies considerably between schools. Ball and Youdell (2007) caution that these differences are characteristics of market-oriented education systems, particularly where competition is accompanied by uneven access to resources. UNESCO (2023) likewise emphasises that expanding educational provision should be supported by policies that promote consistent quality and equitable participation.

A further consideration concerns learners with additional educational needs. Inclusive education depends on more than enrolment; it requires specialist support, appropriately trained teachers, accessible learning environments, and sufficient educational resources. Where these conditions are limited, some learners may continue to experience barriers to meaningful participation despite broader reforms aimed at widening educational opportunities. The OECD (2020) therefore argues that improving educational equity requires sustained investment in inclusive educational practices alongside wider structural reform.

Despite these challenges, the literature also points to examples of positive practice. Scholarship programmes, targeted financial assistance, community partnerships, and inclusion initiatives demonstrate that private schools can contribute to reducing educational inequalities when supported by effective policy and appropriate regulation. Although such initiatives remain

uneven across the sector, they illustrate that educational quality and educational equity can be strengthened simultaneously rather than treated as competing priorities.

As a whole, the literature presents a more nuanced picture than the simple assumption that expanding private education will automatically reduce inequality. While educational privatisation has increased opportunities for many families, access to those opportunities continues to be influenced by financial circumstances, social capital, institutional practices, and variations in school quality. These findings reinforce the importance of examining educational privatisation not only in terms of increased school choice, but also in relation to its broader implications for social inequality within Jeddah's private school sector.

2.5 The Influence of Privatisation on Educational Standards

Whether educational privatisation leads to higher educational standards remains a subject of ongoing debate. Supporters argue that greater competition encourages schools to improve, respond more effectively to the needs of families, and introduce new approaches to teaching and learning. Others question whether competition alone is capable of producing lasting improvements, particularly when schools operate under very different financial and organisational conditions. This debate has become increasingly relevant in Saudi Arabia as Vision 2030 continues to encourage greater private sector participation across the education system.

What emerged from the literature is that private education should not be viewed as a single, uniform sector. Considerable differences exist between schools, even within the same city. Some private schools in Jeddah provide internationally recognised curricula, experienced teachers, smaller classes, and well-developed learning environments. Others operate with fewer resources and more limited institutional capacity. These differences suggest that educational standards are shaped by far more than ownership alone. Leadership, curriculum implementation, school culture, and the effective use of available resources all influence the quality of learners' educational experiences (OECD, 2020; Verger et al., 2022; Ministry of Education, 2021).

A different perspective emerges when attention shifts from school facilities to classroom practice. Modern buildings, digital technologies, and specialist facilities may enhance learning, yet they do not automatically improve teaching quality. Elyas and Picard (2013) argue that

educational innovation achieves meaningful results only when teachers are supported to use new approaches effectively. This may explain why schools with similar resources sometimes achieve very different outcomes. Sustained investment in teacher development, instructional leadership, and curriculum delivery therefore appears to have a greater influence on educational quality than infrastructure alone (OECD, 2024).

Instead of asking whether private schools are inherently better than public schools, many researchers now argue that the more important question concerns the conditions that enable high-quality teaching and learning to take place. Strong leadership, well-qualified teachers, coherent curriculum planning, and continuous professional development are repeatedly identified as characteristics of effective schools, regardless of whether they operate within the public or private sector. Educational standards therefore depend less on the ownership of a school than on how effectively its resources, leadership, and teaching practices are aligned to support learner success.

Considered as a whole, the literature presents a balanced picture. Educational privatisation has the potential to strengthen educational standards where appropriate investment, effective leadership, and robust quality assurance are in place. At the same time, improvements cannot be assumed simply because private sector participation has expanded. Maintaining consistently high standards requires ongoing support, careful monitoring, and clear accountability across the sector. These wider considerations provide the basis for examining the challenges associated with educational privatisation, which are discussed in the following section.

2.6 Challenges of Educational Privatisation

Although educational privatisation has created new opportunities for innovation and school development, the literature also identifies a number of challenges that continue to influence its long-term sustainability. These challenges extend beyond individual schools and raise broader questions about educational quality, workforce stability, regulation, and public confidence. As private sector participation expands, addressing these issues becomes increasingly important if educational reform is to achieve its intended outcomes.

One concern relates to the conditions under which teachers work. Differences in salaries, employment conditions, opportunities for professional development, and job security may influence the recruitment and retention of experienced teachers across the private sector. In

contrast, teachers employed in the public education system often benefit from greater employment stability and more structured career pathways. The OECD (2020) argues that maintaining a well-qualified and motivated teaching workforce remains fundamental to improving educational quality, regardless of the sector in which teachers are employed.

These workforce challenges may have wider implications for learners. High staff turnover, limited opportunities for professional growth, and increasing workloads may affect continuity in teaching and learning. Rather than viewing teacher quality simply as an individual responsibility, the literature suggests that it should also be understood as an organisational and policy issue. Schools are more likely to sustain high standards when teachers receive ongoing professional support, appropriate working conditions, and opportunities to develop their practice throughout their careers (OECD, 2024).

Regulation represents another important consideration. As the private education sector grows, maintaining consistent standards across schools becomes increasingly complex. Although private institutions are expected to comply with national curriculum requirements and quality assurance frameworks established by the Ministry of Education and the Education and Training Evaluation Commission (ETEC), effective oversight remains essential to ensure that these expectations are implemented consistently. Without appropriate monitoring and accountability, differences in educational quality may widen across the sector (Ministry of Education, 2021; OECD, 2020).

A further challenge concerns public confidence in the education system. Where access to high-quality education is perceived to depend largely on financial circumstances, confidence in the fairness of educational reform may be weakened. UNESCO (2023) argues that improvements in educational quality should be accompanied by equitable opportunities for participation if education systems are to remain inclusive and socially responsive. This is particularly important in Saudi Arabia, where Vision 2030 seeks not only to improve educational outcomes but also to promote wider social and economic development.

When combined, these challenges highlight the complexity of educational privatisation. Expanding private sector participation has the potential to contribute positively to educational reform, yet its long-term success depends upon more than increasing the number of private schools. Sustained investment in teachers, effective regulation, and continued attention to

educational equity remain central to ensuring that the benefits of reform are experienced across the wider education system. The following section introduces the theoretical framework that underpins the present study and provides the conceptual lens through which the findings are interpreted.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework provides the conceptual lens through which a research problem is examined and interpreted. It assists in explaining the relationships between the key concepts under investigation and provides a foundation for analysing the findings within a broader body of knowledge. Selecting an appropriate theoretical framework is therefore an important aspect of educational research because it strengthens the connection between the research problem, the literature, and the interpretation of the findings. In the present study, Human Capital Theory provides the theoretical foundation for examining the relationship between educational privatisation, educational quality, and educational equity within Jeddah's private school sector. Human Capital Theory, originally developed by Becker (1994), views education as an investment that contributes to the development of knowledge, skills, and competencies that improve both individual life opportunities and broader economic development. Rather than viewing education solely as a social service, the theory argues that investment in learning enhances productivity, strengthens the workforce, and contributes to long-term national growth. From this perspective, improving educational quality is expected to benefit not only individual learners but also society through the development of a more skilled and competitive population.

The principles of Human Capital Theory closely reflect the educational priorities outlined in Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. A central objective of the national reform agenda is the development of human capital capable of supporting economic diversification, innovation, and sustainable national development. Within this context, education is viewed as a strategic investment that prepares learners with the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to participate effectively in an increasingly knowledge-based economy. The expansion of private sector participation has been presented as one mechanism for supporting these objectives by increasing educational choice, encouraging innovation, and strengthening educational quality.

For the purposes of this study, Human Capital Theory provided an appropriate framework for examining whether these anticipated benefits are reflected in the experiences of stakeholders

within Jeddah's private school sector. The study did not assume that privatisation automatically improves educational quality or promotes educational equity. Instead, the theory provided a lens through which these assumptions could be examined critically. It allowed consideration of whether increased investment in private education contributes to improved learner outcomes, while also recognising that the benefits associated with educational investment may not always be distributed equally across different socio-economic groups.

Although Human Capital Theory provided a valuable framework for understanding the relationship between education and economic development, it is not without limitations. Critics argue that the theory places considerable emphasis on the economic value of education and thus pays less attention to broader social concerns such as inequality, inclusion, and unequal access to educational opportunities. Educational outcomes are influenced by a wide range of social, cultural, and institutional factors that extend beyond financial investment alone. Consequently, improvements in educational quality cannot be attributed solely to increased investment or greater private sector participation.

Despite these limitations, Human Capital Theory remained the most appropriate theoretical framework for the present study. It aligns closely with the aims of Vision 2030, supports the focus of the study on educational quality and equity, and provided a coherent basis for interpreting stakeholder perspectives on educational privatisation within Jeddah. The theory also informed the analysis presented in Chapters Four and Five by providing a framework through which the perceived benefits, challenges, and wider implications of educational privatisation could be critically examined in relation to both individual learner outcomes and broader national development objectives.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the literature relating to educational privatisation and considered the ways in which increasing private sector participation has influenced educational access, educational equity, social inequality, and educational standards. Particular attention was given to the Saudi Arabian context and the educational reforms associated with Vision 2030, highlighting how these developments continue to shape private education within Jeddah. The chapter also established Human Capital Theory as the conceptual framework underpinning the study, providing a basis for interpreting the relationship between educational investment, learner outcomes, and national development.

A consistent theme emerging from the literature is that educational privatisation presents both opportunities and challenges. Although many studies associate private sector participation with greater innovation, increased parental choice, and improvements in educational quality, the evidence also demonstrates that these benefits are not experienced equally. Financial circumstances, school location, admission practices, institutional capacity, and the availability of learner support continue to influence educational experiences and outcomes. Rather than presenting educational privatisation as either wholly beneficial or wholly problematic, the literature points towards a more complex relationship in which educational quality and equity should be considered together.

The review also identified important gaps in the existing body of knowledge. While educational privatisation has received considerable attention internationally, fewer studies have explored how school leaders, teachers, and parents experience these reforms within Jeddah's private school sector. Existing research has focused largely on policy developments and broader national trends, leaving comparatively limited insight into the perspectives of those directly involved in private schooling. Addressing this gap provides an important justification for the present study and strengthens its contribution to the existing literature.

As a whole, the literature reviewed in this chapter provides the conceptual and theoretical foundation for the research. It establishes the context within which the study is situated, identifies the issues requiring further investigation, and supports the research objectives presented in Chapter One. The following chapter explains the research methodology adopted for the study, outlining the qualitative research design, participant selection, methods of data collection and analysis, as well as the ethical considerations that guided the research process.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology adopted for the study. The purpose of the research was to develop a deeper understanding of how educational privatisation is experienced within Jeddah's private school sector, particularly in relation to educational quality and educational equity. To achieve this, a clear methodological framework was required to guide the research process from data collection through to analysis. This framework ensured that the study remained aligned with its research aims and objectives.

The chapter builds on the theoretical foundation established in Chapter Two, where Human Capital Theory was identified as the framework underpinning the study. While the literature highlighted broader debates surrounding educational privatisation and Vision 2030, the present research sought to explore how these developments are experienced within a specific local context. Focusing on the Al Salamah district provided an opportunity to examine how national educational reforms are reflected in the everyday experiences of those directly involved in private education. This localised perspective helped bridge the gap between educational policy and practice.

The remainder of the chapter describes the interpretivist research paradigm, the qualitative case study design, participant selection, data collection procedures, methods of data analysis, ethical considerations, and the strategies used to ensure the trustworthiness of the research.

3.2 Research Design: Qualitative Case Study

A qualitative case study design was selected because the study sought to understand how participants experienced and interpreted educational privatisation within their own educational context. Rather than testing predetermined hypotheses or measuring variables statistically, the research aimed to explore the meanings that parents, teachers, and school leaders attached to their experiences, an approach consistent with qualitative inquiry.

Following Yin (2022), the study was designed as a case study because it examined a clearly defined setting within its real-life context. Focusing on the private school sector in the Al

Salamah district allowed the research to investigate educational privatisation as a bounded case while providing a detailed understanding of the local educational environment.

My experience as a teacher in Jeddah for almost a decade also contributed to the research process. Familiarity with the local educational context, community, and Hijazi dialect helped establish rapport with participants and encouraged open discussion during the interviews. At the same time, I remained mindful of the potential influence of my own experiences and therefore adopted a reflexive approach throughout the study to ensure that participants' perspectives remained central to the analysis.

3.3 Research Paradigm: Interpretivism

This study was guided by an interpretivist paradigm, which recognises that people may experience and interpret the same situation in different ways depending on their social, cultural, and personal contexts (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Rather than assuming that there is a single reality, interpretivism acknowledges that individuals construct meaning through their own experiences. This perspective was appropriate for the present study because it allowed me to explore how educational privatisation was understood and experienced by different stakeholders within Jeddah's private school sector.

As a teacher in Jeddah for almost a decade, I was aware that my own professional experiences inevitably shaped my understanding of the local educational context. At the same time, I recognised that parents, teachers, and school leaders could hold different views of the same educational policies and practices based on their own experiences and circumstances. I therefore sought to understand these different perspectives throughout the interviews without assuming that one viewpoint was more valid than another.

Recognising my role as an insider researcher, I remained committed to reflexivity throughout the research process (Varpio & Schuwirth, 2022). I maintained a reflective journal and regularly considered how my own assumptions and professional background might influence the research. This ongoing process helped ensure that the findings reflected participants' experiences rather than my own interpretations, thereby strengthening the credibility of the study.

3.4 Research Approach: Qualitative Inquiry

A qualitative approach was adopted for the study because it aligned with the interpretivist paradigm underpinning the research. Rather than focusing on numerical data or statistical patterns, the study sought to explore how educational privatisation was experienced and understood by those directly involved in Jeddah's private school sector. A qualitative approach made it possible to examine participants' perspectives in greater depth and to develop a richer understanding of how social, cultural, and educational factors shaped their experiences. As Silverman (2021) explains, qualitative inquiry is particularly well suited to exploring the complexity of everyday social settings and the meanings individuals attach to their experiences.

3.5 Study Location: Al Salamah, Jeddah

The research was conducted in the Al Salamah district of Jeddah, an area that reflects many of the educational developments taking place across the city. The district includes a diverse range of private schools, from well-established international institutions to smaller private schools operating in converted residential buildings. This diversity made it an appropriate setting for examining how educational privatisation is experienced within a local context.

The primary data for this study were collected from participants at a private international school located within the district. However, the broader educational environment of Al Salamah provided valuable context for understanding the diversity of private schooling in Jeddah and the ways in which Vision 2030 continues to influence educational reform and private sector participation (Ministry of Education, 2021; OECD, 2020).

3.6 Selection of Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select participants who could provide rich and relevant insights into educational privatisation within Jeddah's private school sector (Hennink et al., 2020). Participants were selected because of their direct experience with private international education and their ability to contribute meaningfully to the research questions.

The study involved 10 participants selected from a private international school in the Al Salamah district of Jeddah, comprising three school leaders, four teachers, and three parents.. This combination of participant groups provided a range of perspectives on educational quality, educational equity, and the influence of educational privatisation within the selected research

setting. To protect the identity of both the school and the participants, pseudonyms and participant codes were used throughout the study.

3.7 Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, as this method provided the flexibility to explore participants' experiences while maintaining sufficient structure to address the research objectives. The interview guide included open-ended questions that encouraged participants to describe their experiences, perceptions, and views regarding educational privatisation, educational quality, and educational equity within Jeddah's private school sector. Interviews were conducted in English and took place at times that were convenient for participants. The semi-structured format also allowed additional questions to be asked where clarification or further explanation was required, enabling a deeper understanding of issues that emerged during the discussions (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Following each interview, recordings were transcribed and participant codes were assigned to protect confidentiality. The use of pseudonyms throughout the study ensured that individual participants and the participating school could not be identified.

3.8 Researcher's Role and Positionality

As a teacher who has worked in Jeddah for almost a decade, I recognised that my familiarity with the local educational context provided valuable insight into the setting in which the research was conducted. This experience also helped establish rapport with participants and encouraged open and meaningful discussions during the interviews.

At the same time, I remained aware that my professional background could influence the way I interpreted participants' responses. To minimise this possibility, I adopted a reflexive approach throughout the research process (Varpio & Schuwirth, 2022). Maintaining a reflective journal enabled me to consider my own assumptions and ensure that the analysis remained grounded in participants' experiences rather than my own perspectives.

3.9 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted before the main data collection to evaluate the clarity and suitability of the questions in the interview guides. The pilot involved one parent and one school leader from a private school outside the selected research site. Conducting the pilot

study provided an opportunity to refine the wording and sequence of the interview questions, ensuring that they were clear, relevant, and capable of generating meaningful responses. This process also improved the overall quality of the interview schedule before the main study commenced (Jack et al,. 2023).

3.10 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

The data were analysed following the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022). Interview recordings were transcribed manually to ensure close familiarity with the data and to capture important details that might otherwise have been overlooked.

The transcripts were then read repeatedly, and meaningful segments of data were coded according to recurring ideas and patterns. Similar codes were grouped into broader categories before being developed into themes that reflected participants' experiences and addressed the research objectives. Throughout the analysis, emerging themes were continually compared with the data to ensure that they accurately represented participants' perspectives.

The final themes were interpreted in relation to Human Capital Theory, which provided the theoretical framework for the study, and were used to guide the presentation and discussion of the findings in Chapters Four and Five.

3.11 Trustworthiness

Ensuring the trustworthiness of the research was an important consideration throughout the study. In qualitative research, trustworthiness provides confidence that the findings accurately reflect participants' experiences and that the research process has been conducted in a rigorous and transparent manner. Following the framework proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the study addressed the four widely accepted criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Nowell et al., 2017).

3.11.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings accurately represent participants' experiences. This was strengthened by including different participant groups, namely school leaders, teachers, and parents, allowing the research to capture a range of perspectives on educational privatisation. Member checking was also undertaken by sharing summaries of

participants' responses to confirm that their views had been interpreted accurately (Nowell et al., 2021).

3.11.2 Dependability

Dependability concerns the consistency of the research process. To support this, a clear audit trail was maintained throughout the study, documenting the decisions made during participant selection, data collection, coding, and analysis. Keeping a detailed record of the research process strengthened the transparency and consistency of the study.

3.11.3 Confirmability

Confirmability relates to the extent to which the findings are grounded in participants' experiences rather than the researcher's own assumptions. As an insider researcher, I remained aware of the potential influence of my professional background and therefore adopted a reflexive approach throughout the study. Maintaining a reflective journal helped me continually examine my own assumptions and ensure that the analysis remained focused on participants' perspectives.

3.11.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings may be relevant to similar educational contexts. Although this study focused on one private international school in Jeddah, detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and context have been provided to enable readers to determine whether the findings may be applicable to comparable educational settings.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical requirements of the University of South Africa (UNISA). Ethical clearance was obtained before commencing the research, and permission to conduct the study was granted by the participating private international school. All participants received information about the purpose of the research, and informed consent was obtained before data collection began.

Protecting participants' confidentiality and anonymity remained a priority throughout the research process. The identities of both the participating school and the individual participants have been protected through the use of pseudonyms and participant codes. Participants were

also informed that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

Interview recordings, transcripts, and all related research documents were stored securely using password-protected electronic storage and encrypted backup devices. Access to the data was restricted to the researcher, and all research records will be retained for five years in accordance with UNISA's research policy before being securely destroyed.

3.13 Limitations

The study focused on a single private international school in the Al Salamah district of Jeddah. Consequently, the findings should not be interpreted as representing all private schools in Saudi Arabia. The purpose of the research was to develop a detailed understanding of one educational context rather than to produce findings that could be generalised to all educational settings.

As a teacher who has worked in Jeddah for almost a decade, I also recognised that my familiarity with the local educational context could influence the research process. To minimise this possibility, I remained reflexive throughout the study by maintaining a reflective journal and continually considering how my own experiences and assumptions might shape the interpretation of the data. These strategies helped ensure that the findings remained grounded in participants' experiences.

3.14 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodology adopted for the study and explained the research design, interpretivist paradigm, qualitative approach, participant selection, data collection methods, and TA was used to address the research objectives. It also described the procedures followed to ensure trustworthiness, maintain ethical standards, and acknowledge the limitations of the research.

Combined, the methodological decisions presented in this chapter provided an appropriate framework for exploring how educational privatisation is experienced within Jeddah's private school sector. By adopting an interpretivist perspective and a qualitative case study design, the study was able to capture the perspectives of school leaders, teachers, and parents within their educational context. The following chapter presents the findings that emerged from the TA and discusses them in relation to the research objectives and Human Capital Theory.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Three outlined the methodological approach that guided the study and explained how the research was conducted. It described the qualitative research design, participant selection procedures, data collection methods, and the process used to analyse the data. Building on that foundation, this chapter presents and discusses the findings that emerged from the interviews. The focus is on understanding what participants revealed about the impact of privatisation within Jeddah's private school sector and how these experiences relate to the broader issues of educational quality, accessibility, and equity.

The study drew on the experiences and perspectives of 10 participants representing three stakeholder groups. These included school leaders, teachers, and parents who were directly involved in, or affected by, private international education in Jeddah. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to share their views, experiences, and concerns in their own words. Following data collection, the interviews were transcribed and analysed using TA. This involved repeatedly reviewing the transcripts, identifying recurring patterns and ideas, developing codes, and grouping related codes into broader themes. These themes formed the basis of the findings presented in this chapter.

Maintaining participant confidentiality was an important aspect of the study. For this reason, pseudonyms were used throughout the research process and no participant names are disclosed. The 10 participants represented three stakeholder groups within Jeddah's private international school sector, namely school leaders, teachers, and parents. To protect participant identities, identifiers are used throughout the chapter and are used when presenting their perspectives and direct quotations. They are referred to as:

L: School leaders: L1–L3
T: Teachers: T1–T4
P: Parents: P1–P3

This chapter serves two related purposes. The first is data presentation: in this stage, the findings are organised into themes and sub-themes, supported by evidence drawn directly from participant interviews. The second is data discussion, where the findings are interpreted and

examined in relation to the research questions, the objectives of the study, the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, as well as the Human Capital Theory that underpins the research. The purpose is not simply to report what participants said, but to explore what their responses reveal about the realities of privatisation and its influence on educational quality, accessibility, and equity within the Saudi Arabian context.

The findings are presented with the objectives of the study in mind. These objectives focus on understanding how privatisation influences educational standards, how accessible private education is to different groups within society, and the extent to which privatisation may contribute to educational inequality. The findings are organised into thematic sections, and each theme contributes to addressing one or more of these objectives. This approach ensures that participant voices remain central to the analysis while maintaining a clear connection to the overall purpose of the study.

Four major themes emerged from the analysis. The first explores the relationship between linguistic capital, institutional prestige, and the social environment associated with private international schooling. The second examines how international educational frameworks are balanced with national, cultural, and religious identity. The third focuses on supplementary academic support and the growing role of shadow education. The final theme considers how private schools respond to the expectations and priorities associated with Vision 2030. Together, these themes provide insight into how different stakeholders understand the opportunities and challenges associated with the continued expansion of private education in Jeddah.

Table 4.1 below illustrates the research objectives and how they are addressed by the research questions and the themes that emerged from them.

Table 4.1: Research Objectives, Research Questions and Themes

Objective	Research Question (RQ)	Theme	Sub-theme
To examine the influence of privatisation on educational standards in Jeddah.	RQ1: How Does Privatisation Influence Educational Standards in Jeddah?	(i) English Language Proficiency as a Marker of Educational Quality (ii) Parental Expectations Regarding Educational Quality, Reputation, and Social Positioning (iii) Educational Standards Beyond Academic Achievement	
To investigate the accessibility of private education for learners from different socio-economic backgrounds in Jeddah.	RQ2: Balancing International Educational Frameworks with Saudi National, Cultural, and Religious Identity	(i) International Education as More Than English Language Acquisition (ii) Balancing International Educational Frameworks with Saudi National, Cultural, and Religious Identity (iii) Developing Global Competencies while Preserving National Identity within both Saudi society and an increasingly interconnected world.	
To examine the role of privatisation in contributing to social inequality in education.	RQ3: To What Extent Does Privatisation Contribute to Widening the Socio-Economic Divide in Educational Quality?	(i) The Growing Reliance on Private Tutoring (ii) Academic Pressures Driving Demand for Additional Support (iii) Equity Implications of Access to Supplementary Educational Resources	Supplementary Academic Support and Shadow Education

4.2 How Does Privatisation Influence Educational Standards in Jeddah?

The findings presented in this section address the first objective of the study, which sought to examine the influence of privatisation on educational standards within Jeddah's private school sector. Across the interviews, participants frequently associated private international education with English language proficiency, internationally recognised curricula, advanced learning resources, and teaching approaches designed to prepare learners for future academic and professional opportunities. While educational quality was a recurring theme throughout the interviews, participants also highlighted the role of reputation, prestige, and parental expectations in shaping perceptions of educational standards.

4.2.1 English Language Proficiency as a Marker of Educational Quality

Language emerged as one of the most frequently discussed indicators of educational quality during the interviews. Although participants identified several advantages associated with private international schooling, English language proficiency was repeatedly mentioned as a major reason why families choose these schools. Across the different stakeholder groups, participants often linked English fluency to future educational opportunities, employability, and long-term success.

The importance attached to English language development was evident in the responses of both parents and school leaders. From a leadership perspective, L3 explained that many families actively seek schools that can provide a strong English-speaking environment:

> *"Stakeholders, you know, they want their children to speak fluently and with a natural accent, which you only get with expat teachers."*

A similar sentiment emerged from a parent (P1), who described language immersion as one of the main factors influencing school choice:

> *"The native English environment and the expat teaching style were definitely the priority. I wanted my child to be fully immersed in English and exposed to international teaching methods that focus on critical thinking, not just memorisation."*

English appeared to represent far more than a subject taught at school for these participants. It was often discussed as a skill that could create future opportunities and provide learners with advantages beyond the classroom. This view reflects Ball's (2020) argument that education is

increasingly seen as an investment capable of producing long-term social and economic benefits.

Teachers also commented on the value that parents place on language proficiency - T1 noted that families are attracted not only to the international curriculum but also to the expectation that learners will develop strong communication skills in English:

> *"They do really value and expect their children to be speaking in a certain way with an accent perhaps even."*

What becomes apparent here is that English fluency is often treated as a visible sign of educational quality. Parents appeared to associate confident English communication with a more international learning experience and, in some cases, with improved future prospects. Similar observations have been made by Robertson and Dale (2020), who argue that globalised education systems increasingly emphasise skills that can be transferred across different educational and professional contexts.

At the same time, participants were careful not to reduce educational quality to language alone. While English was frequently mentioned, discussions often moved towards broader aspects of learning. As a leader, L1 highlighted the ability of private international schools to provide exposure to different teaching approaches and internationally oriented learning experiences. Participant T4 expressed a similar view, explaining:

> *"I don't think it's just the accent that they are invested in. That's an added bonus. The school is known for the IB curriculum and the advanced technology that they have in the school, so I think it's more than just accent. It's to do with critical thinking and all the opportunities that the children can have."*

This point surfaced repeatedly throughout the interviews. Parents and teachers spoke about English proficiency alongside critical thinking, inquiry, creativity, and independent learning. In other words, language was often viewed as one part of a broader educational experience rather than the sole reason for selecting a private school. This finding supports the observations of Mok and Zhong (2022), who argue that the appeal of international education is closely connected to the development of global competencies and learner-centred approaches rather than language instruction alone.

Taken together, the findings suggest that English language proficiency remains a significant factor influencing parental decisions within Jeddah's private school sector. Participants

consistently connected strong language skills with confidence, future opportunities, and educational success. At the same time, the interviews revealed that families often value English because it is linked to a wider package of benefits associated with international schooling.

The findings also indicate that perceptions of educational quality are shaped not only by language outcomes but by the broader learning environment that schools provide. English proficiency may be one of the most visible outcomes, yet participants repeatedly connected it to wider educational experiences, including critical thinking, international mindedness, and preparation for future study and employment. Within the context of privatisation, these qualities appear to strengthen the appeal of private international schools and contribute to continued parental demand across Jeddah.

4.2.2 Parental Expectations Regarding Educational Quality, Reputation, and Social Positioning

The interviews showed that parents often consider a range of factors when selecting a school for their children. Academic quality was certainly important, but it was rarely discussed in isolation. Participants frequently referred to reputation, school culture, peer groups, and the type of environment that private schools are believed to provide. In many cases, these factors appeared to influence school choice just as strongly as curriculum or examination results.

Several parents explained that they would continue to choose private education even if public schools improved academically. Parent 2 highlighted the importance of the overall school environment when discussing this issue:

> *"I would still choose the private sector. The environment, reputation, and smaller class sizes matter to me, since public schools usually have too many students in one class."* (P2)

This response illustrates that parental expectations often extend beyond classroom teaching. While educational standards remain important, factors such as class size, reputation, and the day-to-day learning environment also shape perceptions of quality. Similar observations have been reported by Verger et al. (2022), who found that parents frequently associate private schooling with more personalised educational experiences and stronger learning environments. A related view emerged from Parent 3. Rather than focusing solely on academic outcomes, this participant emphasised the wider social benefits associated with private schooling:

> *"School is not just academics; it's also about peer influence, networking, and the overall culture. So unless the government school could match the private sector in those areas, we would likely stay private."*

This comment points to an aspect of school choice that is often overlooked. For some families, the value of a school lies not only in what happens inside the classroom but also in the relationships, networks, and social experiences that learners encounter during their schooling. Mok and Zhong (2022) similarly argue that parents increasingly seek educational settings that provide both academic advantages and access to wider social opportunities.

Not every participant spoke about reputation in exactly the same way. A few placed greater emphasis on educational quality itself; particularly the curriculum, teaching approaches, and learning opportunities available to learners. Even so, discussions frequently returned to the broader environment created by private schools. This suggests that academic quality and reputation are often viewed as interconnected rather than separate considerations.

The importance of reputation was also emphasised by school leadership. Reflecting on why families continue to invest in private education despite increasing costs, L3 explained:

> *"It's about the community and the networking, you know? The parents in this school have specific values and goals. In a private school, the market is paying for the environment and the reputation that comes with the name of the school."*

What makes this observation particularly interesting is that it moves beyond the idea of education as a service alone. Participants suggested that parents are also purchasing access to a particular community and social environment. Ball (2020) notes that educational decisions are often influenced by broader social considerations, with families seeking institutions that they believe will provide future advantages and reinforce desired social identities. While the literature frequently identifies reputation as an important factor in school choice, participants in this study appeared to place equal importance on the social environment and networks associated with private schooling.

Teachers offered another perspective on this issue. When discussing inclusivity within the private sector, T4 described the school as *"a protective bubble for a particular social class."* The same teacher further explained that access to the school is largely determined by affordability, noting that families who can meet the financial requirements are able to enter the system, while those who cannot are effectively excluded. This introduces an important tension

within privatised education. The same characteristics that make private schools attractive to many families may also contribute to forms of social selectivity.

Taken together, the findings suggest that parental expectations extend beyond academic achievement alone. Reputation, peer influence, school culture, networking opportunities, and perceptions of social status all appear to shape educational decision-making. Participants consistently associated private schooling with opportunities that they believed would benefit learners both academically and socially.

At the same time, the interviews raise important questions about accessibility. While private schools are often viewed as desirable educational spaces, access to these spaces remains closely linked to financial capacity. As a result, discussions about educational quality cannot easily be separated from discussions about educational inequality. Within the context of privatisation in Jeddah, these two issues appear to be closely connected.

4.2.3 Educational Standards Beyond Academic Achievement

Although English language proficiency featured prominently throughout the interviews, participants rarely defined educational quality through language alone. Many of the discussions moved beyond examination results and academic performance and focused on the broader skills and experiences that learners develop during their schooling. Participants frequently referred to critical thinking, creativity, learner independence, and the ability to engage actively with learning as important indicators of educational quality.

Several interviewees described private international schools as environments that encourage learners to think for themselves rather than simply memorise information. In these discussions, educational standards were often linked to teaching approaches that allow learners to question, investigate, and apply knowledge in different situations. Participants viewed these skills as increasingly important in a rapidly changing world and believed that schools should prepare learners for challenges beyond the classroom.

This perspective was reflected in the comments of T4, who explained:

> *"I don't think it's just the accent that they are invested in. That's an added bonus. The school is known for the IB curriculum and the advanced technology that they have in the school, so I think it's more than just accent. It's to do with critical thinking and all the opportunities that the children can have."*

This quote suggests that educational quality is being judged using a wider set of criteria than academic outcomes alone. For this participant, critical thinking and access to meaningful opportunities were central aspects of a high-quality educational experience. Similar observations have been made by Mok and Zhang (2022), who argue that families are increasingly attracted to educational systems that emphasise adaptability, critical thinking, and global competencies alongside academic achievement.

Technology was also discussed as an important contributor to educational quality. Participants frequently associated private schools with access to resources that support more interactive forms of learning. While technology itself was not viewed as a guarantee of quality, it was often seen as a tool that could enhance teaching and provide learners with experiences that might not be available elsewhere.

A related point emerged when T4 described the flexibility available within the classroom:

> *"I think what sets us apart is that we have the technology, yes. I think also within the classroom we have the freedom to teach in an inquiry-based atmosphere. It's inquiry-based learning and it's not so strict that we have to stick to the textbooks."*

This comment highlights the value participants placed on teaching approaches that move beyond textbook-centered instruction. Inquiry-based learning was often presented as a way of encouraging curiosity, participation, and deeper understanding. Rather than viewing learners as passive recipients of information, participants described educational quality in terms of engagement and active involvement in the learning process.

Not every participant emphasised these aspects to the same extent. Some focused more strongly on English language development or future university opportunities. Even so, there was broad agreement that educational standards involve more than examination performance alone. Across the interviews, participants repeatedly linked quality education to the development of confident, independent learners who are able to communicate effectively, solve problems, and think critically.

These findings are consistent with wider discussions of educational quality, which increasingly emphasise learner competencies rather than academic attainment alone. Verger et al. (2022) note that parents and schools are placing growing value on communication, collaboration,

creativity, and problem-solving skills. The views expressed by participants suggest that similar priorities are shaping perceptions of educational quality within Jeddah's private school sector.

Taken together, the findings indicate that educational standards are understood as a combination of academic achievement and broader developmental outcomes. Participants consistently associated high-quality education with inquiry-based learning, technological integration, learner independence, and critical thinking. Within the context of privatisation, these characteristics appear to strengthen the appeal of private international schools and contribute to perceptions that they offer educational experiences extending beyond traditional measures of academic success.

4.3 Balancing International Educational Frameworks with Saudi National, Cultural, and Religious Identity

This section addresses Research Question Two, which asks: *"In what ways does privatisation align with the educational goals set forth in Vision 2030?"* The findings presented in this section explore how stakeholders perceive the relationship between international educational frameworks and Saudi national, cultural, and religious identity within Jeddah's private international school sector. More specifically, this theme examines how participants understand the role of international education in preparing learners for an increasingly globalised world while maintaining the cultural and religious values that remain central to Saudi society. While the previous theme focused on educational standards, the findings presented here shift attention towards how stakeholders believe international education can support both global learning and local identity.

Across the interviews, participants frequently discussed the relationship between international education and Saudi identity. Although many recognised the educational benefits associated with international curricula, they consistently emphasised that these should not come at the expense of national, cultural, or religious values. School leaders, teachers, and parents generally described international education as an approach that promotes critical thinking, inquiry, communication, and independent learning while also encouraging learners to remain connected to their heritage and cultural background. Rather than viewing international education and Saudi identity as competing priorities, participants often described them as working alongside one another.

Participants also suggested that the value of international education extends beyond English language development. While English proficiency remained an important reason why many families selected private international schools, respondents frequently explained that they also valued the broader educational experiences associated with international curricula. These included opportunities for learners to develop confidence, problem-solving skills, creativity, and global awareness, while continuing to learn in a school environment that respects Saudi traditions and expectations.

These findings are particularly important in relation to Research Question Two because they highlight how stakeholders understand the role of private international education within the broader context of educational reform in Saudi Arabia. Rather than focusing only on academic outcomes, participants discussed how international schools prepare learners to participate in both local and global contexts. Their responses suggest that, from their perspective, international education is most effective when it combines internationally recognised educational practices with a strong commitment to Saudi national, cultural, and religious identity.

Three interrelated sub-themes emerged from the data. The first explores stakeholder perceptions that international education offers benefits extending beyond English language acquisition. The second examines how international educational frameworks are balanced with Saudi national, cultural, and religious identity. The third considers how participants believe international education contributes to developing learners who are globally aware while remaining connected to their local identity. Together, these sub-themes provide a deeper understanding of how stakeholders perceive the relationship between international education, cultural identity, and the wider educational changes taking place within Jeddah's private international school sector.

4.3.1 International Education as More Than English Language Acquisition

One of the key issues emerging from Research Question Two was stakeholders' belief that the value of international education extends beyond English language acquisition. Although participants acknowledged that English language proficiency remains one of the main reasons why many families choose private international schools, they consistently explained that it is only one part of the educational experience. Across the interviews, school leaders, teachers, and parents associated international education with the development of critical thinking,

inquiry, communication, creativity, and independent learning. Rather than viewing English as the primary outcome of private schooling, participants described it as one of several skills that help prepare learners for future educational and professional opportunities.

This perspective emerged particularly strongly from school leaders. While recognising that parents are often attracted to English-medium education, L2 explained that the purpose of international schooling extends beyond language development, stating:

> *"Many parents initially choose our school because they want strong English skills for their children, and we absolutely recognise the importance of that. At the same time, we take time to explain that in an IB environment, language is a means to learning, not the end goal."*

The above response by L2 suggests that English is viewed as a tool that supports wider learning rather than as the final goal of education. Instead of focusing only on language fluency, the participant described English as enabling learners to engage more confidently in inquiry, discussion, research, and problem-solving. What becomes apparent is that educational quality is being understood in broader terms. Participants valued English because it opens opportunities for learners to develop other knowledge and skills that extend beyond the classroom.

A similar view emerged from teachers, who explained that parents are increasingly attracted to the wider educational philosophy offered by international schools. Reflecting on parental expectations, T1 commented:

> *"The reason they've chosen this school is not only the international element but also the IB element."*

Likewise, T2 explained:

> *"I don't think it's just the accent that they are invested in. That's an added bonus. The school is known for the IB curriculum and the advanced technology that they have in the school. So I think it's more than just accent. It's to do with critical thinking and all the opportunities that the children can avail."*

These responses reinforce the idea that English language proficiency is only one reason why families choose private international schools. Teachers repeatedly linked educational quality to inquiry-based learning, learner independence, and opportunities that encourage learners to think critically and solve problems. Rather than separating language from learning, participants

viewed the two as closely connected, with English supporting access to a broader educational experience.

This finding is consistent with recent studies of international education, which suggest that parents increasingly value curricula that promote critical thinking, learner agency, and transferable skills alongside strong language development. While English remains an important attraction, research indicates that international programmes are becoming equally recognised for developing learners who can communicate effectively, think independently, and adapt to different educational and professional contexts. The findings of the present study support this view and further demonstrate that these qualities are also valued by stakeholders within Jeddah's private international school sector.

Parents expressed similar views. Although they appreciated the importance of English, they consistently described international education as offering benefits that extend beyond language proficiency:

> *"It focuses more on critical thinking, communication, and independent learning, which are important skills even for children who already speak English at home. It's not just about the language, but about how they learn and think."* (P2)
>
> *"It focuses heavily on critical thinking, research, and problem-solving rather than memorization. The local curriculum has improved, but the international approach develops independent learning skills that I think are essential for university and future careers."* (P3)

These responses suggest that parents evaluate educational quality not only by what learners know, but also by how they learn. Participants frequently associated international education with teaching approaches that encourage learners to investigate, question, and apply knowledge rather than simply memorising information. Within the context of Jeddah, this finding indicates that many families are investing in private international education because they believe it develops the wider competencies learners will need beyond school.

Viewed through the lens of Human Capital Theory, these findings suggest that stakeholders regard international education as an investment in a broad range of knowledge, skills, and competencies. English language proficiency remains an important outcome, but participants also emphasised communication, critical thinking, inquiry, and independent learning as

valuable forms of human capital that may improve learners' future educational and employment opportunities.

Overall, the findings indicate that even though English language proficiency remains an important factor influencing parental school choice, stakeholders consistently viewed international education as offering substantially more than language acquisition alone. Participants associated educational quality with inquiry-based learning, critical thinking, communication, and learner independence, suggesting that the perceived value of international education lies in its broader contribution to preparing learners for future academic, professional, and social contexts.

4.3.2 Balancing International Educational Frameworks with Saudi National, Cultural, and Religious Identity

A second issue emerging from Research Question Two relates to how international educational frameworks are balanced with Saudi national, cultural, and religious identity. Across the interviews, participants consistently rejected the idea that international education requires learners to move away from their cultural or religious values. Instead, school leaders, teachers, and parents described deliberate efforts to ensure that international curricula are implemented in ways that respect Saudi traditions while exposing learners to wider global perspectives. Rather than viewing international education and national identity as competing priorities, participants generally believed that both can be developed alongside one another.

This perspective was particularly evident among school leaders. When discussing how international education is implemented within the school, L1 explained:

> *"We're making sure that we are aligning it so that the number one priority is their heritage, their background, where they're coming from."*

The same participant further explained that the school works closely with Arabic, Islamic Studies, and Saudi Studies teachers and is *"making sure that we're broadening English and Arabic."* These comments suggest that international educational frameworks are not introduced independently of the Saudi context. Instead, school leaders described a conscious effort to ensure that learners remain connected to their language, culture, and religious identity while benefitting from internationally recognised educational approaches. Rather than replacing local values, participants viewed international education as something that should build on the foundations already established within Saudi society.

A similar perspective emerged from a leader who challenged the assumption that international education conflicts with Saudi values:

> *"We are equally intentional about showing families that IB values do not conflict with Saudi national or Islamic identity. Respect, empathy, ethics, and open-mindedness are deeply aligned with our cultural and religious values."* (L2)

These responses reinforce the view that international education is not being presented as an alternative to Saudi identity. Instead, school leaders described many of the values promoted through international curricula as reflecting principles that are already embedded within Saudi culture and Islamic teachings. This finding is particularly important because it demonstrates that participants viewed global educational values and local identity as complementary rather than contradictory.

Similar findings have been reported in recent studies of international education, which suggests that international schools are increasingly expected to adapt global educational frameworks to the cultural contexts in which they operate. Rather than promoting a single global identity, successful international programmes encourage learners to develop intercultural understanding while remaining connected to their own communities and traditions. The findings of this study extend this discussion by showing that stakeholders within Jeddah's private international school sector expect international education to strengthen, rather than weaken, Saudi national and cultural identity.

Teachers expressed similar views from the perspective of classroom practice. Reflecting on the school's approach, T1 explained:

> *"The school really does respect and follow as well as it can the social norms and expectations and culture of the people of the country itself."*

At the same time, T1 noted that the school encourages learners to develop *"global citizenship"* while becoming *"beyond just one thing."* These comments suggest that teachers do not see global citizenship as replacing learners' existing identity. Instead, participants described it as broadening learners' understanding of different cultures while encouraging them to appreciate their own. A closer examination reveals that international education is viewed as creating opportunities for learners to engage confidently with the wider world without losing sight of their cultural and religious foundations.

Parents also supported this view. Although they valued the opportunities associated with international education, they did not suggest that these should come at the expense of Saudi values. Instead, they described schools that successfully combine international educational approaches with respect for local traditions as offering the greatest educational value. This shared perspective across school leaders, teachers, and parents suggests that maintaining cultural identity remains an important consideration when families choose private international schools in Jeddah.

Viewed through the lens of Human Capital Theory, these findings suggest that preparing learners for future educational and professional opportunities does not require the abandonment of local identity. Participants consistently associated qualities such as communication, ethical responsibility, adaptability, and cultural awareness with successful learner development. These competencies may therefore be understood as forms of human capital that contribute both to individual success and to Saudi Arabia's wider educational and national development goals.

Overall, the findings indicate that stakeholders generally believe international educational frameworks can be successfully balanced with Saudi national, cultural, and religious identity. Rather than viewing international education as a challenge to local values, participants described it as an educational approach that enables learners to develop global competencies while remaining firmly connected to their own cultural and religious heritage.

4.3.3 Developing Global Competencies while Preserving National Identity

A third issue emerging from Research Question Two relates to how international education contributes to developing learners who are prepared for an increasingly interconnected world while maintaining a strong sense of national identity. Throughout the interviews, participants frequently associated private international schools with the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, adaptability, and learner independence. Rather than describing these competencies as separate from Saudi values, participants generally believed that they could be developed alongside a strong understanding of learners' national, cultural, and religious identity. This suggests that stakeholders viewed international education as preparing learners to participate confidently in both local and global contexts.

School leaders frequently discussed the broader outcomes associated with international education. Reflecting on the purpose of the school's educational approach, L2 explained:

> *"Our educational direction is intentionally aligned with developing globally competitive graduates who demonstrate critical thinking, problem-solving skills, adaptability, and ethical leadership."*

The above comments by L2 indicate that educational success is viewed as extending beyond academic achievement. Alongside subject knowledge, participants emphasised qualities such as leadership, adaptability, and ethical decision-making. These competencies were presented as important because they enable learners to respond confidently to changing educational, professional, and social environments. Rather than focusing only on examination performance, school leaders described an approach that prepares learners for future challenges while remaining grounded in strong personal values.

A similar perspective emerged from L3, who highlighted the way international education shapes learners' outlook:

> *"It's about the mindset. In the international system, they are encouraged to ask 'why' and 'how'. In the traditional schools, it's still very much about memorising the textbook. Even if they are learning the same science, the way they learn it here makes them more independent."*

This response suggests that participants associated international education with developing ways of thinking rather than simply acquiring knowledge. Learners were encouraged to question, investigate, and solve problems independently, skills that participants believed would remain valuable beyond the classroom. What becomes apparent is that stakeholders placed considerable importance on how learners approach learning, rather than focusing only on what they learn.

These findings are consistent with recent research on international education, which argues that inquiry-based curricula increasingly prioritise learner agency, critical thinking, collaboration, and adaptability alongside academic knowledge. Similar patterns emerged in this study, where participants repeatedly linked educational quality to learners' ability to think independently and apply their knowledge in different situations. However, the findings also add to the Saudi literature by demonstrating that these competencies are not viewed as replacing local identity, but as strengthening learners' ability to contribute meaningfully, within both Saudi society and the wider global community. Teachers expressed similar views from the perspective of classroom practice. Reflecting on the learning environment, T1 explained that the school

encourages learners to develop *"global citizenship"* while helping them become *"beyond just one thing."*

Rather than interpreting global citizenship as adopting another culture, teachers described it as encouraging learners to understand different perspectives while remaining respectful of their own values and traditions. Participants therefore viewed international education as broadening learners' horizons without disconnecting them from their cultural identity. This balance was regarded as an important feature of private international education within Jeddah.

Parents also recognised the importance of these broader competencies. P3 explained that the international curriculum focuses on *"critical thinking, research, and problem-solving rather than memorisation"* and develops independent learning skills that are essential for university and future careers. Similarly, P2 emphasised that the curriculum promotes *"critical thinking, communication, and independent learning"* rather than focusing only on language acquisition.

These responses suggest that parents value educational approaches that prepare learners for future opportunities while developing confidence and independence. Participants consistently associated international education with learning experiences that extend beyond examination results and encourage learners to become active participants in their own education. Within Jeddah's private international school sector, these broader competencies were regarded as an important reason why families continue to choose international schools.

Viewed through the lens of Human Capital Theory, these findings suggest that stakeholders regard international education as an investment in the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes that support long-term educational and professional success. Communication, critical thinking, adaptability, ethical leadership, and learner independence were all viewed as valuable forms of human capital that may strengthen learners' future opportunities while enabling them to contribute positively to society.

Overall, the findings indicate that stakeholders believe private international schools contribute to developing learners who are academically capable, globally aware, and confident in their own identity. Rather than viewing global competencies and national identity as opposing goals, participants generally regarded them as complementary outcomes that prepare learners to participate successfully within both Saudi society and an increasingly interconnected world.

4.4 To What Extent Does Privatisation Contribute to Widening the Socio-Economic Divide in Educational Quality?

Theme 3: Supplementary Academic Support and Shadow Education

This section addresses Research Question Three, which asked: *"To what extent does privatisation contribute to widening the socio-economic divide in educational quality?"* The findings presented in this section also contribute to achieving Objective Three of the study, which sought to investigate the role privatisation plays in increasing social inequality in education. More specifically, this theme explored how stakeholders perceived the growing use of supplementary academic support and whether access to these additional educational resources contributes to differences in learners' educational experiences and opportunities. While the previous themes examined educational standards and the relationship between international education and national identity, the findings presented here shift attention towards an important consequence of privatisation that extends beyond the formal classroom. Across the interviews, participants repeatedly reflected on the increasing reliance on private tutoring, shadow teachers, parental academic support, and other forms of supplementary learning that accompany private international education.

Across the interviews, respondents generally regarded private international schools as offering high-quality educational experiences. However, many also acknowledged that the demands associated with international curricula often extend beyond the support provided during the school day. Consequently, a recurring pattern emerged in which families sought additional academic assistance to reinforce learning, address individual challenges, or help learners maintain expected levels of achievement. Although participants did not necessarily view this trend as evidence of inadequate schooling, they frequently recognised that supplementary support had become an increasingly common feature of private education. What becomes apparent from these discussions is that educational success may be shaped not only by the quality of teaching within schools, but also by the resources that learners are able to access outside the classroom. This observation is particularly important because it introduces the central concern of this theme: whether unequal access to supplementary educational support contributes to broader patterns of educational inequality.

The interviews also revealed that stakeholders differed in their understanding of why supplementary support has become so widespread. School leaders and teachers largely

associated private tutoring with the pace and complexity of international curricula, whereas parents often described it as an educational investment intended to maximise future opportunities for their children. Although these perspectives differed slightly, they collectively suggest that supplementary support is no longer viewed solely as remedial assistance for struggling learners. Instead, it increasingly forms part of a broader educational strategy through which families seek to strengthen learner performance and remain competitive within demanding academic environments. Together, these perspectives begin to illustrate how differences in family resources may shape learners' educational experiences in ways that extend beyond the formal provision offered by schools.

These findings are particularly significant in relation to Research Question Three, which examines the extent to which privatisation contributes to widening the socio-economic divide in educational quality. While supplementary academic support may improve learner achievement, its growing normalisation also has the potential to create differences in educational opportunity among learners attending the same schools. Understanding how participants interpret this phenomenon therefore provides valuable insight into the relationship between privatisation, educational opportunity, and social equity within Jeddah's private international school sector.

Three interrelated sub-themes emerged from the analysis. The first explores stakeholders' perceptions of the growing reliance on private tutoring and shadow education. The second examines the academic pressures that encourage families to seek additional educational support beyond the classroom. The third considers the equity implications of access to supplementary educational resources and how differences in financial, educational, and linguistic capital may influence learners' opportunities to benefit from these forms of support. Collectively, these sub-themes contribute to answering Research Question Three while directly addressing Objective Three by illustrating how supplementary educational support may both enhance learner achievement and contribute to increasing social inequality in education.

4.4.1 The Growing Reliance on Private Tutoring

One of the principal issues emerging from the third research question concerning the extent to which privatisation contributes to widening the socio-economic divide in educational quality, was the increasing reliance on private tutoring and other forms of supplementary academic support. Although participants consistently described private international schools in Jeddah

as providing high-quality educational experiences, many acknowledged that formal classroom instruction was often supplemented by additional learning opportunities outside school hours. Participants across all three stakeholder groups referred to private tutors, shadow teachers, parental academic assistance, and structured homework support as increasingly common features of learners' educational experiences. Rather than viewing these practices as isolated interventions for struggling learners, participants frequently described them as part of everyday educational life within the private sector. This finding is particularly significant because it suggests that educational achievement is influenced not only by what occurs within schools but also by the resources available beyond the classroom.

The prominence of supplementary academic support was especially evident in the perspectives of school leaders, who observed the growing dependence of many families on external educational assistance. Reflecting on the pace of international curricula, a leader explained:

> *"The curriculum is very, very fast. It's a lot of pressure on both the staff and the students. I think for most of our families, to be honest, private tutoring has become a necessity, not a choice."* (L3)

This verbatim quote offers more than a description of curriculum demands. It illustrates how supplementary academic support has gradually shifted from being an optional educational resource to becoming an expected component of learner success. What is particularly noteworthy is L3's characterisation of tutoring as *"a necessity, not a choice*." Such language suggests that, for many families, educational achievement is no longer perceived as depending solely on the quality of classroom teaching. Instead, success increasingly appears to rely upon access to additional educational support that extends beyond the formal school environment. In this sense, privatisation may be reshaping not only where learners receive their education, but also how that education is sustained outside school.

This interpretation is consistent with Bray's (2021) observation that shadow education has become increasingly embedded in mainstream education systems, where supplementary tutoring is no longer viewed solely as remedial assistance but as an extension of formal schooling. Bray further argues that families are increasingly turning to additional educational support in response to rising academic expectations rather than poor learner performance alone. While these studies identify shadow education as a global phenomenon, the findings of the present study suggest that within Jeddah's private international schools, supplementary support

is increasingly perceived as a necessary component of educational success rather than simply an educational advantage.

Teachers largely reinforced this interpretation, although they approached the issue from the perspective of everyday classroom practice rather than institutional leadership. Participant T2 explained that some learners struggle to complete independent tasks without additional assistance, observing:

> *"Sometimes the homework might be a bit unrealistic for them to complete independently and they would either need a tutor or they would need someone to assist them do their homework."*

While L3 focused on the overall pace of the curriculum, T2 drew attention to its practical consequences for learners. Together, these perspectives suggest that the demand for supplementary support is not necessarily an indication of ineffective teaching. Rather, participants portrayed it as a response to the expectations associated with internationally recognised curricula, where inquiry-based learning, independent research, and complex assignments frequently require sustained guidance beyond the school day. An important distinction therefore emerges between educational quality and educational sufficiency. Participants generally believed that schools delivered high-quality education, yet they simultaneously recognised that many learners required additional support to meet those high expectations.

These findings are supported by Bray (2021), who argues that supplementary tutoring frequently develops in educational environments characterised by rigorous curricula and high parental expectations. However, participants in the present study placed particular emphasis on the pace and complexity of international curricula rather than examination preparation alone. This distinction suggests that within Jeddah's private international schools, shadow education is becoming integrated into everyday learning as learners seek to manage continuous academic demands rather than only preparing for high-stakes assessments. Parents offered a complementary perspective by explaining why they willingly invested in supplementary support despite already paying substantial private school fees, as P3 reflected:

> *"Many families do use private tutoring, not because the school is lacking, but because parents want to keep their children ahead or address specific gaps quickly."*

Unlike school leaders and teachers, who primarily associated tutoring with curriculum demands, parents frequently framed supplementary support as a proactive educational investment. Rather than waiting for academic difficulties to emerge, many families appeared to view tutoring as a means of maintaining educational momentum and maximising future opportunities. This difference in emphasis is important because it demonstrates that the growing reliance on tutoring cannot be explained solely by academic need. Instead, it also reflects parental aspirations, competitive educational cultures, and long-term expectations regarding learner success. Educational support therefore becomes part of a broader strategy through which families attempt to secure advantages for their children.

Bray (2021) similarly argues that many families invest in supplementary tutoring as a proactive strategy to maximise educational opportunities and maintain a competitive advantage. This interpretation closely reflects participants' descriptions of tutoring as an investment in future success rather than simply a response to academic difficulty. Bray also observes that parental investment in additional educational support increasingly reflects aspirations for future educational achievement rather than merely addressing learning gaps. However, the present findings extend these observations by demonstrating that these investments are closely connected to the demands of international curricula in Jeddah's private international schools, where supplementary support has become part of everyday educational practice rather than an exceptional intervention.

These findings may also be understood through the lens of Human Capital Theory. From this perspective, education represents an investment through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies that improve future social and economic opportunities. Participants appeared to extend this logic beyond school enrolment itself. Investing in private tutoring, shadow teachers, or additional educational support was frequently viewed as a means of protecting and enhancing the value of the original investment made in private education. Consequently, supplementary support becomes another mechanism through which families seek to maximise educational returns and prepare learners for future academic and professional success.

Overall, the findings suggest that the growing reliance on private tutoring reflects more than increasing academic pressure. Instead, it illustrates how privatisation has expanded educational

experiences beyond the formal classroom, creating an environment in which supplementary support is increasingly viewed as part of successful learning. While participants generally regarded this trend as beneficial for learner development, it also raises important questions about educational equity that will be explored in the following sections.

4.4.2 Academic Pressures Driving Demand for Additional Support

A second issue emerging from the third research question (concerning the extent to which privatisation contributes to widening the socio-economic divide in educational quality) relates to the academic pressures that drive families to seek supplementary educational support. While the previous section established that private tutoring has become increasingly common in Jeddah's private international schools, participants also reflected on the underlying reasons for this growing demand. Across the interviews, participants consistently described international curricula as academically rigorous, fast-paced, and characterised by high expectations for learner achievement. Although these characteristics were generally regarded as indicators of educational quality, they also appeared to create conditions in which many learners required additional support beyond the classroom. The findings therefore suggest that the demand for supplementary education is shaped not only by learner ability but also by the expectations embedded within private international schooling itself.

This relationship between curriculum expectations and supplementary support was most clearly articulated by school leaders. Reflecting on the pace of teaching and learning, L3 observed: *"The curriculum is very, very fast. It's a lot of pressure on both the staff and the students."* Although this statement appears straightforward, it reveals an important aspect of the educational environment within private international schools. Participant L3 did not describe pressure as affecting learners alone; instead, both teachers and learners are portrayed as working in an educational system that demands continuous progress. This suggests that the pressure experienced by learners is not simply the result of individual academic weaknesses but is also shaped by the structural demands of internationally recognised curricula. Consequently, the need for additional support emerges as a response to the educational environment rather than as evidence of poor learner performance.

Bray (2021) similarly argues that supplementary tutoring frequently develops within educational environments characterised by demanding curricula and high academic expectations. This interpretation closely reflects L3's description of a fast-paced curriculum

that creates sustained pressure for both teachers and learners. However, the present findings extend Bray's observations by demonstrating that, within Jeddah's private international schools, supplementary support is increasingly viewed as part of everyday learning rather than merely as a response to academic underperformance. Teachers reinforced this interpretation by describing how these pressures become visible during everyday classroom practice. T2 explained:

> *"Sometimes the homework might be a bit unrealistic for them to complete independently and they would either need a tutor or they would need someone to assist them do their homework."*

Rather than criticising the curriculum itself, T2 highlighted the gap that can develop between classroom expectations and learners' capacity to work independently once they leave school. This distinction is particularly important. Participants did not argue that schools were failing to provide effective instruction. Instead, they recognised that inquiry-based learning, extended projects, independent research, and higher-order thinking tasks often require continued guidance beyond formal teaching hours. What emerges from these findings is the idea that educational quality may itself contribute to the demand for supplementary support. Ironically, the very characteristics that attract families to international schools may also increase their reliance on external academic assistance.

Bray (2021) likewise contends that supplementary tutoring increasingly develops as families respond to demanding educational environments rather than simply addressing poor learner performance. This observation is consistent with participants' accounts of learners requiring additional support to manage the pace and complexity of international curricula. However, the present findings place greater emphasis on the continuous demands of inquiry-based learning, suggesting that shadow education has become integrated into everyday educational practice rather than functioning solely as preparation for high-stakes assessment.

Parents offered a slightly different perspective by placing greater emphasis on educational aspirations than curriculum demands. Reflecting on the widespread use of tutoring, P3 explained:

> *"Many families do use private tutoring, not because the school is lacking, but because parents want to keep their children ahead or address specific gaps quickly."*

This quote introduces an additional dimension to the discussion. Whereas teachers focused primarily on managing academic demands, parents frequently described supplementary support as part of a broader strategy to secure future success. Tutoring was therefore not viewed simply as a response to difficulty but as an investment intended to maintain educational advantage. This finding suggests that parental expectations may amplify the pressures already created by demanding curricula. Academic support becomes a means of ensuring that learners remain competitive, even when they are already performing well.

Bray (2021) similarly argues that many families invest in supplementary tutoring as a proactive strategy to maximise educational opportunities and maintain a competitive advantage. This interpretation closely reflects parents' descriptions of tutoring as an investment in future success rather than simply a response to academic difficulty. Bray further observes that parental investment in additional educational support increasingly reflects aspirations for future educational achievement rather than merely addressing learning gaps. However, the present findings extend these observations by demonstrating that such investments are closely connected to the demands of international curricula within Jeddah's private international schools, where supplementary support has become part of everyday educational practice rather than an exceptional intervention.

Not all parents, however, responded to these pressures in the same way: P2 explained that she personally supported her child's learning rather than employing private tutors because of her own educational background and English-language proficiency. This perspective introduces an important nuance into the findings. Although the pressure to achieve appeared widely shared, families differed in their capacity to respond. Some relied upon paid educational services, while others drew upon their own knowledge and experience. This variation indicates that the demand for supplementary support is shaped not only by school expectations but also by the resources available within individual households.

Taken together, these responses suggest that although academic pressure is experienced across many families, the ways in which parents respond to these pressures differ according to the educational, linguistic, and financial resources available within the home. These differences begin to highlight broader questions concerning educational opportunity and the extent to which access to supplementary support may shape learners' experiences beyond the classroom.

A closer examination of these responses reveals that academic pressure has become increasingly normalised within the private international school environment. Participants rarely portrayed demanding curricula as undesirable or excessive. On the contrary, many regarded these expectations as evidence of educational excellence. However, this normalisation also raises an important question. If high-quality education increasingly depends upon learning opportunities that extend beyond the classroom, then educational success may no longer depend solely on what schools provide. Instead, it may also depend on the extent to which families are able to supplement that provision through additional educational support. These observations suggest that the decisions families make regarding supplementary academic support extend beyond immediate educational needs and reflect broader investments in learners' future educational opportunities.

Viewed through the lens of Human Capital Theory, these findings demonstrate how families respond rationally to educational pressures by investing additional resources in their children's development. Participants frequently regarded supplementary academic support as another investment capable of strengthening learner knowledge, skills, and future opportunities. However, these responses also highlight an important implication of the theory. As educational expectations continue to increase, the capacity to make additional investments becomes progressively more important. Consequently, differences in family resources may influence not only access to private education itself but also learners' ability to benefit fully from the educational opportunities that private schools provide.

Overall, the findings suggest that the growing demand for supplementary academic support is driven by an interaction between rigorous curricula, parental aspirations, and competitive educational expectations. Rather than functioning solely as a response to academic difficulty, shadow education has become integrated into the educational experiences of many learners attending private international schools. These findings further strengthen the argument that privatisation shapes not only the quality of education provided within schools but also the expectations and educational investments that increasingly occur beyond the classroom. This discussion naturally leads to the final sub-theme, which examines whether unequal access to these additional educational resources contributes to wider issues of educational equity.

4.4.3 Equity Implications of Access to Supplementary Educational Resources

A third issue emerging from the third research question (the extent to which privatisation contributes to widening the socio-economic divide in educational quality) relates to unequal access to supplementary educational resources. While participants generally recognised the educational benefits associated with private tutoring, shadow teachers, and additional academic support, they also acknowledged that not all families possess the same capacity to access these opportunities. Throughout the interviews, participants repeatedly linked supplementary support to differences in financial resources, parental educational backgrounds, language proficiency, and the availability of time within the home. Consequently, the discussion moved beyond whether supplementary support improves learning towards a more fundamental question of who is able to benefit from it. This finding is particularly significant because it suggests that educational inequality may develop not only through access to schools themselves but also through unequal access to the learning opportunities that exist beyond the classroom.

Teachers were especially conscious of the relationship between family resources and supplementary academic support. Reflecting on the use of private tutors, T1 explained:

> *"Because of the background and nature of some of the families they're in a position where they're able to afford that and it's a luxury that they can utilise."*

Although T1 referred specifically to affordability, the quote points towards a broader issue than financial cost alone. By describing tutoring as a "luxury," the participant recognised that additional educational support is not equally available to every learner. What becomes apparent here is that educational opportunities may increasingly be shaped by family circumstances rather than school provision alone. Learners whose families possess sufficient financial resources are able to access personalised instruction, additional revision, and individual academic guidance that extend well beyond the learning experiences available during the school day. Consequently, educational advantage may accumulate through opportunities that exist outside the formal curriculum.

This interpretation is consistent with Bray (2021), who argues that access to supplementary tutoring frequently reflects differences in family resources rather than learner ability alone. Bray also observes that learners from financially advantaged households are more likely to benefit from additional educational support, reinforcing existing educational advantages.

The present findings closely reflect these observations while also highlighting that participants viewed such differences as part of the everyday reality of private international schooling in Jeddah rather than as isolated cases. School leaders reinforced this interpretation by highlighting the wider financial commitment associated with private education, as L3 observed: *"It's a huge financial commitment. The tuition is just the start."* At first glance, this comment appears to relate primarily to school fees. However, when considered alongside the wider findings, it reveals a more complex picture of educational investment. Tuition fees represent only one component of the financial commitments undertaken by many families. Participants repeatedly referred to tutoring, shadow teachers, examination preparation, transport, technology, and extracurricular activities as additional costs accompanying private education. This suggests that access to educational opportunity extends beyond admission to a private school. Instead, learners' experiences may increasingly be influenced by the extent to which families can continue investing in supplementary educational resources throughout their schooling.

These findings also resonate with Bray's (2021) observation that the financial costs associated with shadow education often extend well beyond school tuition fees. Bray further contends that supplementary educational expenditure has become an increasingly important component of family investment in education. However, participants in the present study broaden this discussion by demonstrating that educational investment within Jeddah's private international schools extends beyond tutoring to include a wider range of academic resources and opportunities that shape learners' educational experiences.

Parents introduced an important dimension to this discussion by demonstrating that educational support is not determined exclusively by income. While P1 and P3 described private tutoring as a common strategy for strengthening learner achievement, P2 explained that she preferred to support her child personally because of her own educational background and strong English-language proficiency. This perspective broadens the discussion by illustrating that families draw upon different forms of capital when supporting their children's education. Some invest financial resources by employing tutors, whereas others utilise their own educational knowledge, language skills, and previous learning experiences. An important distinction therefore emerges between possessing financial capital and possessing educational capital. Both may contribute to learner success, although not every family has equal access to either.

Together, these findings suggest that supplementary academic support operates through multiple forms of advantage. Financial resources enable families to purchase additional educational services, while educational and linguistic resources allow parents to provide comparable support within the home. Learners whose families possess one or both of these forms of capital may therefore benefit from educational opportunities that are unavailable to others. Rather than reducing educational inequalities, supplementary support may unintentionally widen existing differences by providing some learners with repeated opportunities for reinforcement, feedback, and personalised guidance.

A particularly noteworthy finding emerging from the interviews is that these differences were rarely viewed as intentional or unfair by participants themselves. Most participants regarded supplementary support as a natural extension of parental responsibility and commitment to learner success. However, this normalisation deserves closer consideration. When private tutoring becomes an expected component of educational achievement, learners who do not receive such support may gradually fall behind despite attending the same schools and following the same curriculum. Educational outcomes therefore become influenced not only by individual effort or school quality but also by differences in the resources that families are able to mobilise outside the classroom. This observation speaks directly to concerns surrounding educational equity within increasingly privatised education systems.

The findings closely reflect contemporary research on shadow education and educational inequality. Bray (2021) argues that although supplementary tutoring frequently improves individual learner achievement, it may simultaneously reinforce educational inequalities when participation depends upon family resources. Bray further contends that shadow education often benefits learners whose families possess greater financial, educational, and cultural capital, thereby reproducing existing educational advantages over time. The present study supports these conclusions while contributing further insight within the context of Jeddah's private international schools. Participants generally viewed supplementary support in a positive light and rarely questioned its legitimacy. Nevertheless, their experiences reveal that unequal access to these resources has the potential to generate differences in educational opportunity even among learners attending the same institutions.

These findings may also be interpreted through the lens of Human Capital Theory, which proposes that families invest in education because they anticipate long-term social and

economic returns. The participants' accounts suggest that this investment frequently extends beyond school enrolment to include tutoring, shadow teachers, and additional academic support designed to strengthen learner outcomes. However, Human Capital Theory also highlights an important implication of unequal investment capacity. Families possessing greater financial and educational resources are better positioned to accumulate additional forms of human capital for their children, whereas families with fewer resources may struggle to make comparable investments. As a result, opportunities to develop valuable knowledge, skills, and competencies may become unevenly distributed, reinforcing differences in future educational and occupational outcomes.

Overall, the findings indicate that supplementary academic support represents both an educational opportunity and a potential source of educational inequality. Although participants consistently recognised the value of tutoring and additional learning support, they also demonstrated that access to these resources depends upon forms of financial, educational, and linguistic capital that are not equally available to all families. The findings therefore suggest that privatisation may widen socio-economic differences in educational quality by creating conditions in which learners' opportunities increasingly depend upon resources extending beyond the formal school environment. In doing so, this theme directly addresses the third objective of the study by illustrating how educational equity may be influenced not only by access to private schooling but also by unequal access to the supplementary support that increasingly accompanies it.

CHAPTER FIVE: STUDY SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The final chapter brings the study to a close by drawing together the work presented throughout the dissertation. It begins by providing a summary of the study before presenting the conclusions reached from the research. The chapter also reflects on the overall contribution of the study and considers its implications for private education within the context of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

It opens with a summary of the study, showing how each chapter contributed to addressing the research problem and achieving the overall aim of the research. This is followed by the conclusions, which are organised according to the research questions that guided the investigation. Rather than repeating the findings presented in Chapter Four, the conclusions will explain what those findings revealed about the impact of privatisation on educational quality and educational equity within Jeddah's private school sector.

The chapter concludes with recommendations arising from the findings, discusses the limitations of the study, identifies areas for future research, and offers concluding remarks. Together, these sections highlight the overall contribution of the research and its relevance to the continued development of private education in Saudi Arabia.

5.2 Summary of the Research Study

Chapter One introduced the study by providing the background to educational privatisation in Saudi Arabia and explaining its relevance within the context of Vision 2030. It presented the research problem, aim, objectives, and research questions, while outlining the significance and scope of the study. It also defined the key concepts that informed the research and established the foundation for examining the impact of privatisation on educational quality and educational equity within Jeddah's private school sector.

Chapter Two reviewed the literature relating to educational privatisation, educational quality, and equity, as well as the educational reforms associated with Vision 2030. The chapter examined international and Saudi Arabian scholarship to provide the conceptual and contextual

background for the study and identified the gap addressed by the research. It also introduced Human Capital Theory as the theoretical framework that underpinned the study and informed the interpretation of the findings.

Chapter Three described the research methodology: a qualitative research approach, informed by an interpretivist paradigm, was used to explore the perspectives and experiences of school leaders, teachers, and parents within Jeddah's private international school sector. It explained the participant selection process, data collection through semi-structured interviews, procedures, ethical considerations, and the measures implemented to ensure the trustworthiness of the research.

Chapter Four presented and discussed the data collected from the participants. The chapter organised the analysis into themes that addressed the research questions and interpreted the evidence in relation to the objectives of the study, the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, and Human Capital Theory. This provided the foundation for the conclusions presented in this chapter.

This final chapter brings the dissertation to a close by drawing together the research undertaken throughout the study. It presents conclusions organised according to the research questions, followed by recommendations, a discussion of the limitations of the study, suggestions for future research, and concluding remarks. Collectively, these sections highlight the contribution of the research to understanding the impact of privatisation on educational quality and equity within Jeddah's private school sector.

5.3 Conclusions

The conclusions presented in this section are based on the findings discussed in Chapter Four and are organised according to the research questions that guided the study. Rather than repeating the evidence already presented, this section interprets what the findings reveal about the influence of privatisation on educational quality and educational equity within Jeddah's private school sector. Each conclusion explains what the findings mean in relation to the research questions and considers their significance within the broader context of educational reform and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

5.3.1 Research Question One: How Does Privatisation Influence Educational Standards in Jeddah?

It can be concluded that privatisation has influenced educational standards within Jeddah's private school sector by changing how educational quality is understood. Educational standards are no longer viewed mainly in terms of examination results or academic achievement. Instead, quality education is associated with a wider range of learner outcomes, including communication skills, critical thinking, inquiry, learner independence, and the ability to apply knowledge in meaningful ways. This suggests that educational quality is increasingly judged by the overall learning experience that schools provide rather than by academic performance alone.

Another point that becomes clear is that educational quality is shaped by the environment in which learners are taught. Educational standards were consistently associated with learner-centred teaching, access to appropriate resources, supportive learning environments, and opportunities for active participation. These features were viewed as important because they help learners develop both academically and personally. This shows that educational standards are influenced not only by what learners know, but also by how they experience learning throughout their schooling.

The research also highlights the important role that parental expectations play in shaping educational standards within the private sector. Families increasingly appear to value schools that prepare learners for future opportunities rather than focusing only on immediate academic success. Educational quality is therefore linked to the development of knowledge, skills, confidence, and independence that learners can carry beyond the classroom. In this way, private education is expected to prepare learners for further study, future employment, and the demands of an increasingly interconnected world.

The evidence also shows that educational standards cannot be separated from the wider school environment. School culture, reputation, learning opportunities, and access to educational resources all influence how families judge the quality of a school. Together, these factors shape expectations of private education and contribute to a broader understanding of educational quality than academic achievement alone.

Looking across the evidence, it is clear that privatisation has broadened expectations of educational standards within Jeddah's private school sector. Quality education is now closely associated with developing well-rounded learners who are confident, adaptable, and prepared for future challenges. Rather than simply providing an alternative to public education, privatisation has influenced how educational quality itself is understood and valued within Jeddah's private school sector.

5.3.2 Research Question Two: In What Ways Does Privatisation Align with the Educational Goals Set Forth in Vision 2030?

The research indicates that privatisation has the potential to support many of the educational goals associated with Vision 2030. Rather than focusing only on academic achievement, private international education is seen as developing learners who are able to think critically, communicate effectively, solve problems, and adapt to changing circumstances. These qualities reflect the broader direction of educational reform in Saudi Arabia, where the emphasis has shifted towards preparing learners with the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed for future national development.

A second conclusion is that stakeholders do not see international education and Saudi identity as competing priorities. Instead, they believe that learners can benefit from internationally recognised educational approaches while remaining connected to their national, cultural, and religious values. This is significant because it suggests that preparing learners for an increasingly interconnected world does not require them to move away from their own identity. Instead, international education is viewed as strengthening learners' ability to participate confidently in both local and global contexts.

What also becomes clear is that stakeholders value private education because of the opportunities it creates beyond the classroom. The research suggests that families increasingly associate private international schools with developing confident, independent learners who are prepared for future study, employment, and wider participation in society. From this perspective, the contribution of private education extends beyond offering an alternative curriculum. It is also seen as supporting the long-term development of learners who are able to respond to new opportunities and challenges.

An equally important point is how stakeholders viewed the contribution of private education within the broader goals of the Saudi education system. Although participants generally recognised the positive role of private international schools, they also understood that their value depends on how well they complement national educational priorities. This suggests that alignment with Vision 2030 involves more than expanding the private sector. It also involves ensuring that educational development continues to support both national priorities and the needs of Saudi society.

Considering the research overall, it can be concluded that privatisation has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the educational aspirations of Vision 2030. Its contribution extends beyond increasing educational choice by supporting the development of learners who are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and personal qualities needed for the future. At the same time, the research indicates that this contribution is strongest when private education remains aligned with Saudi Arabia's wider educational goals and continues to complement the country's long-term vision for education.

5.3.3 Research Question Three: To What Extent Does Privatisation Contribute to Widening the Socio-Economic Divide in Educational Quality?

One of the broader conclusions emerging from the study is that the relationship between privatisation and educational equity is more complex than simply increasing or reducing inequality. While private international schools were generally associated with high educational standards, the opportunities linked to those standards were not experienced equally by all learners. This suggests that educational quality and equity are closely connected, as learners' experiences are influenced not only by the schools they attend but also by the support available to them beyond the classroom.

What becomes clear from the research is that educational opportunity increasingly extends beyond formal schooling. Access to additional academic support, educational resources, and learning opportunities can strengthen what learners experience in school, but these opportunities are not equally available to every family. As a result, educational outcomes are shaped not only by the quality of teaching provided in schools but also by the different forms of support that learners receive outside the classroom. This highlights that educational success is influenced by factors that extend beyond the formal education system itself.

The study also shows that educational equity cannot be understood only in terms of financial resources. Family circumstances, educational background, language proficiency, and the capacity to support learning at home all influence learners' educational experiences. Looking at these wider influences provides a more complete understanding of educational equity and shows that advantage can develop in different ways within a privatised education system. This highlights the importance of considering both school-based and family-based influences when examining educational opportunity.

An important implication of these findings is that improving educational quality does not automatically lead to greater educational equity. Expanding access to high-quality educational experiences is an important achievement, yet the research suggests that differences in family resources may influence the extent to which learners are able to benefit from those opportunities. This demonstrates that educational quality and educational equity should not be viewed as separate goals. Instead, they influence each other in ways that require careful consideration when evaluating the impact of privatisation.

Viewed as a whole, the study suggests that privatisation has created valuable educational opportunities within Jeddah's private school sector while also highlighting important questions about educational equity. The study demonstrates that the impact of privatisation cannot be judged by educational quality alone. It should also be understood in relation to the opportunities learners are able to access and the conditions that shape those opportunities. Ultimately, the findings suggest that improving educational quality and promoting educational equity should be regarded as complementary goals if the long-term benefits of educational reform are to be experienced more widely across society.

5.4 Recommendations

The recommendations presented in this section arise directly from the conclusions of the study and are intended to support the continued development of private education within Saudi Arabia. To ensure these recommendations are actionable, specific institutional actors—including the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Education and Training Evaluation Commission (ETEC), private school leadership, and parent communities—have been identified to lead implementation across regulatory, pedagogical, and equitable dimensions.

5.4.1 Recommendations Related to Educational Standards

- **For the Education and Training Evaluation Commission (ETEC) and Ministry of Education (MoE):**

Expand Quality Evaluation Criteria Beyond Academic Performance: ETEC should update its national school evaluation frameworks to explicitly weigh non-academic competencies—such as critical thinking, inquiry-based learning skills, and learner independence—alongside standard exam outcomes.

Standardise Quality Assurance Across Private Providers: The MoE should implement regular monitoring to ensure that lower-fee private schools are held to the same curriculum implementation and resource standards as high-cost international schools, narrowing the internal quality gap across the private sector.

- **For Private School Leadership and Administrators:**

Invest in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Teachers: School leaders should establish mandatory, ongoing training in inquiry-based learning and learner-centered pedagogy rather than relying solely on textbook instruction.

Integrate Technological and Critical Thinking Resources into Classrooms: Leadership must ensure equal access to digital learning tools and interactive resources across all grade levels within the school, fostering consistent engagement.

5.4.2 Recommendations Related to Alignment with Vision 2030

- **For the Ministry of Education (MoE):**

Strengthen Co-Curricular Cultural and National Identity Guidelines: The MoE should provide private international schools with structured national framework modules that seamlessly integrate Saudi culture, Islamic values, and history into global curricula (such as IB or Cambridge) without disrupting international accreditation standards.

- **For Private School Leadership and Curriculum Coordinators:**

Foster Dual-Language and Cultural Integration: School leaders should ensure equal status and time allocation for Arabic, Islamic Studies, and Saudi Social Studies, pairing international

faculty with local language teachers to build cross-cultural competencies and reinforce national identity.

Align Graduate Profiles with Vision 2030 Human Capital Goals: Leadership should embed leadership, communication, problem-solving, and global citizenship explicitly into school-wide learner profiles to directly support Saudi Arabia's transition toward a knowledge-based economy.

5.4.3 Recommendations Related to Addressing the Socio-Economic Divide and Shadow Education

- **For the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Educational Authorities:**

Establish Regulatory Frameworks for Shadow Education: The MoE should establish clear regulatory guidelines for commercial private tutoring and shadow teachers in Jeddah to ensure quality control, transparent pricing, and protection for families against escalating costs.

- **For Private School Leadership:**

Implement In-House Remedial and Academic Support Programs: School leaders should establish structured, school-funded peer tutoring and teacher-led remedial sessions after school hours, reducing families' dependency on costly external private tutors.

Review Homework Load and Assessment Pace: Academic leaders should review curriculum pacing and homework policies to ensure independent assignments are realistic and manageable within normal home environments without mandatory external adult assistance.

- **For Parents and School-Community Associations:**

Promote Balanced Educational Expectations: Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) should conduct workshops focusing on managing academic pressure and understanding holistic learner development, helping parents avoid unnecessary over-reliance on private tutoring for already high-achieving students.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

All research studies are conducted within particular methodological and contextual boundaries, and these should be considered when interpreting the findings. The purpose of identifying these

boundaries is not to diminish the value of the research, but to provide an understanding of the context within which the findings should be viewed. Recognising the scope of the study also allows the conclusions to be interpreted appropriately while identifying opportunities for further investigation.

The study focused specifically on private international schools in Jeddah and explored the perspectives of school leaders, teachers, and parents. This enabled the researcher to develop a detailed understanding of privatisation within a specific educational context. At the same time, the findings should be interpreted within that context rather than assumed to represent experiences across other regions of Saudi Arabia or different educational settings. In keeping with the qualitative design, the intention was to develop rich contextual understanding rather than produce findings that could be statistically generalised.

The scope of the study was also shaped by the stakeholder groups included in the research. Learners, policymakers, and representatives from public schools were outside the scope of this investigation. Including their perspectives may have provided additional insight into how educational privatisation is experienced across different parts of the education system.

These methodological choices allowed the study to explore participants' experiences and perspectives in considerable depth while defining the boundaries within which the conclusions should be understood. Rather than weakening the research, these boundaries provide important context for interpreting the findings and highlight areas that warrant further investigation. The following section builds on these considerations by identifying opportunities for future research that emerged from the study.

Additionally, while issues of geographical and financial accessibility were reviewed in the literature (Section 2.2), participant responses during interviews focused predominantly on educational standards, school reputation, and supplementary support equity. Consequently, accessibility was not drawn out as a discrete empirical theme, which represents a conceptual delimitation of the empirical findings.

5.6 Suggestions for Future Research

The study has contributed to understanding the impact of privatisation on educational quality and equity within Jeddah's private school sector. At the same time, it has highlighted several

questions that extend beyond the scope of the present research. Rather than closing the discussion on educational privatisation, the findings point towards areas that require continued investigation as private education continues to evolve within Saudi Arabia. Exploring these questions would strengthen understanding of how educational reform, educational quality, and educational equity continue to interact within changing educational contexts.

One area that remains underexplored concerns the voices that were outside the scope of this study. An important question emerging from this research is how learners themselves experience educational quality and equity in private international schools. While this study examined the perspectives of school leaders, teachers, and parents; learners' own experiences remain underexplored. Exploring these perspectives would have provided a valuable dimension to the findings and would have contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of how privatisation is experienced within the Saudi educational context. A broader understanding could also be achieved by including policymakers and representatives from public schools, allowing future research to examine educational privatisation across different parts of the education system.

The study also raises wider questions about how these findings may be understood in other educational contexts. Because this research focused on private international schools in Jeddah, further investigation across different regions of Saudi Arabia, different types of private schools, and comparative studies involving public and private education would help establish how educational context influences experiences of privatisation. Such work would extend the understanding developed through this study while providing a broader picture of how educational quality, educational equity, and Vision 2030 are experienced across the Saudi education system.

One question emerging directly from this research concerns the long-term relationship between educational quality and equity. While this study demonstrated that these two priorities are closely connected, how that relationship continues to develop as private education expands remains uncertain. Examining this issue over time would provide valuable insight into how educational reform continues to shape opportunities for learners and would further develop understanding of privatisation within the Saudi Arabian context.

5.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has brought the dissertation to a close by drawing together the main outcomes of the research. Through the summary of the study, conclusions, recommendations, limitations, and suggestions for future research, it reflected on the significance of the findings and their implications for understanding privatisation within Jeddah's private school sector. Collectively, these sections have demonstrated how the research questions were addressed while providing a final reflection on the contribution of the study to educational research within the Saudi Arabian context.

One of the central conclusions emerging from this dissertation is that the impact of privatisation cannot be understood through educational quality alone. The study has shown that educational quality, educational equity, and the educational aspirations of Vision 2030 are closely connected and should be considered together when examining the role of private education within Saudi Arabia. Bringing these dimensions together provides a broader understanding of how privatisation is experienced and highlights the complexity of educational reform within a rapidly changing educational landscape.

Ultimately, this dissertation demonstrates that understanding privatisation requires equal consideration of educational quality and equity, as well as national educational priorities. Considering these issues together provides a more balanced understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with private education in Saudi Arabia while contributing to ongoing discussions surrounding educational development. In this way, the study provides a stronger foundation for understanding the continued development of private education within the Saudi Arabian context.

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ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNISA university of south africa

College of Education _ERC

NHREC Registration # : (if applicable)
Ref #: 11278
Name: Ms Naeema Foflonker
Student #: 35651318
Staff #:

Date: 23/03/2026

Dear: Ms Naeema Foflonker

Decision: Ethics Approval from 23/03/2026 to 22/03/2029

Researcher: Ms Naeema Foflonker

Department: Department of Education Foundations

College: Education

E-mail: 35651318@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Supervisor: Professor Mbusiseni C Dube dubemc@unisa.ac.za

Co-Supervisor:

Co-Researcher(s):

E-mail:

The Impact of Privatization on Educational Quality and Equity in Saudi Arabia

Qualification: Masters in Comparative and International Education

Thank you for the application for research ethics approval by the College of Education _ERC for the above-mentioned research study. Ethics approval is granted for three years.

The **low risk application** was **reviewed** by the College of Education _ERC in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising during the undertaking of the research study that may affect the ethical integrity of the study, including those involving research participants, third parties, or juristic persons, must be reported in writing to the College of Education _ERC without delay.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that may affect study-related risks to research participants, juristic or third persons, must be reported in writing to the College of Education _ERC , accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research study complies with all applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines, and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Where applicable, adherence to the following South African legislation is essential: the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013), the Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005), and the National Health Act (No. 61 of 2003)
6. Future use of this research data is permitted only in de-identified form and only for secondary research with objectives similar to those of the original study. Any secondary use involving identifiable human data will require additional ethics

clearance.

7. No fieldwork activities may continue beyond the stated expiry date (22/03/2029). A completed Research Ethics Progress Report must be submitted as an application for renewal and is subject to approval by the Research Ethics Committee. A Close-Out Report must be submitted upon completion of the research study.

8. The College of Education _ERC may require the submission of regular progress reports on an annual basis, in alignment with Section 7.2 of the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics (2024).

Additional Conditions

1. Disclosure of data to third parties is prohibited without explicit consent from the research participants and Unisa.
2. Research data must be stored in compliance with the university's research data management policy for a period of up to 15 years.
3. When publishing the results, the researcher must take appropriate precautions to safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of the research participants, juristic persons, third parties, and the university, in accordance with institutional policies and ethical standards.
4. Adherence to the National Statement on Ethical Research and Publication Practices, specifically Principle 7 on Social Awareness, must be ensured. This principle states: 'Researchers and institutions must be sensitive to the potential impact of their research on society, marginal groups, or individuals, and must consider these when weighing the benefits of the research against any harmful effects, with a view to minimising or avoiding the latter where possible.' The University of South Africa (Unisa) accepts no liability for any failure to comply with this principle.

Note

The reference number 11278 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,

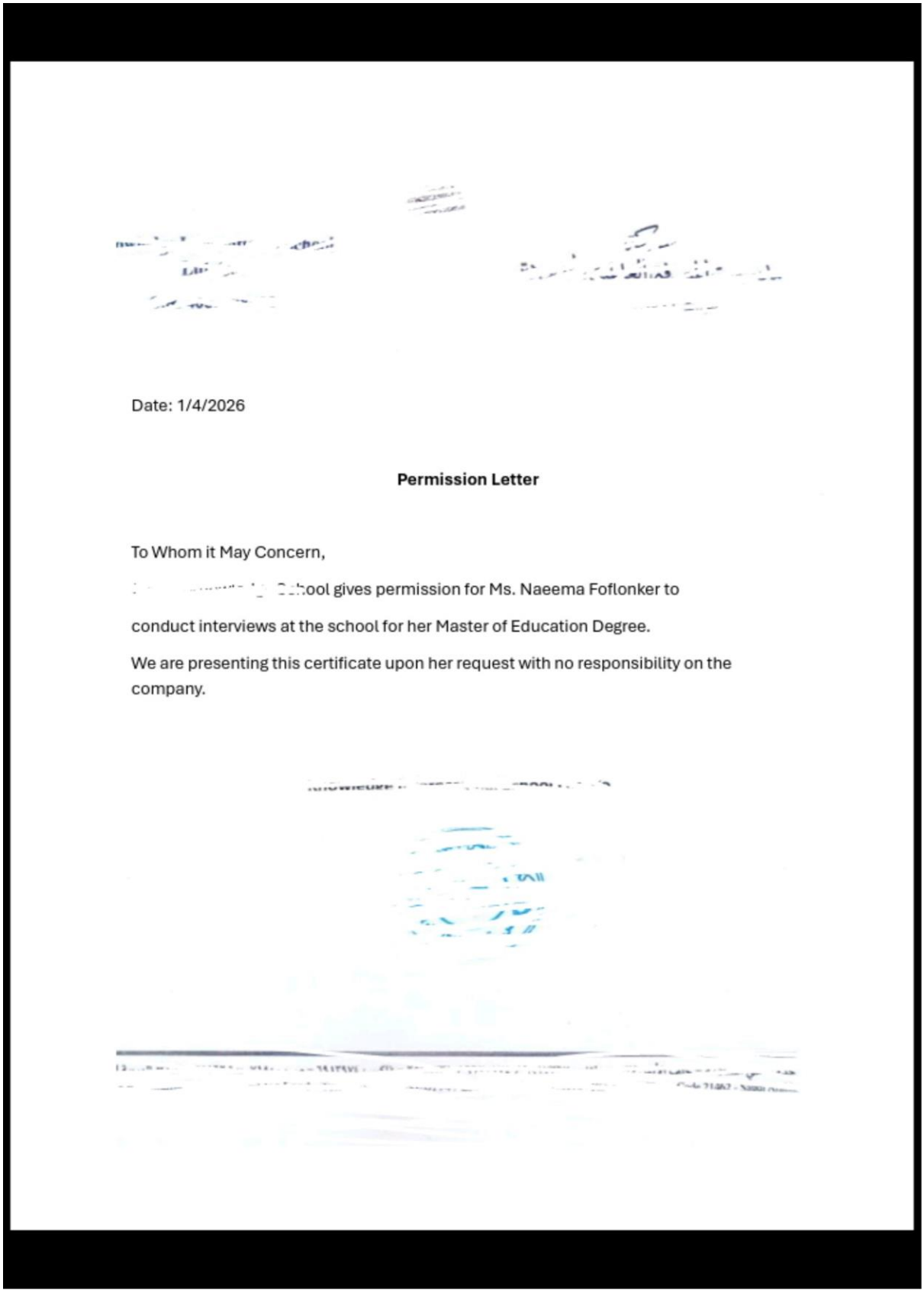


Prof Justin Oswin August
Chair of College of Education _ERC
E-mail: augusjo@unisa.ac.za



Prof Mpine Makoe
Executive Dean / By delegation from the Executive Dean of College of Education
E-mail: qakisme@unisa.ac.za,

ANNEXURE B: PERMISSION FROM SCHOOL TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS



Date: 1/4/2026

Permission Letter

To Whom it May Concern,

[redacted]ool gives permission for Ms. Naeema Foflonker to conduct interviews at the school for her Master of Education Degree.

We are presenting this certificate upon her request with no responsibility on the company.

ANNEXURE C: CONSENT FORM

UNISA university of south africa

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the audio recording of the interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname..... (please print)

Participant Signature.....Date.....16/4/26.....

Researcher's Name & Surname: Naeema Foflonker

Researcher's signature.....Date.....16/4/2026

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ANNEXURE D: INTERVIEW GUIDE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT AND LEADERSHIP

HOD & Leadership Interview Guide

Strategic Stakeholder Perspectives on International Education

1. Balancing Institutional Reputation and Academic Rigor In the international school market, a school's "brand" is often its most visible asset. From your leadership perspective, how do you balance the necessity of maintaining a **"High-Prestige Brand"** with the deep academic rigor required by **CIS and IB standards**? Specifically, how do we ensure that the academic substance behind our name is clearly recognized by the community?

2. Navigating a Changing Educational Landscape Under **Vision 2030**, we are seeing significant investment and rapid improvement in the public school sector. In this evolving landscape, what do you believe is the specific "competitive edge" that an **IB/CIS accredited** environment offers our students that the state system is not yet designed to replicate?

3. The Intersection of IB Values and Linguistic Goals While parents are often initially drawn to the school for **English fluency**, our mission as an **IB World School** involves developing the **"Learner Profile"** (inquiry, critical thinking, and global-mindedness). How do you bridge the gap for parents who may prioritize language skills over these broader pedagogical goals? Furthermore, how do we ensure these global standards complement and strengthen a student's **Saudi national and religious identity**?

4. Sustainability of the International Model Maintaining high-end international resources, IB/CIS affiliations, and an expat faculty requires a significant financial commitment. How does the school's leadership manage these **rising operational costs** while ensuring that the school remains a sustainable and accessible choice for the **local Jeddah market**?

5. The Broader Impact on Social Equity There is an ongoing academic debate regarding whether privatization helps elevate national education standards through competition or if it risks widening the **social gap**. In your view, does the growth of elite international schooling in Jeddah contribute to the overall improvement of the Saudi system, or does it primarily serve to create a specialized **"Global Elite"** class?

6. Alignment with National Strategic Goals Vision 2030 seeks to produce graduates who are **globally competitive** and equipped with high-level **problem-solving skills**. Given this, does the school leadership view the institution primarily as a **strategic partner** helping the Kingdom achieve these national goals, or is our direction more heavily influenced by the immediate **market demands and expectations** of our parent body?

ANNEXURE E: INTERVIEW GUIDE TEACHERS

Teacher Interview Guide

This interview is part of my UNISA Master's research on how private education is changing in Jeddah. I'm exploring the shift towards private and English-language schools, and how costs and expectations are shaping education.

Just to confirm, you've signed the consent form, and everything you share will remain completely anonymous. The recording is only for transcription and will not be shared.

Subject: Classroom Reality and Global Standards

1. The "Product" vs. The Pedagogy As a teacher in an international setting, do you find that parents are primarily focused on their child's **English fluency and accent**, or do they actively value the **IB-style critical thinking** and inquiry skills you teach? In your daily interactions, which of these "skills" do you feel is the most important "capital" for the families we serve?

2. Managing Academic Pressure Because of the prestige associated with our curriculum, it can be quite fast-paced. From your perspective in the classroom, how do students manage this pressure? Do you notice a high reliance on "shadow education" (outside tutoring) to meet the school's standards, and how does that affect the learning environment?

3. The Resource Advantage in Practice While public schools are rapidly improving their facilities under Vision 2030, what is the **one pedagogical resource** or advantage (e.g., small group sizes, specific technology, or teaching freedom) that you feel still sets our private environment apart?

4. Social Dynamics and "Hidden Costs" In a private school setting, there are often "hidden costs" like high-end technology, international trips, and specific materials. Do you notice these factors creating a **social divide** or specific pressures among the students, or does the school culture successfully bridge these gaps?

5. Inclusive Education in an Elite Setting As practitioners, we aim to be inclusive. In your view, is the growth of private schooling in Jeddah truly opening doors for a **diverse range of learners**, or is it primarily creating a "protected bubble" for a specific social class?

6. Vision 2030 and Classroom Adaptation

- **The Context:** Vision 2030 aims to move Saudi Arabia toward a global hub of innovation, looking for graduates who are globally competitive, fluent in English, and experts in critical thinking.
- **The Question:** As a teacher, do you find yourself **intentionally adapting** your lessons to meet these specific "Vision 2030" goals, or do you feel that our International Curriculum naturally delivers these skills without extra adjustment?

ANNEXURE F: INTERVIEW GUIDE PARENTS

Research Interview: Parent Perspectives

1. The Choice Factor When you were looking at schools for your child, was the **Native English environment** and the **Expat teaching style** the "must-have" factor for you, or were you more focused on the campus facilities?

2. The Support Reality Because the international curriculum is very fast-paced, do you feel the school's internal support is enough for every student, or is **private tutoring** now the standard way families keep up?

3. Curriculum Value Do you feel the **International Curriculum** used here prepares your child for the future better than the local curriculum in public schools, even for children who already speak English at home?

4. Economic Strategy Besides the main tuition, how do the **additional costs** (such as technology fees, specialized resources, or extracurriculars) impact your family budget or your decision to stay in the private sector long-term?

5. The Professional Choice As a parent who understands the education system, if a government school offered native English teachers but lacked this school's **social environment and reputation (prestige)**, would you still choose the private sector?

6. The Vision 2030 Connection

- **The Context:** Vision 2030 aims to transform Saudi Arabia into a global hub for technology, tourism, and innovation. To achieve this, the national goal is to produce graduates who are **globally competitive**, **fluent in English**, and experts in **critical thinking and problem-solving**.
- **The Question:** Does having your child in this private international environment make you feel more confident that they are gaining these specific **'Vision 2030 skills'** compared to what they would receive in the public school system?

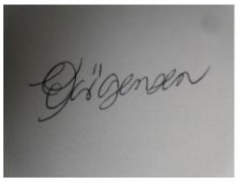
ANNEXURE G: CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

Erna Jörgensen
Professional Language Editor
& Survey Research Expert
Mobile +27 63 803 5589
editorerna@gmail.com

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

Title: Examining the Impact of Privatisation on Educational Quality and Equity in Saudi Arabia: A Case Study of Jeddah's Private School Sector
Degree: Masters of Education
Author: Naeema Foflonker
Institution: University Of South Africa

This certifies that the above document was proofread and edited by Erna Jörgensen and returned to the author on 4 September 2026. The document was edited for proper English language, grammar, punctuation, spelling, inconsistencies, and overall style, according to the guidelines of the institution. The editor endeavoured not to change the author's intended meaning, and all amendments were tracked with Microsoft Word "Track Changes" which the author had the right to accept or reject. The final document remains that of the author.



4 September 2026

The Copy-editing and Proofreading Course (*SA Writers' College*)
Bachelor of Arts Honours in Social Behavioural Studies around HIV AIDS (*Unisa*)
Certificate in Marketing Management and Marketing Research *(Unisa Bureau of Market Research)*
Diplôme de Langue Française *(Alliance Française, Paris, France)*

ANNEXURE H: TURNITIN REPORT

Naeema Final Submission

ORIGINALITY REPORT

13%	11%	8%	6%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Submitted to University of South Africa	Student Paper
2	louisdl.louislibraries.org	Internet Source
3	ir.unisa.ac.za	Internet Source
4	Nasr, Ryma. "Evaluating the Alignment of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Scholarship Program (CTHMSP) with Vision 2030 Goals for Human Capital Developmen Saudi Arabia.", University of Baltimore	Publication
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