THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRESCHOOLS IN KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA AND UNITED STATES IN CURRICULUM AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

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THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRESCHOOLS IN KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA AND UNITED STATES IN CURRICULUM AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

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in

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by

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Abstract

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRESCHOOLS IN KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA AND UNITED STATES IN CURRICULUM AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

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The aim of this study is to figure out the differences between curriculum and classroom activities that children will learn while they are in preschool in Saudi Arabia and United States. The contrast comes from differences in culture, religion and history in both countries. The research also identified there are similarities between curriculum and classroom activities provided to preschool children in Saudi Arabia and United States.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This research focused on the differences between preschool in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United States in curriculum (corners) and classroom activities. Saudi Arabian preschool is for children who are four and five years old. Preschool is required in Saudi Arabia and there is a private preschool and public preschool, with parents paying all the cost for private school.

In 2013, the Saudi Arabia Ministry of Education ruled that all children age four through six must be in the preschool. Preschool in Saudi Arabia is from generally from eight in the morning until twelve thirty in the afternoon. Teachers all must have a degree from a college with an early childhood degree.

To understand preschool education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a little of the culture and history is needed. Saudi Arabia is a large country that takes up four-fifths of the Arabian Peninsula, covering 2,150,000 square kilometers of land. Saudi Arabia is surrounded by the Red Sea, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, the Arabian Gulf, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Yemen (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). The landscape of Saudi Arabia is very diverse due to its large size, and the landscape includes deserts, grasslands, mountains, forests, and coastline near the sea. The predominant and official language of Saudi Arabia is Arabic.

According to Algamdi & Nooraldeen (2002), the national education system in Saudi Arabia works hard to prioritize teaching Arabic in every grade. The Saudi Arabian education system also tries to improve students’ Arabic across the curriculum because it is the official language of the country. In addition, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia mandated preschool education for all children in 2013 although preschool education has existed in Saudi Arabia for many years. Before 2013 preschool education was both private and public education.
The private was paid for by the parents and the public was free but not required. If children want to go to elementary school since 2013, they must complete kindergarten or they will not be admitted.

**Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent of differences between the classroom activities and corners (centers) that children will learn while they are in preschool in Saudi Arabia compared to the United States. The researcher believes that the contrast comes from differences in culture, religion and history in both countries. The research also identified there are similarities between teaching classroom activities and corners (centers) provided to preschool children in Saudi Arabia and United States.

**Definition of Terms**

Arabic is a language spoken widely across the Middle East and North Africa. There are many Arabic dialects spoken in different areas. Arabic is read and written from right to left.

Classroom activities refer to the subjects taught in Saudi Arabian preschools.

Saudi Arabian preschool is for children who are 4-5-6 years old, it is required in Saudi Arabia and there is a private preschool and public preschool, and parents pay all the cost for private school.
Corner refers in Saudi Arabia to the centers that are in the preschool such as reading, writing, discovering, building, art, and kitchen. The corners remain the same, but different materials are added to the corners.

Centers- are thematic units on topics in preschools in the United States. Center topics might include reading, writing, social skills, science, kitchen corner, quiet corner, social studies, mathematics, music, art, and creative works.

Quran, the holy book for Muslims, is composed of verses. Muslims believe that Quran is the word of God. The two Islamic Holy mosques are located in the Cities of Mecca and Medina in, Hijaz, the western region of Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia -the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - is located in the Middle East. Arabic is the official language, and Islam is the official religion.

**Delimitations and Limitations of the Research**

There are two delimitations to the survey:

1. The scope of my study is limited to the population of preschool teachers in a large city in Mecca, Saudi Arabia because of the research question, and the availability of respondents.

2. The research is limited to on-time period - a three-week time period because of the need to receive IRB approval and complete the project before graduation.

There are two limitations to the research of the topics taught by preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia and how those compare to topics taught by American preschool teachers.
1. The research was limited to only those preschool teachers who would respond to the survey via email.

2. When surveying the preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia and in the United States, no effort was made to distinguish the candidate’s education or experiences.

**Method of Approach**

A survey will be given November of 2016 to study whether classroom activities and corners (centers) provided in preschool in Saudi Arabia and in America are similar. Surveys will be sent via email to ten potential respondents, five in Saudi Arabia and five in the United States. These potential respondents were selected based on familiarity of the researcher with the preschool teachers, both in the United States and in Saudi Arabia. A total of ten teachers were asked to complete the survey.

The original survey is from the Ministry of Education survey conducted in 2008 in Saudi Arabia and also used in United Arab Emirates. A copy of the survey in English is included. The survey consisted of three sections: demographic information, seven Likert-scale specific questions and comments. Respondents were asked to provide a written response explaining the corner (center) and classroom activities they selected in the preschool. They are to mark if they strongly disagree or 5 if they strongly agree.

The IRB approval letter is attached as Appendix A. Project data collection materials (the survey questions about the corners and activities) are attached as Appendix B. The responses and tables are located in Appendix C.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research Question

My research focuses on the classroom activities and corners (centers) taught in preschools in Saudi Arabia and the United States. I believe that Saudi Arabian and America will have similar classroom activities and corners (centers) including: writing, reading, discovery, building, art, and others. However, I also believe there will be many differences based on culture and background. These are some questions about my research and I will answer all these questions in my research:

1- What are the differences and similarities between curriculum and classroom activities that children will learn while they are in preschool in Saudi Arabia and United States?
2- Why there are differences between curriculum and classroom activities in preschool in Saudi Arabia and United States?
3- Is preschool required in Saudi Arabia and is it required in United States or not?

Discussion of Prior Research

Preschool education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been in place for many years. Education in Saudi Arabia is directed by the Ministry of Education. The Saudi Ministry of Education emerged during the establishment of the modern country.

The roots of early childhood education in the Arab world extend to ancient Arab thinkers such as Ibn Sina, El Ghazali, and others, all of whom were concerned with a child educational approach” (El-Beblawi, 1988). Early childhood education in modern Saudi Arabia has a more recent history than that of public education.
Early childhood education in Saudi Arabia started as non-formal and includes day care, nursery schools, and kindergarten. Two types of supervisory authorities oversee ECE programs: governmental organizations and private ones. The government oversees education through several auspices such as the General Presidency for Girls' Education, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, while private education is run by various school organizations (Filimban, 1990).

Girls’ education started in Saudi Arabia in 1964 (Al-Otaibi & Al-Swailm 2002). However, the idea of kindergarten had never been introduced before 1974. Consequently, the need for early childhood care and education programs increased, resulting in the establishment of the first preschool and kindergarten classes starting in 1975, with classes that were attached to general education schools (Aljabreen & Lash, 2016).

In 1965, the first preschool center was established in Jeddah by the private sector. Indeed, the private sector was solely responsible for the preschool stage until 1966 when the first public preschool was established by the Ministry of Education. After that, several preschool centers were established all over the country.

Early childhood education is a fundamental component of the education system in Saudi Arabia. The idea of kindergarten education in Saudi Arabia was introduced in 1974 with the establishment of preschool and kindergarten classes in 1975 (Aljabreen and Lash, 2016). Early childhood education is a fundamental component of the education system in Saudi Arabia.

Due to the success of the governmental pre-kindergarten and kindergarten program opened in Makkah with ten classrooms and seventeen workers in 1975, the government decided to improve the idea of kindergarten schools.
The early childhood education curriculum was featured prominently in a Royal Decree, which was introduced in 1988 with the cooperation of the General Presidency for Girls’ Education, which is the highest authority that supervises women's education in Saudi Arabia, the Arab Gulf Program for United Nations Development Organization (AGFUND), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), regarding concerted efforts to promote childhood through the preparation of curriculum for kindergarten and all materials required for teaching aids (Alshaer, 2008).

In 1993, there were 678 ECE schools, of which 365 were government-run and 313 were private. Combined, they served 5,098 students (Ministry of Finance and National Economy, 1994). However, even though early childhood education in Saudi Arabia is still limited, it has lately come under official and public attention and is growing fast in the main cities of the Kingdom. This type of education is still relatively unknown in small towns and countryside areas where the population is small and the socioeconomic circumstances necessitating ECE generally do not exist.

The goals of preschool education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia came from the Ministry of Education with consultation from the King’s advisors. Saudi Arabia is governed by a number of policies regarding education, which include aims for Early Childhood Education. Additionally, such goals aim to expose children to the school atmosphere rather than only experiencing the conditions within the home compound (Aljabreen & Lash, 2016; Ministry of Education, 2004). Schools are typically identified as one of the best areas where children can grow with very high discipline and rigor, hence preparing them for life. School environments also drive children to form relations with social peers.
A successful governmental pre-kindergarten and kindergarten in Makkah (Mecca) consisting of ten classrooms and seventeen workers, of which fourteen were teachers, led to formal introduction of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten into the countrywide school program. These numbers increased to 182,556 students, 22,189 teachers, and 2,559 schools in 2013-2014 (King Khalid Database, 2015). These numbers underscore the importance that Saudi parents attach to early childhood education and its role in the overall education program of Saudi children.

As preschool education developed, classroom activities and corners (centers) were designed to make preschool education more uniform throughout the Kingdom. Preschool education varied a great deal depending on whether or not the child lived in the city or in a rural area.

The preschool model must be situated in an appropriate way within the Saudi educational and cultural systems. In Saudi Arabia, the main aim of education is to prepare Saudi children to follow the teachings of Islam and the Saudi and Arabic culture. At the same time, although Saudi Arabian cultural elements are important, early childhood education in Saudi Arabia also must include global influences including those from Western countries. Because of the Western influences, many of the philosophies of early childhood education overlap with Saudi Arabian early childhood education programs. For example, both the Western and the Saudi Arabian belief that childhood is a unique and important period of human development. It also includes that the people the child interacts are of central importance, and that motivation and self-directed activities are valued (Al-Otaibi, 1997).

A study was conducted to see if students had greater math skills in first grade and beyond if they had preschool education. In the study of 685 primary, fourth grade pupils in Mecca the
research found that children that had experience in kindergarten compared to children who did not have preschool, had significant differences in their math scores (Kashkary & Robinson, 2003).

The study was of 685 of primary fourth grade pupils in Mecca. Students with special were need not included. The researchers found that there is a difference in math scores between children with experience in kindergarten and the other children who did not go to preschool. These children who had preschool experience, progressed through the first, second and third grades of the primary school in the city of Mecca (K.S.A) in the academic year of 2002-2003. The children for the study were drawn from the 40 primary schools, randomly selected from the four areas in the city of Mecca (North, South, East, and West of Mecca). The study included 20 schools for boys and 20 schools for girls. In the study, 417 of the students sampled had attended kindergarten (294 boys and 123 girls) and 268 of pupils had not had kindergarten (106 boys and 162 girls). Two main methods of data collection were used in this study: a) mathematical scores of final exam that the pupils had achieved in the three grades (first grade 1999, second grade 2000, and third grade 2001) were collected from the administration office of each of the schools; and b) teachers’ questionnaire that consisted of questions to elicit information on the teachers’ view about the importance of kindergarten education, as well as their view about the academic and social adjustment differences.

The result of the study indicated that: (1) the pupils who had attended kindergarten significantly out-performed their peers who had not attended kindergarten in the first grade and the effect was continued in the second and third grades; (2) the gender of pupils who had attended kindergarten did not affect mathematical attainment in the three grades of primary school, although the girls who had not attended kindergarten were better than the boys, 3) finally,
the results concluded that there is a strong indication that attending kindergarten has been shown to be effective in supporting the mathematical education of primary age children. If this is so, then it appears to us that all children should attend kindergarten before joining primary school.

In the case of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A.) kindergarten is not part of the formal education yet, since the child can join the primary school without having been to kindergarten (Al-Hokeel, 1992, p.28).

Children who join the primary school at the age of six without being well prepared at home or through a kindergarten institution that enabled them to acquire some new cognitive, behavioral or social skills may face problems in acclimatization or academic achievement. It has been noticed, through the experience of teachers of mathematics in the primary and intermediate schools, that the curve of progress of pupils in the primary school is low in mathematics in general and particularly in the basic skills: addition, subtraction, division, multiplication and solving some simple calculation questions (Ministry of Education and General Presidency for Girls Education, 2001).

According to Mohy-Aldeen (1989) the reasons for the slow growth in developing mathematics skills in the preschool ages, include the current curriculum that focuses on memorization. The research also found that teachers often ignored individual differences among pupils, presented mathematics in uninteresting ways, and used abstract ways unrelated to the child environment to present mathematical concepts making them disinterested in such concepts.

Kindergarten education is known to foster the development of some basic social skills and young learners lacking such skills risk ‘peer rejection’ and academic failure (Knight and Hughes, 1995). Taiwa and Tyolo (2002) they found that the scores in reading and mathematics
achievement were much higher for kindergarten children than for non-kindergarten children. The same results have been repeated in studies of many other researchers in the past.

On the other hand, Al-Okaily (1986) and Stipek and Byler (2001) identified a modest advantage in academic achievement for children who entered kindergarten during the first year of school, but this advantage disappeared by second and third grades.

Other researchers did not find a significant difference in mathematics achievement among students who did nor did not attend kindergarten. A study by Maripatricia, (1996) showed that there was no significant difference between the experimental and control groups in mathematics achievement in relation to a variable of attending kindergarten.

Kindergarten or pre-primary education is the first level of education in Saudi Arabia. This level did not see much development as attending kindergarten was not compulsory for enrollment in Grade 1 until 2013 and now it is required for all children. According to a new research report by RNCOS, "Saudi Arabia Education Forecast to 2016", due consideration for the improvement of the state of kindergarten education level in the country has been highlighted.

After 2013, Saudi Arabia launched a push to encourage the private sector, in particular, to set up kindergartens. The state offers loans of SR4m-5m [$1.07m-1.33m] to help women open kindergartens. It sees this as a way to boost employment for women and to support female entrepreneurs. As well as funding such ventures, it helps businesswomen with curriculum content and professional development.

In 2009, 19 percent of children in the Middle East received formal preschool education, UNESCO Saudi Arabians Education Sector. In 2009-2010 school year, there were 1,521 kindergartens and 106,301 children attending kindergarten with over 10,3337 teachers according to the Saudi Ministry of Education.
The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education Report (2016) revealed that many private players are entering the field of kindergarten education, especially to tap the unexplored segments in the urban areas. Further, Saudi Arabian government in the country is also adopting measures like creating awareness about the importance of getting the children enrolled at this stage of education. The report has identified some strategic plans of the government along with its stipulated investments for the same. During the study, facts like how the kindergarten education sector is improving in the country, major steps towards it, and what all are the impending factors boosting the same has been analyzed. Additionally, it has also given data forecasts till the academic year 2015-16 on the potential requirement of number of schools, academic and administration staff in relation with the improvements in the enrollment levels, etc.

Research evidence suggests that the education provision in the early years is not only seen as important, but a vital element in the balanced development of a child from early years to adulthood. On early experience Sylva and Lunt (2003) indicated that research evidence leaves no room for doubt that the first five years of life are important for emotional, intellectual and social development. This is a time when a child is developing most rapidly, and is learning more than at any other time in his life. They emphasized that: good early childhood experiences help a child to acquire an interest in learning, a willingness to try new things and to trust adults, a strong sense of independence, and to avoid negative behavior. They also reported that children need to be immersed in an environment that is both experience-rich and language-rich. A language-rich environment includes ample opportunities for young children’s authentic communication with adults because the adults’ use of language is strongly redolent with an experiential environment and so supports children’s acquisition of both the meaning and pragmatic functions of the language.
Tudge and Doucet (2004) they also indicted that children’s early mathematical experiences play a significant role in the development of their understanding of mathematics. This early learning in preschool also serves as a foundation for their cognitive development.

**Early Childhood Education in Saudi Arabia Curriculum**

The development of curriculum and approaches in early childhood education went through many stages. The first stage was the traditional approach taken in 1952, when early childhood education was comprised of independent, individual practices (Alomar, 2013). This method depends on its content across a range of books and courses such as reading, writing, mathematics and science.

During the period from 1965 to 1991, there was no official curriculum for preschool education in Saudi Arabia. In 1991, a national curriculum for preschool education was developed. This curriculum was based on a number of educational theories that had been developed in Western countries that includes a child-centered program, which emphasizes an interactive self-learning approach that focuses on children’s choices. In also includes: flexibility, play, freedom, interaction, respect, child identity and culture, knowledge, skills and relationships. The classroom is divided into a variety of interest areas or corners (centers). These areas are prepared with several activities to develop children’s skills and support the themes (writing, reading, block and building, art, discovery corners, kitchen corners, and quiet corners).

The corners focus on several reading and writing readiness skills. Some of these skills that are emphasized in the curriculum are; auditory and visual discrimination, fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination and the ability to observe.

Until recently the programs and activities in kindergartens were left to the teachers. The kindergarten programs and curriculum (corners) were not specifically drawn up to be adopted by
all kindergarten institutions in Saudi Arabia. Perhaps the most important reason was that kindergarten education was widely available in the private sector. This was the main reason why the State decided, in 1980, to give the General Presidency for Girls’ Education full responsibility for supervising kindergarten education in Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, the presidency embarked on constructing an organized curriculum and also well-defined aims for this stage.

The initial curriculum, designed by the Presidency included activities such as religious and moral education, Arabic language, simple arithmetic and science education, the development of children’s artistic skills, physical education, health and social education (General Presidency for Girls’ Education, 1984, pp. 13-44). The same subjects changed to some extent over time to become more appropriate for early learners. The topics that were covered in the traditional courses turned into more student directed corners or centers.

Efforts by the Presidency to improve kindergarten provision, its curriculum and program continued through the 1980s. To improve preschool education, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia decided to improve preschool education instruction in the universities. Preschool teachers were required to have degrees in education and in early childhood education. In addition, very recently, some universities (such as King Saud University) have started to offer training leading to a degree in early childhood education and related fields.

The first emphasis in the new kindergarten curriculum and corners (centers) was on teaching mathematical concepts. However, the Saudi kindergarten programs aims at getting children to acquire mathematical concepts and skills (Kashkary & Robinson, 2003).

The curriculum was developed from teacher directed to student centers (corners). Alomar (2013) reported that a kindergarten program that included a comprehensive and balanced approach, which offers activities to meet the needs of the child's physical, mental, and social
A timetable and program were developed to support the development of curriculum, which could affect the gradual expansion of education for the better in the establishment of kindergarten over the private home. To achieve these goals, construction of classrooms and effective curriculum for kindergarten was necessary to provide maximum learning. Development of the kindergarten curriculum was accompanied by the establishment of four centers for the training of the national cadres, (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education Early Childhood Education in Saudi Arabia: Report, 2016)

The idea behind the early childhood curriculum was to provide student centered learning that would help the children grow. Early childhood is a time when young children develop numerous social and emotional competencies, including the capacity to control their emotions, a budding value system, self-confidence, and social skills. Social and emotional competencies are important for successful adjustment (Schultz, Richardson, Barber, & Wilcox, 2014)

The Comprehensive Project to Develop Preschool Education, as part of King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz’s Public Education Development Project, a comprehensive project to develop preschool education emerged. The project aimed to adapt child-centered curricula, which view children as active learners who initiate and direct their learning, to early childhood education. The project also aimed to build the capacity of teachers, supervisors and directors in the field of early education throughout an effective partnership with the private sector. In response to this, Tatweer, a Saudi strategic investment company, built a partnership with educational companies that not only provides a global educational standard curriculum in preschool education, but also has the ability to implement these curricula and provide training and quality services. Hence, in
January 2013, a pilot implementation of three suggested preschool programs was applied in some preschools in different region (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education Early Childhood Education in Saudi Arabia Report, 2016).

**Early Childhood Education in the United States**

Early childhood education in the United States developed quite differently than in Saudi Arabia. Social, economic, and political changes have led to evolution within the educational system particularly for early childhood education and preschools. In the United States, with its varied educational system, there are continuous efforts at the official and public levels to improve the concept and application of early childhood education.

The National Association of the Education for Young Children has developed a system for accreditation of early childhood education programs. The goal of this system is to help make these programs meet educational and public expectations for better education by fulfilling universal criteria. The accreditation process and its standards could serve to improve and develop early childhood education programs at large.

**History of Preschool in the United States**

The federal government created what is called Head Start, it is the first government-funded preschool program created in 1965 by President Johnson. It is a half-day preschool program for low-income families. This program includes an education, meals and health checking for children, and assistant services for families. In the 1960s, ten percent of the children from three to four years old were registered in classrooms. In the 1980s, a pinch of states began their own version of the Head Start Program for students from low-income families. In 2005, sixty nine percent of four-year-old children nationwide joined some type of state preschool program. Among the most important factors that increased the enrollment rate of students in pre-
school education are the eradication of poverty in many states and increased rate of working mothers each year.

**Schools in the United States**

Students in the United States generally start the educational program around age five or six in kindergarten. Also, there are two different types of schools in the United States from K-12 schools: public schools and private schools. Each state has different laws related by ages for mandatory education in both public and private K-12 schools.

**USA Pre-Primary Education System**

Preschool education in the United States includes all the formal and informal education for children before the age of six. Preschool education programs contain toddler programs, play school, and nursery school; all these are called kindergarten programs. For children below six, it is not mandatory for them to go to school.

Many public elementary schools supply one year of education as preschool kindergarten for five years old children and that is the first year of elementary school for children. There are different types of schools that are providing this education: kindergarten, nursery schools, preschool programs, and child/day care centers.

**Nursery or Pre-Kindergarten School**

There are two different types of these schools: schools that provide care for children and offer little educational programs. Another type of schools provide various educational programs and offer many social and classroom activities.

**Difference between Pre-K and Child Care**

The difference between Pre-Kindergarten and Child Care is that Pre-Kindergarten provides children with educational programs, but Child Care provides care for children who have
parents working. Some nurseries provide children with educational and social programs that are
the same as kindergarten, as well as teachers with sufficient experience in this field. Pre-
Kindergarten is important for children because it provides educational programs, offers great
learning environment to develop different skills and prepares them for the next school stage.
There are different skills in Pre-Kindergarten that children can learn like reading, writing, math,
and science. Also, they can learn much information about the world.

**Education System Structure**

Daycare is a part of early childhood education and it is indicated as an early childhood
setting. Day Care is not free, but the cost is dependent on how they prepare children and what
kind of programs they have. Sometimes the cost may be high in Day Care. It provides daily
programs for 12 hours. On the other hand, some of them provide meals and transportation for
children and some do not.

Pre-School or Pre-Kindergarten is known as the first official academic school for
toddlers. It is an educational classroom environment that children attend. It starts from three
years old to prepare them in the pedagogical and academic way for school.

There are differences in each Pre-School in preparing children in several respects:
socially, developmentally, physically, mentally, and cognitively. Pre-School follows teaching
criterions that are set from organization. They created educational curricula and class activities
for children in Pre-Schools.

There are specialized techniques that pre-schools use in teaching children like
Montessori, Waldorf, High Reach Learning Curriculum, High Scope Curriculum, The Creative
Curriculum, Reggio Emilia Approach, Bank Street and many teaching styles that help to improve
education.
**Kindergarten in the United States**

Margaretha Schurz created the first kindergarten in the United States in Watertown, Wisconsin, in 1856 and it was a German language kindergarten. Also, Elizabeth Peabody created the first American English-language kindergarten in Boston in 1860. In 1874, the National Education Association started a kindergarten division and teachers established the International Kindergarten Federation in 1892.

**Major expected differences in Saudi Arabia and American preschool education.**

One of the fundamental concepts in the Saudi kindergarten curriculum is teaching children traditional and cultural practices such as respecting elders and greeting others (UNESCO, 2011). The same is true for preschools in the United States where children learn to salute the flag, holidays and cultural expectations like standing in line, taking turns, etc.

In Saudi Arabia, the kindergarten school day often starts with circle time that follows a routine, starting with the calendar, Quran recitation, songs, and then a teacher-planned lesson (Saudi Arabia Ministry of Education 2003). The lessons are to encourage interaction between the teacher and the children. This is very similar to United States preschool education where there is circle time, calendar, songs and a teacher prepared lesson such as reading a big book aloud.

In both Saudi Arabia and in the United States there are centers that are similar to the corners in Saudi Arabia that are based on a theme such as (art, reading, writing, kitchen, discovery, quiet time, blocks and building). The themes are similar in both the corners and centers, however in the United States there would also be technology as one of the centers.

However, in the United States, no religious instruction is done unless the children attend a private religious preschool. In the United States there is separation of church and state, so preschool religious education is not allowed. In Saudi Arabia, everyone studies the Quran.
Since the early period of the Saudi schooling system, memorization continues to be a main feature in the Saudi educational system (Rugh, 2002). This indicates the major influence of cultural assumptions and beliefs on the implementation of the curriculum. In the preschools in the United States there is not much memorization other than letters, colors and numbers. Other than that instruction is open and flexible.

**Summary**

The results of the initial analysis of the review of literature indicated that preschool education in the United States and in Saudi Arabia has changed over time. Now, preschool education is required in Saudi Arabia but is not required in the United States. Children must attend first grade, but are not required to attend kindergarten or preschool.

Preschool and kindergarten are very different terms in the United States and in Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia is from ages four to six. In the United States, preschool is four, kindergarten is from five to six, and then first grade is six years old.

In Saudi Arabia and in the United States, preschool education teachers use corners or centers to develop lessons but in Saudi Arabia the Ministry of Education has requirements that some subjects be taught such as the Quran, reading, writing, and math. In addition, the teacher who teaches English must graduate with a degree in English and preschool education and a person teaching preschool math must have a degree in math and preschool education. In the United States, preschool education, because it is not required is very different depending on who is teaching the children. In Saudi Arabia a college degree in early childhood education is required, where anyone can teach preschool children in the United States unless they teach in a public licensed school system where they need to have an early childhood degree.
Another difference is that preschools in the United States that are public may not teach religion but all preschools in Saudi Arabia do teach religion and the Quran. Only private preschool in the United States can be allowed to teach religion.

The results of research in Saudi Arabia shows that students who attend preschool do better in grades first, second and third than students who do not attend preschool. Because of that research, the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education now required preschool of all children. If Saudi children attend a public school it is free, but if they attend a private school, the parents must pay all the costs for their children to attend including the transportation and the materials. In the United States, children with identified special needs or children identified as needing additional services such as Head start, attend preschool free and have all of the expenses covered, but other than that parents pay for their own preschool.

Hypotheses

I hypothesized that the common preschool topics in both Saudi Arabia and the United States would be similar but there would be some differences because of cultural differences.
CHAPTER III: METHOD

Participants

Research was conducted with five preschool teachers who are from a large urban school in Mecca, Saudi Arabia and five preschool teachers who are from small rural schools in Wisconsin in the United States who were willing to respond to a survey. There were a total of ten teachers, with five from Saudi Arabia and five from the United States.

Materials

The information that was collected included preschool teachers’ perceptions of the common preschool instructional centers taught in America and corners in Saudi Arabia. Data were collected for the beginning December of the school year.

The survey was divided into 3 parts: demographic information (age, educational level and years of experience), a Likert scale of questions about corners and centers, and written comments. Teacher answered each question on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 5 meaning strongly agree. There are seven general topics and specific questions within each topic. There are 42 specific questions where the respondents were asked to rate how strongly they felt about teaching those topics in their preschools.

Procedures

Before the research began I first received permission from the Institutional Review Board. Once permission was received from the Institutional Review Board, I proceeded to receive permission from the Preschool Director at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville Children’s Center and Saint Marys’ School.

During the fall, I prepared, administered, and collected data from the teachers of the two different countries preschool teachers. The two school districts included the preschools in the
Platteville School District area in Southwestern Wisconsin and five different preschools within Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Five teachers in the United States were contacted in person and asked to respond to the survey and five teachers in Saudi Arabia were asked to respond to the survey via email or by phone. The Saudi Arabian teachers were known to the researcher. The five American teachers were recommended by the Coordinator of the Clinical Experiences Office. Teachers were selected because they were known to respond to email inquiries.

No recruitment procedures or material inducements for participation were provided to the potential respondents. Potential respondents were asked to participate in an email or a personal request to them that included the request to complete the survey and an explanation that the research was for completion of an educational project for an MSE at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

To protect the participant’s identity a data key code was prepared for each participant on the separate data sheet. Each participant was assigned a number on the data collection sheet instead of their name. The data key code was stored separate from the data collection sheet. The material was stored in the University of Wisconsin-Platteville locked files in the Education Office of Special programs.

The survey was administered December of 2016. Ten preschool teachers responded to the initial survey via in person interviews in the United States and phone interviews and/or emails in Saudi Arabia.
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This chapter will be similar to an APA Results section. Include your tables and figures within the text of this chapter, as each becomes relevant.

The initial survey resulted in ten respondents. The return rate for the survey with an initial email and a follow-up email was 100%. This percent is an acceptable response rate. This is a representative sample

Of those respondents, the major conclusion could be that there are some similarities but also some differences. The major similarities are that there are similar corners, for instance reading, construction, art, and writing are similar but some of the materials are different and there are different names for the centers/corners. The major differences are that there are some corners that are only in the United States such as: music corner and the quiet corner. There are also some of the same activities but they are combined. For example, in the United States there is a shape corner, puzzle corner, and a block and building corner, but in Saudi Arabia, these are all combined in the same corner.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The results of the survey showed many similarities between corners in Saudi Arabia and centers in the United States as well as the activities in both countries for preschoolers. There were many similarities but there were 14% of the questions that were very different. I will analyze the survey result by finding the biggest differences between subtotal numbers for both countries Saudi Arabian preschool respondents and American preschool respondents and discuss why there are big differences numbers between both countries in each area and talk about it in different paragraphs. Question 9 asked if activities included opportunities for learning for children with special needs. The subtotal score for Saudi Arabia was 15 and the subtotal score for the United States was 22. In Saudi Arabia there are special schools for children with special needs, so there are not as many children with special needs in the regular classroom. If the class has the child with special needs, then the teacher has to have a special education background or major. The teacher must have a bachelors or masters’ degree in special education.

Question 10 has only 19 for a subtotal score from Saudi Arabia but a score of 25 from preschool teachers in the United States. The question asks about arrival of the children. In Saudi Arabia, the parents bring the children to school and some bring them early because of work, and others may bring them when it works with their schedule. In American schools, children are shown how to use their cubby and how to get ready for school. In some Saudi Arabian preschools, children get in a big circle and start with the letters and alphabet song. However, different schools might follow a different style for the beginning of the day. Some have the students follow the teacher in a line. Some allow children free time in the playground until the rest of the children are in class. Teachers must follow the schedule.
When answering question 12 about free time to play outside, Saudi Arabian teachers had 23 and American teachers only had 17. In the United States, outside play time is different depending on the school and whether the program is all day classroom. In Saudi Arabia, there is a set time so that children are outside playing for at least 45 minutes each day. In Saudi Arabia, if the weather is cold, then students stay inside and play in the corners/centers. In the United States, children go outside to play unless the weather is dangerous.

The question 13 about the meal with the children, in the United States the time is about 15 to 20 minutes, but in Saudi Arabia it is more variable because the parents want the child to have enough time to eat their meal. The parents in Saudi Arabia do not want the teachers to hurry their children to eat.

When the preschool teachers answered question 31 about rhythmic and expressive movements like dancing, Saudi teachers had a composite subtotal score of 14 while American preschool teachers had a subtotal of 22. In Saudi Arabia the dancing is in festival and for the purpose of inviting parents and to have the children practice for some performance, but otherwise they do not do this in the regular classroom. In the United States classroom, preschoolers have rhythmic movements and expressive movements for the music.

When looking at the question about individual and group activities, there was a four-point difference with Saudi Arabia teachers marking individual and group activities lower than the America teachers.

It appears that many of the differences are because of culture and background experiences. In Saudi Arabia, there is no nap time like in the United States. If children are done with school, then parents take them home. There are similar trips to take the children to different social and cultural events but there are no swimming schools in the public schools or the
preschools. Perhaps the teachers in Saudi Arabia are more careful and cautious about the children so the school is set up more as parent-centered otherwise the parent can send their child to a different preschool.

**Conclusion**

There is no disagreement that the early childhood it is one of the most important stages in the children's life. The results from the survey concluded that there are differences in specific teaching styles in Saudi Arabia and United States. The people in each country are agree that early childhood education is important for preparing children for successes school education. In this paper has highlighted how might the Saudi education system be similar or different from the United States education system for preschool education?. Both countries are different in geographical, religious, economical, cultural, and educational systems. The similarities come from the past when Saudi Arabia was taken a western curriculum for teaching children in early childhood. That helped to share different experiences from other countries. Also, I pointed out that both countries have some different and some similarities in educational corners (centers) inside classrooms. Moreover, I pointed that the preschool is required in Saudi Arabia and all children should attend kindergarten before joining elementary school, but it is not required in United States.
CHAPTER VI: REFERENCES


Thomas, K. 2012). Focus shifts to early learning: governments in the Middle Ease are identifying strategies aimed at improving pre-school care and education facilities for their youngest citizens. MEED Middle East Economic Digest, 55(10) 32.


APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

11/15/2016

Wijdan Sobahe
Sponsor: Dr. Jennifer Collins
Department of School of Education
University of Wisconsin-Platteville

RE: IRB Protocol #2016-17-21

Project Title: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRESCHOOLS IN KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA AND UNITED STATES

Approval Date: 11/15/2016
Expiration Date: 11/14/2017

Your project has been approved by the University of Wisconsin-Platteville IRB via an Expedited Review. This approval is subject to the following conditions, otherwise approval may be suspended:

1. No participants may be involved in the study prior to the IRB approval date listed above or after the expiration date.
2. All unanticipated or serious adverse events must be reported to the IRB.
3. All modifications to procedures, participant selection, and instruments used (surveys, consent forms, etc) must be reported to the IRB chair prior to their use.
4. If the project will continue beyond the expiration date, then the researcher must file for a continuation with the IRB at least 14 days prior to the expiration date. If the IRB approval for this project expires before approval for continuation is given, then a new protocol must be filled out and submitted. Federal guidelines allow for no exceptions to this rule. Any data collected after the expiration date cannot be used in the study.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB chair at the address below. Include your protocol # on all correspondence.

Sincerely,

Dr. Barb Barnet
Institutional Review Board Chair
Professor, Mathematics Department
Gardner 451
University of Wisconsin-Platteville
(608) 342-1942
barnetb@uwplatt.edu
## APPENDIX C- SURVEY RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score on 1-5 scale</th>
<th>Saudi Arabian preschool respondents</th>
<th>American preschool respondents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 strongly disagree</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 subtotal</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 subtotal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 strongly agree</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 subtotal</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 subtotal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1- Children play games and interact with the games or with other children in the learning room.</td>
<td>5 5 5 3 5 23</td>
<td>5 5 5 5 4 24</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Allowing children individually to learn in large and small groups, at different times of day.</td>
<td>3 5 5 5 5 23</td>
<td>5 5 5 5 5 25</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- The learning room contains children's works, drawings, and writings.</td>
<td>3 5 4 3 5 20</td>
<td>4 5 5 5 5 24</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- The planning of activities: daily / weekly / monthly / yearly.</td>
<td>5 5 5 4 4 23</td>
<td>5 5 5 5 5 25</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- Children learn numbers and letters in the context of everyday life.</td>
<td>5 4 5 4 5 23</td>
<td>3 5 4 4 5 21</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- The children work on long projects that provide them with enough opportunities to play, research, and discover.</td>
<td>3 4 5 3 5 20</td>
<td>5 4 5 3 3 20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7- Kindergarten provides opportunities for children to play in the outdoor every day.</td>
<td>4 5 5 5 5 24</td>
<td>5 5 4 5 5 24</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8- Teacher reads stories and books for children during the daily program in individual or collective groups (small / large).</td>
<td>5 5 4 4 4 22</td>
<td>4 4 5 5 5 23</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9- Activities in kindergarten contain opportunities for learning for children with special needs, taking into account the differing backgrounds and abilities.</td>
<td>1 5 5 3 1 15</td>
<td>3 5 4 5 5 22</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10- The arrival of the children (15 minutes).</td>
<td>3 5 5 2 4 19</td>
<td>5 5 5 5 5 25</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11- The opening class (10-30 minutes).</td>
<td>5 5 5 4 5 24</td>
<td>5 5 5 5 5 25</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12- Free play outside (45-60 minutes).</td>
<td>4 5 5 4 5 23</td>
<td>3 5 2 2 5 17</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>13- The meal (15-20 minutes).</td>
<td>3 5 5 5 3 21</td>
<td>5 5 5 5 5 25</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14- Corner activities (40-55 minutes).</td>
<td>5 5 5 4 4 23</td>
<td>3 5 5 2 5 20</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15- The last meeting with the teacher (30-45 minutes).</td>
<td>5 5 5 4 3 22</td>
<td>2 5 5 2 5 19</td>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>16- The departure of the children (15 minutes).</td>
<td>4 5 5 3 4 21</td>
<td>2 5 4 2 5 18</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17- Oral communication and expression activities.</td>
<td>3 5 5 4 5 22</td>
<td>5 4 5 4 4 22</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>18- Communication and written expression activities.</td>
<td>4 4 4 3 4 19</td>
<td>2 3 5 4 5 19</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19- Physical activities: perceive things, change the position of things, perceive the shapes and sequencing classification, conformity, and assembly.</td>
<td>5 5 5 4 5 24</td>
<td>4 4 5 4 5 22</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20- Discovery and investigation activities.</td>
<td>3 4 4 3 3 17</td>
<td>3 4 5 4 4 20</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21- Problem-solving activities.</td>
<td>3 5 4 3 3 18</td>
<td>3 4 5 4 5 21</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22- Creativity and innovation activities (completing the story, painting, etc.).</td>
<td>4 4 5 3 4 20</td>
<td>4 4 5 4 5 22</td>
<td>42</td>
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<tr>
<td>23- Kinetics activities</td>
<td>3 5 5 5 5 23</td>
<td>5 5 5 4 5 24</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>24- Manual activities: ropes and twine embroidery, beading, etc.</td>
<td>4 5 5 3 3 20</td>
<td>5 4 5 4 4 22</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25- Activities for the development of manual muscle synergies (rolling the ball by hand or filling a vase with water).</td>
<td>3 5 5 4 3 20</td>
<td>5 4 5 2 4 20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26- Activities of folding: paper, cardboard, fabric, metal, synthetics, wood.</td>
<td>5 5 4 4 3 21</td>
<td>5 4 5 2 4 20</td>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>27- Play activities.</td>
<td>5 5 5 5 5 25</td>
<td>5 5 5 4 5 24</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28- Group activities</td>
<td>4 4 5 4 5 22</td>
<td>5 5 5 4 5 24</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29- Creative activities (drawing, painting)</td>
<td>4 5 5 3 5 22</td>
<td>5 5 5 4 5 24</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30- Music, songs, and finger games</td>
<td>5 5 5 4 5 24</td>
<td>4 4 5 4 5 22</td>
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TOTAL: 46 46 49 41 40 42 45 44 46 43 44 46 42 45 44 46 44 46 46 46
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>31. Rhythmic and expressive movements (dancing)</th>
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<td>32 Expression and communication activities</td>
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<td>33 Individual and group activities</td>
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<td>34 Re-telling stories</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>35 Reading Corner (social cognitive linguist)</td>
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<td>36 Construction and Demolition Corner (kinesthetic - innovation)</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>37 Representation Corner (psychosocial)</td>
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<td>38 Art Corner (artistic aesthetic)</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>39 Research and Finding Corner (Cognitive)</td>
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<td>40 Cognitive Games Corner (kinesthetic athlete - creative)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>41 Writing Corner (social cognitive linguist)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>42 Moving Corners: Every week teacher has to create a new corner to make sure that children aren't bored.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
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