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**THE TRANSITION OF SAUDI ARABIA FROM A RESOURCE-  
BASED ECONOMY TO A KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY:  
Developing Human and Social and Moral Capital in the 21<sup>st</sup>  
century through a Case Study of the King Abdullah Scholarship  
Programme (KASP) programme**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Leeds Beckett University  
for the degree of:

Doctor of Philosophy

By

**Hadeel Ibrahim Alzaidalsharif**

December 2020

## Abstract

**Background/Context:** Capital is sometimes broadly understood to be material wealth, whether liquid or otherwise, that can be used for further production. Thus, those who own capital, or the means of production, are in a position to increase their own wealth. This is the backbone of a Capitalist System, as described by theorists such as Karl Marx and Adam Smith. However, such understanding of capital in material or economic terms is inadequate. Although it explains the flow of wealth within a resource-based economy, it does not explain what is necessary to transition from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy. In a knowledge-based economy, where capital is no longer strictly associated with material wealth or ownership, there is more potential for benefits to circulate and for the entire society to be enriched. Yet, how this can occur and what its foundations should be remains unclear.

In 2005, the KSA established the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP) to enrich the knowledge base of society. The programme funds Saudi citizens to attend foreign universities, mostly in western countries. Like many comparable programmes, the KASP aims to boost the educational level of the population, redistribute wealth and capital, and generate cultural and social capital. As opposed to monetary wealth these refer to a range of less tangible resources that make it more likely for individuals in society to be able to enrich the knowledge base of that society. Such programmes are arguably a crucial part of establishing a knowledge-based economy, which Saudi Arabia aims to do through its Saudi Vision 2030 reform programme. How KASP addresses this complex and imperfectly defined goal remains an unexplored topic.

**Purpose/Research Question:** This study examines how Saudi Arabia can transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based society by developing human and social capital. It is guided by a case study to: **A)** explore the role of scholarship programmes (KASP) in the country and **B)** identify, if any, challenges and skills needed during and after the programme which can impact on human and social capital.

**Research Design:** A qualitative method was adopted, and 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with **A)** students who graduated from the KASP programme and **B)** KASP administrators. The interviews explored the perceptions and perspectives of the participants relating to the programme itself, focusing on the issues around building human and social capital in the 21st Century. The translated transcripts were coded and analysed using Thematic Analysis (TA).

**Conclusions/Recommendations:** This study concludes that, in addition to acquiring a degree from a university abroad, Saudi nationals develop 'moral capital' that is accessed through authentic encounters with the local societies and networks in the foreign country of study. This outcome contributed to a greater understanding of moral capital, particularly as it relates to the unanticipated finding of Saudi students who returned from their studies abroad with altered perceptions of morality and new beliefs about right and wrong. Thus, it has been found that both moral and social capital is mobilised through the KASP. The transition to a knowledge-based society involves an evolution in how forms of capital are viewed. When comparing the findings of the present research with thinkers such as Bourdieu, Warsh, and Benkler, it can be seen that social and moral aspects of capital are more integrated than previously envisaged. Therefore, this thesis recommends that this mobilisation of moral and social capital be supported by developing better opportunities for the reintegration of KASP graduates in order that they can apply their knowledge and new perspectives, particularly through the education system and the job market.

## **Declaration**

I declare that this PhD thesis is my own work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at Leeds Beckett University. It has not been used before for any other university.

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## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

<b>APEC</b>	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
<b>PBUH</b>	Peace Upon Him
<b>CITC</b>	Communications and Information Technology Commission
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>GDPR</b>	General Data Protection Regulations
<b>GEA's</b>	The General Entertainment Authority
<b>GPA</b>	Grade point average
<b>HCC</b>	Human Capital Centre
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communication technology
<b>IELTS</b>	International English Language Testing System
<b>IMO</b>	Mobile application
<b>KASP</b>	The King Abdullah Scholarship Program
<b>KE</b>	Knowledge Economy
<b>KSA</b>	The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
<b>MIT</b>	The Massachusetts Institute of Technology
<b>NIE</b>	The Networked Information Economy
<b>NEOM</b>	New Future
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>OPEC</b>	Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
<b>SMEs</b>	Local Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
<b>TA</b>	Thematic Analysis
<b>TAQAT</b>	The National Labour Gateway
<b>TOEFL</b>	Test of English as a Foreign Language
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background

At present, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) finds itself at a crucial crossroads with regards to its cultural and economic development. While recognising and enjoying the privileges of a strong economy, the fact that this economy is based heavily if not solely on the extraction and sale of one, albeit plentiful and lucrative, resource – oil – renders the KSA's future precarious. Figure 1.1 provide a map of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).



**Figure 1. 1 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) map (Source: CIA-The World Factbook).**

Oil is one of the most in-demand resources available, and Saudi-owned Aramco has contributed a very high proportion of the world's oil-facilitated economic growth in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has created a prosperity that many in the KSA still enjoy. However, the oil industry is also volatile and contentious, often tied up in regional and international power politics, and vulnerable to price fluctuations. Given the encroaching challenges of climate change and the role of fossil fuel emissions in the environmental catastrophe the planet is facing, it will be incumbent upon world governments to make a move away from oil dependency. At the same time, the commodity is so much in demand that international wars have been fought over it, namely the two Gulf Wars, whose immediate objectives were surely influenced by a desire to retain access to oil rich regions. It is likely, despite or even

because of these various complexities, that the KSA will be able to keep profiting from its oil reserves for some time. However, the dependence on oil – or, for that matter, on any single natural resource – is short-sighted, carrying with it embedded deficiencies and risks.

A resource-based economy injects wealth into some strata of a society but may do a poor job of providing other forms of capital necessary to survive and compete in the modern, or postmodern, world. Thus, Saudi Arabia, despite comparative wealth in some sectors, is beset with social problems that economic growth has not resolved. Fortunately, these are currently being addressed by a forward-thinking regime. Unemployment is one such issue, particularly among youth – a serious problem, given the youthful population of the KSA. Gender disparity is certainly an issue, with women enjoying only a few of the rights that others around the world take for granted, and thus being limited with regard to their social and economic participation. Therefore, until the present, initiatives to increase education availability for them were also an issue.

The solution to the multiple dilemmas of a resource-based economy could be to successfully make the transition to a knowledge-based one, but this is more easily said than done and must be addressed on various levels. Educating the population is one crucial step but that alone will not be enough to transform the economy if those who are educated cannot find niches in which to implement what they have learned.

Since 2005, the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) has been providing funds for young Saudi citizens to attain higher education abroad, most notably in western countries. Like many comparable programmes, KASP has the objective of increasing the educational level of the population, redistributing wealth and capital, and, perhaps most importantly, generating what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; 1977; 1990; 1993; 2003; 2015). This is not monetary wealth, but rather, a range of less tangible resources that make it more likely for individuals in society to be able to enrich the knowledge base of that society, for both themselves and others. What remains in question is how well KASP is addressing this complex and as yet imperfectly defined goal. This thesis attempts to fill some of the gaps between KASP's objectives and realities, through a theoretical framework and qualitative research involving ten KASP recipients.

An understanding of the concept of capital is key to drafting a theoretical framework through which one may better understand the aspirations, successes and failures of KASP. In economics, capital is sometimes broadly understood to be material wealth, whether liquid or otherwise, that can be used for further production. Thus, those that own capital, or the means of production, are in a position to increase their wealth. This is the backbone of a capitalist system, as described by theorists such as Karl Marx and Adam Smith. Though

essentially valid, however, this understanding of capital in material or economic terms is ultimately inadequate for our purpose. It explains the flow of wealth within a resource-based economy like the one the KSA currently has, but it does not explain what is necessary to transition from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy. Within a knowledge-based economy, capital is no longer strictly associated with material wealth or ownership. A knowledge-based economy therefore provides much more potential for benefits to circulate and for the entire society to be enriched. But how does this occur, and on what is it based?

To answer these key questions, the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu and Yochai Benkler proves invaluable. Bourdieu was the first to identify, name and describe different types of capital: economic, cultural and social (Bourdieu, 1986; Benkler, 2003). Whereas economic capital is the form most easily recognised, as it comprises wealth and property, cultural and social capital have to do with educating members of a society and, most importantly, creating the conditions under which that educational effect may spread. This sort of capital has the potential to create a knowledge-based economy and society, so Bourdieu's ideas are a critical component of the theoretical framework for this research. Although, Benkler (2003), on the other hand, discusses the 'wealth of networks' which is an updating of the classic work by Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1937), Benkler's work is current and addresses the challenges and opportunities of our global society and economy. His work stresses the possibilities inherent in the sharing of knowledge and intangible resources. The ideas he promotes are also critical to the creation of a knowledge-based economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

After establishing this theoretical framework – defining, as far as possible, what would be necessary to allow KASP to contribute meaningfully to the transformation of Saudi society – I conducted research through the form of semi-structured interviews with KASP recipients, to ascertain how well the present programme is meeting these identified needs and contributing to the formation of a knowledge-based economy as intended.

There are, very likely, significant challenges to be overcome if KASP is to fulfil its intent and its potential. Some of these challenges are beyond the scope of the programme itself – for example, employment parity for women is still a long way off in the KSA, and socio-cultural issues must be addressed before it can be achieved. Nevertheless, there is an advantage to identifying these issues and fitting them within the larger framework of the KSA's objective to build the social and cultural capital necessary to nurture a flourishing knowledge-based economy.



## **1.2 My position as a female scholarship student studying overseas**

The idea for this research emerged and developed as a result of my own personal experiences, as well as my professional and academic research interests. In 2006, I decided to travel away from my home to study abroad, after one of my friends told me about “an international scholarship program”, which had been set up by the Ministry of Education, which was available for any Saudi citizen with sufficient academic aptitude. This programme was the KASP. I was attracted to the idea that living and studying in a new place and meeting new people would be fascinating. At that time, I knew it would be difficult, but I knew it would not be impossible. I arrived in the UK in 2007 and began to attend English Language courses in the same year. Then, in 2009, I started my MSc in Information Management at Leeds Beckett University. Although I awarded my MSc in 2010, I remained in the country for a few months with my husband who was finishing his Ph.D. and I subsequently left the UK in 2011. After this period of living in the UK these years and being exposed to a number of new experiences, I started to notice subtle changes, both in myself and in my thinking; specifically in the way I felt about other cultures and the way people of various backgrounds lived in Leeds. For example, I was beginning to engage with people from different nationalities, cultures and religions. However, as I was engaging within the small circle that was around me, which was comprised of classmates and other friends from university (which included Saudi friends), I felt the communication with the locals of Leeds was missing and circumstances were not ideal, as I was focusing on my studies and on my relationship with family.

When I returned to Saudi Arabia, I had high hopes of getting a good job and applying all the experiences I had gain in Leeds. However, shortly after I arrived, I faced some significant difficulties and it was not easy to search for and find a job. Moreover, I felt that the way I interacted with my culture had changed, and I noticed that people were beginning to view me differently from before – and not always for the better. This caused me to ask myself how the interactions I had with different cultures had impacted on my thought and personality, and how this would impact my relationship with people, both in Saudi and in Leeds. Although I was happy about the new me, I had a lot of questions in my mind about how change happens, how to get the best of this change, and what cause the change; whether it was related to knowledge, the people around me and/or the new culture I was engaged with (Section xxx, 6.4. presents a reflection on the researcher's personal story).

As a female scholarship student studying overseas, I understood and was aware of the roles and responsibilities of being an overseas student. However, I lacked any understanding of what it would be like to go back home, have no job, and have difficulties with my own family and society. Moreover, I became aware that many other students who

had been on the scholarship programme would be likely to have similar encounters that caused them to experience life differently. I wanted to understand more about the challenges they faced and how they or the government resolved them, how their relationship with families and/or society changed over time and how they would describe their experiences.

Moreover, the academic study that I undertook as part of my MA degree encouraged me to research my experiences and helped me understand it better. The preliminary literature review chapter (Chapter 3) shows that studies conducted within Middle East countries that are relevant to this topic are very limited. Therefore, considering these limitations in the literature and my position as a female scholarship student studying overseas, I wanted to delve into it in more depth, so I decided to take it on for my research project. I planned to conduct a qualitative research study with an initial general aim that focused on examining how Saudi Arabia can transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based society by developing human and social capital, using a case study to explore the role of scholarship programmes. I also aimed to explore the historical role of scholarship programmes (KASP) within the KSA by interviewing students who have graduated from this programme, as well as some of the programme's administrators, since 2005.

### **1.3 The Problem of Oppression**

In considering Giddens's (1974) framework and concept of the lack of duality between the individual and society – which continuously create one another – the question of oppression naturally arises. It is easy to see the cooperative, indivisible, interaction between the individual and society within a free society in which the individual is seen to play an active and autonomous role in creating practices, and such practices are then accepted and perhaps adopted by others. However, in a society where the desires and actions of the individual are overtly or covertly limited, constrained or punished, it is easier to see things in terms of an opposition between the two.

However, structuration theory is not derailed by instances of oppression; oppression can and does, of course, exist within a recursive or self-reflexive system, on both a micro- and macro-level. For Giddens, oppression is a type of social practice originating from the individual and affecting other individuals. Types of social practice are associated with different levels of consciousness, and therefore the way to overcome oppression is to raise consciousness (Giddens, 1984; Wheeler-Brooks, 2009). When one becomes conscious of the fact that a certain social practice is oppressive and begins to work to overcome it, consciousness is raised, and empowerment is achieved. This change matters not only for

the individual but also for the society that the individual is creating, in accordance with the general lack of a breach or distinction between the two in Giddens's theory.

### **1.3.1. Applicability of Giddens's Structuration to KASP and its Outcomes**

In Giddens's presentation of the interplay between individual agency and social structure, the individual agent is the only factor that is capable of change and not inherently constrained by external factors. Even in the midst of social practices that are oppressive, the individual has the chance to raise their consciousness and become empowered. As a result, over time, the whole society may change. It is possible that KASP students, however, have been given an advantage or a head start with regard to consciousness-raising, having been put into an environment where not only are they freed of the embedded tradition of their country of origin, but they are relatively free and independent.

As Giddens states, the self is reflexive – formed all that time in relation to what it is exposed to. Thus, in accordance with modernism (which, Giddens argues, we are still in the midst of – he rejects the notion that we have moved into a post-modern society), KASP students are being put into a domain that nurtures them but also makes them something other than what their home society would have brought out in them. It is significant that KASP actually takes students out of their social context rather than bolstering education within it.

Societies are what give individuals their agency or limit it – they are not two structures in opposition to one another. The allocative power given to students or used on their behalf by their government to administer KASP to send students abroad to learn puts them within a different structural norm. Students learn new ideas of self, of right and wrong, and what they can achieve regardless of previously applied social limits, like those placed on gender.

The question is what happens to these students when they return? What do the social and structural norms within Saudi Arabia allow them to accomplish, and how much ability do they have to expand or transcend these, while still contributing to the building of a new economy? Most striking in the findings is that students build a strong sense of unity, both with each other and with the country in which they are studying, during the course of their studies. The malleable structures within which they find themselves allow them to form bonds and attain skills.

Upon returning to Saudi Arabia, students will find that the connections they formed influence their ideas of how society should operate, the rules of society, and its morality. Once students return, the structure in which they exist – the morality and social rules of Saudi Arabia – are no longer accepted at face value, given that the students now have exposure to many other ideas of societal rules, morality, and things like right and wrong. The suggestion made by Giddens that we have presently transcended time, space and tradition

indicates that they may be able to retain these ideas. According to Giddens, the individual is not only subject to the social structure but in part creates it even as they are created by it; this suggests that a change in the individual students and their networks – an expansion, as it were – may manifest as a change in the society itself.

It is possible for social institutions to temporarily block social change. This does not belie Giddens's theory but is a further manifestation of it. As discussed earlier, Giddens provides a response to social practices that seem to constrain or oppress. When consciousness is raised, practices may eventually be altered through individual agency or perhaps even collectively.

To maximize the positive effects of KASP and to hasten the transformation of the society and economy to an innovative, knowledge-based economy, it is preferable that the government of Saudi Arabia recognise the extent of the change that they are inviting – and which they need – by sending students to study abroad. Acquiring skills is part of the experience, but not all. These students, upon returning, have had the opportunity to become a part of social structures that they would not otherwise have had access to, and have inevitably been altered by the experience. The society that they then help to create is not the same as it would have been without that experience. Unhindered, the changes brought about in individual students through KASP may bring about transformation to the society on a micro- and macro-level, much as predicted by Giddens.

However, even in the absence of sanctioned, societal change, it is possible and perhaps inevitable that the alumni of KASP will bring about eventual transformation to their society. As part of KASP, students are embedded in a unique and hospitable environment, acquire skills, and receive support and access to programmes not otherwise accessible to them. One result of such an experience will be empowerment, and Giddens assures us that individual empowerment brings about greater opportunities and greater freedom in the society that these individuals ultimately create. This will feed into other ways in which the world beyond KSA impinges on its development.

Granovetter (Kahin and Foray, 2006, p.76) noted that knowledge generation, as well as innovation, are key factors in improving the knowledge economy within which employment must operate and therefore serve as imperative to the advancement of the knowledge economy. The potential range of expertise and skills available to workers go hand-in-hand with the ability to move forward any given economy, including that of Saudi Arabia.

Improving knowledge can help improve the overall discipline and functionality of a social – and by extension economic – group in one of two ways. Firstly, at the micro-level, increased knowledge can expose individuals to the psychology of social bonds, particularly the notion

of in-group versus out-group, which can help to better accommodate outsiders joining employment and trying to blend into existing employee landscapes. Secondly, increased knowledge can help at the macro-level by exposing individuals to ideas that no longer exclude migrants from other countries or allow for racist or sexist behaviours. Removing this exclusionary and potentially pejorative climate by way of increased knowledge for the people within a given workplace can make that workplace more forward-thinking, more inclusive, and more accepting; therefore, a better workplace in which to operate with improved social bonds and overall advancement.

This macro- and micro-level economic potential is only gained by advancing the knowledge economy. The results of this study have revealed that acquired skills as well as exposure to new technology from those who are studying abroad provide a successful and rewarding experience that has caused many of the interviewees to change the way they treat other people and overcome social barriers that they may not even have realized existed.

Building from the need for knowledge advancement to improve the knowledge economy, as noted by Granovetter,(1983) the individuals who are able to gain independence and improve their knowledge economy, social skills, and openness to other cultures need to be able to implement them and continue the advancement not just for themselves but for those around them. Individuals who learn these skills while studying abroad and subsequently return to Saudi Arabia have to put those skills within the existing Saudi context.

## **1.4 Research Aim and Objectives**

### **1.4.1 Research Aim**

This research aims to examine how Saudi Arabia can transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based society by developing human and social capital, through a case study exploring the role of scholarship programmes (KASP) in the country over the years. This includes the importance of developing human and social capital within a network society for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, discussing how resource-based societies are transitioning into a knowledge-based society by developing human and social capital, and exploring the historic role of scholarship programmes within countries such as the UK and the US.

The study also explores the role of scholarship programmes (KASP) historically within the KSA by interviewing some of the students who have graduated from this programme as well as some of the programme's administrators since 2005. These students have benefitted from the KASP, as discussed above, in identifying, informing and determining the challenges and skills needed during and after the programme, which have had an impact on human and social capital. Therefore, the main focus of this study is analysing the issues around building human and social capital in the 21<sup>st</sup> century based on an in-depth series of

interviews with some who have been involved in this construction. Consequently, the study aims to address gaps in the existing literature to contribute methodologically and theoretically to the discussion and knowledge base of analysing the issues of building human and social capital in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It aims to pinpoint the main challenges, skills and tools needed by exploring the graduated students and programme administrators' perceptions and perspectives relating to the KASP and human and social capital since 2005.

#### **1.4.2 Research Objectives**

To facilitate the study, aim as outlined above, the following objectives have been set:

- To critically review and analyse the relevant literature about human and social capital in the context of change through scholarships programmes such as KASP to develop an understanding of how resource-based societies are transitioning into knowledge-based societies by developing human and social capital. This includes: analysing the significance of different forms of capital in the 21<sup>st</sup> century according to Smith, Bourdieu, Castells, Benkler and others; exploring the role of scholarship programmes over the years within countries such as the UK and the US; and introducing the KASP programme as a case study to examine how Saudi Arabia is attempting to develop new forms of capital, by moving away from dependency on the oil industry (Smith, 1937; Smith et al., 2009; Bourdieu, 1986; Castells, 2004; Castells, 2011; Benkler, 2003; Zurmuehlen, 1990).
- To explore and examine the issues around building human and social capital through in-depth interviews with some of the students who have graduated from this programme as well as some of the programme's administrators since 2005. To explain their perceptions, perspectives and understanding of the transition to a knowledge-based economy, focusing on helping to benefit Saudi's economy.
- Based on the outcome of these interviews, to analyse the collected data and develop a model which may help to explain the transition process to a knowledge-based society in Saudi Arabia; this includes the challenges and skills needed for human capital, the tools used and the management support that is necessary.
- To develop a set of recommendations that may help in the transition process.

It is important for the reader to know that these aim and objectives were the initial objectives which developed during the research as clarified in the concluding chapters.

#### **1.5 Summary of Research Strategy**

Recently, most Gulf countries, like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), find themselves at a crossroads with regard to their cultural and economic development. Since 2013 the KSA

has seen some degree of serious development led by its king in recognition of how oil makes the KSA's future precarious (Al-Kibsi et al., 2015). To explore what would be necessary to allow KASP to contribute meaningfully to the transformation of Saudi society (as outlined above and discussed in subsequent sections) and gain a holistic understanding of the research topic, a research methodology was required which both explored the Saudi government's and students' perspectives and provided an assessment of the current situation. The design of the research methodology adopted in this research was developed over different stages.

At first, based on secondary data (existing literature), an initial exploration of the previous relevant research works was carried out. This has concluded that there is a lack of field-based understanding of the current situation in Saudi and further exploration is required. To carry out the proposed exploration, I adopted a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews with KASP recipients. The research question and to some extent research problem emerged as a gradual process as the study was ongoing (and becoming more focused), based on exposure to research participants' perceptions and concerns. Although the study naturally commenced with a question, the initial question only served as a guide to the process based on the key aspect of emergency, which implied that the research question might change as the study progressed.

To implement the research strategy, two government members were interviewed. The transcripts of these interviews were coded and initially analysed to complement the rest of the interviews. In response to their insights and perspectives, this led to a refocus of the original aims of the study towards the experiences of students, which not only included the KASP process but also related to the psychological contexts of their activities and how they influenced their understandings.

Thus, the researcher was able to move further and argue for designing the rest of the research methodology adopted in the rest of the research. A qualitative methodology was deemed to be more suitable to help gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences, emotions and perspectives concerning the different stages of the KASP programme.

Interviews were adopted as the main data collection tool from a sample of government members and students who were the main participants in the research. Once these interviews were transcribed and translated, the most suitable data analysis method was determined. Thematic Analysis (TA) was adopted as a data analysis method. I believe that the adopted strategy in this research aimed to explore and investigate the KASP recipients to analyse potential recommendations. Therefore, both students and members of the

government were the first points of contact in considering aspects of the transformation of Saudi society, from start to finish.

## **1.6 Thesis Structure**

This introductory chapter, which, in addition to the brief description of the background and structure, provides the rationale and the purpose of the study, is followed by **Chapter 2**, which provides a discussion about Saudi Arabia's history and its economy, and introduces Vision 2030, the country's reform initiative.

**Chapter 3** presents key concepts from the literature review, including knowledge networks, capital forms and scholarships. The first section about knowledge networks explains Manuel Castells' conception of the network society, the knowledge-based economy and characteristics and benefits of the knowledge economy. It also provides an overview of KSA's economy and a background on women's education in Saudi Arabia, along with the challenges of overcoming public opinion towards its establishment. Additionally, it examines the potential that Saudi women's education provides to benefit the economy and change the fabric of Saudi society over time. It also considers the obstacles that exist to women in participating in Saudi's economy, as well as what Saudi state intervention has and could do to facilitate this participation, with reference to the KASP programme and Vision 2030's aim of transitioning from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy. The second section presents a critical analysis of the significance of different forms of capital in the 21st Century according to key thinkers, such as Smith, Bourdieu, and Benkler, in the context of change through scholarship programmes such as KASP, in order to develop an understanding of how resource-based societies are transitioning into knowledge-based societies by developing human and social capital (Smith, 1937; Smith et al., 2009; Bourdieu, 1986; Castells, 2004; Castells, 2011; Benkler, 2003; Zurmuehlen, 1990). The final section explores the historic role of scholarship programmes in countries such as the UK and the US and their relevance to the KASP. It also introduces the history of the KASP as a case study in examining how Saudi Arabia has attempted to develop new forms of capital and move away from dependency on the oil industry.

**Chapter 4** details the research strategy and the rationale for using the adopted approach and **Chapter 5** presents and evaluates the results of the research while adding personal insights and interpretations. **Chapter 6** is comprised of narrative vignettes that have been developed to illustrate the research findings. This includes a personal reflection on the overall research process. **Chapter 7** revisits the initial objectives of the study and discusses how the results presented in Chapters 5 and 6 fulfil them. **Finally**, the conclusion to this thesis features a set of recommendations and policies that are argued will help the



transformation process in the KSA. The chapter also presents some of the limitations and difficulties faced by the researcher during the research process. Based on that, a set of potential future research studies is recommended for the researcher herself and for any other researchers who are interested in the subject. Finally, connections are made between the implications of the findings, how they inform the literature, and how they add new knowledge to the field.

## **Chapter 2:**

### **Research Context: Saudi Arabia in Transition**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the research context of Saudi Arabia, including the geography and history of the Arabian Peninsula, the Golden Age of Islamic civilisation and the history of the Saudi state and how its Wahhabism has influenced the modern geo-political situation, Saudi Arabia's current economic status with reference to crude oil prices, the future of the Kingdom, and the Vision 2030 reforms. In covering these topics, the chapter will critically discuss the historical and cultural contexts, their implications and their role in future strategy.

Understanding the social and historical context is essential to the discussion of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP), whose origins and purpose will also be discussed here along with current and potential strengths and limitations of the programme.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the future of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in relation to the present state of its economy, Vision 2030, and the overall plan to diversify the economy and make the vital transition from a resource-based economy to one which is knowledge-based.

#### **2.2 Geographical and Historical Overview of the KSA and Arabian Peninsula**

##### **2.2.1 Geography and Civilisation of the Arabian Peninsula**

The Arabian Peninsula is a large stretch of land located in Southwest Asia, occupying a territory that covers 3,237,500 square km (six times bigger than France); it is the largest peninsula in the world. Located on the Peninsula are Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, with Jordan and Iraq sharing some of the Peninsula's land. The Peninsula's borders merge with the Syrian Desert with no clear borderline in the north; with the Persian Gulf, the Tigris, Hira, the Euphrates and the Indian Ocean to the south. To the west, it is bounded by the Red Sea. It is characterised by the presence of deserts and hot uninhabitable regions, some of the largest being the Nafud and the Rub' al-Khali deserts. The Peninsula also has a mountain range stretching from south to north. The maximum elevation does not exceed 2,470 m (Hopwood, 2015; Al-Rasheed and Vitalis, 2004).

According to geological data, the Arabian Peninsula was formed 23 million years ago. A few areas were scattered throughout Arabia where small amounts of water can be found, and local tribes used these locations to allow their camels and other cattle to graze (Hopwood, 2015). The climate of the peninsula is rather challenging: hot and dry in the desert regions,

and humid in the areas near the coast. As a result of this, the total population of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia currently only equals about 35.5 million inhabitants (Saudi Arabia population (2020) live – Countrymeters, 2020).

Human inhabitation of the Arabian Peninsula dates back 130,000 years. Due to the harsh climate and the absence of water, pre-Islamic Arabia was populated only in a few key settlements, such as Medina and Mecca. What is now referred to as 'pre-Islamic Arabia' was in fact a sequence of civilisations, such as the Himyarite Kingdom, the Kingdom of Main and Sheba (Al-Rasheed and Vitalis, 2004). The Islamic era of the Arabian Peninsula commenced in the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E., when the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)<sup>1</sup> successfully united the Arabian tribes under the banner of the new religion. Later, the Muslim Arab Empire would expand beyond the borders of the modern Arabian Peninsula (Hopwood, 2015; Al-Rasheed and Vitalis, 2004).

Historically, the economy of the region relied on trade in gold, silver and precious stones produced in local mines, as well as the rearing of horses and camels. Presently, however, the major resources of the region are oil and gas, the production of which has turned the Arabian Peninsula into one of the wealthiest regions in the world (Al-Rasheed and Vitalis, 2004; Hopwood, 2015). The richest oil reserves belong to the city of Zahran (or Dahrhan), located not far from the Persian Gulf within Saudi Arabia (Al-Rasheed and Vitalis, 2004). Given the often highly politicised competition for oil, the Arabian Peninsula has developed highly complex local and international geo-political relationships, some of which are analysed throughout the rest of this chapter because of their relevance to the present economy of the region.

### **2.2.2 The Islamic Golden Age and its Socio-Cultural Impact**

The Golden Islamic Age refers to the period of Islamic history from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, and is characterised by significant economic, socio-political, cultural and scientific – including both technological and medicinal – development (West, 2008). Belen and Aciduman (2006) argue that the Islamic Golden Age has had a major impact on the development of the region and, indeed, the entire world, and is therefore relevant to the present discussion.

The Golden Age coincided with the increasing importance of the city of Mecca, which had long been regarded as a significant trade hub, but during the discussed period also became

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<sup>1</sup> PBUH is used here as an abbreviation for 'Peace Be upon Him' and is said by Muslims when they speak, hear and/or read the name of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It is intended as a prayer of blessing, love and a symbol of respect. Muslim belief in all the prophets means that they say a similar prayer upon speaking, hearing and/or reading the names of other prophets from the Abrahamic tradition. This thesis will maintain this tradition of Islam, throughout.

an important cultural centre due to the religious pilgrimage, or *Hajj*. As a result, Mecca became a place where not only goods, but also knowledge and ideas could be exchanged between people (Saliba, 1995). In addition to the growing importance of culture and pilgrimage sites, the Peninsula has also gained importance due to its unique strategic position as a crossroads of routes, connecting the Arab world with Africa, Asia and Europe. This position as a trade hub played a part in determining the essence of Muslim civilisation, in contrast to the more agricultural Chinese and Christian cultures of the same period. Therefore, the society built during the Golden Age could be best characterised as mercantile (Saliba, 1995). The merchants and their constantly growing routes that spread through three continents allowed the Muslim world to grow its merchant economy through diverse investments, such as in plantations and the production of textiles (Falagas et al., 2006). This economic boom facilitated the formation of new political, mercantile and cultural ties while also supporting the spread of Islam to various new locations such as North Africa, Central Asia and Persia (Belen and Aciduman, 2006, Falagas et al., 2006; Saliba, 1995).

The spread of Islam and the Golden Age are important to the psyche of the Saudi people, and to that of the Muslim world. Thus, the Saudi state is both expected and required to be able to protect the two Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina. The narrative of Islam places both Mecca and Medina especially as the centre for genesis and expansion for Islam across the world. Therefore, pilgrimage to these sites, discussed in greater depth later in this chapter, is as much a religious journey to holy places as it is a journey to the core of one's being and notion of self. Islam is as key an aspect for most Muslims' self-perceptions and identity as popular culture or professional roles might be for those in western, European and North American countries. For these reasons Muslims need to feel that the core of their identities projected onto these holy cities is protected, but also that Saudi Arabia champions the significance of the Golden Age of Islam.

### **2.2.3 The First, Second and Third Saudi States**

The first, second and third Saudi states represent key milestones in the development of the modern Kingdom. The first Saudi state dates back to 1744 and was established by Imam Muhammad bin Saud. The capital of the state was Al-Diriya, which was united under a common idea of reforming the faith of Islam to eliminate what were claimed to be heretical practices. The establishment of the first state succeeded in uniting almost the entire Arabian Peninsula, leading to stability and prosperity in this region, previously torn apart by conflict and war. The state was based on a combination of innovatory administration practices and their interpretation of the principles of Islam. It was brought to an end with the Ottoman invasion of the Arabian Peninsula in 1818 (MOFA.gov, 2014). Following this invasion, given that several structures from the first Saudi state were preserved, Prince Mishari bin Saud

started attempts to establish the second state. Though he was not successful, the state was eventually re-established in 1824 by Imam Turki bin Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Saud (MOFA.gov, 2014; West, 2008). The new state established a new capital city, Riyadh, which was later lost in battle. In regard to organisation, management and structure, the second state was highly similar to the first, as it was founded on a literalist interpretation of the premises of the Islamic law (Sharia).

The third state emerged after King Abdulaziz successfully re-captured the city of Riyadh in 1902. The re-capturing of the former capital had a major impact on the development of the entire region as the ruling family managed to unify almost the entire Peninsula. 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1932 is considered the date the third state was established, when the whole country was successfully unified under the name of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (MOFA.gov, 2014). King Abdulaziz's reign saw the establishment of a new prosperous era in the region. It was during his reign that the KSA gained its special international role, achieved global recognition and became a guardian of security in the region through establishing the Arab League in 1945 (MOFA.gov, 2014; West, 2008). This prosperity was underpinned by the increasing global dependence on oil and the rich reserves found in this region.

#### **2.2.4 Wahhabism**

Anderson (2014) notes that the religion of Islam, shortly after it was founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century, split into two key sub-divisions: the so-called Orthodox Sunni majority, and the diverse Shi'ite minority. The latter was traditionally more widespread in parts of Iraq, Iran and Yemen. Some researchers claim that, by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Orthodox Islam had become greatly modified through various new practices, some of which closely resemble mysticism, and sometimes even idolatry (Anderson, 2014, p.5). These gradual changes in religious belief and practice, along with an overall movement to restore an old order of things socially and politically, led to the formation of reformist movements, one of which became known as Wahhabism (Andersen, 2014; Crooke, 2015).

Wahhabism refers to a religious movement that claims to be a branch of Sunni Islam, which has played an important role in the modern and present history of the Arabian Peninsula. The movement ostensibly aims to restore the pure beliefs and religious practices (or *tawhid*) but has been described and characterised as 'fundamentalist' and 'ultraconservative' in nature due to its doctrine and methods of implementation (Determann, 2016; Crooke, 2015). The followers of the movement reject the term Wahhabism and instead call themselves Muwahhidun ('people of tawhid') or Salafi (those following the practices of the first generations). The term Wahhabism is derived from the name of Muhammad ibn Abd al-

Wahhab, who was a controversial 18<sup>th</sup> century religious scholar. The movement has always stirred and continues to stir disagreement and disapproval among other branches of Islam, both among Shi'ites and the majority of Sunni Muslims in the KSA and across the world (Crooke, 2015).

Wahhabism-based ideology among modern Sunni youth has sparked interest in radical Islamic movements such as ISIS, to the concern of the entire world (Crooke, 2015). Furthermore, as Crooke (2015) stresses, Wahhabism and ISIS have a major effect on Saudi Arabia's socio-political situation, as the methods and violence used by this movement are both horrific and pose a threat to the Kingdom itself. Some scholars in Saudi Arabia argue that Wahhabism *per se* cannot be viewed as a threat to peaceful life, as it is only the inhumane interpretation by Da'ish (ISIS) that makes it use force, terror and violence to make their points (Determann, 2016). However, it is noteworthy that in its earliest days, Wahhabism insisted on the invalidity of what, up until that point, had been considered to be Sunni orthodoxy and used that to authorise the killing of any who disagreed with it, and this legitimisation of murder extended to Shi'ites too (DeLong-Bas, 2004; Glasse, 2001). Given the parallels to the current situation, it is clear that Wahhabism-fuelled ISIS is a threat to the Western world as well as threatening the peaceful life of Muslim people globally and the socio-economic situation within Saudi Arabia specifically (Al Mallakh and Al Mallakh, 2015).

The situation in the region has been, and continues to be, highly controversial and complex. In the past decade, the international media has generally turned away from the situation and religion in Saudi Arabia due to the spotlight on Al-Qaeda, and the escalated situation in both Afghanistan and Iraq. However, since the outbreak of civil war in Syria in 2011, the interest of the Western world has returned to Saudi Arabia and its neighbouring states. The Syrian uprising against Al-Assad caused many countries within the Gulf Region, including Saudi Arabia, to make use of the conflict as a so-called proxy war (Shia versus Sunni, for example). To maintain control and their leading position in the region, Saudi Arabia and other countries have invested large sums in supporting various groups who oppose Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad. According to some sources, Saudi Arabia went as far as to send its top military experts to organise and consult with Sunni opposition in Syria (Clapper, 2016).

### **2.2.5 The Gulf War**

The topic of the Gulf War is relevant, not only to the past and current situation in the Middle East, but also to the entire global geo-political landscape. The Persian Gulf War, or the First Iraq War, took place from 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1990 until 17<sup>th</sup> January 1991 and involved several countries. The key participants were the coalition force, led by the United States, and Iraq.

The US-led intervention happened in reaction to the annexation of Kuwait by Iraqi forces (Al-Rasheed and Vitalis, 2004). In turn, as pointed out by Aarts and Renner (2016), the reason (or trigger) for the invasion by Iraq was that Kuwait had been producing amounts of crude oil far exceeding the quotas regulated by the Organisation for Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OPEC). This situation, along with actions by Saudi Arabia, weakened crude oil prices worldwide and therefore negatively affected the economic situation within Iraq (Aarts and Renner, 2016). Iraq, like many countries within the region, has an oil-dependent economy with over 61% of its GDP generated from oil-based revenues. Therefore, the dictatorial state invaded Kuwait and the Gulf War ensued (Al-Rasheed and Vitalis, 2004).

The coalition's interests, as pointed out by several experts, were mostly influenced by economic considerations as well as an overall political dominance within the region. The reaction of the US government, for instance, was mostly guided by the fear of destabilisation in the strategically important region, which supplied the world's growing crude oil demands (Aarts and Renner, 2016). US President George H. Bush collaborated with the government of Saudi Arabia, and US troops, along with UK and Egyptian military forces, were deployed to Saudi territory. It is estimated that the total cost of the war for the coalition was around \$92 billion. The conflict resulted in a clear victory for the coalition forces, although Saddam Hussein remained in power. At least once during the first Gulf War, the city of Khafji in Saudi Arabia was occupied by Iraqi troops (Al-Rasheed and Vitalis, 2004).

### **2.3 Current Geo-Political Analysis of the KSA**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia garnered little scholarly attention in the west prior to the 1970s, when the so-called Arab embargo resulted in the country's position as a world energy market leader (Al Mallakh and Al Mallakh, 2015). Prior to this period, Saudi Arabia was primarily known as one of the guardians of the Muslim religion and home to its primary pilgrimage destinations, Medina and Mecca (Al Mallakh and Al Mallakh, 2015). Once the KSA demonstrated its potential as the world's leading supplier of crude oil, its strategic political position profoundly affected the rest of the world's perception of it (Gause, 2016).

As well as the country's economy, political and social life in the KSA have been affected by oil prices over the last few decades (Lackner, 1978; Simmons, 2006; Al-Rasheed and Vitalis, 2004). The oil-based economy has made the KSA dependent on a number of factors, including relationships with Iran and the OPEC countries, the performance of the Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Aramco), and diplomatic relationships with the US (Chubin and Tripp, 2014; Al-Rasheed and Vitalis, 2004). The KSA has recently experienced a significant drop in oil prices, which only worsened once OPEC officially announced in 2016 that it would not cut crude oil production (Al-Rasheed and Vitalis, 2004). According to financial reports, in

2014-15 Saudi Arabia was forced to quickly reserve cash by selling bonds in the amount of \$4 billion, and during the same period, up to \$70 billion was withdrawn from asset management firms, demonstrating the precariousness of its dependence on oil and its resource-based economy centred on oil production (Egan, 2015). At the same time, other countries in the region have also experienced political pressure and instability.

Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar are well-positioned to face the challenges of lower oil prices, having placed funds in reserve to withstand price fluctuations (Egan, 2015). The KSA, however, has chosen an alternative approach based on the diversification of its economy and major changes within its socio-political system (Alshehry and Belloumi, 2015). This section will critically analyse the current economic and political situation of the Kingdom – namely, its relationship with Iran, OPEC, and the history of Aramco – and will conclude in the final section by exploring the new Vision 2030 reforms, which aim to modernise the KSA's economy.

In addition to the high level of dependence on oil and fluctuating oil prices, traditionalism and a conservative religious approach to certain key state structures has had a strong effect on social and political life in the KSA and therefore is relevant to this discussion. For example, the KSA is one of the very few countries in the world whose judicial system is still based on the premises of Sharia (Al Mallakh and Al Mallakh, 2015).<sup>2</sup> Researchers argue that, despite this traditionalism, so far the country has successfully demonstrated high levels of development and innovation. Some argue that these successes are due to huge oil-based revenues (Stevens, 2015). However, Al Mallakh and Al Mallakh (2015), for example, oppose this notion, asserting that an overall high rate of progress may be due to the significant flexibility and adaptability of the state infrastructure. For instance, in order to adhere to Sharia law, the banking sector in the KSA does not operate based on interest rates. However, as an alternative to interest, banking institutions charge commission and therefore ensure profits from various financial operations, while still complying with their version of Sharia law (Al Mallakh and Al Mallakh, 2015). This is also the case for the UAE, Kuwait, Oman, and increasingly other Muslim countries both within and outside the Arabian Peninsula, whereby resilience to the fluctuations of the financial markets becomes an unintended by-product of attempts to reject usury. This is not always achieved in totality

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<sup>2</sup> Sharia law is a system of law where judgements are taken in consideration of context, and from precedence or newly derived opinions, based on the Qur'an and the *Hadith* (recorded traditions and sayings of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH)). There are specific methods of deriving new understandings, but not all jurists may reach the same conclusion using the same method. Importantly, for modern misconceptions of Islam, this means that not all Sharia legal systems are the same. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the Sharia being referred to throughout is that which is interpreted through Wahhabism's principles and as instituted in the KSA.



across the nation, as both private and public banks with international operations are linked to the system of interest, but diversity in the system of banking in Muslim countries is increasingly providing a buffer against sudden changes.

### **2.3.1 The KSA and Iran**

Iran and the KSA are the two major geo-political players within the Middle East, and the nature of their often-contentious relationship also serves as an important factor which affects the overall stability and development of the region (Chubin and Tripp, 2014; Alshehry and Belloumi, 2015). Religion-based tension (Shi'ite versus Sunni) certainly exists, though it is not the major reason for conflict between the two nations; rather, it is based on the division of political and economic power in the region (Alshehry and Belloumi, 2015). Scholars argue that the current chill in the relationships between the two nations has been caused by a recent nuclear deal signed by Tehran and several world leaders; however, Jokar (2016) argues that the tension runs deeper than that.

In the 1970s, Nixon and Kissinger supported two trusted pillars of national security and stability within the Middle East: Saudi Arabia and Iran (Cooper, 2011). However, the balance this afforded came to an end with the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran (Jokar, 2016). The US continued close collaboration with Riyadh, however the same was not true with Iran. The Iraq-Iran war that followed further destabilised the situation within the region and led to a massive human death toll (Chubin and Tripp, 2014). Riyadh supported Hussein, the Sunni leader, but the Kingdom soon found itself in the middle of the so-called Shi'ite revival (Jokar, 2016). Events such as the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks in the US, the US invasion of Afghanistan, and the rise of the Taliban have further destabilised the Middle East. At present, relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia are best described as tense, due to the fact that Riyadh suspects Iran is working towards re-building its dominance in the region (Cooper, 2011; Chubin and Tripp, 2014; Alshehry and Belloumi, 2015).

Iran's nuclear programme is only one of the KSA's numerous worries regarding the regional political situation. The possibility of Iran's growing dominance worries Saudi Arabia, as well as the effect on Syrian peace talks of Iran's direct involvement in the Syrian war (Al Mallakh and Al Mallakh, 2015) – and the fact that al-Assad is supported by Iran further complicates the situation. Stephens (2014) speculates that the US-led coalition may eventually consider negotiations with the dictator, as the alternative – ISIS-controlled states – may pose an even bigger threat to global peace.

### **2.3.2 The Relationship with OPEC and Crude Oil Prices**

Crude oil prices experience both minor and major fluctuations (Egan, 2015). De Santis (2003) points out that these price fluctuations are determined by a number of factors,

perhaps most notably the quotas established by OPEC. Quotas, which are decided upon by the member countries, determine the production volume of crude oil for a given country (Alshehry and Belloumi, 2015). De Santis (2003) notes that the Saudi Arabian supply of oil is inflexible in the short term, and therefore any major shock event in the market is associated with sharp oil price changes. However, oil prices have seen major fluctuations since 2018 and prices have been dropping due to many factors.

OPEC is an intergovernmental organisation, comprised of 14 nations; it was established in Baghdad in 1960 and the KSA is its *de facto* leader. In recent years, OPEC and the KSA have pursued a distinct strategy aimed at gaining control of the global petroleum market (Cunningham, 2016a). According to Cunningham (2016a), the organisation has successfully reached this goal and, as of 2016, controls over 45% of global crude oil production to be the largest exporter in the world. OPEC's domination of the world's oil market gives it key leverage in controlling prices. The overall goal of the organisation is to establish market rules for exporters of crude oil. These rules allow for more regulated, efficient and profitable production of petroleum and this has seemingly paid off, increasing US dependence on OPEC-based oil and strengthening the Saudi Arabian position within the region (Cunningham, 2016a). At the same time, closer analysis of the 2030 Saudi Vision demonstrates that the Kingdom's priorities have shifted (Alshehry and Belloumi, 2015). For example, according to Cunningham (2016), membership and collaboration within OPEC is no longer a strategic priority for Saudi Arabia, because of the country's desire to diversify its economy and move away from an oil-dependent income (Alshehry and Belloumi, 2015).

### **2.3.3 Saudi Arabia's Oil-based Economy**

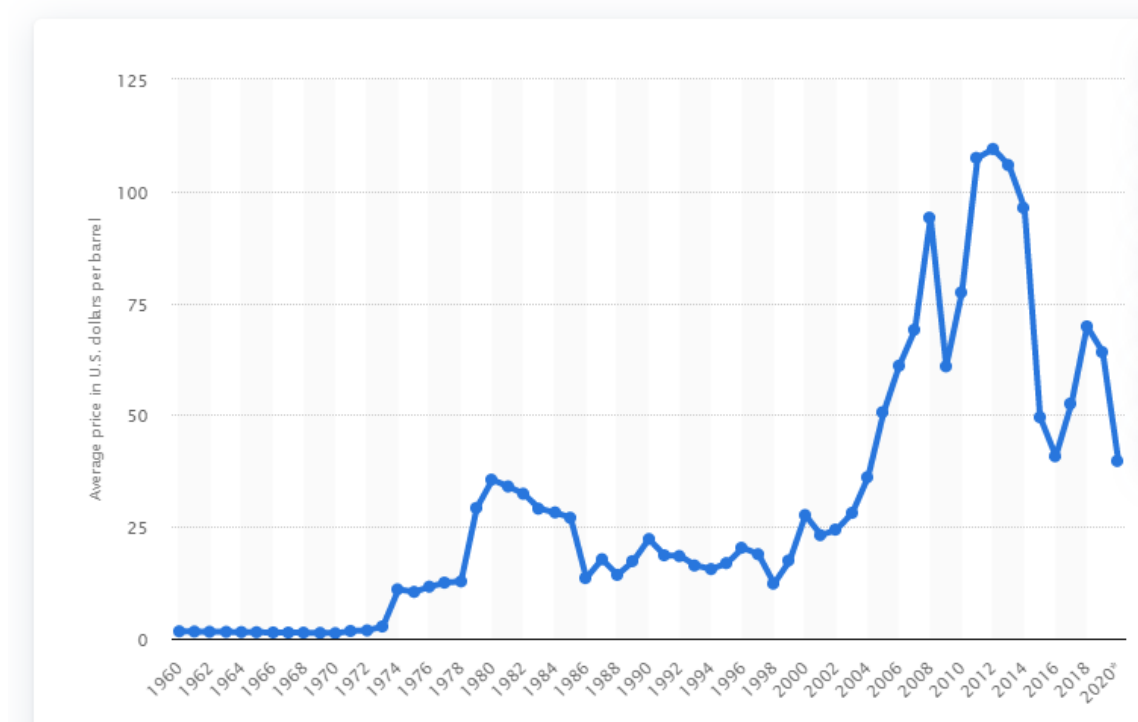
As indicated above, Saudi Arabia has a single commodity economy, in that its key product – oil – dominates all of the most important spheres of the economy, from government revenues and national income to foreign exchange earnings. According to oil industry reports, the KSA possesses a total of 16% of the global reserves of petroleum, making it the biggest exporter of petroleum in the world (Arezki and Blanchard, 2015). The petroleum industry accounts for over 80% of all budget revenues, or 90% of the country's exports (Forbes.com, 2016). However, despite the significant annual revenues resulting from the oil industry, it is not the major source of employment in the country, a situation that contributes to a rather high rate of unemployment (Al Mallakh and Al Mallakh, 2015). Al Mallakh and Al Mallakh (2015) conducted a structural analysis of the Saudi economy since 1975, which demonstrated that several major changes occurred, shifting key state activities away from non-oil-based ones (such as construction work, hotels and restaurant businesses, and electricity, water and gas production) towards oil-based activities. They noted that the most prominent shift was the move away from agricultural activities.

Economic expenditure in Saudi Arabia can be divided into two key components: private and governmental. Spending by the private sector is comparatively low, the major spending being conducted by the state (Al Mallakh and Al Mallakh, 2015; Andersen, 2014). Furthermore, state expenditure has been increasing during recent decades. Al Mallakh and Al Mallakh (2015) note that this increase is an attempt at wealth redistribution through various subsidies, social programmes and attempts to increase employment.

As mentioned, unemployment in the KSA is a significant problem. Ironically, 6 million foreign workers are employed in the KSA's petroleum industry, while the country's own citizens struggle to find employment (Alshehry and Belloumi, 2015). Up to 28.6% of the KSA's youth were unemployed during 2014 (Oxford Business Group, 2015). According to data from the Oxford Business Group (2015), the overall unemployment rate in the KSA was equal to 11.7% in 2014. However, after 2014 the trend of overall unemployment in Saudi Arabia showed an increase. In 2015 unemployment showed a minor decline but in 2016, 2017 and 2018 there was a constant rise in the rate. By 2019 and 2020 the unemployment rate for Saudi Arabian citizens had shown an upward trend, with the highest being 12.5% in the first quarter of 2019 (Amlot, 2020). This is according to data released by the Saudi general authority for statistics. Whereas the male unemployment rate declined slightly during the period 2013-2014 (from 6.1% to 5.9%), a slight decline was also seen in the second quarter of 2019 from 12.5% to 12.3%. The problem of unemployment is more acute for Saudi women. During the period 2013-2014 the rate declined very slightly, from 33.2% to 32.8% (Oxford Business Group, 2015).

Another key problem the KSA faces is its budget deficit. The underlying reason is major capital spending, which cannot be compensated for due to low crude oil prices. In 2014, oil prices dramatically dropped, and, despite expectations, Saudi Arabia announced that it would continue producing large volumes of crude oil, as opposed to counterbalancing the demand with a lower supply to increase prices (Arezki and Blanchard, 2015). Furthermore, the KSA pressured OPEC members to maintain the collective effort of petroleum production at nearly 30 million barrels per day. A number of important consequences for the global economy have been discussed by scholars as a result of the Saudi decision, namely the fundamental change within market expectations regarding the future prospects of the oil industry, which has further lowered the price and brought the situation closer to a classic case of competitive market equilibrium (Arezki and Blanchard, 2015).

## Average annual OPEC crude oil price from 1960 to 2020 (in U.S. dollars per barrel)



**Figure 2. 1** Oil price trends, 1960-2020 (Source: Sonnichsen, 2020)

When it comes to the average crude price from the 1970s, as shown in Figure 2.1, trends show a massive variation. While it remained constant throughout the 1960s the trend was fluctuation all the way to 1998. After 1998 there was continual rise in the average annual crude prices until 2008 when the global recession hit the markets throughout the world, leading to a sharp decline in the years since. The situation has improved recently, in the last year (Sonnichsen, 2020).

According to Forbes.com (2016), the KSA requires the global oil price to rise above \$100 per barrel in order to eliminate the budget deficit first faced by the country in 2009. For now, the country is considering a number of feasible options to balance the deficit, though the only strong solution would be to significantly reduce capital spending or oil production; the latter of which would inevitably lead to the rise of global prices (Arezki and Blanchard, 2015). In May 2020, the OPEC Plus group decided to reduce oil production by 9.7 million barrels per day, or about 10% of global supplies, due to the decline in demand following the repercussions of the Coronavirus (Reed, 2020).

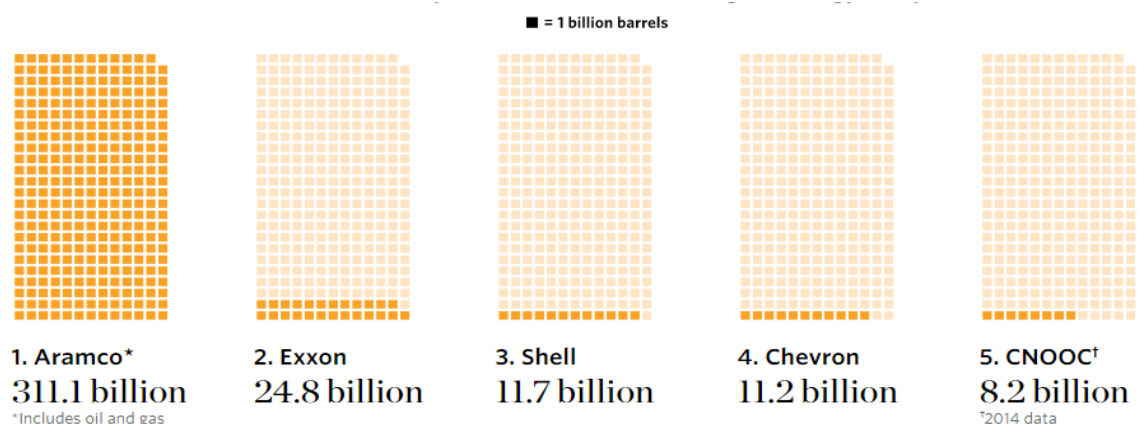
Over the past several years, Saudi Arabia has been surrendering control of its market share to its closest rivals. Raval (2016) points out that during the period 2013- 2015, the country lost control of nine out of its 15 key markets, including the US, China and South Africa. Key

rivals, such as Russia and Iraq, are pursuing a very aggressive strategy within the already crowded market (Raval, 2016).

In light of both the successes and the challenges of the oil industry in the present day, the KSA's government recognises the importance of economic diversification and considers petrochemicals, telecommunications, tourism, and aviation to be promising sectors for its future survival (Forbes.com, 2016). However, it must be noted that these industries still revolve around petroleum to some degree (such as extraction of natural gas and petrochemical production), limiting the possibilities of actual diversification. Saudi Arabia is not currently experiencing any significant non-oil economic growth (Alodadi and Behnin, 2015; Santos et al., 2014). According to industry analysis, the non-oil sector of the KSA's economy – which is privately owned – delivered only around 5% of GDP in 2015. This actually represents a decrease, as in 2010, the contribution of the non-oil based private sector was estimated at 7.2% (Oxford Business Group, 2015). In 2019 Saudi Arabia's non-oil economy grew by 3.3%, its fastest rate since 2014 (Arab News, 2020).

#### 2.3.4 Aramco's Role in the KSA Economy and Oil Price Interventions

Aramco is one of the biggest energy companies in the world and is responsible for managing the KSA's considerable oil reserves. The company's total annual costs revenue is estimated at \$2-3 trillion, and its annual total production exceeds that of the cumulative capacity of the world's biggest energy companies, Figure 2.2, (Martin and Bianchi, 2015; Barnett et al., 2016). 95% of the company's shares are owned by the Saudi Arabian government and, as of 2016, the company employs 55,000 people (Al Malakh and Al Malakh, 2015).



**Figure 2. 2 Comparison of Aramco and some of the world's largest energy companies**  
(Source: Barnett et al., 2016)

The company has three key activities: production of crude oil; production of various petrochemicals; and refining operations (Barnett et al., 2016; Henni, 2015). The company's key customers are the US, China, and India. Apart from generating tremendous revenue,

Aramco plays another key role in the life of the KSA – it provides a mechanism to control so-called spare capacity (Martin and Blanchi, 2015). The spare capacity refers to the difference between the volumes of crude oil that is pumped and that which could potentially be pumped (Barnett et al., 2016). The spare capacity margin has provided Saudi Arabia with a powerful tool to regulate the market price of crude oil by increasing or decreasing production depending on the current market supply (Barnett et al., 2016; Martin and Blanchi, 2015).

In July 2016, Aramco announced a number of strategic points related to future policy and intent. First of all, there is no intention to reduce the daily production of crude oil. Second, the Saudi Arabian Oil Company views East Asia as its key priority and will fight competitors (like Russia and the US) for control of the existing and emerging markets (Al Malakh and Al Malakh, 2015). The son of King Salman, Prince Mohammed, is initiating a number of other bold moves which directly involve Aramco and its strategic decisions. 5% of the company's shares were put on the market in 2018 to generate revenue. Moreover, the company began actively investing in a number of energy-concerned projects globally, including the construction of the Fadhili gas plant. When completed, the plant will significantly increase the gas production capacity of Aramco (Mahdi, 2016). The strategy of increasing production will not, of course, increase or stabilise oil prices – quite the contrary. It has been suggested that, as has occurred several times in the past, Saudi Arabia may be purposefully lowering oil prices in order to destabilise the local economic situation, decrease the confidence of investors, and thus gain an upper hand in current tensions with Iran.

All of the above circumstances conspire to make necessary an alternative source of economic growth and stability in the KSA. Another interesting development is that, in December 2019, Saudi Arabia raised \$25.6 billion by making public shares in Aramco, which until that point was entirely owned by the state. Since taking it public, three billion shares have been sold at \$8.53 each, making it the biggest public offering worldwide, surpassing that of China's Ali Baba in 2014. Aramco is now the largest public trading company in the world, valued at \$1.7 trillion. Moreover, around 1.5% of its 200 billion shares are due to be sold, which could see the amount raised increase to \$29.4 billion (Horowitz and Defterios, 2019).

### **2.3.5 Transition to a Knowledge-Based Economy**

Within a global economy, the key sources of sustained growth are product design, research and entrepreneurship. A central feature of both developing and developed countries is the advancement of a knowledge-based economy. In contemporary societies, information and communication technologies, research and development (R and D), rising investment in

intangible assets and growing innovation are increasingly important drivers of growth (Debanath, 2015). The frailties of a resource-based economy are well known, so the transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge economy is an essential step to ensuring the long-term economic stability of any nation (Nour, 2014). However, to do so proactively while a country's resource-based economy is still booming requires foresight and careful planning.

The success of a knowledge economy is less well understood than an economy based on resources or manufacturing. Establishing markets within a knowledge-based economy is fraught with uncertainty, being dependent on attitudes, perceptions and the viability of scholarships and communications. Saudi Arabia is striving to take advantage of the opportunities offered by a youthful population: 60% are under the age of 30, while close to 40% are 14 and under (Glum, 2015). The Gulf Region in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular, have some of the fastest growing populations in the world. The forecast expansion of its population creates a number of opportunities and imposes additional challenges on the country's economy (Hilal et al., 2015). Gause (2014) discusses the problem of youth unemployment as the most crucial issue facing the Kingdom, pointing out that part of the problem is that the country's private sector is incapable of generating enough jobs for locals under 30 (Hilal et al., 2015). The problem is particularly acute for young women, a growing number of whom are in higher education (Gause, 2014).

In an effort to create a foundation for a knowledge-based economy, the government has launched numerous initiatives to encourage innovation, develop human capital, diversify the economy and accomplish the transition (Shine et al., 2012). This includes the establishment of the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, which encourages the development of science (particularly engineering) and has attracted scholars and collaborations from foreign universities (Shine et al., 2012). Shine and colleagues (2012) report that up to 99% of the publications authored by scholars at the university were published in the fields of biomedical research (39%), engineering (19%) and science (19%), reflecting the availability of funding and governmental support for specific areas of research aligned with the government's overall strategic vision. By selectively investing in these specific areas of research, Saudi Arabia may succeed in ensuring that the trained workforce is suited for the current market's needs. However, it may also be argued that this approach is short-sighted, as it ignores the country's need to develop social science scholarship to address a variety of social and political issues (Al Malakh and Al Malakh, 2015; Yusuf, 2014).

## **2.4 The Saudi Vision 2030 and the Country's Future**

### **2.4.1 The Vision 2030 Plan**

The Saudi Cabinet has developed and endorsed an ambitious set of plans aimed at restructuring the KSA's economy, diversifying its sources of income and implementing social change by 2030. According to the documented results of the cabinet session, the new 2030 vision is based on three key pillars: "*A vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation*" (The Council of Ministers, 2016). The first pillar of the new vision, a vibrant society, concerns recognition of the key Islamic premises, embracing national identity and history, and guaranteeing the residents of the KSA benefits of advanced social and healthcare systems – now more important than ever, given the global Coronavirus pandemic in 2020, and the correlating pressure on health services in countries around the world.

The second theme, a thriving economy, is more business-oriented and based on recognition of the need for new economic approaches and alternatives, including those focusing on support and help provided to the Kingdom's entrepreneurs. This theme aims to unlock 'promising economy sectors', as well as creating more job opportunities for qualified candidates. Interestingly, the premise also discusses further possibilities for the privatisation of some governmental structures and institutions. The Vision also argues for taking advantage of the KSA's strategic geographical position (connecting Asia, Africa and Europe), and making use of international investments to leverage the local economy (The Council of Ministers, 2016). The document, although somewhat generalist and declarative in nature, also acknowledges and discusses an important economic problem – currently local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are not key contributors to the economy. The Vision 2030 plan therefore stresses the importance of supporting these SMEs through various governmental initiatives, including increased access to funding (The Council of Ministers, 2016).

Section 2.1.1 of the plan, entitled '*Learning for working*', contains information about empowering and securing jobs for young men and women of the KSA. Some of the key features of the section concern the establishment of the National Labour Gateway (TAQAT), responsible for interaction and cooperation with business, government and education sectors to determine their specific needs in terms of trained and qualified professionals. This collaboration, already in place, is designed to ensure that the KSA's higher educational system is preparing specialists that are currently needed within the home market, and therefore aims to reduce unemployment amongst younger people (The Council of Ministers, 2016).



The third pillar, an ambitious nation, is highly strategic though unspecific. It mostly discusses the necessity of forming an “*effective, transparent, accountable, enabling and high-performing government*” (The Council of Ministers, 2016). This premise is built upon recognition that all of the key stakeholders, be they private sector, citizens or non-profits, must become an integral part of the decision-making process. This integrated effort is characterised by a responsible and proactive approach and would allow the KSA to successfully cope with existing challenges as well as take advantage of the various opportunities presented to its economy (Alshehry and Belloumi, 2015). The Vision 2030 plan postulates:

*We shall have zero tolerance for all levels of corruption, whether administrative or financial. We will adopt leading international standards and administrative practices, helping us reach the highest levels of transparency and governance in all sectors.*  
(The Council of Ministers, 2016)

This ambitious objective is also based on the creation of an effective and transparent e-government system which is intended to reduce the overall level of bureaucracy and increase transparency in the country (Alshehry and Belloumi, 2015).

Overall, the discussed plan has established the following mid- and long-term goals before the KSA: developing integrated and effective e-government, increasing the Kingdom's spending efficiency, developing an effective digital infrastructure, increasing the overall competitiveness of the KSAs energy sector and other promising sectors of the economy, and ensuring that the educational system is aligned with current market needs (The Council of Ministers, 2016).

Academics note that this plan is a reflection and reaction to a number of global trends that affect the oil market. First of all, Saudi Arabia is both voluntarily and involuntarily beginning to lose its once dominant position within OPEC. Moreover, the plan reflects the global decrease in oil dependency, which will be evident in 2030. Saudi Arabia has also highlighted its commitment to transitioning to a knowledge-based society, with a gradual transformation of its oil-based economy into a digital one, where information and human assets become the key sources of competitive advantage (Alshehry and Belloumi, 2015).

Furthermore, the new Vision is not the first attempt to diversify the economy of Saudi Arabia (Al Mallakh and Al Mallakh, 2015). In the past, the Kingdom attempted to limit daily oil production to 8.5 million barrels, unless some special conditions demand an opposite course of action. This attempt can be viewed as a general government policy aimed at preventing the expansion of the crude oil industry and reducing the overall dependence on this sector. The move was also intended to diversify the economy by allowing other

potentially profitable sectors (such as hospitality) to catch up with oil production. However, these results have not materialised to date, perhaps due to the talks concerning possible future expansion of gas associated with oil production (Al Mallakh and Al Mallakh, 2015). Therefore, the discussed plan seems to be a much more appropriate and potentially effective measure. Instead of relying on passively limiting oil production, the plan encourages active steps to support and develop key innovative sectors in Saudi Arabia.

#### **2.4.2 Women's Rights**

A significant part of the reforms are efforts to increase women's participation in Saudi society by allowing them more freedoms than they had in the past. These fundamental changes to the structure of society perhaps constitute the most significant in the country's modern history. Opportunities that only men had access to are now open to women, allowing them to become more socially mobile and able to contribute to society in ways that had previously been barred for them. As a result, women have found their lives to be much less constricted since Muhammad bin Salman was afforded the power to make these changes.

Such changes can be clearly seen through the various Royal Decrees issued by the prince. For example, decrees have been passed which permit women to obtain business licenses, join the police and attend football matches. Perhaps the most significant of these, both in terms of changing perceptions about the country and in terms of loosening restrictions placed on women's daily lives, has been the 2018 decree that allowed women to drive cars. This considerably opens up the country for Saudi women, as they can now travel without needing a male relative to chauffeur them. Furthermore, Saudi women no longer need the consent of their guardians to travel abroad and they can now apply for their own passports.

Another factor which has dramatically changed the makeup of society and provided much more freedom to Saudi citizens, both male and female, is the limitation of the powers of the so-called 'religious police'. This means that women are now freely able to walk in shopping malls without covering their hair, without being harassed, and without being treated badly because of their choice of clothing.

The issue of women's empowerment will be taken up in greater depth in Chapter 5, where discussion will involve the impact of women's education and their greater involvement in society, politics and the economy, past, present and future, of the KSA.

#### **2.4.3 Entertainment Sector**

The General Entertainment Authority (GEA) is one of the initiatives that has stemmed from Saudi Arabia's Vision for 2030 and was established in May 2016, to organise and develop the entertainment sector and support its infrastructure (General Entertainment Authority, 2020a). It has a clear aim to:

*organise, develop, and lead the entertainment sector to provide exciting entertainment options, and tailored experiences to the needs of people from all walks of life around Saudi Arabia. Also, to contribute in improving and enriching the lifestyle and social cohesion among the community. (General Entertainment Authority, 2020b)*

The GEA's efforts are designed to support local economies and SMEs (General Entertainment Authority, 2020a). Despite this, the establishment, by supreme order, of the GEA led to popular criticism by Saudi public opinion and conservative religious sentiments. However, the 'Riyadh Season', which began in October 2019 and continued until January 2020, brought a total of 11.4 million visitors to sites across the city in which events such as plays, expos, concerts and many other types of entertainment took place (Riyadh Season, 2019). It is estimated that the total income generated was more than 1 billion Saudi Riyals. In addition to the money generated from the events, this initiative created a total of 52,000 jobs; 34,700 of which were a direct result of the events, and 17,300 came from it indirectly.

The success of the initiative has evidenced two things to the Saudi government. Firstly, public opinion and conservative religious forces in the country are not always correct in their initial criticisms of impending failure but are responsive and grounded in modern economic realities enough to change their criticism once they are able to see the success of a new initiative. Especially when, in this instance at least, the criticism has often been rejected and proved wrong in the same family/household by younger generations visiting the Riyadh season and reporting back positive experiences to parents/grandparents. This suggests that the Saudi leadership should be unafraid to push forward its reforms.

Secondly, the entertainment sector is a highly lucrative industry and potential source of revenue for the Saudi government. The opportunity for it to provide employment for many Saudis, especially a younger population, means that it provides financial resources in the form of wages which can continue to circulate in the Saudi economy. It also provides opportunities for SMEs to be set up by young entrepreneurs and developed to provide further employment.

#### **2.4.4 Tourism**

Related to entertainment, the country has also opened itself up to increased tourism opportunities. One way the government has done this is through the introduction of a new tourist visa, or 'e-visa', allowing foreign visitors from 49 countries into Saudi Arabia, including the UK, US and South Korea, for tourism purposes. In the past, visas were only granted for religious reasons, to visit the holy sites, or for business. It is hoped that this e-visa will boost the country's fledgling tourism industry, which had previously been buoyed

up by pilgrims to the holy cities. The 90-day e-visa permits entry into the country for both Muslims and non-Muslims, although non-Muslims are not permitted to enter the holy cities.

Much interest has been generated by this new move and, in the first month, it was reported that 77,000 applications had been made for the visa. The more relaxed attitudes towards women's dress are also related to this as it is thought that more people will want to visit the country if women can dress as they like. Furthermore, it is now legal for non-married couples to book hotel rooms in the Kingdom, which had previously been forbidden on religious grounds. The Saudi government hopes that all of these initiatives will make the country a much more desirable holiday destination, hoping to attract more than 1 million visitors annually.

#### **2.4.5 The Hajj**

It would be disingenuous not to mention the Hajj and acknowledge the contribution it makes to the Saudi national economy; it would be equally disingenuous not to mention the investment made to the Hajj pilgrimage and industry by the KSA to provide for the millions of pilgrims who attend both the annual Hajj pilgrimage as well as the lesser pilgrimage known as the Umrah, which continues throughout the rest of the year. It is difficult to estimate average annual revenue, due to changes in pilgrim quotas (by percentage of Muslim population by country), but it is nevertheless estimated at around US\$16 billion (Cochrane, 2018). Saudi investment over the decades has turned the tens of thousands performing Hajj every year into the millions. Facilitating the movement and ensuring the safety of so many pilgrims has been a major challenge and commitment to upholding the title of 'custodians of the two holiest cities'. Saudi is looking to continuously improve on the Hajj and so initiatives like the 'Hackathon', to create a mobile phone application (app.) which would help to make the Hajj safer are modern developments of a logistical marathon (Al Omran, 2018). Also, in the wake of COVID 19, many scholars and developers are thinking of new ways to make Hajj easier and safer.

However, the development of the Hajj pilgrimage, and indeed the Hajj industry, has been at the expense of the very historical and cultural heart of the cities of Mecca and Medina. For example, over 95% of millennia-old buildings have been wiped away to make way for both the expansion of the Mecca mosque complex but also to extend the old Mecca into a modern city with high-rise buildings, hotels, and transport systems (Kermali, 2012). The reasons for this development were pragmatic and carried out with the needs of increasing numbers of pilgrims in mind. The religious justification for this cultural 'vandalism' in the face of criticism from Muslims around the world was rooted in Wahhabism, which propagates the

opinion that historical sites and shrines encourage idolatry, and therefore must be destroyed (Kermali, 2012).

The sweeping changes made by the Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman can do little to change the destruction and damage that has been done to the cultural and historical heritage of not only Saudi Arabia, but by default, the Muslim world. However, the Crown Prince has, through his ministries, initiated projects such as Roads of Arabia, a travelling exhibition around Europe, on display at such places as the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. However, these initiatives are critiqued by those like Kermali (2012) who see this as an opportunity to capitalise on the international success and popularity of the British Museums' Hajj exhibition.

Speaking at the Future Investment Summit, the Crown Prince said that the *"difference between now and what we hope for the 'New Future' (NEOM) city is the difference between these two phones"* (Farhaa, 2017), at which point he held up an old Nokia phone and a new smart phone. In elaborating on his vision, he mentioned the change from the radical religious-conservative movement 'Al-Sahwa' (translated as 'the awakening') – which had incredible influence on social and political policies of the KSA and was rooted in Wahhabism – towards technological and economic innovation and a changing society. With regards to NEOM city, the Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman described this as a \$500 billion mega city, that will provide residents with world class service and where *"only dreamers are welcome to join"* (Farhaa, 2017).

All this is important for Mecca and Medina, as state policy seems to be slowing down on the idea of further expansion for the two holy cities and is seeking instead to control the flow of international pilgrims to create even greater revenue from the Umrah pilgrimage throughout the year, as well as benefitting from the bulge in the number of pilgrims during the Hajj season. Plans are in place to encourage Umrah pilgrims to extend their stay in Saudi Arabia, with religious tourism being offered through plans for an Islamic faith museum in Mecca (Winston, 2016).

This may go some way to alleviating the concerns of Muslims around the world, with regards to the decisions to destroy the historical Mecca and Medina, but it will take much more from the KSA to heal the rift caused with other Muslim nations as a consequence of these actions. Under the direction of the Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, trying to reaffirm the KSA's reputation as the custodian of the two holy cities, the KSA may still become the incubator of a new Golden Age of Islam, however, this may sound just as absurd as a modern entertainment industry in a country like Saudi Arabia may have sounded only four years ago. What contributes to this potential becoming reality is the difference in thinking and in

approach, which is as stark as the difference between an old Nokia phone and a modern smart phone.

#### **2.4.6 Saudi Arabia: Future Prospects**

Although Saudi society has come to understand that there is an urgent need for economic restructuring and diversification, there is a strong possibility that the Kingdom will continue to use oil as a powerful way as leverage in the international political arena (Stephens, 2015; Alshehry and Belloumi, 2015). For example, as mentioned earlier, Stephens (2014) argues that Saudis have artificially lowered the oil price to reduce the influence of Iran in the region, despite the long-term harm to the local economy this may pose. It is predicted that, despite the announced course to diversify the economy, such behaviour and global political games will continue in the future, and the KSA will remain an active player on the world stage (Alshehry and Belloumi, 2015).

Additionally, another key trend concerns the relationship between the KSA and OPEC. Cunningham (2016) argues that the country has taken a course towards distancing itself from the organisation. The fact that during an important meeting in Doha in April 2016, the KSA froze the only option that could have potentially led to decreasing crude oil production and further stabilising of global prices would seem to agree with this notion. Cunningham (2016) stresses that the new position of Saudi Arabia reflects its political intentions (rivalry with the growing influence of Iran) as well as a slight change of leadership (involvement of Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman) (Yusuf, 2014).

Furthermore, the behaviour of the KSA towards OPEC in light of the Saudi Vision 2030 is noteworthy because the Vision and the country's strategic decisions seem to be connected, which is also supported by the recent resignation of the former oil minister, Ali al-Naimi, who occupied the position for a number of years. It would seem that the strategy is starting to yield positive results whilst also being connected to an overall unwillingness to cooperate with its regional rival, Iran, who is torn by its involvement in conflicts in Syria and Yemen (Cunningham, 2016). Saudi Arabia simply continues to maintain or even increase its high production levels (up to 10.2 million barrels daily) and will mostly continue to do so in future (Alshehry and Belloumi, 2015). In the second quarter of 2020 the overall demand for oil fell by more than 16 million barrels a day compared to the same time in 2019 (Reed, 2020), according to the international energy agency.

There have been interesting events in the oil market of Russia and Saudi Arabia recently; when Saudi Arabia proposed the OPEC+ deal in early March 2020, Russia refused to renew it at first, however after a month it joined with less favourable conditions (Wire, 2020). Due to the coronavirus outbreak, oil demand collapsed in the global market, so Saudi Arabia

effectively waged a price war on Russia (Wire, 2020). An exciting scenario is expected in the future when the oil demand starts to recover gradually in the Autumn of 2020. Russia will have a hard time restoring production quickly and inexpensively (Wire, 2020).

Nevertheless, the KSA's future prospects are closely aligned with Vision 2030 and indicate a solid strategic shift away from an oil-based economy towards a knowledge-based one. As discussed above, some key steps will likely involve the privatisation of Aramco and massive investments in non-oil-based sectors. Cunningham (2016) notes that the decision probably means that OPEC will no longer play a strategic or significant role in the new Vision plan:

*Oil prices are finally rebounding, up more than 80% from the February lows. Outages of supply from Canada to Nigeria have tightened markets. U.S. production is down 1 mb/d and will continue to fall for the foreseeable future.*

Therefore, economic diversification is likely to continue in the KSA and is recognised as an effective strategy.

## **2.5 Summary**

In light of the context set out in this chapter, the KASP scholarship clearly connects the current Saudi Vision 2030 with its implications for and the practical steps needed for transitioning to a knowledge-based economy. Some consider initiatives such as the KASP to be the most profitable investments in the future of the Kingdom and its people, particularly the younger generation (Taylor and Albasri, 2014). This may well be the best intended investment that any nation could make; but as is testified to by many parents, it requires much more than financial investment to nurture a human and a citizen. As such, it is understood that much more is required if investment is to manifest in the change that the Saudi state wishes to see in its economy. What is additionally required will be investigated and presented in the ensuing chapters.

This thesis is an attempt to investigate the success of the KASP scholarship, and indeed to contribute to that success by enhancing it. It will do this by considering opportunities to learn from the KASP's and Saudi governments' aims, its peers' (US, UK) student scholarship programmes globally, its challenges in their respective contexts, and its potential to transition effectively and in a timely and well-planned manner for the benefit of the future of the people and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Most importantly, in this task, this thesis will use primary data from research and secondary sources from the social sciences to inform analysis of the above and present discussion. The thesis will conclude with a summary and some key recommendations towards

achieving its stated aims. However, at this point the thesis turns to a discussion of women in Saudi Arabia and their participation in education, society and the economy.



## Chapter 3: Literature Review

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the context in which this research project is taking place. This chapter introduces a preliminary literature review of the general concepts related to the topic under investigation for the initial main aim of the research and its objectives. The review of the literature falls into three main sections, following the initial **Literature Overview**, namely: **Networks**, **Capital forms** and **Scholarships**.

### 3.2. Literature Overview

**The literature overview** seeks to explore what the characteristics of a knowledge-based economy (also termed *knowledge economy*) are, before applying them to the Saudi context and sets out the basis for a subsequent discussion about the knowledge-based economy. It has been said that investment for economic growth is what governments do to increase their development in the global economy. The main focus of such investment has become the building of a knowledge-based economy, which requires developing “*human skills, focusing on education, science and vocational training*” (Hadad, 2017, p. 209). The section then considers the works of Sagiyeve et al. (2018), Balcerzak and Pietrzak (2016) and Talpos et al. (2017) to inform our understanding of some of the key characteristics and benefits of a knowledge-based economy. The section then applies these characteristics to the Saudi context, in relation to Saudi economy and the country’s aim of transitioning from a resources-based economy to a knowledge-based economy and society.

- **Knowledge-Based Economy**

The engine room of productivity and growth in the economy is knowledge. According to the World Bank, successful transitioning into a knowledge-based economy includes long-term investment in pedagogical knowledge, the building of capacity to enhance innovative ideas (or innovation itself), the development of a modern information technology infrastructure, and the establishment of enabling environments that support economic productivity (Anderson and Gallini, 2019). These are considered to be the four pillars of the knowledge economy (Hadad, 2017, p. 203).

Hadad (2017) provides a useful overview of past and current understandings of the term *knowledge economy*, and also provides a very useful comparison with traditional resource-based economies. This section first considers the comparison and returns to a discussion on the overview later.

Knowledge economies are seen as different from traditional economies in that they indicate an abundance of resources, rather than a scarcity of them. Unlike natural resources which continuously diminish, knowledge can increase through the sharing and application of knowledge. In economic terms, this is a 'non-rivalrous' or 'non-rival' good or commodity. Furthermore, the knowledge economy is not bound by location or time zone, as virtual technologies facilitate the transfer of said knowledge (Hadad, 2017, p. 205). Despite these benefits, there are certain difficulties related to knowledge economies. For example, a knowledge economy (some of which are new) can face difficulties in applying regulations nationally and attempting to enforce them globally. Additionally, the usefulness of knowledge within a knowledge economy is, to some extent, subject to their context, as the same knowledge can have a vastly different fiscal value in different settings. Also, human capital, such as skills and knowledge, increase the value of corporations, yet these cannot be evaluated by companies in their annual statements in the same way that, for example, profits can (Hadad, 2017, p. 205). Thus, declaring employees' human capital contribution can be very difficult, and could even lead to a failure to recognise and reward skills and capacity where they exist in employees.

Moving away from a traditional resource-based economy to a knowledge economy necessitates wholesale changes in society, from the way people think about value to the way people approach the working environment. Hadad (2017, p. 205) cites Brinkley (2006, p. 13) to highlight some of these changes. For example, in discussing the new way of understanding capital, he notes that there must be a fundamental change from considering capital as something which is physical and tangible, as would be the case in a resource economy, to something that can be intangible, such as intellectual capital. As such, intellectual capital therefore needs to be protected, just as physical capital would be, leading to the establishment of areas of law that can safeguard it, such as Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), copyright and patents. Also, in the knowledge economy, innovation is very important, as are ICT and skilled workers. However, a key characteristic of the knowledge economy that could provide challenges to human agency and education in the future is that it encompasses all sectors of the economy (Hadad, 2017, p. 205). This last point is what makes Castells' (2004) optimism for 'informationalism' blind to the danger of what is deducted from real life. For example, addiction to and overuse of technologies, such as mobile phones and tablets, especially by young people, along with the constancy of knowledge economies and how peoples' time-space outside of the workplace and traditional working hours is infiltrated by such things as emails and video-calls, allows access to the individual that would otherwise be unattainable and which is unparalleled in human history. This overload can have a negative impact on the well-being of individuals,

especially if exposed to it over prolonged periods of time. Moreover, the consequential hegemony over human daily life of corporations who have monopolised the sector, such as Facebook (who own WhatsApp) and Microsoft (who own Skype), raises profound questions about its ethicality, as technology and knowledge production and consumption has changed the way we live, relate and operate, both in society and the world in general. Knowledge economies and knowledge societies change the way we live, work, learn, communicate, represent ourselves and others, and how we perceive and engage with the world of business and entertainment. It is therefore suggested here that societies and individuals would also benefit from consideration of the impact of knowledge economies on them; not least through education, as this is what the knowledge economy requires of individuals, societies and their governments as capital investment.

As mentioned above, the development of the definition of the term and concept of *knowledge economy* is mapped by Hadad (2017, pp. 207-209). He identifies the origin of the concept as being in the 1950s and 1960s as focused mainly on the emergence of innovation industries and their ensuing impact on economic change, as assessed by the work of Drucker (1998) who characterises it in terms of the emergence of knowledge workers and managers, at the detriment of manual workers, in the transition from 'brawn to brain' (Drucker, 1998). The scientific and technical industries hold a narrow view of knowledge economy as applying specifically to knowledge-intensive industries where knowledge is the core skill. Hadad (2017) goes on to identify how, at the international level of organisations such as OECD and APEC, they now see knowledge economy as how firms and countries compete in a globalised economy, and also touches on how knowledge economies have become a strong theme in their activities (Hadad, 2017, p. 207). A proposed definition from the World Science Forum (2003) is as follows:

*A society based on knowledge - an innovative society based on lifelong learning concept throughout life [sic]. It unites the community of scientists, researchers, engineers and technicians, research networks, as well as firms involved in the process of research and production of high-tech goods and services. It forms a national innovation and production system, which is integrated into international networks on production, distribution, use, and protection of knowledge. (World Science Forum, 2003)*

Scholars such as Chartrand (2006) have drawn out key themes from this definition, such as knowledge, networks and innovation, to which UN experts have added competitiveness and economic growth (Hadad, 2017, p. 208).

Governments invest in economic growth to enhance their development in the global economy and so the main focus has become the building of a knowledge-based economy, by developing “*human skills, focusing on education, science and vocational training*” (Hadad, 2017, p. 209). Thus, more importance has been given in recent decades to ‘the role of innovation’ in the knowledge-economy to sustain competitive advantage (Hadad, 2017, p. 209). It may greatly help our understanding to differentiate between a knowledge economy, where competition and trade takes place – the sphere of economic activity – and a knowledge-based economy, where the building of infrastructures and human capital investment occurs – the building of actors and a stage/set in preparation for the economic activity – in order to harness innovation and therefore potential advantage in the global market. To extend the metaphor of a stage and actors to elaborate on this point, the more investment in training, development and practice for actors, and investment in the theatre building, stage and set production, as well as marketing, the more up-take there will be in the economic activity of attracting an audience to the theatre to enjoy the shows. However, just as the ticket sales may still remain low despite investment in the theatre and actors being high, investment in the knowledge-based economy does not necessitate success in the knowledge economy itself. In the theatre, this may be due to external factors beyond the reach and control of the theatre, however creating shows that are actually entertaining and that the audience will enjoy is the key interaction and contribution that can emerge from investment in the theatre and its actors. Thus the investment in the knowledge-base requires skill and wisdom in order for success in the knowledge economy to be made more likely.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is attempting to move towards a knowledge-based economy and away from a resource-based economy through its various initiatives and programs under the umbrella of Vision 2030. Included as part of this is the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP), which will be discussed in greater depth as a case study in Section 3.4 of this Chapter. In light of the aims of the KSA Vision 2030 and to fulfil the purposes of this thesis, it is necessary here to consider some of the key characteristic building blocks and subsequent benefits a knowledge economy can afford a country. Then, this section moves onto linking these building blocks with the context of Saudi Arabia, its ongoing challenges and its notable efforts and successes in transitioning to a knowledge-based economy.

- **Characteristics and Benefits of the Knowledge Economy**

Transitioning to a knowledge economy involves an in-depth understanding of the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the combined study, of various societal players when framing policy, as well as investments that are suitable to their knowledge patterns and the overall

objectives of the state. Knowledge economy requires particular building blocks which help overcome the relevant challenges, as referred to above in relation to the transition from a traditional resource economy to a knowledge economy, which must be seen from different angles and analysed in order to reveal the required characteristics (Moisio, 2018).

The first angle should be the pace of technological advancement, most importantly the building of technologies which can help bring about the intended knowledge economy – ‘information and communication technology’ (ICT). Second, the knowledge economy should be considered from an economic angle, whereby all sectors of the economy, such as the agricultural and administrative sectors, are now ‘knowledge-driven’. Thus, ‘knowledge accessibility’ is a must, in terms of access to technologies which facilitate knowledge – such as computers and the Internet – as well as knowledge of and access to the technologies and skills that enhance performance and efficiency, such as automated machinery for harvesting, or touch-typing. This would enhance human capital development through access to education for all social groups and areas of industry (Sagiyeva et al., 2018). Third, a knowledge economy needs a higher level of involvement from all areas of industry, innovation and business in education and training, as workers in these and other areas also need ‘new forms of education and training’. ICT illiteracy is, therefore, a big impediment to progress and productivity. Fourth, the development of fast-paced knowledge needs a total and ‘lifelong investment in training’; both at a macro level of government policy in education as well as at a micro level of human endeavours and commitment to lifelong learning. Fifth, a greater level of science and technology-related jobs have increased over time, which calls for urgent needs to obtain an ‘*improved and enhanced education for employees*’. Sixth, and finally, employees who can access encoded information and have technological skill should be acknowledged and given higher pay compared to their colleagues who rely on manual labour or physical input (Balcerzak and Pietrzak, 2016).

As for some of the benefits of the knowledge economy, Talpoş et al. (2017) provide a very useful list in their paper, *Talent management and the quest for effective succession management in the knowledge-based economy*. Talpoş et al. (2017) described the benefits of the knowledge economy as follows:

- A. The contents of a knowledge economy and its data contribute to the methods that include the necessary background to stimulate investment growth, especially in the area of scientific investment and the practical knowledge that can be used to build knowledge capital, which will eventually add to knowledge production.

- B. Knowledge economy adds to the enhancement of performance and helps cut production costs. It further enhances its standard by deploying technical means and approach, most importantly, in the industrial sector, where it helps in developing electronic equipment, computers and software.
- C. The contribution of a knowledge economy in attaining clear and tangible changes in the way an economy is structured are important. For example, by using advanced technologies to boost knowledge products or service export, particular changes can be brought about, such as the relative significance of knowledge, production increase and rises in the level of investment in knowledge in order to boost knowledge capital and increase the significance of workers in the knowledge sector.
- D. Knowledge economy results in job creation, especially in areas that involve the use of advanced technologies found in the knowledge economy. Consequently, it constantly creates job opportunities for qualified, skilled workers.
- E. The new order of wealth generation and accumulation is based on the scientific knowledge which knowledge economy houses.

These 'benefits' and 'characteristics' of a knowledge economy are important for the argument developed in the ensuing pages. This thesis distinguishes between the two categories of factors – benefits and characteristics – by asserting, as alluded to earlier, that the characteristics of the knowledge economy do not necessitate the success of a nation's knowledge economy in a global market. Put simply, the investment in and success of creating a knowledge economy nationally does not necessarily translate into a successful knowledge economy internationally. Therefore, to explore how to build a successful knowledge economy, nationally and internationally, this thesis seeks to isolate and consider the actual aims or motivation behind wanting to invest in, or transition to, a knowledge-based economy. To this end, separating benefits and characteristics and looking in more detail at these may help the KSA to identify not only *where* to invest – in human capital development, ICT, transport infrastructure – but also, *how* to invest – with what intent, and to achieve or acquire which particular benefits. The importance of this analytic exercise is to inform the design and development of a fledgling knowledge economy with clearer intent, that is better informed and therefore can engage in efficient and successfully targeted investments, and provide a greater chance of transitioning into a successful knowledge economy on the global market, as well as, potentially, more considered and ethical investment in relation to human capital and ecological impact.

Therefore, as this is the kind of economy Saudi Arabia is transitioning into from a resource economy, it is revealed why human capital development is significant for its successful

transition, as understandings of knowledge economy are closely related to human, social and intellectual capital, which is discussed in more depth in Section 3.4. It is also an important reason for the investment by KSA government in a scholarship programme for Saudi nationals to increase and expand social and intellectual capital towards the achievement of the Vision 2030 national plan and beyond. Furthermore, it will help to ensure the successful diversification of the economy and its sustenance and sustainability. The KASP scholarship is examined more fully in Section 3.5, and an investigation into the impact of increasing social and intellectual capital of, and on, Saudi Arabian nationals is presented in Section 3.4. This section now moves on to a brief overview of the KSA economy, prior to a discussion of the six characteristics and five benefits of a knowledge economy, which were outlined above, applied to the context of Saudi Arabia to reveal which, if any, of these characteristics have proven problematic for the country's transition to a knowledge economy.

- **Overview of KSA Economy**

Saudi Arabia is a global leader in producing natural gas and oil. The Saudi Arabian government has progressively tried to reform its economy and diversify from a total reliance on such natural resources, especially since the country became a member of the World Trade Organisation in 2005. A country with a growing population, Saudi Arabia has close to 20% of the global petroleum reserves, and is ranked as the largest exporter of oil (Gholba et al., 2018). Its leadership role is felt in the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (Diriöz and Erbil, 2020). Saudi Arabia introduced the Vision 2030 plan in April 2016; the essence of the plan is to move away from a heavy reliance on oil and to diversify its economy. It further aims to grow its service, healthcare, education, construction, and recreation and tourism sectors, amongst others, as well as its infrastructural facilities. The reforms in the Vision 2030 plan and national transformation plan is likely to have a significant impact on the government, economy and citizens of the KSA (Thompson, 2017).

Saudi Arabia's an oil-based economy is largely controlled by the government. The petroleum export of Saudi Arabia generates 90% of the revenue that finances its national budget and it makes up 42% of gross domestic product (Muye et al., 2017). However, the country is now actively encouraging private sector participation in the economy to generate more jobs for their nationals and to diversify its economy. Approximately six million foreign nationals work in Saudi Arabia and have an essential role in sustaining its economy, especially in the oil and service sector. However, the government is striving to cut rising unemployment among its many youths. In the wake of the crumbling oil market and the negative impact of fossil fuel generated carbon on the climate, the government is making moves to raise revenue from external investment. Additionally, the government has cut

down on its spending and subsidies on electricity, water and petroleum products (Krane, 2018). The diversification initiatives, contained in the Vision 2030 plan, have thus prompted the Saudi government to start looking for ways to shift its economy from resources to knowledge.

Therefore, in order to help to understand the transition process, the review of the extant literature in this thesis falls mainly into **three sections**. These sections are considered in order to develop a diagram to indicate the relations between the three aspects to understand the ways to shift the KSA's economy to rely on knowledge.

**The First section** of this chapter will investigate **Networks**, particularly the way society has been seen some as a *networked society*. Networked society allows people to connect with each other quicker and engage more actively. The section begins with the important work of Castells (2004) and his concepts of the network society, and of '*informationalism*', before arriving at a clearer understanding of what is meant by a knowledge economy and a knowledge society. Reference will be made throughout to the KASP programme and the aim of Vision 2030 of transitioning the economy from being resource-based to being knowledge-based, and our understanding of capital forms will move us towards an informed approach for Saudi Arabia's attempt at the empowerment of its women.

**The second section** of this chapter critically reviews the literature related to 'capital forms' in order to present the context for the data collection process. An in-depth understanding of the meaning of capital forms is revealed by examining Bourdieu's (1986) definition and discussion of the term and Adam Smith's (1937) work on capital, and how it operates in the system of capitalism that he envisioned, in relation to individuals and society/the state. Moreover, tangible and intangible forms of capital are part of the historical discussion of modern theorists such as Benkler, Carr, and Warsh to track whether the evolutions of capital and ways of exchanging capital (work), as well as the means of production (the Internet and other technological developments), have indeed provided more agency and power, or whether they have served to further dislocate us from the ownership of wealth. This discussion is highly relevant to the aims of the KASP programme and the implications for creation of a future Saudi society through the KSA's Vision 2030 agenda, and so will be connected to this overarching discussion throughout this section.

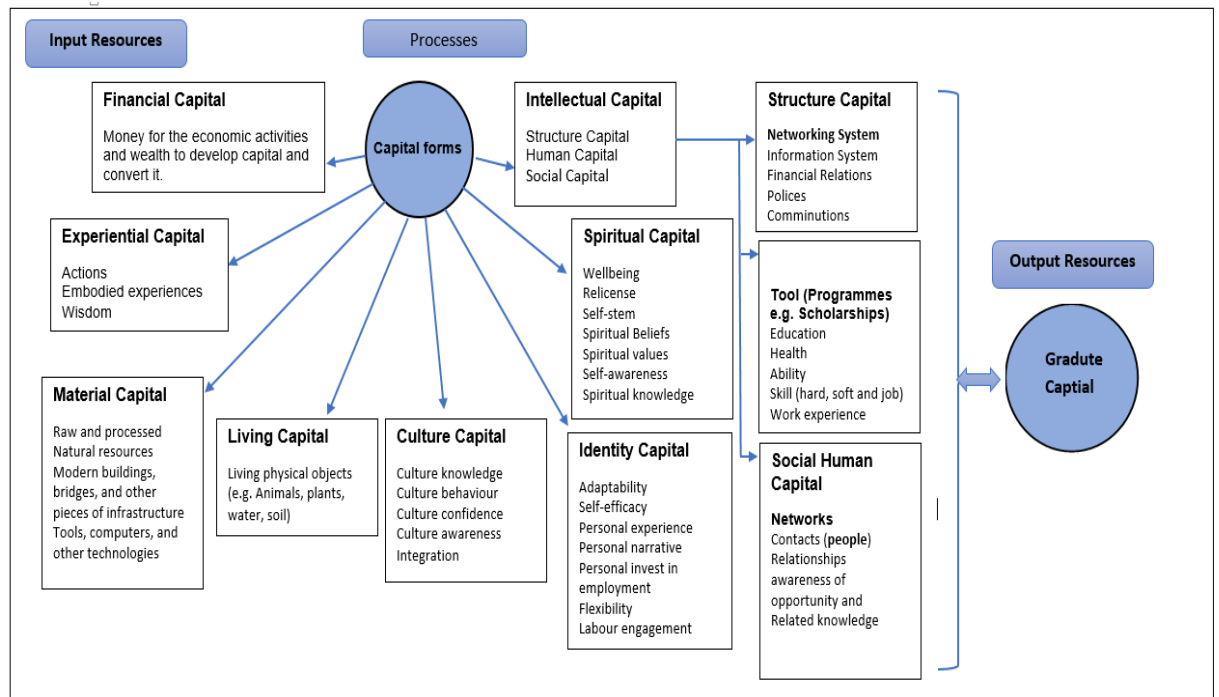
**The Final section, Scholarships**, includes an investigation into international scholarship programmes, beginning with the famous Rhodes Scholarship in 1902 (The Rhodes Scholarships, 2020) and the US's Kennedy and Marshall Scholarships (Deaton, 2018). Furthermore, in order to maintain focus on the aims of this research, a brief overview of Saudi Arabia's scholarship programmes is highlighted. This includes the King Abdullah



Scholarship Program (KASP) which is a case study in this research. It considers how the programme helps Saudi students to acquire the skills needed to maintain the Saudi labour market in the context of globalisation. The origins of the programme will be assessed, while its key features, rationale and aims will be evaluated. Moreover, because of the social context of Saudi Arabia, which relies on resource capital more than social, intellectual and human capital, and because the ultimate aims of KASP are so different from, for example, the Rhodes Scholarship, obvious similarities between the two might be misleading. However, the question is whether and how the Saudi students can contribute to the Saudi Arabia's economy and society. Therefore, this chapter moves toward fulfilling the research aim of examining how Saudi Arabia can transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based society by developing human and social capital through a case study exploring the role of scholarship programmes (KASP) in the country over the years.

In general, to aid the reader's understanding, these three sections are presented in this way to allow for the setting of conceptual foundations and their development, which will be built upon in the ensuing chapters. Moreover, these sections have been developed while the research is growing and has been updated based on the research findings. However, these scholarships develop and change depending on the people who are using them. All this could be understood and seen by looking to the different capital forms, such as social and human capital, which the coming sections will discuss in detail.

Furthermore, reference will be made to key primary policy documents and government materials, as well as the results of primary research from interviews with participants on the programme. This primary data receives further comprehensive analysis in Chapter 5 and discussion in Chapter 7, drawing learning from this research to provide recommendations in Chapter 8. For the purposes of this chapter, however, primary data and other sources contribute to the understanding of the KASP, rather than participants' experiences of the programme.



**Figure 3. 1A diagram indicating the relationships between: (i) Networks, (ii) Capitals, and (iii) Scholarships.**

### 3.3 Developed diagram to illustrate the relationships between: (i) Networks, (ii) Capitals, (iii) Scholarships.

The presented model depicts the relationships between the three main aspects of this literature review: Capital Forms, Networks and Scholarships. Capital Forms are the key resources, particularly the social, human and cultural personal assets, which can be converted into social economic benefits. The present work demonstrates that a knowledge-based economy requires humans to be considered as forms of capital, in that they are intrinsic to the functioning, maintenance and development of an economy. The development of knowledge and skills (both hard and soft) could give students the confidence to access the labour market, as the process of going to university is primarily an act of capital exchange, whereby financial capital is paid to acquire intellectual capital. The effective development of human capital could benefit the students by teaching them transferable skills related to the job market and give them confidence when searching for jobs, writing applications and/or developing their interviews skills. However, this can only happen through a range of input processes, such as social capital provided by institutions such as governments to the students. An important reason for the government to invest in intellectual capital is that understanding a knowledge economy is closely related to it and

such investment would help to ensure the successful diversification of the economy and its sustenance and sustainability. Its primary role is to work to build the productivity level of workers to the greatest extent through the implementation of better-quality performance management. It will also provide sustained training to enhance the capacity of professionals as well as knowledge exchange, which can be made possible through scholarship programmes offered by the government.

Such programmes afford students with the opportunity to obtain a world-class education in world-leading higher education institutions. Students are given financial aid to cover their tuition fees and/or living costs. It is anticipated by providers that such programmes not only benefit the individual, but also as the societies and economies from which they have been sent and to which they will return upon completion of the programme. Yet, scholarship programmes have the potential to change and increase the flow of economic, political and social capital within communities. Economic capital is extended by the state in order to increase all the other forms of capital in the students – cultural, social, and economic. Cultural and social capital are the most relevant for building a knowledge-based economy, although all three capital forms are a desired outcome of the scholarship programme. The expenditure of the initial outlay leads to complex benefits which will then feed off one another in a cyclical manner. Although this is often an enriching experience for the scholarship participants, the new experiences to which they are exposed in a new country with different cultural values and norms can also be disorienting. Although scholarships are temporary, it can leave the student needing to constantly negotiate between opposing values. Though it may give the student prestige and a competitive advantage, it may not actually prepare the student for employment in their home countries. In other words, while offering intellectual development, studying abroad may not enhance actual social and cultural capital.

Furthermore, networks, contacts and relationships will enhance the students' knowledge of how to access their targeted employment, help them recognise what roles they could lead, inform them how to lead others, help them develop their networks and contacts, and enable them to explore and develop the job market. The acquired benefits would not be limited to educational skills alone, but could be expanded to their networks, much the same as the exposure to new technologies also would expose them to new social and knowledge networks within their daily lives and throughout their education. The new environments and cultures in which they find themselves can strengthen the individual identity and ability to present themselves confidently. Such experiences would enable them to raise awareness among their peers about other cultures, and their personal narratives can also enable the

students to test their ideas and create different strategies to attain their goals by describing the areas they need to develop. This perhaps relates to the explanation given by Castells (2004, p. 20) about networks, where he stated:

*“A network is a large system consisting of many similar parts that are connected together to allow movement or communication between or along the parts, or between the parts and a control centre.”*

### **3.4. Section one: Networks**

#### **3.3.1. Introduction**

A networked society allows for people to connect with each other quicker and engage more actively, while focussing on what it is there to accomplish (Robert, 2004). This section presents the important work of Castells (2004) and his conception of the network society and ‘*informationalism*’, before arriving at a clearer understanding of what is meant by a knowledge economy and a knowledge society.

The section then applies these characteristics of a knowledge economy to the Saudi context in relation with the Saudi economy, and to the country’s aim of transitioning into a knowledge economy and a knowledge society. By building this foundational understanding, the thesis arrives at its main foci of the education, training and skills acquired by Saudi nationals studying abroad, especially those engaged with the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP), and how/if they are able to bring and contribute these to the Saudi Vision 2030 plan for its economy and society. Furthermore, the end of the section will outline women’s education in the KSA, with focus on the challenges of overcoming public opinion towards establishing it; past, present and future. Throughout this section, reference to both the KASP programme and Vision 2030’s aim to move the country’s economy from being resource-based to one that is knowledge-based, and an understanding of avenues of women’s empowerment will be built up based on the built up understanding of capital forms.

#### **3.3.2 Manuel Castells’ Conception of the Network Society**

The importance of Manuel Castells’ work (2004, 2011) is preceded only by its reputation and its great influence on discussions of knowledge society. Castells’ work (2004) is a resource which allows the reader to interact with developments in economy, society, politics, culture, structure, technology, innovation and power, to name but a few. It charts the evolution of industrial economies and societies over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, focusing on the technological developments of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, into what he calls a network society:

*A network society is a society whose social structure is made of networks powered by microelectronics-based information and communication technologies. By social structure I understand the organisational arrangements of humans in relationships of production, consumption, reproduction, experience, and power expressed in meaningful communication coded by culture. A network is a set of interconnected nodes [...] the relative importance of a node does not stem from its specific features but from its ability to contribute to the network's goals [...] Nodes only exist and function as components of networks. The network is the unit, not the node. (Castells, 2004, p.2)*

For Castells' concept of a network society, he enhances the traditional definition of a network, defined as:

*A large system consisting of many similar parts that are connected together to allow movement or communication between or along the parts, or between the parts and a control centre. (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2020)*

He does this by maintaining the main characteristics of 'interconnectedness', and 'facilitation of' (movement, communication), but zooms out to point back to the network as 'the' unit. He goes on to suggest that the power and control of the network requires a programme, or a first cause, which ultimately sets the direction:

*A network is defined by the program that assigns the network its goals and its rules of performance. This program is made of codes that include valuation of performance and criteria for success or failure. To alter the outcomes of the network a new program (a set of compatible codes) will have to be installed in the network – from outside the network. (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2020)*

As alluded to earlier, Castells' work is a resource that can be used to develop discussions to help us understand the impacts of cultural and, particularly, technological revolutions towards political change. It is the impact of technological revolutions towards changes to economic and social structure that are of most relevance to the topic of this thesis.

*At the core of this technological change that unleashed the power of networks, there was the transformation of information and communication technologies, based on the microelectronics revolution that took shape in the 1940s and 1950s. It constituted the foundation of a new technological paradigm, consolidated in the 1970s, mainly in the United States, and rapidly diffused around the world, ushering in what I have characterized, descriptively, as the Information Age [...] What we actually mean, and what I always meant, is that our society is characterized by the*

*power embedded in information technology, at the heart of an entirely new technological paradigm, that I called informationalism. (Castells, 2004, pp.6-8)*

Castells introduces his concept of 'informationalism' as a technological paradigm, which exists now – in his particular notion of a historical epoch he calls 'the information age'. He argues that there has been a shift in the way we use information. And that, above all, information is now seen as being a source of value. Castells argues that this source of value is generated and processed as part of this networked society.

The role of information as a source of value is identified by Castells as beginning and developing during the Cold War period (1947-1991), culminating in the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when it became apparent that having more information (either the US or Russia [then USSR]) would win the information war and ultimately could be decisive in avoiding or ending a military war between the two world superpowers (Castells, 2004, p.30). In 2020, information has value in being able to facilitate a multitude of activities, from targeted advertising (based on algorithms which factor in personal preferences, types of people, time, context, recent activity) to facilitating large gatherings (such as protests, festivals, pilgrimages), and includes influencing public opinion (in elections, referendums and socio-political interests). However, in the expanse of the development of the idea and practice of information as a source of value (as Castells understands it), as well as technological advances, over that time – especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union (late 1980s/early 1990s), 'informationalism' has become a part of modern capitalism – information has become a form of capital. Leading up to the present the rise of the Internet giants like Facebook, Google and Amazon exemplifies Castells' argument probably even more than he imagined was possible in the late 1990s when he first published his initial work on the information age.

This last point is important as it introduces two pivotal concepts to this thesis, one of which is capital forms, which relates to information, or more precisely knowledge, as a form of capital. The second concept is the process of ascribing value to commodities for trade. Both concepts will be discussed and explained further as part of the development of this research in Chapter 7.

*Informationalism*, as set out in the context of Castells' understanding of a network society in an information age – whereby information is a source of value and therefore a form of capital – is a view which resonates with the idea of a knowledge economy – one where the focus is on knowledge a

Source of value. Here, knowledge, unlike Castells' (2004) '*informationalism*', is something that cannot be considered simply as a technological phenomenon. To offer this critique is to find justification, for this thesis, to move towards an understanding and use of the concept and broader sense of a knowledge economy; not least because it allows for the need to discuss human and social issues, particularly the idea of forms of (knowledge) capital. Whereas Castells' *informationalism* necessarily, but not exclusively, links this commodified or value-imbued information to advances in technological innovation and contextualises it within a time-space framework of the information age, an understanding of knowledge economy better facilitates discussion on social and human issues, such as social interaction, education/training and access to training/learning, which facilitate the acquiring, developing, manifesting, and utilising of capital forms; a discussion to which social scientists, economists and philosophers have contributed more readily, fluidly and comprehensively. For example, and most notably, the work of Pierre Bourdieu is relevant to a discussion of human and social capital. However, as stated above, these discussions occur in following section of this chapter.

### **3.3.3. Saudi Arabian Economy in Transition**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is being pushed towards transitioning to a knowledge-based economy and away from a reliance on its plentiful yet diminishing oil reserves. The global reduction in reliance on non-renewable (and fossil fuel) energies, combined with a move towards more sustainable, environmentally friendly and renewable sources of energy are a pull factor for Saudi Arabia to follow the global trend. This consistent decline in demand has impacted oil prices and the impact on the KSA economy has led to a desire to withdraw from an over-reliance on crude oil, which is particularly susceptible to fluctuating prices due to global geo-political events and conditions.

Additionally, the knowledge economy itself is contributing to so much wealth generation for other economies that the KSA is being pulled towards this model:

*The new economy records that over 50% of gross domestic product in economically developed countries is based on the knowledge-based economy. (Hadad, 2017, p.3)*

Furthermore, there are internal factors such as a growing younger population which requires access to the outside world. They need to be empowered with the skills and knowledge required to not be so reliant on the resource of oil, or influenced so readily by global events, politics, demands and decisions. Therefore, and for further social, political, economic and other reasons beyond the scope of this thesis, the KSA has set in motion its Vision 2030 plan, since 2016, to move from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy.

The aforementioned characteristics and benefits of a knowledge economy are set out in Table 3.1 to aid analysis.

Taking each of these items in Table 3.1 in turn, first considering the 'characteristics', internal links emerge between them, which indicates coherence, such as improved and enhanced education for employees (5) being necessitated by the fast pace of technological advancement (ICT) (1). From characteristics 2 to 5 there is a definitive commitment required in the knowledge economy for investment in education. This points to the importance of the KASP for Saudi Arabia, as it represents the key investment area for successful manifestation of a knowledge economy. The remaining characteristic (6) combined with the first (1) point towards the key area for 'investment for development', 'investment in technology', especially ICT, as well as technological skill (the investment need is required in both the product and the skill of technology here).

**Table 3. 1 Characteristics and benefits of a knowledge economy**

No.	Characteristics	Benefits
1)	Pace of technological (ICT) advancement	Content of KE → stimulate investment growth → eventually adds to knowledge production
2)	Knowledge accessibility	KE enhances performance and cuts production by deploying technical means and approach
3)	New forms of education and training	KE changes the way economy is structured – value added
4)	Lifelong investment in training and learning	KE creates jobs, especially in advanced tech for qualified and skilled workers
5)	Improved and enhanced education for employees	Wealth generation and accumulation occurs through the knowledge of the knowledge economy
6)	Technological skills should be recognised	See footnote <sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Although there are benefits associated with technological skills being recognised, these are more relevant to the 'worker', and of less fiscal importance to the considerations of those that set the



Turning to the 'benefits' of a knowledge economy, it would aid our analysis further by taking each in turn and relating it to the area of an economy on which it impacts most. For the first benefit, which relates to the area of scientific research, we can see how the contents of the knowledge economy itself stimulates investment growth, which is evidenced in the context of Saudi Arabia by its long-standing commitment to these contents through its investment in educational institutions and programmes. This then, in turn, adds (or should add) to knowledge production. A cyclical system of knowledge is revealed: value, investment, creation. However, based on the review of literature earlier in this chapter, there is a missing element here which needs to be added between investment and creation – knowledge exchange – without which the value of knowledge is not fully realised, let alone increased. This, it seems, may be where KSA is struggling to realise the 'benefits' of a knowledge economy, even though it is seeking sincerely to invest in a knowledge-based economy and thereby manifest its 'characteristics' in its knowledge economy.

The second benefit relates to industry, in which the knowledge economy enhances performance and cuts production effectively in its petroleum industry, investing heavily in technology to gain more control of its vital natural resource by building its own refineries. However, this benefit can also be ascribed to the impact of globalisation, and an essential counterpart to the expected investment in infrastructure like transport, motorways, waterways and buildings.

The third benefit is related to economic structure and shows how a knowledge economy harnesses and increases knowledge: through investment, value, capital, as well as the significance of knowledge workers, and production capacity in that economy. It also points to how things have fundamentally changed in how economies sell/trade, advertise, share and perceive the contents of a knowledge economy. This is where the shift is in the transition and can be evidenced most notably in a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). For Saudi Arabia, these figures will be skewed due to the recent impact of Covid-19 and the consequential fall in demand for petroleum and the fall in numbers of people visiting from across the world for the annual Hajj pilgrimage. Thus, the statistics might point to a decrease in the GDP of Saudi from the knowledge economy. However, this is not to take away from the KSA being fully committed to this transition towards a knowledge economy, as is evidenced by the much developed service industries, tourism (other than for the Hajj pilgrimage), new scholarship (especially with the success of the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology – KAUST), and small and medium-sized businesses (some of

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direction and motion of the economy. As such, the benefits of this characteristic are intentionally omitted simply to draw attention to this fact.

which have a large online presence/consumer base) as well as the healthy economic activity produced from such ventures.

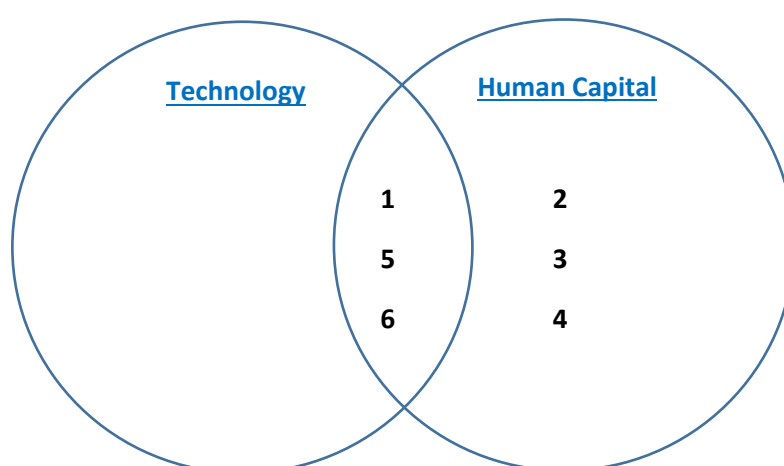
The fourth benefit relates to the job market, in which the KSA is beginning to really see and feel the effects of efforts to invest in the knowledge economy and its human capital. For a long time there was an absence of adequate employment opportunities for returning students from the KASP, and this made the issue of students not returning to the KSA after their studies a real problem, especially given the financial investment made in them. However, things have started to improve with jobs available in industries such as education, academia, science research, small and medium-sized businesses, marketing, information management, and ICT. This is still a problem area, however, as it has been projected that the labour force will increase to close to 8.6 million by 2030, at a participation rate of 44%. This means that, on average, 203,000 jobs have to be created per year to 2030. The Vision 2030 aim is to lower the unemployment rate to 7% from 11.6%. It further aims to overhaul the entire education system to accommodate the vision. This area is discussed further in Section **3.3.4** and Chapter **6**.

The fifth benefit relates to wealth, its generation and accumulation and how this is achieved by the knowledge economy. In terms of this overall discussion in this thesis, this benefit touches on discussion presented in Chapter **7**, especially on the wealth of nations – how it operates and more fundamentally what is considered to be wealth. In the knowledge economy, knowledge itself is of value and is a form of wealth. And unlike in traditional resource economies, its value is not so much dependent on availability of a finite resource, but rather its value relates to how much it is also valued by others; and how effectively it can be shared, promoted and traded. The skilled operation of technology and ICT requires human capital investment and the KSA is engaged in this activity to manifest its knowledge economy. However, this benefit also requires careful strategy and positioning from the KSA, to lean into its position as a knowledge economy, and also perhaps its global geo-political position, to benefit fully from the wealth of the knowledge economy. This benefit is thus pivotal for the transition and the end goal of a successful knowledge economy.

It is noteworthy that as part of its human capital development effort, the Human Capital Centre (HCC) was established by royal decree (Al-Ghalayini, 2018). This centre of excellence will be the incubator for the government to manage human capital. Its primary role is to work to build the productivity level of workers to the greatest height through the implementation of better-quality performance management. It will also provide sustained training to enhance the capacity of professionals as well as knowledge exchange, which can be made possible through a different scholarship programme offered by the

government. However, this could potentially be misplaced pressure of a type that leans on human capacity building, rather than on knowledge-based economy development, which – although a nuanced and subtle critique – could make all the difference in the holistic and successful development of a knowledge-based economy.

The characteristics represent a Venn diagram, as presented in Figure 3.,2 of key areas for investment to build a knowledge-based economy, which are: human, intellectual and social capital; and technology, especially ICT.



**Figure 3. 2 Venn diagram**

The relationship shown in the Venn diagram is also represented in Table 3.2 to show the description of each characteristic, against each key area(s) for investment they relate to both human capital and technology.

**Table 3. 2 Description of characteristic of knowledge-economy against technology and human capital**

Characteristic No.	Description of characteristic of knowledge-economy	Technology	Human Capital	Technology and Human Capital
1	Pace of technological (ICT) advancement			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2	Knowledge accessibility		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
3	New forms of education and training		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

4	Lifelong investment in training/learning		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
5	Improved and enhanced education for employees			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6	Technological skill should be recognised			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

As can be seen from Figure 3.2 and Table 3.2, there are three characteristics which relate solely to human capital and three which intersect between human capital and technology. This indicates the primary importance of investment in human capital as both the creator and innovator in a knowledge economy, as well as the consumer, operator and producer of its technologies.

Furthermore, it could be argued that a knowledge economy is more human than technology centred, but in actuality it is knowledge centred – which is why the knowledge economy is an appropriate term. It is also the reason why building a knowledge-based economy requires investment in human capital as the main priority, and why the KSA is correct in its approach by investing in human, intellectual and social capital, through a number of initiatives, most notably the international scholarship programme, KASP. These are also the reasons why this thesis is concerned with the education of Saudi nationals abroad, and with their experiences of acquiring knowledge and skills to contribute to the KSA's Vision 2030 national plan, towards transitioning from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy. This is what makes the KASP such an important case study to this thesis' area of study and to its research aims and objectives.

### 3.3.4 The Empowerment of Saudi Women

There is a general trend in the world to empower women, whether this be through political participation – allowing women the right to vote and participate in the political process – or through being able to work and earn money as contributors to the national economy, or even in gender parity – in equity of education and equal pay for the same work done. In some aspects of this aim and struggle there is success for more developed democratic nations, in other areas there is less success. In some nations there is more desire (from the people or the political powers) for this to be the case, in others less so. The issue concerns which aspects of the socio-political a people are comfortable with being more equitable and those which are not, as well as how quickly such equity can be reached. To provide an example, in the UK women's suffrage – by which they finally achieved the same voting rights as men – occurred and became instituted through the Equal Franchise Act of 1928,

but almost a century later there still persists a structural problem in parity of pay across genders for the same work done (BBC News, 2016). In the UK, therefore, women appear to be politically equal, but economically unequal. For Saudi Arabia, there is a need for them to contribute to economic activity, but the country has not yet arrived at this status of equity in economic activity.

This part of the thesis recognises this dichotomy and seeks to both acknowledge it and call for greater awareness to be able to overcome it. It begins by looking at the background of women's education in Saudi Arabia and the challenges of overcoming public opinion towards establishing it. It proceeds to consider the potential of Saudi women's education to benefit the economy and change the fabric of Saudi society over time. The section then turns to the challenges to Saudi Women's participation in the economy, as well as what Saudi state intervention has and could do to facilitate such participation.

#### **3.3.4.1 Women's Education in Saudi Arabia: Background**

The state sponsored education of women in Saudi Arabia is a recent development. It can be traced back to the opening of the Dar al-Hanan and Nassif private schools for girls in the city of Jeddah in 1957. This was prompted by Iffat, the wife of the then-Crown Prince, and soon to be King, Faisal (reign: 1964-1975). Subsequently, the Saudi government began opening state-operated girls' schools. Religious fundamentalists protested the openings of the schools, and in 1963, the then-Crown Prince and soon to be King Faisal bought in soldiers to control protesters when a girls' school opened in Buraydah.

The General Administration of Girls' Education (also called the General Presidency for Girls' Education) was established independently from the Ministry of Education when girls' education began in Saudi Arabia in the 1960s. Girls' education was put under the control of a separate administration controlled by conservative clerics as "*a compromise to calm public opposition to allowing (not requiring) girls to attend school*" (House, 2012, p.152).

#### **3.3.4.2 The Potential of Saudi Women's Education**

The present educational landscape for Saudi Arabian women is incredibly progressive in contrast to other Middle East countries. According to the World Bank report, female students in higher education in Saudi Arabia outnumber those in Jordan, Tunisia, and the West Bank and Gaza (World Bank, 2008, p.172). According to the World Bank Edstats database, in Saudi Arabia in 2006 the gross enrolment rate for females was 36.1%, for males was 24.7%, and for the total was 30.2%.

This particular desire, therefore, has spearheaded the crossing of important milestones in Saudi Arabian legal, civic and political arenas. In the area of law, for example, the first group of women graduated from a law programme in 2008. On 6 October 2013, the first four

women received their legal licences to practice law, not only as legal consultants but as lawyers in courtrooms and before the Saudi judiciary. Further to which, around 2009, an expert on girls' education became the first woman minister in Saudi Arabia. Nora bint Abdullah al-Fayez, a US-educated former teacher, was made deputy education minister in charge of a new department for female students (Borger, 2009).

Further commitment and investment in both women's education and participation in society is demonstrated by the generous provisions of Saudi Arabia for female students through one of the world's largest scholarship programmes, the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP), which has helped thousands of Saudi women earn doctorates from western universities (World Bank, 2007). The building of colleges and universities for women, which was recently announced by the government, is also critically important (World Bank, 2009). This is in addition to the Princess Nora bint Abdul Rahman University (PNU), which is the first women's university in Saudi Arabia and the largest women-only university in the world, composed of 32 campuses across the Riyadh region.

#### **3.3.4.3. Challenges to Saudi Women's Participation**

Although women comprise 60% of Saudi Arabia's college students, they make up only 21% of its labour force, which is much lower than in neighbouring countries. Transition from education to participation in the labour market is slow and cumbersome. Correlating advances over the last decade in women's participation in society reflect both pioneering and large-scale leaps forward, coupled with astonishment about what is required to effect such change. In January 2013, women were announced as members of the nation's Consultative Assembly. In 2015, they were allowed to run for office in municipal elections. In early 2017, Saudi state schools announced that they would be offering physical education classes to both boys and girls starting in the fall of 2017 (World Bank, 2008). Later that same year, the state announced that they would be allowing men and women to attend sport events, including inside sports stadiums (World Bank, 2007). On 26 September 2017, a royal decree granted women the right to drive vehicles, to take effect from June 2018.

Depending on which direction one looks from, it is still the case that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it requires a royal decree or incredible pioneering for a system of government as in the KSA, to allow this liberty for freedom of movement, facilitating women's greater participation in society and, hopefully, the labour market. To hold both these views and feelings is the challenge of the women of Saudi Arabia, especially those who are returning to Saudi in the hope of making a contribution to the Saudi economy and society other than, and indeed in

addition to, being a suitable match for an educated Saudi man, producing children and maintaining a family.

To delve deeper still, it is the challenge of this thesis to hold these different perspectives and present them and suggestions for the role of education in the transition from a resource-based society to a knowledge-based society with clarity, whilst doing justice to the incredibly important role and potential impact that Saudi women's participation can have towards achieving this aim.

### **3.3.5 Saudi State Intervention**

Internally, both the voice and the will of the people in Saudi Arabian society are very much subject to the will of the Saudi ruling family, which itself is historically moderated by conservative clerics and religious opinion, meted out by and measured (for response) according to public opinion. In this tripartite system, these forces move like a tricycle, with the Saudi ruling family in a strong leadership position, as the wheel in front; driving the nation forward. If either of the back wheels, public opinion or conservative clerics, decide to move either move forward or apply the break independently of the other wheels, the tricycle will just move in one big circle. This makes the role of the Saudi ruling family incredibly important, as they have to steer both the back wheels in the right direction, despite pressures and constraints, ensuring forward motion. Things have been changing into the right direction since 2015 when King Salman and MBS came up with vision 2030 which made sure that the country has to move forward no matter what.

To a large extent, it must be noted, Saudi Arabia is and has been engaged in this forward motion. One such engagement is through the KASP programme and the fleet of returning students to Saudi Arabia who are seeking employment in the labour market. However, for those who are excluded – women – this fleet becomes a crowd of men, for whom only a handful gain employment commensurate to their training and education, in a competitive job market with an inadequately small knowledge-based economy.

What is required in response to this, counter-intuitive as it may seem, is greater intervention by the Saudi ruling family, the front wheel, to do two things. The first is to take the necessary policy decisions to facilitate the effective transition of the Saudi economy from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy. This is already being attempted, and KASP is an excellent example and move towards this, as is the aforementioned investment in education in the Saudi education system, at all levels. As an achievable task, this is also so much easier said than done. The investment is immense and the commitment is there – which together make all the difference – but the intelligence being gathered and the insights from research that this thesis hopes to add to might help to contribute to Saudi achieving

this success with a more informed strategy in a straighter direction. Another recommendation is for investment in education to be more targeted toward social science related subjects, in addition to the investment in science and technology related subjects.

The importance of the back wheels mean that the Saudi ruling family must look back as well as forward, and indeed outwards. Given the role of Saudi Arabia in the global economic market, as well as its significance to the Muslim world, the responsibility weighs heavy on the Saudi ruling family to successfully steer the country forward.

The second intervention required by the Saudi ruling family is akin to the advances it has made in civil society. It is the suggestion and recommendation of this thesis towards techniques and strategies to be used during recruitment, to ensure meritocracy and equity in recruitment practices. This would provide for the factor of bias to be removed during the recruitment process and allow women a fair platform to engage in the labour market. The techniques and strategies include such things as blind-interviewing (where appropriate), anonymised applications, as well as – perhaps an aspirational aim – following gender-impact assessments, a clear commitment and policy towards closing the gender pay-gap (Perez, 2020). This would put Saudi Arabia in a better position to overcome the challenge for women's participation in the labour market, presented by the unseen hand of the patriarchy at play in recruitment practices, as well as conservative public opinion – leading to appointment on merit.

### **3.3.6. An Informed Approach**

Saudi Arabia is in a unique historic position; it has both global relevance, historically, and makes a significant contribution to the world at present. The wealth of the nation is immense and gives Saudi the resources needed to take its chosen course, which is informed by external forces and realities of a diminishing and increasingly less relevant natural resource, oil, Saudi's main contribution to the world. Saudi needs to be economically relevant if it is to continue in its role as a significant world player and regional power.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to describe and prescribe a policy approach or economic strategy for Saudi Arabia, but it is important to note that approaches and strategies could be informed by what is discussed here, especially in terms of Saudi Arabia's role in the Muslim world – how this could inform its approach and vision of a Saudi Arabia transitioning to a knowledge-based economy. In addition, the KSA's leaders should be informed by discussions around facilitating the participation of women in the Saudi labour market, especially in the vision of a knowledge-based economy, as well as in making the effective interventions needed to make this vision a successful reality.



In such an instance of successful transition and progressive advancement, the Saudi ruling family can potentially become the champions of the Saudi people, increase their reputation in the Muslim world, and acquire 'prestige' in international circles.

### **3.3.7. Summary**

This section has reviewed different concepts and theories relating to the subject of the research. The theories reviewed include Manuel Castells' concept of the network society, which he describes as a network that is surrounded by historical patterns, rising prevalent functions and processes. Furthermore, he believes that the organised network creates social change in the environment and that the sharing of networking logic significantly alters the result and process of cultural operations, the production experience, and their power. Thus this section explores the concept of a knowledge economy.

A knowledge economy is seen as the powerhouse of productivity and, within this model, growth in the economy can be a function of the knowledge involved in it. Thus it has been shown that transitioning to a knowledge-based economy involves long-term investment in educational knowledge, capacity building to enhance innovations, development of modern ICT infrastructure, and establishing enabling environments that can support economic productivity. Moreover, moving deeper into the discussion of a knowledge-based economy, this section identified key characteristics and benefits of a knowledge economy. It provided analysis to draw out similarities, intersections, internal coherence, cyclical systems, foci for investment and development of a knowledge economy as pertaining to different areas of the economy.

This section also examined the characteristics and benefits of knowledge economy in relation to the KSA's transition towards a knowledge-based economy, beginning with a discussion about the push and pull factors of the need to reduce carbon emission to reduce climate change, to which fossil fuels are the number one contributor, and because of the dwindling price of oil in the global market. It made reference throughout to what Saudi Arabia is doing concerning human capital development, linking this to the country's massive investment in human capital, through initiatives such as the KASP, and for the advancement of the Vision 2030 plan for economic diversification.

This section concluded by reaching a greater understanding of where the foci are for investment of a knowledge-based economy, observing that the KSA is therefore correct to pursue its investment in human capital through KASP. This supports the case for this

research to delve deeper into these discussions, especially with regard to a case study of KASP, but also into discussions of concepts such as capital forms, the research context of Saudi Arabia, other international scholarship programmes, as well as discussion of the primary research sample of Saudi nationals from KASP. The following section will present the different **Capital Forms** and their relevance to the Saudi context.

## **3.4. Section Two: Capital Forms**

### **3.4.1. Introduction**

This section presents a broad review of the literature related to ‘Capital Forms’ in order to present the context for the data collection process. It explains the meaning of capital forms in-depth, particularly Bourdieu’s (1986) definition and discussion of the term, in order to move to other forms of capital. It begins by introducing a brief historical background of the term capital forms, with reference to Adam Smith’s (1937) work on capital, and how it operates in the system of capitalism that he envisioned, in relation to individuals and society/the state. This is followed by discussion of Bourdieu’s (1986) work to guide the overview of different forms of capital. Tangible and intangible forms of capital are also part of the historical discussion of modern theorists such as Benkler, Carr, and Warsh to track whether the evolutions of capital and ways of exchanging capital (work) as well as the means of production (the Internet and other technological developments) have indeed provided more agency and power, or served to further dislocate us from the ownership of wealth. This discussion is important to the aims of the KASP programme and the implications for creation of a future Saudi society through the KSA’s Vision 2030 agenda, and so will be connected to this overarching discussion throughout this chapter.

### **3.4.2. Historical Background of ‘Capital Forms’**

In order to move on to other forms of capital, it is important to clarify the terms ‘capitalism’ and ‘capital forms’. Capitalism is not easy to define – it is not simply about exchange but centres on manipulating and investing to derive an increase in value. Bourdieu (1986) defined capital as:

*accumulated labour (in its materialized form or its ‘incorporated,’ embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor [...] Capital, which, in its objectified or embodied forms, takes time to accumulate and which, as a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in*

*identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being, is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible. (p.241)*

The concept of capital and the economic system that stems from it – capitalism – is a system in which private individuals or businesses own capital goods; moreover, the right of ownership of private wealth is the key cornerstone of the system, upon which is built the right to trade in goods and services. The right and ability to both produce and trade in goods and services is also one of the prime movers of the system of capitalism. These principles are enshrined in political systems, especially democratic systems.

Capitalism is also seen as the system that helps individuals and groups in society make manifest their agency and 'liberty' by being able to own, produce and trade in goods and services. For individuals throughout history, and especially as a focus of the capitalist system, their labour is the service that they are able to provide and trade in, known as moveable capital. Historically, during the Industrial Revolution and the expansive growth of capitalist production, this meant that people, especially in England, became geographically mobile from the rural to the urban towns and cities, in order to exchange their labour (variable capital) to operate the machinery (fixed capital) in the factories and mills to increase the production of capital for the factory and mill owners. Therefore, to understand the nature of capital as resources (human and material) it would – through many evolutions of both labour and machinery – be understood as movable and fixed capital relating to each other in much the same way as it has always done, in the context of the bigger system of capitalism and wealth production. To expand on this is to state simply that private wealth most often continues to benefit those in control of the means of production within the capitalist economic system.

However, there have been many ways to understand capital and capitalism, and capitalism itself has changed over time. Moreover, the theories of capital (what is considered to be goods and services, that can be owned and traded to increase revenue) are different to forms of capital (is it only goods and services that can be considered capital or does it include such things as an idea, a logo, a franchise or production model, like McDonalds or Ford?). During a job interview, for example, does capital include the style and way you present yourself to make you more able to trade your labour in the (job) marketplace than the next candidate? If so, then this too has been and will be considered – through this chapter – in its ability to be acquired/owned, produced and traded.

### 3.4.2.1 Adam Smith's Theory of Capital and Beyond

The examination of capital and its forms and effects begins with Adam Smith and his seminal 1776 book: *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations*. Smith, considered a moral philosopher, author, and pioneer of political economy, and a key figure during the Scottish Enlightenment, is also known as '*the father of economics*'. He distinguished capital from simply money or property (Belyh, 2019) – according to Smith, capital is 'that part of men's stock which he expects to afford him revenue', in which stock was understood to be the 'moveable' portion of a farm. As industrialization progressed, the reference to the stock of a farm became metaphorical, but the concept persists – capital is the part of products that one expects to gain revenue or other value from, therefore, it is not simply wealth. Smith further made the distinction between fixed and circulating capital. Fixed capital consists of machinery, whereas circulating capital is raw materials used to produce a product which will then be sold. For example, if the capitalist in question is part of the wool trade, their fixed capital is their machinery for carding and spinning wool, whereas their circulating capital is the raw wool itself, to be processed and then sold as yarn or some other product. Thus, the circulating capital is itself a commodity that could be sold, but processing it using the fixed capital adds value to the product. In turn, the money that the capitalist makes from the enterprise is not necessarily capital – it only becomes so if it is invested in more machinery or more raw material. If it is saved or spent on necessities or luxuries not related to the business, it is not capital. Thus, capital can be converted to non-capital, though the reverse may also be true (Smith, 2000, p.10). The important concept is that the basis of having inputs in the form of certain types of goods and services (raw materials, labour, machinery) has the effect of (almost unlimited) growth in wealth (outputs of higher value), namely, the type of economic growth that we see in capitalist countries where there is the existence of capital and the freedom to use it.

However, according to Smith and many of his contemporaries – and, indeed, economists in the century or so following Smith – capital is understood to be both physical and measurable. It is apparent, however, from modern perspectives and demonstrable realities, that if capital is to be defined as something that one has which gives value or allows one to make a profit, it is not confined to forms that are tangible. According to Smith, stock is divided into two parts, one which is used for immediate consumption and the second for earning additional revenue. This latter sum he calls 'capital', and hence the term capitalism is derived from its use in a commercial system of production and exchange. Capital is therefore an engine for economy (Smith, 2020).

However, our understanding of Capital has developed since Smith's time, through the Industrial Revolution, and the post-war development of technology and transport of goods

and services towards a global economy into very different and varied forms. Today, both the tangible and intangible qualify as capital, sometimes independently and sometimes coalescing. For example, if the wool producer's machinery and raw material allows them to manufacture the product that then generates the income, so too does his know-how, his training, and his contacts in the industry. Those are intangible, but without them, the material goods are useless. As these are things of value that can also be inherited or acquired, they must also constitute a type of capital. Interestingly, many of the terms, definitions and theories came after the change and evolution of capital and through capitalist development, but important to understanding modern capital and capitalism, innovative ways of conceptualising the nature of capital and process of capitalism has produced new forms and impacts. Examples of these include the invention and trading of crypto-currencies like Bitcoin, or the trading of risk and debt by banks.

Smith was well aware that increased industry and wealth brought about changes in society that went beyond physical, fixed and circulating capital. These were the products of increased wealth but sometimes also its cause – elements such as improvements in income (Smith, cited by Spengler, 1977, p.89) and the gradual improvement of arts, manufacturing and commerce itself (Smith, cited by Spengler, 1977, p.755). However, according to Spengler (1977, p.32), Smith did not anticipate that the intermediary factors that produced these changes – for example, education – could become a commodity. Yet the ways in which the nature of commodities have changed – into things, knowledge, and/or skills that can be exchanged – are ways in which capital has developed in its forms, and in our understanding of how capitalism works and has developed. These developments must now be considered in the study of capital.

Human development theory, as developed in the 1980s and 1990s through the work of Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen and the United Nations' Human Development Index, states that there are several forms of intellectual, rather than physical, capital (Bassam, 2013). These include skills, knowledge social capital, individual capital and instructional capital. Later, these categories and definitions would be further refined, but the basic concept (from Smith) remains the same – capital not only takes the form of physical things but encompasses those aspects of things 'that create value', which may or not be physical. Capitalism is not just about increasing things or exchanging things, it is about increasing value. Hence, capitalism is not only about quantity, it is also about quality.

The transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy is noteworthy and profound. On the one hand, it appears to be a smooth and intuitive evolution in the way one views both money and commodities, and, indeed, in the way an increasing

range of aspects of everyday life are transformed into commodities. In economics, a commodity can be a good or service that has full or substantial fungibility, – it is mutually interchangeable (How Commodities Work, 2020). According to Marx, a commodity “*appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties*” (How Commodities Work, 2020). It is safe to say that knowledge has become a commodity, exchangeable for currency.

Originally, currency was created to symbolically replace actual items available for barter. So instead of comparing one commodity with another, everything could be measured in terms of currency, hence bringing it into an actual ‘exchange value’. Currencies were originally based on the gold standard, that is, there was gold in the vaults of the nation to back up the value of the bills printed, until the outbreak of World War One in most European countries (World Gold Council, 2020). However, after this time, and due to arguments in favour of means of exchange value becoming more mobile internationally, exchange value of currency became intrinsically linked to the economies of nation-states and the production of currency and debt to nations’ central banks. For the purposes of efficiency for human interaction and trade, instead of having to compare one commodity with another, everything could be measured in terms of money or exchange value.

Trade was previously carried out in ‘things’ that were largely physical and tangible rather than symbolic – the exception being the trade for expert services. Understandings have also developed over time, such as the concept of labour, which was introduced as a unique aspect of value by Marx, since he saw it as the main source of value in capitalism (Marx, 2020). Marx developed the labour theory of value – as the only source of added value in producing a commodity from raw materials, machinery and so on is the essential labour required to produce the new product. Contrary to this, his theory was that people (such as bankers and investors) believed that you could acquire value by operating within and predicting the market; the market itself being seen as having agency, whether as a collective agency of consumer behaviour, or other external and internal forces like government policy or competition amongst business interests.

In all cases, however, the evolution of capital and capitalism has been from an economy built upon more literal and tangible forms, to one that is increasingly intangible, abstract, nominal and symbolic. For Smith (1976, p.282) capital is:

*fixed capital, of which the characteristic is, that it affords a revenue or profit without circulating or changing masters’ included machines, buildings, land and ‘the acquired and useful abilities’ of individuals. (Hodgson, 2014)*

For Bourdieu (1986), this evolved into:

*Capital is accumulated labour (in its materialised form or its “incorporated,” embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e. exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labour. (p. 15)*

Nowhere else is this truer than in Britain, where the Industrial Revolution developed capital production, all the way through the 20<sup>th</sup> century to date, where London is a global centre for development through banking and other financial services – international capitalism, trade and investment, and ever-evolving ways for the exchange of value. The increase, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, of the exchange of services and other non-tangible commodities has also evolved subsequent understandings of the concept of capital, commodities, and capitalism.

However, I believe that the evolution in the understanding of capital is also a revolution, a more profound, precipitous, and complete change, and that understanding it as such has ramifications for the development of the economies of nations worldwide, including Saudi Arabia. Many nations have completed this revolution, but for those who have not, making the transition may prove vital and a solid understanding of the process is undeniably an asset as it will lead to an understanding of how educational and industrial systems need to change to complete and capitalize upon the revolution. Moreover, as economic strength relies upon the accumulation of capital – as everyone since Adam Smith has known and largely accepted – understanding and making transitions in capital forms predicates the transition of the whole economy.

What is at stake here is definable as the transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based one, a transition that many countries have undergone successfully while others have failed to do so. Such a transition is coherent with the change in the understanding of what constitutes capital (Hodgson, 2014; Bourdieu, 1986).

The example of Saudi Arabia sufficiently illustrates the general concept. Saudi Arabia's dependence on oil is an example of the dependence on Smith's fixed and circulating capital as a source of economic growth. Fixed capital consists of the machinery for extracting oil and the ownership of properties from which oil is extracted. It is important to note that oil is just a raw material whose value depends on market demand and supply. The vulnerability in this system of relying on tangible products and forms of capital for wealth and growth is the knowledge that the supply is not inexhaustible. This vulnerability may be alleviated if the fixed and circulating capital in question was diversified – if there were many natural resources and manufactured products on which the economy depends. However,

dependence on a single, relatively raw product makes one extremely vulnerable. Wealth production exists only for so long as (a) that product is available and (b) there is a market for it. Moreover, wealth thus produced tends not to be distributed equitably throughout a society as the means of production are and can possibly (for capitalism's survival – as it presently operates) be owned only by a few. Further to which, the desire for wealth accumulation, rather than the distribution and circulation of wealth across the nation (Smith's original moral ideal for the economy of nations), has become the primary reason and enduring quest of almost all people living/surviving under capitalist economic systems.

To be clear, such a resource-based economy with foundations resting primarily upon a single resource would not be Smith's ideal or his recommendation. Smith saw the wealth of nations as dependent upon manufacturing and division of labour to produce items not in or near their raw forms, but ones which required and provided a great deal of wage labour.<sup>4</sup> However, the dependence on tangible sources of capital, we understand now, is in itself a vulnerability.

One reason for this is that tangible capital disperses rather slowly within an economy. Smith famously argued that the wealth of industries and capitalists will lead to overall gains in the entire country; and the standard of living will rise overall as more industry offers more jobs and more diverse, tangible and intangible benefits. Over the years, this has proven to be both true and untrue and is, to this day, controversial. However, John Maynard Keynes had a profound criticism of Smith's concept (later identifiable as Ronald Reagan's 'trickle down' theory or 'Reaganomics' [Phillips, 1990; Powers, 1995]) when he noted that a *laissez-faire* economy depending on the invisible hand does not in fact cover the needs of those disadvantaged during economic crises (Davis et al., p.127).

Tangible capital forms only disperse slowly, if at all. While wages and overall standards of living might rise, capital tends to remain accumulated in the hands of individuals, groups and families who own and control the key forms. Evidently, Smith was critical of the ways in which 'economic rent' skewed markets and Marx's criticism of the capitalist system indicated that it is exploitative and "*expropriates the excess labour*" of those who are without capital – but one does not have to be a Marxist in order to see the validity of such criticism (Marx, 1865). Indeed, Smith's argument for a free market was in fact for a market free from

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<sup>4</sup> The pursuit of ever-greater profits by companies, manufacturers and producers that developed efficiency through machinery (the assembly line), were and are, in Smith's line of understanding a danger to the wealth of nations. However, this change precipitated and hastened a development and move towards service-based economies, which for countries like Britain still holds significance and contributes considerably to the wealth of the nation, in the financial services industry centred in the City of London.



economic rent – almost the exact opposite of those who use his name in favour of a free market allowing freedom for rentiers of all kinds.

Wealth, privilege, and therefore capital tend to stay in the hands of those who originally own them and increase there. Other, non-tangible forms of capital, however, have a greater possibility of dispersing throughout society, and therefore enriching the society as a whole. It is not a foregone conclusion that they will do so, but the transmission of knowledge, for example, may occur more readily than the transmission of fixed or financial capital. As a result, concentration on other forms of capital holds out hope for the overall enrichment of a society, with the provision that other forms of capital may only be realized if they circulate and are shared – unlike economic rent, which is characterized by binary exchanges. Economic rent means you own something, and you loan it out to people, but you keep control of your ownership. Smith was very critical of what he called rentiers, those who were manipulating resources and only letting people use it at a very high price. This was seen by Smith as completely undermining the way in which capitalism should operate (Smith, 1931).

#### **3.4.2.2 Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Capital**

Pierre Bourdieu was a French sociologist and philosopher. Though not an economist, he nevertheless made observations about the nature of capital that are relevant to a broad view of economics. According to Bourdieu, explained in *The Forms of Capital* (1986), capital is the currency that is capable of buying one a higher position in society and is what decides one's role. In short, capital determines one's social well-being and status. Here, Bourdieu is expanding on Marx's idea that capital is what gives one control of the means of production and acquisition of wealth (Marx, 1865), but unlike Marx and Smith, Bourdieu conceptualizes capital as going far beyond tangible and exchangeable commodities. Bourdieu was a cultural sociologist and so he developed this aspect of capital as a social/cultural force and not simply as an economic one. For Bourdieu, therefore, the three forms of capital are economic, cultural and social. Moreover, the three types can transform into one another, sometimes in a cyclical way in which the result is a net increase in capital when labour and time (sometimes called labour-time by Bourdieu) is injected into the process:

*capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations ("connections"), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility. (Bourdieu, 1986, p.16)*

Economic capital is not simply money, it is wealth – something that can act as the source of revenue and further the wealth a culture may have; some define it as wealth to create further wealth or add value. In modern times, it could also be tantamount to cryptocurrency such as Bitcoin. Economic capital does not exist alone but is inextricably linked to other forms. Cryptocurrencies are a new form of medium of exchange – but they are not wealth as such, beating back the theory that money was the one and only form of medium of exchange. Cultural capital may be defined as ‘what you have and what you know’, and it is subdivided into embodied, objectified and institutionalized cultural capital. A brief overview of the three forms of Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of capital follows.

- **Cultural Capital**

*Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, i.e. in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the institutionalized state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee. (Bourdieu, 1986, p.17)*

According to Bourdieu there are three types of cultural capital. These are embodied, objectified and institutionalised capital. Embodied cultural capital is intrinsic to the individual. It consists of skills that one has acquired through experience or schooling, but also one's presentation of oneself to society – one's accent, cultural tastes, vocabulary, even demeanour. Certain behaviours, appearances and ways of expressing oneself are associated with wealth and power and having these will accelerate acceptance into higher social groups in terms of wealth acquisition, asset outlook and individual social interactions. Embodied cultural capital may give one more influence and may even lead to an increase in the other forms as well.

Objectified cultural capital refers to one's material belongings that have cultural significance – such as a prestigious car or designer clothing. The use of objectified cultural capital varies according to time period and the society and segment of society in which one lives and changes according to fashion. What may confer or convey prestige in one time and place may be out of place, and therefore a barrier to belonging, in another. Knowledge of the objects that will provide prestige and having the means to acquire them are dependent on the other forms of capital, economic and social – and this is one example of how all the forms of capital are both interactive and interdependent.

Institutionalized cultural capital refers to credentials and qualifications such as those acquired at a university, as well as a title that is acquired, such as Doctor of Philosophy. Institutionalized cultural capital is a further way in which others may recognise a person's credibility and/or position in society. It is worth noting, given the larger topic at hand, that a university degree confers at least two types of cultural capital directly – embodied (knowledge and skills) and institutionalized (credentials). Cultural capital tends to imbue people who recognise and share it with a sense of kinship with one another. Cultural capital denotes position and is often what allows one to acquire the next form, social capital; and vice versa.

- **social capital**

*Social capital may be defined as 'who you know'; one's social capital can be identified as one's network. To elaborate on this, social capital Bourdieu defined social capital as "the sum of resources be it actual or virtual that accrue to a group or an individual merely by virtue of possessing a network, which is durable of institutionalized relationships of acquaintance and recognition which is mutual" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.119). There were two basic ways to increase one's social capital, and this is basically true even today although, as seen in the subsequent analysis of Benkler, the potential for forming networks has increased greatly through technology. Firstly, social capital may increase if one knows many people, or if one knows and builds relationships with a few powerful people who know many others. Secondly, relationships with people can be 'inherited' or conferred on a person through their family, or through the school they attend, or their social, ethnic, cultural group (structure) or even sub-culture – alumni networks, or caste/tribe system affiliation, for example:*

*Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group<sup>11</sup> – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (Bourdieu, 1986, p.21)*

Therefore, in relation to the topic at hand, university education also increases social capital in a number of ways. For example, this may be through building networks of people on a course of study, or through student societies and clubs, or even after leaving university through alumni networks.

Social capital, as discussed and presented by Bourdieu, is very important because groups share their capital amongst their networks, and by joining the group one will potentially have

a share in it. Having social capital to begin with – by being born into a higher social class, for example – causes social capital to increase without great effort, in that class migration up the social order does not need to be a life-long effort for material and social wealth, and so instead one may focus on improving one's standing in society in other ways, making this the foci. This is an important point in relation to reputation, or prestige, because one may gain this by being seen as a philanthropist or someone who focuses on social and community improvement or other charitable work. This then becomes the thing that people see as one's focus and main interest and ignore how this is only possible because one already has financial capital, or indeed social capital.

Another key point about social capital is that when one has social capital already, more people are eager to be acquainted with one, so the social network can increase without much time and effort needed to try and increase it. When one has less social capital to begin with, greater effort is needed if one wishes to augment it.

In and through the work of Bourdieu, the whole notion of social capital as a form of capital has gained increasing importance and relevance and brought it to the consciousness of those trying to understand and acquire capital. From academics to business owners and entrepreneurs, to criminal enterprises, through to social entrepreneurs, and even (to an extent) the 21<sup>st</sup> century digitally and socially literate population of the world are all aware of (to differing degrees) and participate in the building of their social capital in some way. This is most true through social media and the possibilities for connection it has afforded people, but also through formal and professional networks built around key enterprises and issues. Social capital, it is fair to say, is a more accessible slice of the pie in today's society and global economy and akin to one's potential and actual capital. This is especially true, within the understanding presented here, of the interconnected nature of types of capital, whereby although the slice of social capital may not be equal in size to that of the economic slice, it will be enjoyed by more people. In other words, given that most people do not have financial capital and are unlikely to gain any significant amount of it, developing social capital is both a reasonable alternative, and an important one. Further to which, it may even be argued – as developed here and explored throughout this thesis – that it may serve to increase one's social network and therefore potentially create further avenues towards accumulating financial capital; or indeed (and more likely) cultural capital.

In relation to this thesis, the addition of social capital and the greater understanding of it and how it works, and how it has developed understandings of capital forms, as both a tangible and intangible form, is a key feature of the development of the research topic. In other words, accepting and understanding the what and how of social capital could greatly benefit

the KASP scholarship and the aims of the KSA to make a transition from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy. This could be achieved by KASP students being encouraged and supported to develop their own social capital so that their networks could help them in their careers and their contribution to the Saudi economy upon their return to participate in the Saudi job market.

- ***Economic Capital***

Economic capital refers to material assets that are “*immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights*” (Bourdieu, 1986, p.242). Bourdieu’s understanding of economic capital also has a sub-heading, symbolic capital, identifiable with the notion of prestige. Symbolic capital or embodied prestige is a more amorphous version of the previously discussed objectified capital and is not necessarily denoted by purchased goods. Prestige in and of itself is perhaps not a tangible value but is a result of the other forms of capital. The more of those forms one has, the more prestige one garners (Bourdieu, Brown and Szeman, 2000). In general, more economic capital leads to more symbolic capital, but this varies among societies and subsections of societies. It may, for example, be considered more prestigious to do an activity for the love of it – because of intrinsic motivation – than because one is getting paid to do it. Conversely, the use of money as the primary motivation may actually lower prestige as in some cultures, especially in Muslim countries, pursuing and accumulating money and wealth is seen as less prestigious than upholding other values, such as the giving of charity.

Bourdieu refers to a cycle of capital in which capital forms circulate and are transformed. Social capital can be transformed into economic capital, which is then converted to cultural capital, which, in turn, can help an individual obtain more social capital. As capital cycles in this way it tends to lead to the acquisition of more capital. However, there is a cost at every stage in terms of labour time, which adds value, and even though there may not be a profit immediately, both profit and capital increase over time. A simple and common example of this is what happens when one raises and educates children. Children gain cultural capital as they are exposed to education and cultural events and places such as museums and concerts. These gains come at a cost for parents, who expend their economic capital and their labour time. Over time, however, there are net gains in economic, symbolic and cultural capital as the child grows up and begins to function in society and form social networks. For the society, too, there are net gains in capital brought on by the initial expenditure (Bourdieu, 1986, p.18).

This model is Bourdieu's particular understanding of the functioning of capital in society, however, it has been criticised by a number of thinkers, most notably by Desan (2014), who challenges the connection to Marx's concept of capital, and Tittenbrun (2018), who argues that the results of his critical analysis of Bourdieu's work shows that the latter's "*framework is plagued by economism or economic imperialism*" (P.2). Bourdieu's model has particular significance and utility to this thesis however, as it provides a relatively simple to understand account of the process of capital functioning in society over time which allows for investment to be made by the state which can fiscally calculate and therefore predict the potential net gain, in investing in the education of their population, for example – an issue which is the key focus of this thesis, in the context of the Saudi economy and the KASP.

Many of Bourdieu's described forms of capital may appear to be considered normal and expected, particularly when one thinks of the prestige that comes from not only a university degree or title, but also from the appearance, accent and mode of dress and self-presentation that contribute to embodied cultural aspects of capital and other social aspects of human interactions in society. Social capital, too, appears to consist largely of knowing the 'right people', the contacts that will prove valuable, and the right demeanour and way of speaking contribute to one's ability to be accepted within these groups. For a democratic or meritocratic society, these ideas are anathema, but one must keep in mind that Bourdieu was not being prescriptive but descriptive. These simply were the circumstances as he observed them in his society, and perhaps they are not very different from social and capital gains (David, 2016). So, one must take what lessons one can from these realities. Certainly, there are ramifications of these ideas for the education of young people, either privately, in state schooling or through government-funded overseas scholarship programmes.

Bourdieu is correct in providing the basis and understanding of capital forms that are not raw material, the machinery that produces products for consumption as commodities, or even the labour power of individuals, but rather they are the grey areas of human relations and economic development, the tangible (networks/groups) and intangible (prestige, cultural and symbolic) forms which can be the make or break for success of individual and group enterprises. The development in understanding of capital and its functioning in society that Bourdieu's theories and concepts offer are highly useful for understanding the distinction of how a resource-based economy and capital production within it takes form and function; and how these capital forms manifest and operate differently than traditional forms in a knowledge-based economy.

### 3.4.2.3 Yochai Benkler and the Information Economy

Yochai Benkler's (1990, p.11) thoughts on capital are worth exploring because he goes beyond what others have done, which is to enumerate various forms of capital, continuously expanding the list to include tangible and intangible forms. Rather, Benkler proposes a revolutionary idea, that it is the networks of information rather than the individual possession of capital that ultimately augment a nation's wealth, culture and prosperity. According to Benkler, this is a relatively new development made possible by the sudden growth and accessibility of digital media, which differs sharply from traditional forms of media such as radio, newspapers and television. It is important to note here that the title of Benkler's book, *The Wealth of Networks* (2006), borrows from Adam Smith's book *The Wealth of Nations* (1931). This is a deliberate borrowing to indicate a break away from Smith's idea that the wealth of nations (capital) resides in its people (private ownership) and now resides in networks of information; and also points to a break from the past in terms of how economics and economies are now and possibly more so into the future influenced by accessibility of digital media, and to which can be added more efficient ways of moving fiscal capital around the world than were available in Smith's time.

These networks of information, which Benkler calls the 'industrial information economy', were one-way channels for the commercial production of information in written or telecast forms. Information in its various forms was a commodity, making knowledge a commodity as well – something that could be produced by members of an educated public, bought by publishers or broadcasting networks, and released to the public, also for a fee. Though not material, this form of production followed the description of capital proposed by economists as far back as Smith. The propagation of information through Benkler's industrial information economy involves both fixed and circulating capital – the fixed being the machinery required for printing or broadcasting, for producing the product, and the circulating being the stories and other information products themselves. It was possible, then, to work for a publisher or broadcaster and to make a good living that way, while the person owning the means of production (the television channel or network, the book or newspaper publisher) would make an even better living off the information brought to them by their employees or contractors – just as would be the case with any other product. Then, the public would purchase and partake of these products, consuming the information but rarely if ever 'talking back' to it or influencing the production process themselves. It was analogous – indeed, identical – to the production and consumption of any other product, service or commodity.

*From our friendships to our communities we live life and exchange ideas, insights, and expressions in many more diverse relations than those mediated by the market.*

*In the physical economy, these relationships were largely relegated to spaces outside of our economic production system. The promise of the networked information economy is to bring this rich diversity of social life smack into the middle of our economy and our productive lives. (Benkler, 2006, p.53)*

The great danger, Benkler argued, is that one will believe that this is still the system we are functioning within and act accordingly, equating the desired growth of knowledge-based economy with participation in this now antiquated or even obsolete economic model of information production, buying and selling. To do so would be to invest in a model that is close to becoming defunct and will be insufficient, in this day and age and into the future, to augment, let alone transform, an economy.

Capital forms have moved gradually or hastily from the more tangible (involving money, machinery and raw goods) to the less tangible (involving services, knowledge and information), from Smith's time to date. But Benkler is describing a different though analogous process. The straightforward interaction between producer and consumer, when the commodity in question is knowledge or information, is being transformed and perhaps overthrown by the current reality of unlimited sharing and collaboration.

Indeed, this new dissemination of knowledge is demonstrated by the delivery method of Benkler's *The Wealth of Networks* (2006). In addition to using a traditional publisher, Benkler also chose to publish his book through Creative Commons Non-commercial Share Alike Network, from where it can be downloaded for free and even edited by readers. This, he believes, is the future of the knowledge economy – or, as he calls it, the 'networked information economy' (NIE).

It is easy to see this in terms of losses to an industry. Indeed, what print media have been dealing with for the past decade or more – with readership declining sharply due to free, online content and newspapers going under as a result – is generally framed and seen as a loss. Benkler would say that viewing these developments as a loss is short-sighted as well as futile; the loss to a traditional, transactional economy is a huge potential gain in terms of the building of networks and the sharing of information.

*The outcome of the conflict between the industrial information economy and its emerging networked alternative will determine whether we evolve into a permission culture, as Lessig warns and projects, or into a society marked by social practice of nonmarket production and cooperative sharing of information, knowledge, and culture of the type I describe throughout this book, and which I argue will improve freedom and justice in liberal societies. (Benkler, 2006, p.57).*



When the dissemination of information is decentralized, the cost is lower, the 'product' is more individualized and current, and the process is faster and more far reaching. In short, just as the assembly line, as described by Smith, transformed the process of producing goods by making it exponentially faster and more efficient, so the growth of the NIE has the potential to do the same for the information economy, especially in terms of news production and consumption, as can be seen in the use by TV news reports of public capture and submission of mobile phone video footage recordings of events that become newsworthy. Benkler would therefore argue that the overall gain and benefit to society would more than make up for any small, localized losses, in the development of a knowledge-based economy.

*The outcome of the conflict between the industrial information economy and its emerging networked alternative will determine whether we evolve into a permission culture, as Lessig warns and projects, or into a society marked by social practice of nonmarket production and cooperative sharing of information, knowledge, and culture of the type I describe throughout this book, and which I argue will improve freedom and justice in liberal societies. (Benkler, 2006, p.57)*

Based on standard economics, the categorizing of products includes the process of allocating them as 'rival' or 'non-rival'. A rival product or commodity is simply one that can be used up; so that one person's acquisition or consumption of it means that another cannot have it. This is the case with tangible, consumable goods. One might argue that it is particularly the case with regard to non-renewable tangible resources – oil, for example, would clearly fall under this category. If owned and used up by one party, it cannot be used by another, so that in a sense, the rivals are not the products themselves but the consumers who compete for them and are affected by shortages and surpluses. A non-rival product, however, is one that can be shared indefinitely. One person's enjoyment of it does not bar another's use of the same product or commodity. An example would be a song, or, indeed, Benkler's own book, because choosing to publish it online in a free, downloadable form precludes any possible scarcity of this resource, as it is endlessly reproducible. The consumers of such a product are not rivals; there is no barrier to owning a copy.

Benkler is vague on one major point: where is the source of revenue in this open-source, non-rival economy? He states that “*Internet-based society will have little effect on Bill's living in poverty*”, adding that “*this is the pessimistic view*” but that there is “*enough truth in it*” (Benkler, 2006, P.301). In other words, he seems to acknowledge that NIE will not simply or quickly eradicate the poverty of an individual. If things that were once commodities to be monetized are now no longer to be considered or used as such, it seems clear that sources

of revenue are to be lost, but how will they be gained? Benkler offers a few examples of how revenue has changed under the Internet-based economy, and cites the potential benefit and disadvantage of increasing revenue through a stricter copyright regime:

*Today's users of information are not only today's readers and consumers. They are also today's producers and tomorrow's innovators. Their net benefit from a strengthened patent or copyright regime, given not only increased potential revenues but also the increased costs, may be negative. If we pass a law that regulates information production too strictly, allowing its beneficiaries to impose prices that are too high on today's innovators, then we will have not only too little consumption of information today, but also too little production of new information for tomorrow. (Benkler, 2006, p.38)*

Benkler continues by citing other possibilities of revenue from advertising for newspapers (2006, p.40), and the multiple ways which constitute approximately two-thirds of software industries' revenues (p.45), and how music and dance artists could and should acquire more revenue from live performances than from recording sales of their productions.

However, in the long run, he posits that individuals and society as a whole will be better off because NIE can bolster justice (Benkler, 2006). Benkler argues that because information, knowledge and culture are “*core inputs into human welfare*”, increased access to information will indeed enhance human and societal well-being, including economic well-being, over time through “*commons-based strategies for welfare and development*” (Benkler, 2006, 308). This is also exemplified in his tale of the Three Storytelling Societies (Benkler, 2006, p.165), in which he seeks to demonstrate that:

*greater freedom to choose to become an active producer of one's own information environment... make it exceedingly difficult for any single actor to control the information flow to any other actor... [and in order to achieve autonomy-respecting policy, there is] the requirement that government not limit the quantity and diversity of information available. (Benkler, 2006, p.165).*

Meanwhile, today's world does provide ample evidence that there will, indeed, be sources of income in a NIE-based reality. In the past, entertainment and information presented in televised form relied on dissemination through major commercial television networks. So, to be in the position of getting one's idea to the public, one had to market and sell that idea, have it produced by a network, and be paid for the content, which would then exist in the form of a show that generated revenue for the network, both through cable subscriptions and through advertising. This was an elaborate system involving ratings, high selectivity, and heavy production costs that were centralized with the networks. If one was not picked

up by a channel or network, one's work – one's commodity – would find no market and no audience. Revenue was tied closely to the TV network which owned the capital.

Enter YouTube. Now, a few short years later, production is profoundly decentralized – any person who wishes to do so can produce and post content on YouTube, and anyone with Internet service can access it for free. Many individuals who post content on YouTube remain obscure, but many develop a following. And while no one is paying them explicitly for their content, it would be a mistake to think that activity on YouTube produces no revenue. In fact, “there is a 45/55 split for all content creators, so Google keeps 45 percent of all YouTube advertising on your videos, and you get the remaining 55 percent” (Investopedia.com, 2020). In terms of revenue production for content creators, “*in 2013, the average income for each YouTube content creator was \$7.60 per every thousand views*” (Investopedia.com, 2020).

There are many people who make a living by broadcasting content on YouTube, either self-produced, traditional entertainment content such as music or television, programming, or lifestyle blogging. And while in the past the standard success story was for a performer to get ‘*discovered*’ while broadcasting on YouTube and go on to a more traditional entertainment career, nowadays this is not the only path to remuneration for one's creative effort. For example, Justin Bieber who was discovered on YouTube (CNN, 2019). Advertisers see the opportunity to gain viewership as YouTube channels garner more viewership than traditional media such as television, especially among younger demographic groups. Advertising on YouTube becomes a viable and attractive choice for them, allowing the broadcasters to directly make a profit from advertising dollars, rather than indirectly (paid by commercial networks).

The evolution of the use of YouTube is only one example of how the economy is being transformed through the advent and great proliferation and accessibility of digital media forms. It is easy, perhaps, to underestimate the scope of this change, as superficially, to an observer, things look much the same: billions of viewers are still viewing content on an electronic screen. But how that content was created and the economic channels that are involved in its profitability have radically changed (Strangelove, 2010).

As Benkler observes, this change is profound and all encompassing, and must necessarily play a role in how we build a knowledge-based economy. To attempt to do so without this awareness would be to subscribe and invest in obsolete forms – essentially, a great waste of time and resources. Benkler offers some ideal-type information production strategies (Benkler, 2006, p.43) which can assist in maximizing time and resources:

*In order to provide some texture to what these models look like, we can outline a series of ideal-type “business” strategies for producing information to offer a simple analytic framework within which to understand the mix of strategies available for firms and individuals to appropriate the benefits of their investments – of time, money, or both, in activities that result in the production of information, knowledge, and culture. The differentiating parameters are simple: cost minimization and benefit maximization. (Benkler, 2006, p.42)*

It is important to note here, yet again, that Benkler is arguing for what he sees as a change to the very fabric of the economic and social world we operate in through technological and especially communication changes, which necessitate a switch in the way we do business and produce information. As such, our focus must change to see what he is seeing – the need for strategies for information production – if we indeed wish to take account of, or react to, the inevitable shift and impact on revenue we will experience as the new ways of producing and sharing information by people across the world will bring. This is the main reason why Benkler does not represent a business model or business strategy per se, but rather a strategy for prioritising information production, in an evidently more knowledge and/or culture rich economy (2006, p.43).

This new knowledge economy also changes the way traditional forms of human capital, as laid out by Bourdieu, are acquired and manifested. First, because the new knowledge economy based on NIE is much more dynamic than the industrial information economy was, status is more mobile, and people are more mobile within the class or status system to which they are subject. The markers of success that indicate embodied capital, for example, as described by Bourdieu are no longer what they were – namely, belonging to a prominent family or, more recently, having attended a prestigious university and being employed by a reputable firm. To be sure, these things may confer status, but they are not mandatory for the acquisition of status. In a way, this is a continuation of the change that has been taking place within class systems since the Industrial Revolution; one may observe, however, that the changes are not more rapid than they were before. One may argue that such status is superficial, and this may well be true. It is also true, however, that the older markers of embodied social capital are no longer reliable, and therefore no longer as strongly regarded.

*The way life is actually lived by people within a given set of interlocking technological, economic, institutional, and social practices is what makes a society attractive or unattractive, what renders its practices laudable or lamentable. (Benkler, 2006, p.31)*

Even more profound has been the change in what Bourdieu called social capital, and this is exactly the change that Benkler describes. Building networks was formerly a matter of hereditary status; then it was dependent on status that came from one's university, place of employment, and consequent social connections. Now, with the wider availability and vastly improved accessibility of social and knowledge networks, mobility within and between social class groups may be expected to increase significantly.

*The dramatic decline in the cost of the material means of producing and exchanging information, knowledge, and culture has substantially decreased the costs of information expression and exchange, and thereby increased the relative efficacy of nonmarket production. When these facts are layered over the fact that information, knowledge, and culture have become the central high-value-added economic activities of the most advanced economies, we find ourselves in a new and unfamiliar social and economic condition. (Benkler, 2006, p.56)*

Again, the effect that this has is one of destabilizing previous knowledge, thinking and action with regard to the building of knowledge and human capital. An understanding of these changes is absolutely essential to our ability to build and maintain a knowledge economy. If we do not work with these changes but attempt to ignore them, or remain ignorant of them, there is no doubt that the evolution that is currently going on within knowledge dissemination will undermine and invalidate a country's efforts to build a knowledge-based economy.

*...the possibility that a radically different form of information production will emerge – decentralized; socially, no less than commercially, driven; and as diverse as human thought itself – offers the promise of a deep change in how we see the world around us, how we come to know about it and evaluate it, and how we are capable of communicating with others about what we know, believe, and plan. (Benkler, 2006, pp.33-34)*

#### **3.4.2.4 The Carr-Benkler Wager and the Peer-Powered Economy**

When Benkler wrote about his ideas and concept of 'commons-based peer-production' in 2006, he was strongly criticized by an executive editor of the Harvard Business Review, who was well known for his provocative articles, and had been writing for almost 20 years, Nicholas Carr. He strongly criticised Benkler for his views about peer production, insisting instead that there would emerge a 'price-incentivised' system. Much of Carr's critique was in line with his previous critical thinking on the impact of new technologies on the way in which we work and how the market/economy functions. This is exemplified in his famous article 'IT doesn't matter' (Carr, 2020), where he analyses the ways in which information

technologies have failed to function. Evidently, Carr was attempting the same line of argument against the propositions of Benkler with regards to the Internet and volunteer peer-production.

Both Benkler and Carr are high profile bloggers and have argued about whether in five years (by 2011 at the time they were in dialogue) people will get their pay cheques for submitting content to sites like Flickr. Benkler, a professor of law at Yale University, suggested that collaborations of new types online will help people in being more productive compared to any profit-seeking venture. Carr, however, disagreed with this line of thought, being of the view that the lure of money will prove much more effective in finding top content pickers. Carr argued that social media platform such as reddit had, until then, existed outside pricing systems simply because markets had not emerged for this kind of labour. Whereas Benkler strongly believed and predicted that the majority of these platforms would be primarily voluntary peer-based productions especially.

In May 2012, Carr claimed victory, citing the fact that most popular online videos and blogs were corporate productions. Benkler's response was to say that Carr can only claim victory of the wager if all social software was considered as commercial content. However, other bloggers, especially Matthew Ingram (writing on the site Gigaom) stated that "*Benkler has clearly won.*" He acknowledged that although there existed large corporate entities like Facebook and Twitter, the majority of content, and indeed "*value that is produced in those networks and services comes from the free behaviour of crowds of users*" (Ingram, 2012, p.3).

Antony Bryant<sup>5</sup> (2020), in his journal publication entitled 'Liquid uncertainty, chaos and complexity: The gig economy and the open source movement', discusses the way we work and earn, live and relate to each other, in light of the developments of capitalist and corporate interests, information and Internet technologies, and our understanding of the spaces that these developments create, expand and narrow. In his own exploration of how we craft and navigate the information environment Bryant, citing the Carr-Benkler wager, argues that:

*Though Benkler did indeed win the wager, the victory has proven hollow. The 'value' produced by the crowds of users has largely been 'packaged' and 'commodified'*

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<sup>5</sup> Bryant is professor of Informatics at Leeds Beckett University, Leeds. He is also my supervisor for this doctoral thesis. His work, insights, support and guidance have been invaluable in helping me develop my ideas further and to go beyond in my own thinking and understanding.

*and taken into a renewed ownership model that drives and thrives in the digital environment. (Bryant, 2020, p.60)*

This thesis agrees with this appraisal of the developments of online production and thus the outcome of the wager. It is clear that there is a 'free-access model' (Bryant, 2020, p.60) at play that functions for online material production and consumption, but it is argued here that these spaces have been crafted by corporate interests to create economic value to create a 'funnel' into an 'ownership-model' (Bryant, 2020, p.60) whereby producers sell or share their ownership rights to various platforms, for a slice of the advertising profits and/or online traffic (hits/likes/shares). This slice of the profits is, as cited earlier, approximately 55% in the case of YouTube/Google.

Of particular interest to earlier discussions in this section is the way in which this 'crafting of a funnel' of the information environment points to a 'glitch' in the system of how a network functions in our understanding of social capital. The developments outlined earlier in terms of online production and consumption suggest that the bigger the social network becomes, the smaller the value of the individual's impact and voice becomes. This suggests a capacity to the size of a network, but also perhaps the additional support that is required for a network to function beyond its human and information technology social media function.

The example of Facebook is a case in point, the smaller groups, interests and individuals that contribute to it, the bigger it gets. The bigger it gets, the smaller groups, interests and individuals contribute to it. The new discussion – and possibly the next wager – is to what extent we want online production to go, and to what extent we willingly require mathematical algorithms, coding, and even social-psychological analysis to render its impact further. The scandal of the role of Cambridge Analytica in doing exactly this to influence voting behaviour for the Brexit referendum and the American presidential election of Donald Trump is the prime example of this (Graham-Harrison and Cadwalladr, 2020). Whether this is social networks being pirated on the high seas of the World Wide Web, or a danger of self-harm from the tools we contribute and participate to daily, and indeed whether this requires a national or international intervention from governments, platform providers, or even our individual selves, is a debate outside the scope of this thesis, but definitely one that we all need to have and take responsibility for in the near future.

However, the implications of the wager as outlined here, on understanding the development of an economy, networks, capital forms for value creation, and indeed the development of students on the KASP programme are of importance to this thesis and will therefore be considered and understood in more depth here.

In his analysis of the concept of capital and economic systems, Carr noted that capitalist structures are inheritably infused in corporate programmes and interests (Benkler and Nissenbaum, 2006, p.404). He noted that traditional economic systems failed to provide markets where social content sharing was possible. In supporting the capitalist structures governing the modern world, Carr argued that the different pressures and challenges facing capitalist markets are due to the high number of profit-oriented groups and professional players in the markets (Hetcher, 2009).

However, Benkler's perspective of capitalism and economic structure is totally different from Carr, since he argued that the various networks such as web systems help individuals and groups to develop teamwork and cooperative models that improve the economic value of content creation (Benkler and Nissenbaum, 2006, p.407). This means that modern economic systems will depend largely on social media resources and other digital avenues (Klein, 2009, p.464). This will transform markets as well as promote productivity and elevate collaboration networks more than past profit-seeking ventures. Carr also noted that money will change and control how people value their content creation and top content pickers will create wealth in the long run.

However, Benkler asserts that proper considerations should be given to the radically falling cost of relative production systems in the digital world and information sharing age, to improve the modern social forms of information production (Klein, 2009, p.467), such as footage taken from mobile phones used as part of TV news reports. This is because the modern network of digital technologies makes it possible for information to be produced through the coordination and cooperative efforts of different individuals and teams, especially after inclusion of radically distributed data, using non-market mechanisms without proprietary plans – examples of this include Open Source software (such as Linux) openly available for both use and further development on the Internet. Benkler proposes that 'peer production' should characterise cooperation and collaboration that will improve the processes of consciousness-sharing practices – in other words collaborative working will become a more intended act. This will require individual efforts and the use of digital media to increase information sharing to the public (Benkler and Nissenbaum, 2006, p.396). Despite this, it should be understood that Benkler's idea of the concept of peer-production is, and should be, based on collaboration, since it is a non-market and non-exclusive model, meaning it was developed without profit in mind, and with the intention for any and all to contribute to its development. However, this differs from Carr's view and understanding of developments of human technology, generally, in which he sees financial benefit as being the primary motivator for people's endeavours to collaborate and create.



Importantly, the theoretical view on capital forms supports the adoption of different methods in promoting productive purposes both at individual and group level. This can be achieved through the use of stable economic models that require both monetary and non-monetary motivations. Having different economic systems will increase and promote generation of value in different categories, including financial, social as well as intellectual and physical aspects (Bates, 2007, p.161). In business and economic environments, the most important categories of capital forms include the financial as well as the human aspects. The human aspect is important since it helps develop the knowledge economy in business. Generally, it is acknowledged that a combination of human and social aspects of the economy can help produce the greatest value (Benkler and Nissenbaum, 2006, p.395). If one fails to consider the tangible aspects of capital forms, it may render stability of the information sharing useless and less important.

Using human growth and development models, organisations can develop the human and social aspects of the economy through training and acquisition of different skills (Fox, 2007, p.51). With a well-developed human capital, the organisations are able to transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy. Such new models of capital form can be developed in all countries across the globe. However, it requires a cooperative and teamwork approach among different agencies to achieve economic well-being and professional development of all the stakeholders involved (Bates, 2007, p.162). Creation of value is the hallmark of all models of different capital forms including the cultural, human, social and economic capital forms (Benkler and Nissenbaum, 2006, p.394). This means that investment in different capital forms without considering the extent of value creation may render and lower the benefits of capital forms in the economy. At the heart of the matter, this is the problem with the King Abdullah Scholarship Program, presently being experienced by returning graduates to the Saudi job market. There has been a creation of value through investment in Saudi's human capital, through the KASP, but there has not been the necessary transition to a knowledge-based economy to benefit the overall economy from this value creation.

### **3.4.3 The Role of Knowledge**

In *Knowledge and the Wealth of Nations: A Story of Economic Discovery* (2006), David Warsh, an American journalist covering issues on economics and finance, like Benkler pays homage to Adam Smith and emphasises changes since Smith's time. Warsh focuses on the importance of knowledge and technical change as an example of the progress made in economic theory. This is important to the main aims of this thesis, to inform our understanding of what helps or hinders the ability of a nation to make a switch from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy.

From the perspective of Warsh, throughout the 1970s and to date, economic ideas have shaped the world with the need for understanding different types of capital. He argues that the wealth of nations has not been fully understood and value has not been realised, partly due to the fact that economic theories are sometimes limited in their ability to include different capital forms, including wealth or indeed value generated from knowledge-based forms. However, the key aspect for wealth acquisition among nations is the intellectual revolution (Krugman, 2006).

Paul Krugman, distinguished Professor of Economics (at City University of New York)<sup>6</sup> and Nobel prize-winner in Economic Sciences, reviewed Warsh's book and highlighted the great contradiction of economic theory since 1776 based on Adam Smith's ideas on the wealth of different countries. He commended Warsh for "*describing the social and personal matrix from which economic ideas actually emerge*". According to Warsh, the wealth revolution was based on the struggle for greater productivity, and indeed profits, based on the division of labour (pin factory model), and the theory of the invisible hand at such locations as the bakery, candlemakers, and shoemakers (Krugman, 2006). Krugman explains these theories put forward by Smith, as follows:

*On one side, Smith emphasized the huge increases in productivity that could be achieved through the division of labor, as illustrated in his famous example of a pin factory whose employees, by specializing on narrow tasks, produced far more than they could if each worked independently. On the other side, he was the first to recognise how a market economy can harness self-interest to the common good, leading each individual as though "by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention."* (Krugman, 2006)

Warsh emphasises that significant increases in the productivity achieved through the process of the division of labour (pin factory model) superseded and prevented the market-economy harnessing self-interest to the common good (invisible hand theory), as the tendency of capitalist and business interests is to get rid of competition and to create monopolies. Krugman agreed with Warsh in arguing that, for the invisible hand theory, or as he calls it, the theory of diminishing returns, requires competition in the market for the invisible hand to operate (Krugman, 2006).

Warsh asks relevant questions for the modern nation, such as what role does knowledge play in the wealth of nations? How do nations become wealthy in the present global economy? Benkler asks similarly important and relevant questions, but with emphasis on

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<sup>6</sup> Krugman was formerly Professor of Economics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

networks and social capital. Warsh queries how this works with human and knowledge capital. Warsh argues that economies rely on innovation and entrepreneurial spirit to ignite and progress the wheels of industry, but what does this look like in a knowledge economy, where the industry is non-tangible? The importance and relevance of these questions and discussions to the subject matter of this thesis cannot be emphasised enough – especially when considering that both Warsh’s argument and the argument presented in this thesis are one and the same, in that they are both arguing for knowledge becoming consciously considered part of the wealth creation of a national economy, not just as an individual asset. It would, therefore, be fruitful for nations’ economies to consider this, especially in terms of the Saudi economy, in their stated aim of switching from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy. This potential transition is made even more difficult by the fact that oil prices have and will continue to fluctuate. In this sense, the switch is both necessarily timely, but also requires a better understanding of developments in economic theory through the works of such people as Warsh, Benkler and Krugman. This thesis adds to these works by contributing the important question: how can we set up national economies (and indeed scholarship programmes) that benefit from knowledge as value (capital) and wealth in the economy?

Tapscott and Williams, in *Wikinomics* (2006), answer some of these questions by saying this represents a new type of Capitalism, one which has a network economy, where knowledge production and sharing is of an open source network type. Carr undermines this view, citing corporate interests and pressures from effective knowledge creation. Yet both Carr and Tapscott are arguing from a position in favour of capitalism, and against the substantive ideas of Benkler and Warsh, who both present a radical shift in understanding how capitalism has or should function. Both Benkler and Warsh seek to value the human and social factors above the economic – for the former to direct the latter. Benkler asks for more attention to be paid to different mediums and tools of knowledge production, as well as greater attention and development of effective communication for the knowledge-based economy – but, importantly, with the focus on individuals and small groups as the key peer-producers and consumers of this knowledge economy. Warsh, a contemporary ally, says effectively the same thing, but from a historical perspective. As mentioned above, Benkler uses the perspective of networks and social capital and how people can peer-produce a knowledge economy going forward. Warsh uses the understanding of a knowledge-based economy, and how economic theories have prevented us from being able to harness this as an evolution of capitalism, since Smith’s time of a manufacturing-based economy. The importance of Benkler and Warsh’s work on the subject of this thesis has been discussed above, and this thesis also identifies as a subsequent ally in regard to presenting an

alternative form of capitalist economy – one which is not driven by raw materials and manufacturing, but rather by knowledge production and entrepreneurialism, where social and cultural capital are of equal, if not greater, value to the wealth of the nation, compared to economic capital alone.

Warsh examines how the ideas of Smith are still relevant today, and how, despite the development of capitalism, Smith's intention was to point to the need for regulation of market forces, and a harnessing of its innate possibilities – through the invisible hand theory, to create a morally just system for the progress of humankind. Smith did not intend for wealth to be concentrated in the hands of a few, but rather that market forces would work to ensure the distribution of wealth across the nation. But for nearly two centuries, the process of economic thinking has been dominated by the assumption of the process of diminishing returns with the pin factory being pushed deep into the background (Krugman, 2006). Warsh explains that this process is not about ideology but rather about the line of least mathematical resistance, as economics is the discipline with scientific aspirations – with economists seeking rigour and clarity from the use of numbers and equations representing ideas (Warsh, 2006).

In his description of Warsh's book, Krugman (2006) states that:

*The first half of Knowledge and the Wealth of Nations is a history of economic thought from the vantage point of that underground river. It describes how great economists chose to exclude increasing returns from their analyses, even though many of them understood quite well that they were leaving out an important part of the story. (The Pin Factory Mystery, para, 6)*

Furthermore, he notes that “*the economics of diminishing returns lend themselves readily to elegant formalism, while those of increasing returns – the Pin Factory – are notoriously hard to represent in the form of a mathematical model*” (Krugman, 2006, The Pin Factory Mystery, para, 6).

The great economists decided to exclude the increasing returns from their analyses, with many of them understanding that they were leaving out a significant part of the story. Warsh outlines how the new growth theory has led to the success of dominant first-mover firms including IBM or Microsoft whilst underscoring the value of intellectual property. Warsh continues by also providing essential advice to those who have a concern for the expansion of the economy, and the expansion of the online economic giants Google, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon.

It is this advice which should be heeded for the KASP and which is relevant to the research aims of this thesis, akin to Smith's initial research aim to understand 'why country A is wealthier than country B'. Warsh's answer to this question is that country A has a better network (of people) with ideas. These ideas create wealth in a knowledge economy. And that, to a certain extent, the raw material (resource) as well as the machinery of these ideas are people and their ability to cooperate and communicate in a network society. Warsh, like Smith before him, argues that in this way country A will become wealthier, but also that country A is wealthier than country B in any case, as it has a greater productive capacity, contained within its people (and potentially/ideally a more developed infrastructure for the knowledge economy) than country B.

#### **3.4.4 Symposium on Education**

An international symposium on Benkler's works and its applicability to education was held, and subsequently published in *Policy Futures in Education*, as 'The Wealth of Networks' (Aigrain et al., 2008). The need for this conference was expressed in a contribution by Aigrain:

*In the background was another motivation: helping continental European readers to better relate with American commons thinking. Several factors were limiting the ability of European readers to draw inspiration from or to build critical conversations with the generation of thinkers who have put information commons on the agenda in the US. (Aigrain et al., 2008, p.152)*

Further to this, Benkler was invited and asked to participate because:

*Yochai Benkler's Wealth of Networks takes a new step in this direction. Benkler's work is deeply rooted in American liberal philosophy. However, his interest in political philosophy globally has led him to express his views in a language that can be read from a European or global perspective. (Aigrain et al., 2008, p.153)*

Key thinkers attending and subsequently contributing to the publication (Aigrain et al., 2008) include Philippe Aigrain, Leslie Chan, Jean-Claude Gu  don, John Willinsky and Yochai Benkler. The contribution of Willinsky, entitled 'The Educational Implications of Networks' (pp.165-169), is particularly relevant to this thesis and its exploration of the KASP in seeking to develop social and other capital forms in its students.

Willinsky describes a flaw in the current educational system that schoolwork is "non-proprietary", lacking any value as intellectual property because schools have become "training grounds for large-scale test-score production [...] [With] few opportunities for students to engage in working on something that has value in its own right" (Aigrain et al.,

2008, p.167). This is a lost opportunity to create something of intellectual value that might give the student the means and interest in engaging creatively with others, beginning to form a network. Moreover, if schools and the work that students do within them fail to produce anything of value, but are valued merely for the degrees and skills that students are expected to gain from them, the opportunities and the years spent in education are, if not lost, then falling short of their potential to create value. To link this to the earlier discussion on Bourdieu's capital forms, valuing the education and school work students do, as a social interaction and as an opportunity for creative design and thinking, or even learning through play, is especially relevant to the acquisition of social capital, networks, and the opportunity to experience a shared sense of cultural capital. These experiences and interactions may, at university level education especially, lead to facilitating the acquiring of economic capital, and we should recognise and encourage the value of these educational experiences for what they are: an opportunity for humans to be, to experience each other, and potentially to explore, learn and create together.

Benkler responded to those discussing his work, writing a short piece on education that appears last in the symposium publication (2008, pp.169-173). His thoughts involve the transformation and expansion of the role of student, so that even while learning, students may be teaching others or generating material that is of value to the society outside of the classroom. Thus, students become participants, part of the economic system, even while in school, instead of being held carefully apart from the economic system until they finish their course of study. There are great advantages to this idea, not least of which is that it would allow students to engage meaningfully with larger networks while they are still in school, so that, in effect, they will not remember a time when they were not so engaged. This would surely maximize their involvement in networks and the creation of capital after they graduate as well, providing seamless assimilation into the work force, to the benefit of themselves and the economy they are helping to build. There are, however, disadvantages to this, in that some students may be better able to navigate such networks, for reasons such as parent's education, social class, quality of school attended, and the ability of their teachers. There is also the ethical dilemma of either seeking to give children the best head-start in the economy against allowing school-aged children to remain children, free from financial worries, and (as far as is possible with modern technology and social media) free from the distress experienced by young people as a consequence of cyber-bullying, or not having a big-enough, responsive-enough social network.

However, these disadvantages are not dispelled with age and become a necessity by the age of university education. Indeed, for scholarship programmes, like KASP, the potential benefit to the economy of realising the Benkler's proposition of the transformation and

expansion of the role of student, especially in terms of generating material that is of value to the society outside the classroom, should become an aim in itself. It is hoped this thesis will go some way in contributing to achieving that aim for KASP students returning, with added-value, to the KSA economy.

### **3.4.5 Ramifications for Scholarship Programmes**

When a country sponsors an extensive scholarship programme such as KASP, it is, in a sense, like a parent educating their own children. Economic capital is extended by the state in order to increase all the other forms of capital in the students – cultural, social, and economic. Cultural and social capital are the most relevant for building a knowledge-based economy, although all three capital forms are a desired outcome of the scholarship programme. The expenditure of the initial outlay leads to complex benefits which will then feed off one another in a cyclical manner.

A student educated abroad will have increased embodied and institutionalized cultural capital – skills will be learned, but the acquisition of a degree, particularly at a prestigious school abroad, confers its own institutionalized capital. The networking of those students and the influence that they may have or use for the good of others then constitutes a growing social capital. The result of all this is, hopefully, a boost to economic capital as well.

An important part of the circulation of capital involves the creation of networks – for Bourdieu, this is social capital, the power of 'whom you know'. University education allows for the establishment of some networks, but that process must continue in order for social capital to reach its potential. Active networks must be able to be formed after the individual leaves education, so that the advantages gained there can be maximized rather than lost.

KASP was originally modelled on other scholarship programmes such as Rhodes and Kennedy; these had and have positive effects and have increased communication, network building and knowledge sharing among two countries, the UK and the US. In this way, they may be judged to have been successful. Both of these programmes have also increased cultural capital in their respective countries by offering individuals educational opportunities and, especially, access to international networks that they might not otherwise have had.

In its years of operation, KASP has undoubtedly done the same, and perhaps even more than these other scholarship programmes. KASP has offered educational opportunities to Saudi students that may not have been available to them at home; in addition, the students in KASP have had the opportunity to perfect their English (essential nowadays for participating in a global exchange of ideas) and their familiarity with English-speaking or western cultures. Moreover, KASP has offered educational opportunities to Saudi women

that may not have been offered to them at home, and certainly would not have been offered a few decades ago. Therefore, it would seem that the embodied cultural capital of these individuals and of the whole society has been increased significantly through the number of students accessing KASP and then returning home.

It would seem that human and cultural capital have been increased, or must have been increased – but have they really? Regardless of one's definition of capital, it is generally agreed that capital is only capital if it allows one to accumulate more profit as a result. For a country, capital only counts as such if it generates revenue, stimulates the economy and improves the overall standard of living. Otherwise, the resource remains inert and does not circulate through the economy and stimulate it. In other words, it is not capital. There is every reason to suppose that a scholarship model initiated during colonial times by Cecil Rhodes will emphatically not be effective today in generating capital of any sort. After all, the Rhodes Scholarship was conceived of in a very different time and society, when status was dependent on different factors and the entire economy was differently structured. Yet the Rhodes Scholarship has changed with the times and is as prestigious today as it ever was.

KASP is not an exact copy of Rhodes and Kennedy; moreover, its aims and applications have shifted somewhat through the years it has been in operation, which shows hope in a responsive and forward-moving scholarship programme. Nevertheless, a more deliberate and targeted recalibration may be necessary to ensure that KASP succeeds in generating enough capital to begin to transform the Saudi economy, as is its aim.

Educating people for the new, network-based economy is a global challenge. It is fair to say that it is the subject of much debate and discussion today and that, to complicate matters, traditional schooling may not even be the ideal venue for such education, and yet, it must function within the societal structure of schooling.

It is not uncommon nowadays for students to take part in international education; in an attempt to better themselves once they have returned to their home countries. For example, prominent US universities now host a high population of international students – 5% of their total student population – some on scholarships, but some whose families have paid for them to acquire a more expensive and prestigious education than they would have at home, in the hopes that this will give them a strong foundation and advantage when returning to their home countries (Zong and Batalova, 2018). While this can be and often is a genuinely valuable and enriching experience for the students involved, it can also be disorienting. To study in a country means that one must understand and to some degree embrace its cultural values. Even though temporary, it is a sort of 'mini' act of immigration that leaves the student



a perpetual intellectual hybrid, negotiating between the sometimes-divergent values of home and abroad. It may give the student prestige and a competitive advantage (which is lower according to the number of other students who have the same) but it may not necessarily prepare the student for employment at home. In other words, while almost surely offering intellectual enlightenment, study abroad may not boost actual social and cultural capital.

A step to improving outcomes may involve a true appreciation of the implicit knowledge that a student has gained abroad. This goes beyond knowledge of an arts or technical field studied; the student is actually in a position to become a cultural ambassador of sorts, conducting and leading ongoing dialogue with others in western countries. There may therefore, as an example, be a position for some students within international trade.

Moreover, there must be recognition that the networks students build while abroad are not limited to that time and place. They must be nurtured and encouraged to continue. Participation in online publishing and exchanges of ideas such as TEDX conferences may not appear to be means of accumulating capital in a traditional sense, as they may not be part of a directly revenue-generating industry. However, it is clear that a knowledge-based economy is not and certainly will not remain traditional. International education offers Saudi students a voice in international discussions and a place in global networks, and they must be encouraged to take advantage of it. It must be acknowledged, furthermore, that not all education takes place in a traditional educational setting these days. KASP students can and should continue with their global education after returning home, perhaps educating others in the process.

Finally, while no country can guarantee full employment, the traditional and artificial barriers to employment and economic participation in Saudi Arabia must be removed in order for the country to progress and take full advantage of the potential benefits offered by KASP. I am referring to women's social and economic participation. Educating women is a great step forward, but an incomplete step. Without full economic and social participation – including a chance to be a part of any and all knowledge networks – the country will lack the capital that could be provided by half of its citizenship, and cannot, in that state, reach its potential.

Much of the discussion in this section on the ramifications of these theories on scholarship programmes will be taken up in Chapter 8, which features an overview and comparison of KASP with other international student scholarship programmes, including the Rhodes and Kennedy scholarships.

### **3.4.6 Summary**

This section provided a broad review of the literature related to capital forms. Its main aim related to the context for the data analysis process. In effect, the research findings in Chapter 5 and 6 will be contextualized against the idea of capital forms, particularly social and moral capital. Therefore, the in-depth discussion in the present section provided a clear understanding of the terms capitalism and capital forms, building on definitions and discussions by Bourdieu (1986) and Smith (1937; 1976). Furthermore, the other forms of capital clarified the above terms by interdicting a brief historical background of modern theorists such as Benkler, Carr and Warsh to locate whether the evolutions of capital (in our understanding) and ways of exchanging capital (work) as well as the means of production (the Internet and other technological developments) have indeed resulted in more agency and power, or served to further dislocate us from the ownership of wealth.

## **3.5. Section Three: Scholarships**

### **3.5.1. Introduction**

A large-scale international scholarship programme such as KASP is, broadly speaking, part of a lineage of such programmes and thus should be viewed within that context. It can be said that international scholarship programmes began with the famous Rhodes Scholarship

in 1902 (The Rhodes Scholarships, 2020) and other subsequent programmes were modelled directly upon it, such as the US's Kennedy Scholarship (Deaton, 2018). Nevertheless, because the social context and ultimate aims are so different when one compares Rhodes and KASP, obvious similarities between the two may be misleading.

Scholarship programmes provide an opportunity for students to access a world-class education in some of the world's best higher education institutions, providing financial aid for tuition and/or living costs. It is envisaged from an idealistic perspective that these programmes benefit the individual as well as their society, economy and, potentially, the wider world. However, in the pragmatic reality of operating in the job market and world of business, scholarship programmes – whether needs or merit based – have the potential to change or increase the flow of economic, political and social capital within communities. These are not, however, always the stated aims of such programmes.

The ways that graduates of these programmes receive these benefits and what they do with them can be understood as being the result of having one of two primary aims: changing the status quo or reinforcing it. If the aim is to change the status quo, graduates usually engage in trying to redistribute the kind of capital that is based on opportunities, as well as changing the demographics in institutes of higher learning. In the process, new values may subsequently find their way to prominence within society. However, if the graduate's aim is to reinforce the status quo, the scholarship programme will result in educating a larger group of people in the manner of the dominant class to disseminate an already dominant ideology.

This not only points to how students receive and act after participating in a scholarship programme, but also how such programmes also intend to educate and influence how their participants receive their education and act accordingly in the world following its completion. For example, the Rhodes Scholarship had the stated aim, at the end of the colonial era in Britain, of further disseminating British colonial values throughout the English-speaking world (Schaeper and Schaeper, 1998). What is interesting with regard to KASP is exactly how it has positioned itself with regard to these two possibilities. On the whole, by educating young Saudis abroad, it does seem as though KASP is inviting a change in the status quo, including social values. On the other hand, if that aim is to be realised, such changes must be accepted and must find a place within Saudi society. If this is not allowed to happen, there is a confusion of aims: a scholarship programme that superficially resembles Rhodes or Kennedy but originates in a country that is very different.

This section outlines and compares the aims and effects of several types of scholarship programmes with regard to their aim of changing or reinforcing social norms and their results. It begins by commenting on the effects of merit-based scholarships in the US and

the UK, moves to a discussion of the Rhodes, Kennedy and Marshall programmes, and ends with ramifications for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and for KASP.

By way of an introduction to these programmes, below are a selection of statements to represent their visions, aims or missions:

**The Rhodes Scholarship:** *The Rhodes Trust, based at the University of Oxford, brings together and develops exceptional people from all over the world, and in all fields of study, who are impatient with the way things are and have the courage to act.* (rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk, 2019)

**The Kennedy Scholarship** *is an academic award for study at two of the world's finest universities – Harvard and MIT. It can be used to fund a wide variety of programs at MIT and across all the graduate schools within Harvard – from PhD to LLM, from MPH to MArch. It can also fund a Special Studentship for those wanting a general program of non-degree study.* (kennedytrust.org.uk, n.d.)

**The Marshall Scholarship:** *As future leaders, with a lasting understanding of British society, Marshall Scholars strengthen the enduring relationship between the British and American peoples, their governments and their institutions. Marshall Scholars are talented, independent and wide-ranging, and their time as Scholars enhances their intellectual and personal growth. Their direct engagement with Britain through its best academic programs contributes to their ultimate personal success.* (marshallscholarship.org, n.d.)

**King Abdullah Scholarship Program:** *Vision: To prepare distinguished generations for a knowledge society built upon a knowledge-based economy.* (uksacb.org, 2019)

This section also outlines Saudi Scholarships, such as the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP), which is the case study in this research. It considers how the programme is helping Saudi students to acquire the skills needed for the Saudi labour market in the context of globalisation. The origins of the programme will be assessed, while its key features, rationale and aims will be evaluated. Reference will be made to key primary policy documents and government materials, as well as the results of primary research from interviews with participants on the programme. This primary data receives further comprehensive analysis in Chapter 5 and discussion in Chapter 7, drawing learning from this research to provide recommendations in Chapter 8. For the purposes of this chapter, however, primary data and other sources contribute to the understanding of the KASP, rather than participants' experiences of the programme.

### **3.5.2 International Scholarship Programmes**

This part of the thesis takes a closer look at long-term international scholarship programmes from the UK and the US in their context and original vision to reveal more about of which type of beacon they are. Beginning with a history of the Merit-Based Scholarship Programmes and Rhodes Scholarship in the context of the British Empire, moving onto the social and political context for scholarship programmes from the US – contrasting scholarships from both countries throughout –the section ends with a look at what this means for Saudi Arabia. The concluding question about international scholarship programmes that this part seeks to offer insights into is: what type of beacon is KASP? One that leads the way ahead, or one that allows for coming generations to follow on behind?

#### **3.5.2.1 Merit-Based Scholarship Programmes**

Many scholarship programmes are, or seem to be, fundamentally meritocratic in nature. By paying attention primarily to merit rather than to family origin, social background or other demographic considerations, scholarship programmes provide a chance for social mobility to those who might otherwise not have such a chance. As such, they have the ability to displace and disrupt the status quo and the existing socio-economic class system. Viewed in this way, scholarship programmes have the potential to be an equalizing social force. There is, therefore, the implicit accompanying belief that increased equality and social mobility across classes (contributing to the destruction of a rigid class system) benefits society as a whole. Criticism of meritocratic systems argues that they recruit into existing elites – to reinforce them rather than change them.

In painting the history of the development of scholarship programmes from being primarily based on training a new set of recruits to the elite, towards contributing (unintentionally at first, and now with clearer intent) as a social ‘mixer’ or equalizer, examples from the contexts of the US and UK are useful. These countries did not recently, consciously, face the same dilemma as Saudi Arabia does – how to turn a resource-based economy into a service-based economy. However, both countries did face widespread social inequality as recently as the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century – in the case of the UK, from the remnants of the hereditary, land-based class system, and in the case of the US, from racial discrimination that was the legacy of slavery and segregation. Both countries have also had to deal with a large influx of immigrants and the implicit and explicit class distinctions that integration of immigrants has brought up, all as a result of various forms of immigration. These various forms of immigration have an impact; and relate to the evolving immigration policies of these nations. Presently, both the US and the UK demonstrate significant and growing inequality, both race and class-based (Wright, 1978). Further to which the migration of people from the British Empire’s former colonies, such as Pakistan, India, Kenya, Jamaica, and Barbados

were reflected in more welcoming political policies than the present-day policies that hinder immigration to Britain by refugees fleeing warzones, crossing Europe to reach here. This disparity in intent, attitude and action was made visible by the recent Windrush scandal, in which the recent 'hostile environment' policies of the Conservative government caused a bureaucratic nightmare as it adversely impacted the lives of both groups of migrants whose migration occurred decades apart (JCWI, 2020). Most relevant to the discussion at hand however is to recognise the different intentions, and therefore outcomes, rooted in socio-political realities and economic needs. In the context of our discussion it is important to acknowledge that the point at which the UK and US set up their international scholarship programmes there was a growing demand for skills that were in short supply amongst the elite – for example, the demands of Empire were at the heart of the Rhodes Scholarship.

Finally, both countries have had to deal with the transition from a male-dominated workplace to the integration of women as legally equal participants in all levels and types of employment. All of these changes and the resolution of the social challenges they present have increased the circulation of social capital throughout the societies in question. By increasing equality and access to participation in professional and economic life, society succeeds in reducing 'dead zones' in which resources are not able to spread or are scantily generated.

Scholarship programmes have contributed to this aim of increasing circulation of social capital through society. However, the task would not have been accomplished at all without the evolution of attitudes and of laws. Specifically, in the US, without the changes wrought by the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Equality Movement, and various other shifts in society and law, scholarship programmes would have had little chance of increasing participation. It appears, however, that scholarship programmes worked in tandem with evolving social equality in order to redistribute wealth, ability and empowerment and thus increase their availability to society. However, such programmes should not be considered as benign, as they can also align with constraints on these processes – for example, the UK's and US's programmes' participants were initially almost 100% male and 100% white. As noted above, the impact of these programmes on issues, such as an increase of social capital across unequal groups and the empowerment of women and some minorities, has been largely an unintended consequence, but has become a more focused aim in recent times. A direct example of this is the recent decision by Oriel College governors at Oxford University to remove the statue of Cecil Rhodes from the college building on Oxford High Street ([bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55844444), 18 June 2020). This decision was taken in the wake of the Black Lives Matter campaigners' direct action in England – in light of the brutal killing by police officers of George Floyd, an unarmed black man in Minneapolis, US – of pulling down the statue of

slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol. Noting the ongoing (since 2015) 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign to remove statues and public homages of those involved in the oppressions of slavery and empire, one recent news report stated that:

*Oriel College's governors said the decision had been reached "after a thoughtful period of debate and reflection" – and in "full awareness of the impact these decisions are likely to have in Britain and around the world". (Coughlan, 2020)*

The governors' discussions also included the future of the Rhodes Trust at Oxford University:

*The college is to launch an "independent commission of inquiry" into the legacy of Cecil Rhodes, which also includes scholarships at the university. (Coughlan, 2020)*

The Rhodes Trusts' own response to the pressures of campaigners and the sudden momentum of events in the fight for racial equality was to issue a statement on their website, entitled '#BlackLivesMatter, Racism and Legacy: Reflections on the Past, Present, and Future of the Rhodes Scholarships'. This statement outlines and clarifies issues of the past, as well as what has been done and changed most recently (since 2015, the Rhodes Must Fall movements campaign), as well as its commitments for the future. Key things to note are a rejection of Cecil Rhodes's aim of educating young men to carry out the British Empire's objectives:

*Many elements of Rhodes' original vision for the Scholarships were wrong and are obsolete. We reject his vision of educating young men to carry out a civilising mission, because of the imperialist, racist and sexist assumptions underlying its notion of civilisation. (rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk, 14 June 2020)*

Some successful and noteworthy Rhodes scholars of the past were also highlighted:

*In the ensuing years, Black Scholars were selected out of several constituencies. They included such towering figures in the anti-colonial struggle and in race theory as Jamaican National Hero and Premier Norman Manley (1914); Jamaican-British sociologist and theorist of race and multiculturalism Stuart Hall (1951), and Nigerian Scholar Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem (1983), Secretary-General of the Pan-African Movement. (rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk, 14 June 2020)*

Most importantly however, in laying out key facts about the Rhodes Trust and the Rhodes Scholarship programme, we see the development and emergence of a future vision:

*The Rhodes Trust, based at the University of Oxford, builds a better world through global fellowship programmes that develop and connect compassionate, innovative,*

*and public-spirited people committed to solving humanity's challenges.*  
(rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk, 14 June 2020).

In light of the Rhodes Trust's most recent aims, as outlined earlier in this chapter, of bringing together and developing exceptional people from all over the world, "*who are impatient with the way things are and have the courage to act*" (rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk, 2019), it seems that the Rhodes Trust is repositioning itself to, ostensibly, work with its scholars to change the world. Fundamentally however, it seems that even in light of its statement as examined here, the aim abides of developing individuals into an elite that will have the power and influence to make change in the world.

However, a closer examination reveals that scholarship programmes have always been set up by people and/or initiatives which are visionary, idealistic and sometimes ideological. In this way, scholarship programmes could actually be seen as beacons, leading the way ahead. This is especially true of the Rhodes Scholarship, the oldest of them all. Scholarship programmes can be seen as facilitating education, acquisition of social and cultural capital, and social mobility, as well as promotion of ideas concurrent with its vision. Therefore, preparing the ground for society's institutions and processes and attitudes to change accordingly to match the emerging vision. Equally, they could be seen as beacons to light the way for those following behind – this is where the vision of society already exists and the primary need is to light the way for coming generations.

### **3.5.2.2 The Rhodes Scholarship and the British Empire**

Large-scale scholarship programmes began with the efforts of Cecil Rhodes (1853-1902), who established the world-famous Rhodes Scholarship in 1902, which was inaugurated posthumously, in his will. Later programmes were often designed in the image of the Rhodes Scholarship. However, the programme did not remain static and "*Cecil Rhodes expected his Trustees to adapt his plans, to respond to changing circumstances*" (Rhodes House, n.d). This happened immediately on his death, and has continued frequently, as needed, to the present day:

*"Soon after his death his Trustees created several more Scholarships for Canada than he had done. The adaptation continued through three Acts of the British Parliament and other important changes to his will – for example, during World War I, abolishing the German Scholarships, which were twice re-created by his Trustees (in 1929-30 and 1969-70); in 1929, wholly remaking the geographic basis on which the Scholarships are awarded in the United States; opening up all but four of the Scholarships to women as well as to men in 1976; the opening up of those four remaining Scholarships (for named schools in South Africa) to women in recent*



*years. During the first 100 years after Cecil Rhodes's death, the Trustees added at one time or another nearly another 40 Scholarships, though not all have continued".*  
(Rhodes House, 2020)

It is important to note the responsiveness of the Rhodes Scholarship to changes in social attitudes, especially in relation to changing opinions regarding increased participation of women in society, the job market and in the pursuit of education. This is especially relevant to discussions presented in this thesis in the women's empowerment in the first section of this chapter. There is a correlation between the longevity and enduring success of a scholarship programme with the ability for that programme to respond and develop over time and in relation to changing circumstances.

These circumstances taken heed of are not just social, as in the example of the Rhodes Scholarship, or even economic, as in the reasons for moving away from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy, which precipitated the KASP. They are also political, as in the case of the Marshall Scholarship, which was set up to honour the special relationship and support given by America to Britain in the post-war Marshall Plan. The reality, however, is that the circumstances to which scholarship programmes respond over time are actually multiple and various. For example, the Rhodes Scholarship responded to political changes in Africa, as well as the need to develop strong leaders for the future of African nations:

*"In 2003 to mark the centenary of the Rhodes Scholarships and to continue the historic commitment of the Rhodes Trust to Africa and specifically to leadership development for Africa, the Rhodes Trust joined in the creation of The Mandela Rhodes Foundation. The Rhodes Trust is a forward-looking organisation. As Nelson Mandela said at the launch of that Foundation in 2003, there is "a chance to close the circle of history". We do not shy away from history but use it to challenge the status quo".* (Rhodes House, 2020)

Again, the present circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic are a global human health concern and will undoubtedly have an impact on all scholarship programmes and schooling and education provision around the world. This will require an appropriate response from scholarship programmes which, as they have done previously, may cross over with the responses and aims of national governments. One certain impact of Covid-19 is on the freedom of movement of people everywhere, whether locally, nationally or internationally. And this, perhaps more than anything, is going to impact the 'functioning' of the whole purpose of scholarships – to facilitate the potential students' education at a particular

institution of Higher Education. This challenge is evident in the Rhodes Trust, which self-identifies as follows:

*"It is a global organisation and we use our deep connections across the world to bring together people of different backgrounds and viewpoints. We encourage them to openly debate, challenge each other's thinking and generate new ideas".* (Rhodes House, 2020)

This aim may still be possible via online communication and conference platforms such as Zoom and Skype. But the facilitation of education in-person will be prevented and delayed for some time.

Before moving to a comparative analysis of the Rhodes Scholarship, it is important to note Nelson Mandela's comments on the setting up of The Mandela Rhodes Foundation, as *"a chance to close the circle of history"* and the Rhodes Trust's clear proposition to *"not shy away from history but use it to challenge the status quo"* (Rhodes House, 2020).. In a recent statement of its reflections on the past, present and future of race relations, the Rhodes Trust described its core partnership with the 'The Mandela Rhodes Foundation', an independent African-based charity:

*The Foundation, which is one of President Mandela's three official legacy organisations, was established through an initial £10m gift from the Rhodes Trust. It is dedicated to developing exceptional leaders for Africa through a focus on education, leadership, entrepreneurship and reconciliation.* (rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk, 14 June 2020)

Reconciliation as well as 'reparations' are two key elements of the desire and practice to acknowledge, accept, and advance from the traumas of the past, but also to attempt to 'repair' the damage done in the past, which may still have consequences today. It is an opportunity to accept the impact of historical events leading to the present situation, and a call to action towards changing the impact for the future. It is in this regard that the partnership between the two Trusts may potentially meet Mandela's proposition and advocacy for reconciliation in a post-apartheid South Africa, and in a post-imperial Africa.

This points to discussions throughout this section on whether the primary aim for graduates and scholarship programmes is to change the status quo or reinforce it. In the case of The Mandela Rhodes Foundation specifically, the aim is definitely to 'challenge the status quo'.

In one important sense, the Rhodes Scholarship as well as its subsequent American equivalent, the Kennedy Scholarship, which was established in the 1960s, differ significantly from other international scholarship programmes such as KASP. Scholarships such as

Kennedy and Rhodes bring a very small number of qualified students from various places in the (English speaking) world to certain select institutions in their own country of origin. KASP does the reverse, sending Saudi scholars to a variety of educational institutes worldwide. There is a profound difference in underlying assumptions within these two modes of increasing accessibility of education. In the Rhodes/Kennedy model, there is an assumption that top institutions in the UK and the US (Oxford and MIT) have a value for students and even societies worldwide. The benefits of such education will be diffused, travelling with the students back to their countries of origin. One must wonder, then, what the social utility of such a plan is for those who put it in place or who presently administrate it. At least part of the answer must be the idea of building a wider world with values congruent to those of the upper echelons of the UK or the US. The status quo in the originating countries is thus reinforced and spread, rather than challenged or changed.

The Rhodes Scholarship is an excellent example of a British scholarship programme that tended to reinforce the social status quo by selecting individuals for receipt who did not represent marginalized social groups. As such, the programme increased human and social capital only among certain groups: those that already tended to be part of the dominant culture. The Rhodes Scholarship was one of the most famous in the world and as such was a prototype for other programmes (Rotberg and Shore, 1988).

The Rhodes Scholarship was the first of its kind, an international scholarship awarded and administered on a broad scale. It was set up after Rhodes died and funded from his estate. The Scholarship funds three years of postgraduate studies at Oxford University. The original aim of the scholarship, in Rhodes' own words, was to promote civic minded leadership among "*young colonists*" in order to further the causes and reach of the British Empire:

*"For the furtherance of the British Empire, for the bringing of the whole uncivilized world under British rule, for the recovery of the United States, for the making of the Anglo-Saxon race by one Empire".* (Rhodes and Stead, 1902, p. 59)

Another stated aim was to make "*Oxford University the educational centre of the English-speaking race*". Again, words such as 'race' here represent thinking of the time and the original aims of the Rhodes Scholarship. Every country that produces Rhodes scholars makes its own rules regarding the administration of the award. For example, in the US, candidates must be endorsed by their university. Moreover, criteria do change over time. Women became eligible for the award in 1977 in response to changing laws and views regarding gender-based discrimination. Germans were excluded from receiving it during the world war periods and were not included until 1969.

Rhodes, who himself earned an Oxford degree in 1880, was a colonialist and capitalist. His South African enterprises, which yielded diamonds and gold, sparked conflict in what became Rhodesia, now Zambia and Zimbabwe (Rotberg and Shore, 1988, p.7). It has been suggested by Schaeper and Schaeper (1998) that Rhodes himself sought out an Oxford education in order "*to be accepted as a gentleman and have social connections with the right sort of people*" (p.2) – in other words, he recognised the need for social capital in his own life and wished to augment his share of it. It was at Oxford that Rhodes "*constructed a plan of life*" (Rotberg and Shore, 1988, p.84), so it is perhaps correct that admission to Oxford and his experiences there significantly increased his own capital. In establishing the scholarship (through the creation of a Rhodes Trust in his will) Rhodes also hoped to bring together English speaking "*leaders*" from throughout the British Commonwealth and beyond – for example, extending the scholarship to Germans through a notation in his will in 1901 (Rotberg and Shore, 1988, p. 75).

Originating as it did amid a colonialist mindset, what relevance can consideration of the Rhodes Scholarship have for today, and for a country seeking to build a knowledge-based economy? After all, the aim of the Rhodes Scholarship was never to transform British society and culture, but to spread it. Nevertheless, there are relevant lessons to be learned from the Rhodes Scholarship. First, the terms of the scholarship meant that it was ahead of its time. Rather than focusing exclusively on academics, the scholarship also took into account "*leadership potential, moral integrity and athletic prowess*" – taking into account the whole student in a way that anticipates the requirements for North American university admissions a century later and is relevant for the potential transformation of a society.

Once awarded the scholarship and admitted to studies at Oxford, Rhodes's recipients were encouraged to live a balanced life, travelling and engaging in reading and discussion from other disciplines in addition to their own (Schaeper and Schaeper, 1998). One can surmise that Cecil Rhodes, who enjoyed a high level of professional and economic success in his own life, had, towards the end of it, considered the elements that contributed to his success. He was motivated to extend the benefit of those elements to others, and the Rhodes Scholarship programme in the course of its development over time is a testimony to that principle (Schaeper and Schaeper, 1998). However, his interests lay more in shoring up the context and/or circumstances that helped him to become successful in and through it, namely the British Empire, and the institution of Oxford University, of which he was an alumnus. He therefore intended his legacy to contribute to that ongoing reality. If that is the case, then social capital was being used in a restrictive way and/or as a defence, rather than as something to be spread around. Either way, he had the insight to recognise that success is dependent on factors beyond an educational level. Rather, it is the contacts one

makes, as described by Bourdieu and outlined in Section 3.4, that serve to increase social capital.

There is no doubt that Cecil Rhodes had a zeal for the British Empire, and that this figured in his creation of the scholarship; his writings of 1877 (later amended)<sup>7</sup> on the subject make this clear:

*“There are men now living with I know no other term the [Greek term] of Aristotle but there are not ways for enabling them to serve their Country. They live and die unused unemployed. What has the main cause of the success of the Romish Church? The fact that every enthusiast, call it if you like every madman finds employment in it. Let us form the same kind of society a Church for the extension of the British Empire. A society which should have members in every part of the British Empire working with one object and one idea we should have its members placed at our universities and our schools and should watch the English youth passing through their hands just one perhaps in every thousand would have the mind and feelings for such an object, he should be tried in every way, he should be tested whether he is endurant, possessed of eloquence, disregardful of the petty details of life, and if found to be such, then elected and bound by oath to serve for the rest of his life in his County. He should then be supported if without means by the Society and sent to that part of the Empire where it was felt he was needed.” (p. 249)*

As dated and jingoistic as these sentiments might be with regard to empire, nevertheless there is a solid idea here: people educated within a society must be able to find employment within the institutions of that society. One of these institutions, however, is termed in its broadest meaning as a ‘Church’, for ‘the extension of the British Empire’. This should not be considered facetiously, as on the macro level, the Church has always been the ideologue of western colonialism in the world, Protestant or Catholic. On the micro level however, the need for employment has become a more universal everyday reality.

Another aspect of the Rhodes Scholarship that may make it relevant here is that its terms have been amended repeatedly to fit the needs and standards of society, most notably admitting women to the programme. This is an important factor that allows for the long-term utility and relevance of the programme and should be emulated by other programmes such as KASP. However, Rhodes changed and updated his writings and will on a number of occasions during his lifetime, as mentioned above, and in response to both the changes of

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<sup>7</sup> For further discussion on why and how Rhodes changed his will and legacy, see Maylam, 2005.

the time, as well as his own life and work interests. The changing of his will in 1899 to include the bequest of a scholarship scheme at Oriel College, Oxford University occurred just weeks after Rhodes was awarded an honorary degree in civil law from the College – this was not without controversy (Maylam, 2005, pp.71-72). He had, over time, refined the original idea of the scheme and made this part of his enduring legacy as much due to his personal needs for a positive public image as for the endurance of the British Empire (Maylam, 2005, pp.71-72). This was following Rhodes being forced to resign as Prime Minister of Cape Colony in 1896, due to his involvement in the Jameson Raid (29/12/1895 – 02/01/1896), which sought to agitate an uprising in the Transvaal (area of South Africa) in the hope of annexing this area and its gold mines for British rule and exploitation by the British South Africa Company, of which he was a director (Maylam, 2005, pp.77-78). Rhodes resigned both these postings and so was in need of an opportunity to salvage his global reputation. The honorary degree, and the legacy of the scholarship programme offered precisely this “*eternal recognition*” as a “*generous idealist*” (Maylam, 2005, pp.77-78).

While the colonial age in Britain and beyond came to an end, the Rhodes Scholarship and the concept of a 'Rhodes scholar' persists. The scholarship today extends far beyond the narrow boundaries of gender and racial superiority that its founder intended. Indeed, the programme persists today precisely because it has developed and changed from its jingoistic and racist origins.

### **3.5.2.3 Scholarships from the United States**

The American example demonstrates the ability of scholarship programmes to alter entrenched demographics in higher education institutions, thereby redistributing social capital. US President Lyndon Johnson, in his famous “*Great Society*” speech in 1964, endeavoured to define the direction of development for his country. His understandably abstract concept was anchored by some concrete 'markers'. Economic equality, for example, was “*just the beginning*.” Beyond that, Johnson defined the Great Society as:

*a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents. It is a place where leisure is a welcome chance to build and reflect... It is a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community [...] it is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods. (Johnson, 1964, p.704)*

It is important to note that the use of the terms such as ‘his mind’, ‘city of man’ and the address to the concerns of ‘men’ reflect the time in which these words were spoken. This is

in addition to, not instead of, the ideal and vision that is being communicated of a great society. In other words, this speech addresses the audience who held the power in society at the time, to utilise their agency to bring about better change in their outlook and in their social reality. It also points to how far the US has come since, in giving equality of participation to those it had previously not considered worthy. In the case of America, this includes women as well as African Americans and First-Nation peoples. However, the US Constitution remains worded in a way that excludes these groups.

The impulse to galvanize citizens to contribute to society is intimately connected with what the society is prepared to offer them – this includes physical resources, but also the opportunity to ‘enrich one’s mind and enlarge one’s talents’ (to paraphrase Johnson) as well as the necessary corollary to this: the opportunity to put one’s skills and talents to use within the society. Increasing access to education, particularly higher education because that is where availability falls off sharply with income level. The needs and concerns of the individual – for self-actualization and fulfilment of one’s potential – coalesce with those of the whole society. In turn, giving individuals the means to develop and implement their talents and skills will lead to a stronger economy and a country with more means to help itself and its people.

Interspersed with this straightforward aim – sometimes part of it, sometimes superseding it – is another: the desire to ‘shape’ society in a certain way by increasing access to higher levels of education for certain members. At times, this second aim predominates, and other times it may be the result of deficient planning for full accessibility. An example of this is when quotas for scholarships to such institutions as Oxford and Cambridge Universities – which may allow access to working class students to its course, but which may continue to replicate race and gender bias – fail aims to recruit greater numbers of ethnic minority and/or female students. In short, scholarship programmes as a means of increasing education availability have the potential to either change or reinforce the social status quo – at times – in practice; these aims coalesce and cross-over and so both come into play to some degree, and in different ways.

Academic life in the US was once dominated by the ‘Ivy League’ Universities, a set of highly ranked, longstanding, prestigious private institutions in the eastern US. To this day, the Ivy League universities are sought out as the ‘dream schools’ of American and international students alike, although the list of such prestigious institutions has expanded. Unsurprisingly, these institutions were traditionally attended by the social elite, a group of wealthy, socially connected white males, predominantly ‘WASPs’ (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants) (Synnott, 2017). There was, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, much

resistance to admitting members of other social groups – for example, recent immigrants from Eastern Europe, Catholics, and Jews (the issue of admitting women or African Americans was a considerably later development). Thus, the social capital that attending these institutions conferred was limited, isolated among a distinct and restricted group. The benefits did not spread further to permeate society. Moreover, the social capital generated at the Ivy League universities served primarily to cement and further entrench existing social hierarchies. Therefore, one may even question whether the education conferred by the Ivy League universities at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century really provided social capital at all. Instead of generalising benefits across the system, the benefits remained where they had originated, and therefore social capital was restricted to certain groups.

In *the Half-Open Door: Discrimination and Admissions at Harvard, Yale and Princeton*, Marcia Synnott (2017) describes the changes that took place in admissions to these universities during the years 1907-1970, as well as the role of scholarships in these changes. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as Synnott describes, the doors to these institutions were effectively closed to Jews, German Americans, or Roman Catholics. This admissions policy, whether explicit or implicit, is likened to and aligned with the 'Nativist' movement which arose in the US in response to the influx of immigrants from central or eastern Europe, as well as Asia (Synnott, 2017). Nativists took a narrow view of American identity, denying it to those not born in America and including only those of a white, English, and Protestant extraction. Nativism was a political movement that flourished from the 1890s to the 1920s and was certainly apparent in higher education as well – Synnott calls this “*academic nativism*”. This points to social and political movements which may support restriction of participation in society for certain groups being pushed back sometimes and at other times being upheld by admissions to American universities. Therefore, it is fair to say that society and its educational institutions have a symbiotic relationship. This symbiosis is in the sense of interaction, which can be sometimes beneficial and sometimes harmful yet necessary as they provide a balance that can only be achieved by working together.

Further examples of this include the seemingly destructive actions of the Black Lives Matter protestors in pulling down the statue slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol, which (potentially) interacts and impacts social beliefs and attitudes about how we view, represent and teach history. A more poignant and relevant example is how the Rhodes Trust, in its need to come to terms with and develop beyond its own history and the telling and representation of it, has amalgamated the Rhodes Must Fall movement into its conversations and considerations for its future direction (rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk, 14 June 2020), the latter perhaps accepting that work with the Trust is more likely to lead to their campaign aims being realised. Of course, this association may not always benefit every



member, and it is important to know and accept that. But to recognise it and work in knowledge of it produces a more equitable example, as in the partnership of the Rhodes Trust with the Mandela Rhodes Foundation.

According to Synnott, the WASP hegemony in prestigious higher institutions of learning came about in part because of the National Scholarship Program in 1934. Newcomers to the US, highly motivated and accomplished as well as able to demonstrate need, claimed a disproportionate share of scholarships. As they did so and succeeded in entering post-secondary education previously closed off to them, they raised the standard of education in the Ivy League and other institutions. Moreover, through their entry into these schools and their acquisition of a higher level of education, social capital circulated more freely throughout different strata of the society, enriching the society as a whole. Arguably, the entry of diverse 'newcomers' into these traditional institutions opened the door for other changes, including the eventual admission of women – as well as changes to educational programmes themselves. This coincided with the decline of the Nativist movement and the general acceptance of diverse immigrants in various social roles and strata in American life.

Interestingly, the role of scholarships in these changes was seemingly known, acknowledged and occasionally used as a strategic tool. For example, Synnott cites the example of a scholarship fund set up by a private citizen to allow "*native born boys*" from former confederate states to access funds for private education. Fortunately, such attempts at social manipulation were overshadowed by government scholarships, which tended toward promoting social equality. However, the very tendency to use scholarships to attempt to 'engineer' who will attend which schools is indicative of an acknowledgment of the power of scholarships as a tool or vehicle.

Indeed, the same engineering is evident in 'affirmative actions' policies of later American government initiatives, whereby strategies such as quotas were put in place to give greater access to a specific group: African Americans. Therefore, this points to a time when such actions are entirely justified in the aim of social equality. However, to offer a contrast of the role of scholarships in changing educational demographics in relation to affirmative action policies Darity and Kreeger (2014), in their study *The Desegregation of an Elite Economics Department's PhD program: Black Americans at MIT*, cite the fact that affirmative action was largely a failure in 'desegregating' the highly-rated institution. Nevertheless, African Americans were able to enter MIT on the Marshall Scholarship (Darity and Kreeger, 2014, p.317). It remains open to discussion whether initiatives like affirmative action, or even scholarship programmes, having the intent, will necessarily have the ability to shore up the status quo or otherwise, especially when their effect might be the opposite of their stated

aims. This does not, however, detract from the purpose and persistence of governments, policy-makers and philanthropists in establishing and propagating their visions through these means. As they precipitate the potential of their success through the acknowledgment of their power as tools and vehicles towards their socio-political, economic, educational and personal aims and interests.

Scholarships, as mentioned, have also played a significant role in facilitating the entry of women into higher education institutions. Dynarski (2007), in a study of the complex dynamics of various forms of student aid in the US, cites the effects of scholarship programmes in Arkansas and Georgia in the early 1990s. The effects of these programmes were concentrated among women because they were merit-based – awarded on the basis of grade point average (GPA). More girls than boys in the high school system met the criteria to receive a scholarship, so they benefited disproportionately, and perhaps unintentionally. Thus, girls were given a chance to enter and access post-secondary education, where often they would not have been able to otherwise or may not have thought of the possibility for themselves. College education rates went up significantly – by 27% – as a result of those scholarships, and the effects were disproportionately felt among females. Of course, by the 1990s, sufficient social and legal equality for women had been achieved so that the benefits for these girls were transmitted through their segments of society. The scholarships effectively built social capital as well as human capital in those particular cases, because the conditions were right – society's attitudes and laws had changed, and scholarship programmes worked in tandem with these changes to meet, merge and make them concrete. Therefore, a merit-based scholarship programme that is not costly to administer, among a population with the necessary legal and social support to benefit from it, is more likely to yield the results intended. For a fuller discussion of women's empowerment through scholarship programmes effectively building social and human capital in light of social conditions, see **Section 3.3.4**.

In the following sections, a closer examination of specific scholarship programmes will isolate factors related to their aims, effects, successes and failures. As Dynarski (2007) points out, this is a complex issue. Scholarship programmes come in various forms and configurations. Some are private, while others are government funded. Some are merit-based, others are needs-based, while some are both. There are also significant differences in the scope and cost of administration. For example, some may even provide year-long pastoral support, or even health insurance. However, on the whole, most scholarship programmes, especially those with international recognition and high reputation fund both tuition fees and some sort of bursary for living costs. This adds to their sought-after status, and applicants scramble to get onto these scholarships – for prospective students this

becomes a sure way of not having to struggle financially whilst studying. Further information is given in the sub-sections below on the financial value of both the Kennedy and Marshall scholarships for prospective students.

All scholarships may be expected to bring about some change in the accessibility and demographics of education. As such, they have the potential to increase social justice, equalize access to education across the society, and increase the amount of social capital as well as the circulation of social capital throughout the society and the nation. At the same time, it is important to note that not all scholarship or other aid programmes accomplish this goal. As Dynarski (2007) notes, scholarship programmes and other student financial aid have the potential to “*ameliorate or intensify racial, gender and income inequality in education and labour markets*” (The Economics of Student Aid, para 1). For example, scholarship programmes such as KASP always have the intention of increasing access to human capital (education). In a simple way, by allowing more people to attend school, or to attend more elite schools, scholarship programmes almost inevitably meet their goals. However, graduating from a scholarship programme as a working/under class, and/or female and/or non-white person in a traditionally middle/upper-class, male-dominated, educational institution and in a labour market that has traditionally served the purposes of a white population does not necessarily provide the keys necessary to access relevant employment or grant a way in to a network, community, society, organisation or institution. Here again it is important to keep in mind the rule of capital: if the benefits of education are not spread among the population, they are not truly capital at all. For this reason, there needs to be thought given to intended outcomes as well as unintended consequences, and collaborative action by society and law to meet the emerging requirements of a new society. Thus, society can reap the rewards of an improved human capital, and human capital can in turn feel as though it is capable and valuable to society.

This all comes to bear heavily on Saudi Arabia, as its situation is different from that of many other countries. KASP is funded from an availability of funds based on the country's resources (primarily oil). The increase of social capital in a country may serve to further entrench differences between those who receive education and have the legal and socially mandated ability to implement it, and those who do not. If we are to build a knowledge-based economy in place of a resource economy in Saudi Arabia – a formidable proposition – then increasing access to social capital is an essential component. If capital does not circulate freely, and if access to it is not equalized, then problems related to class and gender differences may be exacerbated. Moreover, the potential of creating and spreading social capital will not have been met.

- **The Kennedy Scholarship**

A counterpart to the Rhodes Scholarship, the Kennedy Scholarship funds postgraduate studies at two top American universities: Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The scholarship was established in memory of US President John F. Kennedy following his untimely death in 1963. It was created in cooperation between then-Prime Minister of the UK, Alec Douglas-Home, the British Ambassador to the United States and the US Secretary of State. Ultimately it was created by a British Act of Parliament, one component of a two-part British memorial to President Kennedy.

The financial value of the Kennedy Scholarship to prospective students is outlined in its prospectus and on the official website for the Kennedy Trust, which states:

*A Kennedy Scholarship typically covers the full costs of tuition and health insurance, paid direct to the institution concerned. In addition, Scholars selected at interview may apply for a means-tested bursary of up to \$27,250 to cover living costs. Scholars are expected to spend part of their summer vacation in the United States after the end of the academic year and may apply for an additional grant of \$2,500 to pay for vacation travel.* (<http://www.stonefish.co.uk>, 2020)

Kennedy scholarship candidates are selected annually, with a short-list of 25 being granted interviews with trustees in London. While they are assessed on their own merits (for example, intellectual achievement) and the suitability of their proposed course of study to the programmes offered at MIT and Harvard, commitment to public service and the ability to transcend hardship are also taken into consideration. Ten candidates are chosen yearly, and to date, 520 have received the scholarship (<http://www.stonefish.co.uk>, 2020). The ideology behind the scholarship is a desire to perpetuate Kennedy's dream of "*a fruitful combination [of] disciplines of traditional humane studies and modern technology, and so making their strength effective in the activities of government and in the direction of world affairs*" (<http://www.stonefish.co.uk>, 2020). Thus, social capital is being built and international connections are being made between the same two nations that are connected through the Rhodes Scholarship, but in a highly contained context, not least due to the limited intake of students on the programme. The establishment of the Kennedy Scholarship was perhaps in part an acknowledgment of the US's rising status as a world leader, in culture as well as politics. In terms of its relevance to programmes aimed at increasing cultural capital and transitioning to a knowledge-based economy, the observations to be made are much the same as those regarding the Rhodes Scholarship.

- **The Marshall Scholarship**

Marshall Scholarships select young American students to study at the UK institution of their choice, at a graduate level in any field of study. The financial value of the scholarship to prospective students is stated on the scholarship website, which lists the support provided to scholars as:

*university fees, cost of living expenses, annual book grant, thesis grant, research and daily travel grants, fares to and from the United States and, where applicable, a contribution towards the support of a dependent spouse. (Home – Marshall Scholarships, 2020)*

Successful candidates are described as "*future leaders, with a lasting understanding of British society*" (Home – Marshall Scholarships, 2020). As well as offering the values of "*intellectual and personal growth*" to the individuals who are awarded the scholarship, the scholarship program also aims to "*strengthen the enduring relationship between the British and American people, their governments and their institutions*" (Home – Marshall Scholarships, 2020). It was established as a 'living gift' to commemorate the aid America offered Britain, post-WWII, through the Marshall Plan.

### **3.5.3 Scholarships in Saudi Arabia**

In 1927, King Abdulaziz ordered the first educational mission, sending 14 students to study abroad (Egypt). After that, 13 Saudi students were sent to the UK. The number of Saudi students has increased dramatically over the years, reaching 11,000 students in the US alone by 2012/2013 (Albasri and Taylor, 2014). During the reigns of King Khalid and King Fahd, Saudi academics and researchers travelled all over the world to study and conduct their research. King Abdullah came up with the idea of sending more young Saudis to study abroad, and, in 2005, he launched the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) to meet the needs of the job market.

#### **3.5.3.1 Case Study: King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP)**

The King Abdullah Scholarship Program began in 2005 under the name "*The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques' Overseas Scholarship Program*" as well as "*The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Program for Foreign Scholarship*" (King Abdullah Scholarships Program, 2020). There have been three five-year phases and, during the initial first two phases, the programme aimed to develop scientific knowledge at Saudi universities in order to increase the number of opportunities to study scientific courses and conduct research in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the programme aimed to bolster the country's private and public sectors by developing a highly skilled workforce, importing knowledge and skills from various parts of the world and enabling the country to become a competitive labour market:

*Mission to prepare and qualify Saudi human resources in an effective manner so that they will be able to compete on an international level in the labour market and the different areas of scientific research, and thereby become an important source of supply of highly qualified individuals for Saudi universities as well as the government and private sectors. (uksacb.org, 2019)*

Consequently, Saudi universities diversified their available specialisations and in 2015, to ensure the sustainability of the workforce, the programme was expanded to serve the specific needs of the economic and strategic interests of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. For example, it was found that not all graduates of the programme were able to find the jobs they required straight away and domestic universities were now beginning to offer the same courses within the country that were being sought externally. Therefore, courses are now targeted to fulfil the needs of the workforce and academic institutions and those awarded with scholarships are first given jobs and then sent to study abroad. In other words, scholarships are also afforded to those who have already been offered jobs or research fellowships and their being awarded is based on an assessment of the country's human resources and academic needs (King Abdullah Scholarships Program, 2020).

In terms of the undergraduates who are sent abroad, the programme covers medicine, medical sciences and health sciences only. However, at the postgraduate level, there is greater diversity in the required knowledge and skills and, hence, medicine – including dentistry, pharmacy, nursing and medical sciences – engineering, computing, pure sciences, law, education, accounting, e-commerce, finance, insurance and marketing are all included in the programme (King Abdullah Scholarships Program, 2020). The countries that have been specified as being appropriate in terms of their academic excellence are the US, Canada, the UK, Ireland, France, Spain, Italy, Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, New Zealand, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, People's Republic of China, Malaysia, India, South Africa, and Turkey (King Abdullah Scholarships Program, 2020). These relationships are under continuous scrutiny and therefore subject to change. As a general rule, the list of countries has been added to and has increased, rather than decreased, with the scholarship programme mainly considering countries and universities that would enhance the Saudi labour market and areas of study. According to Taylor and Albasri:

*Saudi's Ministry of Higher Education must approve all foreign colleges before students are permitted to apply for admission [and] colleges and Universities are added to the Ministry of Higher Education's list only after recommendations from*

*specialized committees, one of which is the Academic Accreditation Committee.*  
(Albasri and Taylor, 2014, p.115)

Significant policy changes, such as the addition of countries to the academic excellence list for KASP students to apply to attend or changes in the types of education institutions accepted on the list will continue. These decisions are inevitably informed by a greater understanding of what the Saudi economy requires both now and in moving towards a future knowledge-based economy.

*Until recently, Saudi Arabian students were restricted from attending community colleges; however, in the fall of 2012, the government accepted community colleges as “Approved Institutions of Learning” for the first time in Saudi Arabian scholarship history. Officials felt that both students and the country could benefit by having access to the many specialized fields that community colleges offer.* (Albasri and Taylor, 2014, p.116)

#### **3.5.3.1.1 Programme Overview**

The Saudi Arabian government believes that a key pillar of the development of a workforce of international standard lies with having students undertake studies at leading international universities. Thus, they created the study abroad programme, which has been very popular, as over 60% of students from Saudi Arabia study at universities in North America (Abouammoh et al., 2014). According to the Saudi Bureau (2005), the creation of the KASP was in response to concerns about the sustainable development of human resources in Saudi Arabia.

The programme sponsored nearly 9,000 students in 2006 alone, the year after it was officially launched. By 2012, KASP had supported 140,000 Saudi Arabian students, indicating a more than 20-fold increase in student participation rates (Hilal et al., 2015). Hilal and colleagues (2015) discuss three possible reasons for the launch of the programme: political, economic, and social. In terms of the political, they assert that there is a direct link between the launch of the programme and the terror attacks of 9/11, which ultimately led to thousands of Saudi students losing the opportunity to obtain a US visa and study abroad. Subsequently, in an effort to improve the country's international relations and strengthen its global position, King Abdullah visited the US and personally met President George W. Bush. The economic reason for the programme was the problem of high levels of youth unemployment in the KSA. The programme allows students to adopt international experience and therefore bridge the gap between their expertise, market demands and expectations (Hilal et al., 2015).

The final, socio-cultural, reason for KASP was to address the current issue of conservatism

in Saudi Arabia. Hilal and colleagues (2015) argue that no major governmental changes and reforms can occur without acceptance of the societal changes. There are many ways to prepare society for the planned reforms and education is a key method in that regard (Albasri, 2014; Yusuf, 2014). The KSA is a highly religious and conservative society, suggesting that major reforms and changes may meet misunderstanding and resistance by local people (Hilal et al., 2015). There is a general governance challenge across the world which requires legislative changes to produce broad behavioural changes in society. A recent and ongoing example of this is the painfully slow maturing of western nations' beliefs, attitudes and behaviours towards racial equality in society. The 2020 killing of George Floyd in the US and the international response in the context of the 'Black Lives Matter' movement is only one recent episode in a long drawn-out drama for greater harmony between races, and an acceptance of the past and the ability to tell it from more than the dominant (white) perspective. Although legislative changes are often backed up by punishments, fines and other legal and social orders of enforcement to encourage people to adhere to those changes, individual and social attitudes against such changes remain a challenge. Therefore, this should give greater importance, in the context of the KSA, to Hilal and Denman's (2013) discussion of the KASP scholarship being a platform that encourages more modern thinking. KASP is an attempt by the KSA for the economy, society and the people of Saudi Arabia to lean into their maturing and growth, rather than continuing to perpetuate the same systems and cycles (of economy or human oppression) of the past. With international experience, younger Saudis are more likely to see the necessity of the changes suggested by the 2030 Vision and possess professional qualifications and personal skills and attitudes to implement these changes. Furthermore, as this thesis will reveal,<sup>8</sup> the acquisition of interpersonal skills, and ethical frameworks and experiences of other ways of living and being become an important factor in and through these programmes.

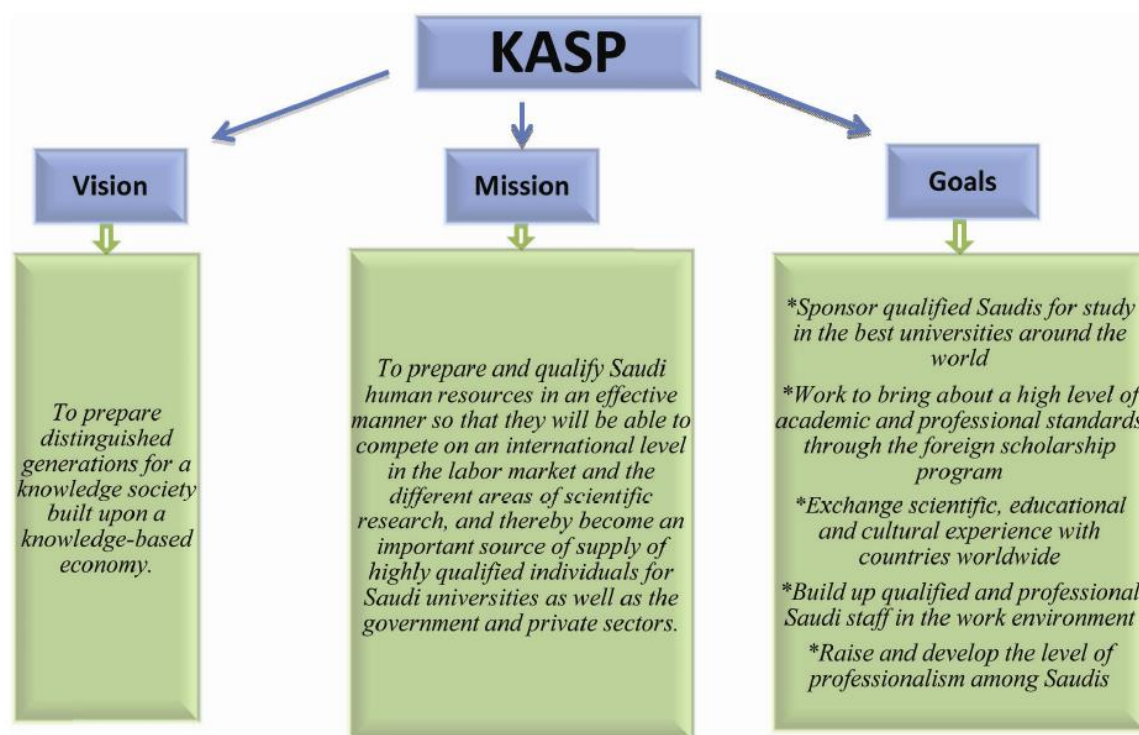
The programme's current mission statement, see Figure 3.3, is formulated as follows: "*To prepare distinguished generations for a knowledge society built upon a knowledge-based economy*" (Hilal et al., 2015, p.256). KASP, a one-year programme, has been extended four times, currently to 2020 (Wagner, 2012). Its terms are unusually generous, offering students full tuition, materials costs, a monthly living stipend, medical and dental insurance, and yearly airfare for the student and family members (Hilal et al., 2015, p.256). The considerable costs of KASP are justified based on the need to serve and prepare the young population while facilitating a shift toward a knowledge-based economy. At the same time,

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<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 5



however, frailties of KASP have been identified, including, perhaps most insidiously, a "brain drain" and the loss of cultural identity among participants (Hilal et al., 2015, p.259).



**Figure 3. 3 The KASP vision, mission, and goals (Source: Hilal et al., 2015, p.257)**

KASP is currently considered an important source of support for the private and public sectors of the KSA, one which develops, qualifies, and prepares human resources. The programme sponsors citizens to study in degree specialisations that were selected in relation to the needs of Saudi Arabia's labour market, in which the students are expected to return to contribute to the development of the country (Saudi Bureau, 2014). To qualify for a KASP scholarship, applicants must be Saudi citizens between 18 and 30 years of age. The programme does not issue quotas based on economic status or ethnicity.

Women are eligible to apply for KASP grants on the condition that a male companion, usually a husband or family member, accompanies them during their entire period of study. In part, because of this requirement, 75% of the Saudi students who have been involved in the programme to date have been male. The awarding of a KASP scholarship does not oblige recipients in any way to return to contribute to the development of the country. Saudis have a strong tendency to want to live in their home country, so the common assumption is that citizens will return home after completing their studies abroad (British Council and

DAAD, 2014). Furthermore, KASP funds full-time undergraduate and graduate study in targeted, high-need fields (British Council and DAAD, 2014).

#### **3.5.3.1.2 KASP Benefits and Possible Consequences**

The outcomes of a scholarship programme as widespread and comprehensive as KASP are bound to be complex and multi-faceted (Hilal et al., 2015; Taylor and Albasri, 2014; Hall, 2013; Hilal and Denman, 2013). Although KASP is undoubtedly an important milestone in the Kingdom's journey to transition from an oil-based to a knowledge-based economy (Hilal et al., 2015), it is difficult to assess the actual contribution of the scholarship to the Saudi economy, although a number of attempts have been made (Oxford Business Group, 2015). An objective evaluation is difficult due to the multiplicity of the processes directly and indirectly affected by, and effecting, the programme, as well as a number of pitfalls and limitations that reduce the expected effectiveness of KASP.

According to Oxford Business Group, the country has seen a profound economic impact in which "*Saudi students contributed \$3.2bn to the US economy in the 2013/14 academic year alone*" (2015, np). What this means for the Saudi Arabian government has not been thoroughly researched, as they have substantially increased the number of scholarships and have seen literacy rates increase from 71% in 1992 to 95% in 2017 (World Bank, 2018). Also, they have invested heavily in education as 25% of the country's GDP goes to the advancement of education, which includes a solid increase in the number of schools, technical institutions, and universities in the country (SACM, 2012). With KASP's projected end date of 2020, it may take years for its full impact to be realised and understood. As a scholarship programme, KASP represents an enormously ambitious commitment to the Kingdom's youth and future. Accordingly, it raises some interesting questions, for instance: what will the cultural impact on Saudi society be when such large numbers of internationally educated citizens return? Saudi Arabia has a conservative and religious society, which may feel threatened by the influx of numerous students exposed to a wider, different world (British Council and DAAD, 2014).

Hilal and colleagues (2015) and ICEF Monitor (2016) have identified another major limitation of the programme. They argue that the scholarship only offers a partial solution, which is practically irrelevant due to the current high unemployment rate. Therefore, the students coming back to the KSA would experience frustration and dissatisfaction as they struggle to find a job that matches their qualifications and expectations (see Table 3.2). In order to address this concern, during the course of the programme's implementation, some key challenges have been made: in the present five-year cycle (until 2020), the KASP programme is mostly focusing on public sector employees who already have a job or have

been employed by the government and need to improve their qualifications (ICEF Monitor, 2016). The programme is also associated with major spending due to the fact that it provides the students with full expense coverage (Hilal and Denman, 2013). Therefore, it has been asserted that, to cut spending, limiting the studying opportunities to students with higher academic and language credentials will be necessary (ICEF Monitor, 2016). Given the impact of Covid-19 on national economies around the world, including that of Saudi Arabia, which has been hit with a drop in demand for – and therefore the price of – oil (COVID-19 crisis response in MENA countries, 2020), as well as lockdown restrictions likely to prevent the global influx of pilgrims for the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca in 2020 (Blakemore, 2020), cuts in spending in Saudi Arabia are looking increasingly likely.

**Table 3. 3 Possible benefits and limitations of KASP (Sources: Hilal et al., 2015; Taylor and Albasri, 2014)**

Criteria	Political	Economic	Socio-cultural
Benefits	Improve the standard of living	Helps transition to a knowledge-based economy	Creates more flexible, open-minded society
	Improve the US-KSA relationship	May reduce competition from foreign workforce	Competency in English language
	Improve the image of the KSA after 9/11	Prepare more qualified Saudis	Familiarity with foreign professional expertise/ exchange of ideas
		Development of business ideas	
Risks	'Brain drain', as some students may find it attractive to stay abroad	Students returning back home may be frustrated due to lack of opportunities	Dissolving Saudi culture within an international one
	Only partial solution to a complex problem	Involves significant spending	Not all students are well-prepared

Taylor and Albasri (2014) point out that the Saudi students themselves largely determine the outcomes and success of the programme. The scholars note that the students from the KSA demonstrate a tendency to stick together, as opposed to integrating into the local student community.

#### **3.5.3.1.3 Strategic Ways to Address KASP Pitfalls: International Experience**

One noted pitfall of KASP is the 'brain drain' effect – students who have received an international education may elect to stay abroad and work after graduation. The noted Saudi

tendency to prefer to return home is not sufficient to alleviate, or guard against, this significant pitfall, especially if suitable jobs and living conditions are not available when they return.

The case of China provides ample and valuable grounds for comparison. Scholarship programmes in China include the National Merit Scholarship, the Elite Doctoral Scholarship, and many others. As of the report's publication, 25,632,977 Chinese students have studied abroad (Beall and Lemmens, 2014). China has taken measures to deal with the danger of 'brain drain' as well as the possibility of international students acquiring the 'wrong' skills relative to the needs of their home country. China has addressed these concerns through the terms of the scholarships offered. The goals of China's scholarship programmes are to train a force of leading-edge science and technology experts who will return to China to help improve and reform the country's tertiary education system. Unlike Saudi Arabia's scholarship programmes, they ensure that jobs are available when they return, so they can contribute solely to the sustainability of their knowledge economy.

A number of countries have also experienced problems concerning the overall effectiveness of exchange programmes due to the qualifications and level of preparedness of students selected to participate (Hilal et al., 2015). Similarly, KASP has experienced some criticism, as a number of students have demonstrated poor performance when studying abroad (Taylor and Albasri, 2014). Taylor and Albasri (2014) suggest that Saudi students are often not prepared for the high university standards of the US, and as a direct result, over 500 students were expelled from the programme in the period between 2005 and 2008. As mentioned before, in response to this criticism and guided by the experience of other national programmes, the KASP has restricted its admission of students based on their knowledge of the English language and overall academic experience (ICEF Monitor, 2016).

It is asserted, therefore, that Saudi Arabia should carefully study the experiences of other countries in order to improve the current programme. Although there are a number of pitfalls to address, overall it is suggested that KASP is positively affecting the Kingdom in a number of ways, particularly by making a long-lasting impact on the educational system in general. Saudi alumni who have attended top global universities are coming home and bringing knowledge and expertise that would help make the current economic transition plan a reality. Arguably, these students also enrich local culture by contributing what they have learned abroad. For many, this includes the acquisition of a modern way of thinking, which provides opportunities to these students to develop in themselves an open and outward looking personality, with and through international experience, and potentially an

international network. This helps build a dialogue between the KSA and the rest of the world, and also increases the competitiveness of the country (Hilal et al., 2015).

Furthermore, what is put forward as a criticism of KASP, namely the loss of cultural identity among participants, may on closer inspection prove to be a gain to both the individual, society and the economy. This is because there is an enhancement of identity through this programme. One which the individual experiences and society (friends and family) notices, but one which still needs to positively impact and change the country, economy and even society, over time.

#### **3.5.4 Ramifications International Scholarship Programmes for Saudi Arabia**

As has been the case in other societies, Saudi Arabia currently faces a lack of circulation with regard to potential cultural capital. This exists primarily in the position of women, although there are other social inequalities (for example, based on class and economics) that likewise impair the circulation and production of social capital.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the level and extent of education of women in Saudi Arabia has increased sharply in the past decades. This is undoubtedly a step in the right direction. The ability of women to access KASP is also an important step, as it produces a generation of highly educated women with knowledge of the world, fluency in multiple languages, and in general a world-class education. However, without the concurrent changes in thinking and in law – as was the case for the US, for example, with regard to the social participation and enfranchisement of African Americans – the social capital generated by educational measures is largely lost or unrealized.

This is not to say that the efforts made to educate Saudi women are lost or irrelevant at present. However, it is an acknowledgment that measures such as KASP, to fulfil their purpose, must exist concurrently with social and legal changes in order to truly turn education into ‘capital’ for the entire society. Though insufficient on their own, it is undeniable that scholarship programmes play a vital role in such far-reaching social changes. This points to a need to expand thinking to reach some level of clarity about scholarship programmes’ aims, especially in relation to a point discussed at the beginning of this section about scholarship programmes being beacons. This is either as beacons to light and guide the way ahead, for societal changes to catch up to, or as beacons which simply light the way behind to guide the footsteps of following generations lest they deviate from the path.

Therefore, an examination of scholarship programmes in the US, UK and beyond as a means of breaking down social barriers and increasing capital will have important ramifications regarding the use and utility of KASP as a factor in Saudi Arabia's transition from a resource-based economy. For capital to increase and circulate, a scholarship programme must work congruently with other social changes, and with clear intent. In and of itself, KASP is an important step, but only a limited one.

### **3.5.5 Relevance to KASP**

Unlike the scholarships funded from private endowments or trusts, KASP is funded from available funds from a resource-based economy, with the explicit intention of moving beyond that type of economy. Moreover, unlike many other programmes, KASP requires its participating students to access foreign education.

Ultimately, however, there is much to be learned from the past successes and failures of other scholarship programmes, particularly with regard to their capacity to spread and circulate social capital across a broader segment of society. The success of KASP to a large degree also depends on its capacity to truly turn inert resources into capital, according to Bourdieu's understanding (Hart, 2019). To do so will involve improvement of not only educational opportunities but social and legal enfranchisement of women in Saudi Arabia, much as other scholarship programmes in other countries have improved accessibility of education and opportunities for women and racial, ethnic and/or religious minorities.

The ability to create a knowledge-based economy depends on far more than simply the ability to produce individuals with higher university degrees. The danger, always, is that the investment in the education of individuals will fail to become 'capital' in the true sense – that such benefits will not circulate. If this is the case, KASP will have failed, and the resources spent on educating talented young Saudis will have amounted to little more than a complex act of charity, adding perhaps to the personal life experiences and satisfaction of those people, but contributing little else. If KASP is to benefit the entire society as intended, opportunities must exist at home for KASP scholars to participate meaningfully and build a robust and self-perpetuating basis of knowledge and professionalism.

Social barriers within Saudi Arabia are not the only challenges or potential pitfalls that may derail this intention, however. The role and aims of the academic are presently being questioned and potentially reformulated, to make them more socially relevant. To this end, the Carnegie Initiative of the Doctorate has investigated PhD programmes in America, and found that:

*rationale for program requirements has been lost in the mists of history: students may not understand why certain elements are required or toward what end, and faculty, if pushed, will not acknowledge that there is no unified vision underpinning many of the experiences students are expected to complete... Most alarming, the pressure of funded research may work against the kind of risk taking, creativity and collaboration that are increasingly the cutting edge of intellectual work in today's world. And worse yet, students may be treated as cheap labour in the service of an advisor's current project and personal advancement.* (Walker et al., n.d.)

In order for a programme like KASP to be successful, many factors must be put in place. These include the relevance of a programme of study and the ability of students to participate in precisely the kind of “*risk taking, creativity and collaboration*” described above. Only if progress is made across all these aspects of evolution in education and society will KASP maximize its capacity to create social and cultural capital.

This thesis, having established the context of the Saudi economy and its socio-political needs, moved on to exploring the social scientific theories that inform our understanding of a transition from a resource-based economy to knowledge-based economy. This section has provided an overview of some ongoing international scholarship programmes and what can be learned from their intention and purpose of their establishment, and how this has developed over time and in response to changing realities. The thesis now moves on to present the data and findings of the research carried out with KASP participants. In so doing, it provides the basis to assess the ways in which social, cultural, and specifically moral capital can be developed by such programmes in the context of significant changes in the strategy of the Saudi economy.

### **3.6. Conclusion to the Literature Review**

The preliminary literature review was formed to lay a foundation upon which this research could be built. Building up the considerable research and ideas regarding the knowledge-based economy and condensing them into one chapter with the aim of introducing and reviewing the history and literature of the mentioned subject in this field has been a great challenge. However, this review has given both the researcher and the reader a broad understanding and an overview of developing human and social capital for the 21st century as it relates to the KSA's transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy. The preliminary review of the literature demonstrated three sections following the Literature Overview: Networks, Capital forms and Scholarships.

Recently, the Saudi government has been aiming to compete in the global market with other international bodies and, therefore, they have become aware of the need to decrease their

dependency on their petrochemical and oil industries and focus on being at the forefront of technological advancement. Saudi Arabia is aware that, in order to continue its economic development, it must invest in its growing population of young people. However, jobs in the country are currently being taken over by foreign labour, and the country has consequently begun to realise the importance of knowledge as a component of increasing profits. With the creation of these scholarships, conceived of to deal with concerns regarding a lack of human capital output, the KSA is rapidly shifting towards a knowledge-based economy that relies on the younger population to return to the country and reinvest in the economy, and to generate further growth.

This research considers the needs of a knowledge-based economy that requires humans to be considered as forms of capital, in that they are intrinsic to the functioning, maintenance and development of an economy. The in-depth critical review of the relevant literature reveals a significant gap in the knowledge; although there have been limited studies which have been conducted in Saudi Arabia related to the transition to a knowledge-based economy, to my knowledge, no thorough in-depth studies related to the investigated topic have been carried out in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, most of the existing studies in the literature applied survey methods to collect data and applied quantitative analytical procedures. However, exploratory insight research and information into the relations between Networks, Capital forms and Scholarships is lacking, particularly in Saudi Arabia.

The above in-depth preliminary literature review provides insight into the studied phenomenon, giving context and clarity to the research questions, to examine the empirical evidence and to assess the need for further investigation (Yin, 2013; Asghar et al., 2017; Saleem et al., 2018). Furthermore, it provides the main impetus to the general research aim stated in the introduction and uncovered the main gap identified in the literature to establish an understanding of the investigated topic. This includes a human element, by first establishing some understanding of the concepts of human, social and cultural capital as provided in Section Two. It then moves, in Section Three, to looking at other successful models of long-running scholarship programmes from the UK, the US and Saudi Arabia. The concluding question about international scholarship programmes is: what type of beacon is KASP? One that leads the way ahead, or one that allows for coming generations to follow on behind?

Consequently, this research aims to examine how Saudi Arabia can transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based society by developing human and social capital, through a case study exploring the role of scholarship programmes (KASP) in the country over the years. This includes the importance of developing human and social capital



within a network society for the 21st century, discussing how resource-based societies are transitioning into knowledge-based societies by developing human and social capital, and exploring the historic role of scholarship programmes within countries such as the UK and the US. The study also explores the role of scholarship programmes (KASP) historically within the KSA. Moreover, the study aims to address gaps in the existing literature to contribute methodologically and theoretically to the discussion and knowledge base related to the issues of building human and social capital in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In addition, it aims to pinpoint the main challenges, skills and tools that such initiatives require by exploring the perceptions and perspectives of graduated students and programme administrators relating to the KASP and human and social capital.

Thus, to address the above identified gaps, research aim and its objectives, interviews with 12 interviews will be carried out with students who have graduated from this programme since 2005, as well as some of the programme's administrators. As these students have benefitted from the KASP, the main focus is analysing the issues around building human and social capital in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century based on an in-depth series of interviews with people who have already been involved in this construction. The interviews are analysed and themes are drawn out using Thematic Analysis (TA) to investigate the students' perspectives and insights related to the topic. This will be followed by a discussion of the data findings and analysis in Chapter 7, leading to recommendations in Chapter 8, for KASP specifically and for the purposes of the transition of the KSA from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy.

This thesis, especially its primary research element, seeks to reintegrate the human element of the production and development of a knowledge-based economy in the KSA. The strategy of the thesis is to consider how to better the economic opportunities of returning students from KASP, but also to better the KSA economy through the return of students from KASP. Theoretically, this outcome will be informed by the theory of a network society and human capital, and with concepts of social and cultural capital. These will be illuminated further by first-hand accounts of KASP and experiences of returning students and is also informed by my own experiences of studying abroad through the KASP and returning to the KSA with the hope of reinvesting in the economy, but finding few opportunities available in the job market. The next chapter provides an in-depth and detailed outline of the research strategy and the methods adopted to conduct the 12 interviews.



## **Chapter 4: Research Strategy**

### **4.1 Chapter Overview**

To proficiently research Saudi Arabia's development of capital to transition into a knowledge-based economy the methodology that was used within this research consisted of a qualitative case study and document analysis. Using the case study of KASP, this research examined the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's transition to understand the development of human and social capital. This was done by examining KASP and using the literary works of Bourdieu, Castells, Benkler and others to tie Saudi Arabia into the discussion of network society, capital forms and international scholarship programmes. This thesis incorporates exploratory research to define the theoretical and hypothetical ideas to build human and social capital and form a knowledge-based economy. Examining this overarching research question by combining speculative and philosophical views with empirically based research helps to provide insights into a hitherto undefined area of study (Zurmuehlen, 1990).

### **4.2 Research Approach: Qualitative Single Case Study (Mono Case Study)**

#### **2.2.1 Qualitative Research Rationale**

There are two distinct types of research: qualitative and quantitative (Saunders et al., 2012). The differences between the two approaches are summarised below in Table 4.1. Quantitative research is concerned with studying phenomena that can be quantified or translated into numerical values. A qualitative research approach, as pointed out by Creswell (2009) can be defined as "*an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem*"(p.99). Qualitative research, moreover, aims to construct a complex holistic picture of a phenomenon in focus, by using words, narratives and detailed information provided by informants (Bryman, 2006). Another characteristic of qualitative research is that it is most commonly conducted in a natural setting (Creswell, 2009). Soklaridis (2009) notes that qualitative studies attempt to better understand people's perceptions of a specific event and phenomenon, and the role it has on their lives, through considering the complex social context surrounding the studied phenomenon. Quantitative research, on the other hand, is more concerned with objectivity and is often adopted by researchers who employ positivism's research philosophy and therefore choose to study a specific concept or phenomenon outside of its social context (Bryman, 2006; Soklaridis, 2009).

**Table 4. 1 Comparison of qualitative versus quantitative approaches**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Qualitative research</b>	<b>Quantitative research</b>
<b>Type of input</b>	Data-rich texts	Numerical values
<b>Duration of data collection</b>	Lengthy periods of time	Relatively quick
<b>Research problem</b>	Problem that is poorly understood; lack of knowledge	Problem in relation to which a research hypothesis can be formulated
<b>Research procedure</b>	Based on various approaches to theme, code and categorise the obtained data; researcher conducts pattern identification	Is most commonly based on inferential and descriptive statistics and procedures
<b>Researcher/participant interaction</b>	Usually extensive; success of the research depends on established trust and understanding between researcher and participant; highly subjective and flexible	Usually limited in scope; success can be achieved via neutral or no relationship between the researcher and their subjects; highly objective in nature and characterised by rigour
<b>Underlying philosophy</b>	Pragmatism, Social Interpretivism, etc. Based on the assumption that the research phenomenon should be approached together with its social context	Positivism, believes that there is universal knowledge that can be accessed and better understood from the point of view of numerical values

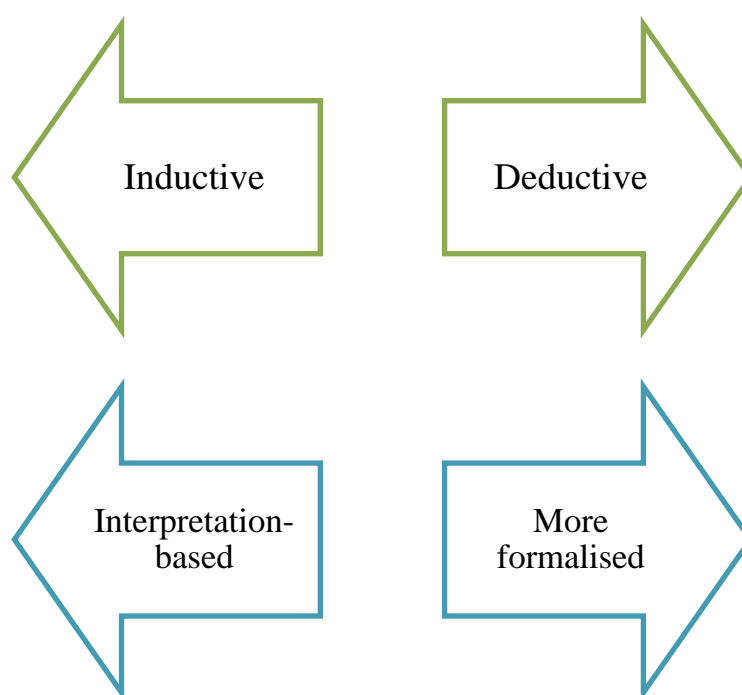
In exploring Saudi Arabia's development of forms of capital and its foundation for translation to a knowledge-based economy, the case study of King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) illustrates the necessity of the development of human capital in the 21<sup>st</sup> century network society. By utilizing an ethnographic fieldwork technique and adopting this case study approach, the research focuses on gathering qualitative information. This information examines the emergent research based on the relationships between understanding the aesthetics of human capital, network issues, and the development and sustainability of a knowledge-based economy in Saud Arabia. Based on the overall research aim of the study and its exploratory nature, a qualitative research design was chosen as the most appropriate. However, as pointed out by Saunders and colleagues (2012) and Easterby-Smith and colleagues (2009), a number of limitations are associated with such an approach and were therefore taken into consideration as they applied within the scope of the study.

According to Saunders and colleagues (2012), a qualitative approach that is specifically based on interviews is prone to lack of rigour and therefore compromised validity. Such

studies, particularly those based on a mixed-method approach (Saunders et al., 2012), are difficult to replicate by other scholars. The present research, however, was based on a mono-method approach and was carefully documented in relation to its methodology and can therefore be replicated, in its methodology specifically, in another cultural or national context. In addition, Easterby-Smith and colleagues (2009) argue that qualitative studies are time and effort consuming compared to quantitative research because qualitative studies – for instance those based on in-depth interviews like the present research – require a significant amount of time and effort to obtain necessary information (Saunders et al., 2012). In view of these limitations, the possibility of using surveys as a data collection tool, which allows a researcher to obtain vast volumes of information in a short period of time, was considered (Creswell, 2009). However, a decision was made to use a qualitative interview-based approach, because the present study is exploratory in nature and aimed at investigating a very complex phenomenon – transitioning towards a knowledge-based society by the KSA, and the role of the KASP scholarship in this transition. Quantitative research was rejected as it was deemed incapable of being able to capture the complexity of the studied phenomenon due to the large number of factors that could possibly have an effect on it (such as employability of the KASP graduates, cultural and professional ties established as a result of the scholarship, and brain drain effects). Yin (2013) points out that qualitative research is often criticised for subjectivity, as it is often dependent and can be influenced by the researchers themselves. The present research acknowledges that it is subjective and dependent on the perceptions and experiences of the interviewed study participants, as will be discussed further in the section dedicated to limitations in Chapter 8.

Despite these limitations, Cooper and Schindler (2008) argue that a qualitative in-depth interview-based approach is highly beneficial when there is little known about the topic of the research, or when it is poorly understood. Such an approach is appropriate when the researcher has to determine variables that affect the study phenomenon and identify any existence of causal or other types of relationships between them (Saunders et al., 2012). In addition, when collected opinions and perceptions of key stakeholders can add to understanding of the research phenomenon, adoption of a qualitative approach will benefit the study the most (Yin et al., 2013). Noting the lack of information on this topic and any identification of causal or other relationships between them, this research method was deemed most suitable. Creswell (2009) points out that when approaching highly complex social phenomena it is often challenging to develop a quantitative methodology capable of understanding and capturing it. However, a qualitative toolkit is much more flexible and can be adjusted or modified to help find answers to any established research question (Saunders et al., 2012). The researchers further argue that depending on the established

research problem, the researcher may choose to recruit various dimensions of qualitative approaches, as presented in Figure 4.1. In line with this consideration, the present study draws on inductive and perception-dependent dimensions of qualitative research. Inductive reasoning, as argued by Saunders and colleagues (2009), refers to the type of research which, due to the lack of accumulated knowledge on the topic, operates without a previously formulated hypothesis. The inductive approach was the only viable option within the context of the chosen theme due to the apparent lack of knowledge about the role of the KASP scholarship in facilitating transfer towards a knowledge-based economy in KSA. A perception-dependent approach, on the other hand, was chosen as an alternative approach to more formalised methods (like surveys), as the aim of the research is to gain an in-depth understanding of the studied phenomenon.



**Figure 4. 1 Dimensions of qualitative research (Source: Saunders et al., 2009)**

Finally, qualitative research, as pointed out by Yin and colleagues (2013), helps to build new theory and is driven by practical questions and considerations. In line with such an argument, the knowledge developed within the scope of the present study will address how the development of international scholarship programmes can help the KSA transition from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy. The present research is driven by practical questions and therefore qualitative research is the most appropriate methodological approach.

### 2.2.2 Mono Case Study Approach

Saunders and colleagues (2012) identify the case study approach as commonly adopted within the context of qualitative studies. According to Robson (2002, p.178), a case study can be best characterised as *“a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence”* (P.18). According to Creswell (2009), a case study is a complex approach which involves not only focusing on a specific research phenomenon, but also a thorough exploration of its complex social context. There are two key case study-based approaches for studying a specific phenomenon: mono versus multiple case studies (Yin, 2013). A mono case study approach, as suggested by the name, focuses on one specific subject of study – organisation, industry, business entity or country. On the other hand, a multiple case study approach is dedicated to understanding the chosen research phenomenon by focusing on understanding experiences of multiple entities – multiple industries, organisations, or countries (Yin, 2013).

The objective of this mono case study is to collect information on how Saudi Arabia might contribute to the transition to a knowledge-based economy through their scholarship recipients. In assessing the KASP, the objectives are to understand how the scholarships awarded correlate to improving human capital within Saudi Arabia. A subsequent objective is to compare the aims of British and US scholarship programmes, which have all moved toward the development of more human capital to sustain their growing society. The rationale for the choice of a mono case study approach is that it is perfectly aligned with the chosen subject – the KASP scholarship. Moreover, a mono case study design is suitable for exploratory research (Saunders et al., 2012). In addition, as pointed out by Yin (2013), a case study approach is often based on rather flexible and adaptable data collection tools, including secondary resources, surveys and interviews.

According to Saunders and colleagues (2012), when the researcher adopts a case study approach, they also find it necessary to conduct data triangulation. Triangulation is defined as *“the use of different data collection techniques within one study in order to ensure that the data are telling you what you think they are telling you”* (Saunders et al., 2012, p.146). Some of the approaches, discussed by Yin (2013), as a way to triangulate qualitative data include conducting surveys to support information obtained via the use of interviews, questionnaires and case studies. The present research also performed data triangulation through the use of secondary sources. More specifically, data collected through open-ended interviews was triangulated through secondary resources (including reports, scholarly articles, and published interviews).

## 4.3 Data Collection and Analysis

### 4.3.1 Interview Approach

For the most part, the remainder of this chapter describes and justifies the way in which data was gathered and analysed as part of the primary research. However, it is important to clearly explain the choice in taking a particular approach towards interviews, and the consequence of not using a different approach. This chosen direction was to focus on the data provided by the interviewee and their responses to conversation and questioning as part of the interview process. It is this data which was then coded, themed and analysed for patterns and relevance to the research aims. The approach chosen was to identify and analyse the interviewees' disposition, meaning making and identity expressed as part of the interview process. An example of this is giving identities to the interview subjects in relation to age, gender and other characteristics as opposed to the interview subject's self-identification as a student, engineer, or daughter, for example.

The works of Atkinson and Silverman (1997, 2017) are very informative and influential in developing this second approach of interviewees expressing their own choice of identity. However, the former approach, of giving interviewees identities, is criticised by Silverman (2017) as likely to end up in competition with quantitative analysts who are better placed with their research tools to carry out, code, and analyse their research and data findings. He also critiques interviews as producing 'an interview society', which accepts the assumptions of modern culture in which the 'authentic self' of the interview subject is accessible and accessed through narrative and storytelling inherent to the interview process:

*An emphasis on interview-narrative performance is an implicit endorsement of contemporary culture and does not offer a vantage point from which to question it's taken-for-granted modes of reproduction. (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997, p.322)*

Silverman returned to this discussion 20 years later to explore the ways in which interviews can be carried out differently and how the data from interviews can be analysed with a different focus (2017). He supports an approach which looks at the 'mechanics' of meaning and identity making, as well as resistance towards these, in the process of the interview. He advocates for this approach to be used in addition to analysis of the content. Silverman presents recommendations for better set-up, sampling and procedure as well as analysis of interviews (2017).

However, this thesis does not take the approach that Silverman favours, for a number of reasons. The main reason is that this level of analysis, at the time of research design, did not favour the aims of the research inquiry, which were more focused on interviewees'



feelings and reflections on their past experiences. Enough rigour was deemed possible through use of mixed sources – discussed below – including secondary sources, academic literature and the mono case study. Researcher bias was also considered to be something that, if monitored consciously and carefully, could be limited in its impact on the subject. As such, the choice was made not to extend the analysis period beyond the scope and aims of the research parameters.

However, there is real value in what Silverman advocates for the qualitative understanding of interview participants' actual feelings, identity and meaning making, a process and phenomena in which the interviewer is undoubtedly a large and instrumental part. The intention of the researcher is therefore to explore the avenue laid out by Atkinson and Silverman, among others, to continue research in this area in the future over a longitudinal study, with the right support and resources in place to facilitate such a level of analysis and subsequent discourse. If this is not possible for the researcher, signposts, such as this one, will be left for others to carry out similar research on this subject and so be informed by this thesis. However, for the purposes of this doctoral thesis, the former approach, as outlined above and detailed below, constitutes the conscious and informed choice of research direction.

#### **4.3.2 Interview Questions**

Two types of questions were used for the graduates of the KASP and a third type was developed for the programme administrators at the Saudi Arabia Culture Bureau in London as well as at the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia. This approach was taken to determine the contribution of the programme in building human and social capital to help the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia become a knowledge-based economy.

Semi-structured and open-ended questions were devised to expand dialogue between the researcher and the participants. Two types of sampling were applied to find graduates of KASP to interview: convenience sampling and snowballing. Convenience sampling was conducted through friends and relatives who were KASP graduates; snowballing occurred through friend's friends and friends of relatives, expanding the participant pool in a tertiary fashion.

The participants were selected for interviews to ensure a diversity of gender, country of scholarship, marital status during the scholarship and different subject areas. See Tables 2.2 and 2.3 below for details.

**Table 4. 2** Participants' gender, country of scholarship and marital status during their scholarship

Participant ID	Country Studied In	Gender	Marital Status	Sample Type
P.1 SM	US	Female	Married	Convenience
P.2 HH	US	Male	Married	Snowballing
P.3 WA	UK	Female	Married	Convenience
P.4 NA	UK	Female	Married	Convenience
P.5 HA	UK	Female	Single	Convenience
P.6 NA	UK	Female	Single	Convenience
P.7 EH	UK	Female	Married	Convenience
P.8 HS	UK	Female	Married	Convenience
P.9 AM	Jordan	Male	Single	Snowballing
P.10 AS	New Zealand	Male	Single	Snowballing

**Table 4. 3** Participants' fields of study and employment following graduation

Participant	Field of Study	Employment
P.1	Biomedical Informatics	Semi-Government Application analyst
P.2	MSc IT	Government Assistant professor
P.3	MSc Food Science and Nutrition	Own business
P.4	MSc international business and marketing	Government Teacher
P.5	MSc Nutrition and food sciences	Privet Marketing communication manager
P.6	Linguistics	Government Assistant professor

P.7	MSc Computer science	Semi-Government Application analyst
P.8	Public relations	Government Assistant professor
P.9	Law	Privet Law Researcher
P.10	E-Commerce	Semi-Government Recruitment – supervisor

The open-ended interviews were administered in Arabic rather than in English. The Arabic interviews were then coded for appropriate themes, after which the relevant components, including the interviews and codes, were translated into English. This method of translation was considered the best approach because – while there are other methods such as conducting interviews in English, given that the scholarship recipients had some basic understanding of the English language for their higher education – speaking in a native tongue put the participants at ease. It was important for me as the interviewer to be part of the same linguistic community as the interviewees, to make them feel more comfortable during the process.

The decision to conduct interviews in Arabic also gave me better control over the translations. For example, if the interviews had been conducted in English, the interviewees might have used terms or phrases which were unintended simply because of linguistic mistakes. But having the terms used in Arabic made it easier for me to discern exactly what the intent and meaning was, therefore providing more accurate thematic analysis and codes.

The method of open-ended interviews allowed me to ask more detailed and open-ended questions and to enjoy a higher degree of control over the data collection process. There is normally a limitation to this method of social research in that interviewer bias could potentially inhibit the data collection process (Hyman, 1954). Interviewing skills are essential because some of the standardized interview questions and structures violate rules of more efficient conversation where people might paraphrase. Even small changes in wording can potentially influence outcomes, which is why having all of the participants speak in their native language was so important to help give better control over the data collection process and the data that was collected for subsequent analysis.

This is important because an understanding of this problem helped with preparation of the methodological tools for the participants. This preparation helped to circumvent potential limitations or compromised data. Cultural biases and fluency are possible limitations of both researcher and participants. Bias is typically negative, although it can be positive, and linguistic bias was a particular risk when it came to categorizing and coding the main themes. Sun and colleagues (2019) found that there can be subconscious bias in the natural linguistic process. This goes hand-in-hand with fluency issues. Given that this research focused on measuring themes and perceived values and struggles by individuals, being limited in English would make it significantly more difficult for participants to express nuanced emotions and for me to interpret the subjects to the same degree.

Delamont (2004, p.225) wrote that the biggest problem novices endure during their preparation for this type of research is that the research books fail to provide enough information about what to observe, how to observe it, and what to write down. When methodological instruction is not explicit enough about what to conduct a successful interview, it leaves a lot of room for errors that can negatively influence only the data collection but the outcome. Being aware of this potential problem, I was able to prepare by reviewing any potential limitations and setting up solutions to mitigate those limitations ahead of time, effectively laying out every step in the process before the first step was even started rather than working it out one step at a time. For example, acknowledging the potential challenge of fluency or the difficulty in finding nuanced emotions and themes within the interviews, I planned ahead to administer the interviews in Arabic, code them in Arabic, and translate the results so that the translations would be as accurate as possible.

Before starting to conduct the interviews, I researched and read reference texts to discover the skills necessary to conduct interviews effectively and gather sufficient information to serve the research. I acknowledged the benefits and potential problems associated with interviews, especially the challenge of not inducing interviewer bias, and not inadvertently giving nonverbal or verbal clues about responses. This was achieved by working on necessary interview training and practice ahead of time.

Similarly, I recognised the need for confidentiality, which in the context of this research included not discussing information provided by the individuals with people outside of the research group and presenting the findings in such a way that the individuals cannot be identified. Maintaining respondent confidentiality was another subject inadequately addressed in methodological books, especially due to recent changes in General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and attempting to ascertain how long and with what consent/opt-in I could keep and maintain records from primary data. Eventually, I set about

providing disclosure to the participants so that they would understand what the information was being used for, what methods would be applied during the course of the research, and what confidentiality measures would be enforced to protect their identities.

Any personally identifiable information was collected and kept in a secure database under password protection. To that end, at the conclusion of each interview, I transferred all files to a main computer and created a backup copy at which time I also changed the name of the files according to interview names and saved all information securely on a private computer.

#### **4.4 Research Design**

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), face-to-face interviews have long been the dominant interview technique in the field of qualitative research. In the last two decades, telephone interviewing has become more common. Due to the explosive growth of new communication forms, such as computer-mediated communication (for example email and instant messaging), other interview techniques can be introduced and used within the field of qualitative research. Thus, technical competence was considered when arranging interviews by finding three different ways to communicate with participants: 1) audio call by mobile application (IMO); 2) email; and 3) face-to-face interviews.

##### **4.4.1 Audio Call Mobile Application (IMO)**

The first method of interview used in this research was audio call by mobile application. At the start of the research, an appointment was arranged with the first participant by sending a message through WhatsApp. Most of the Internet video call programmes (Skype, OoVoo, Line, Tango, Facebook Messenger) did not work because these applications are blocked by the Saudi Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) (Brinkmann, 2014). According to Syditi Magazine's Mustapha Al-Sadawi, "*many users of Facebook Messenger in Saudi Arabia have not been able to make voice and video calls*" (Bryman, 2006, P.21). In July 2017, however, the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Abdullah bin Amer Al-Sawahah announced the lifting of the ban on applications using voice and video calls that meet the regulatory requirements of users in the KSA and to use them as stated:

*We are currently coordinating the CITC and the Kingdom's telecom service providers to enable customers, citizens, and residents, to take advantage of applications that provide voice and video communications over the Internet.*  
(Bryman, 2006)

Al-Sawahah thanked the CITC and the telecommunications companies for developing their technologies in line with the latest trends in the ICT sector and providing the best services

to users, as reported by the official Saudi Press Agency. This fruitful cooperation between the partners in the Kingdom's telecommunications sector comes under the umbrella of the services industry policy of Customer First, which is the policy in which everyone works to give all telecom subscribers in the Kingdom services that meet their expectations and satisfy their needs. However, at the time of the interviews, the communication programmes were blocked by the Communications Authority.

After many experiments with various resources, I selected IMO, a free voice calls programme through the Internet, and was able to make an appointment with the first participant and run a test to ensure the strength of the Internet connection from both sides so that the interview flowed as smoothly as possible. This step ensured that participants remained at ease and were not anxious about a lack of quality or connection. During the interviews, the loudspeaker and high-quality sound recorders were used. The duration of the interviews ranged from 30 to 90 minutes. Such preparations allowed for the best possible interview process with limited interruptions or delays often associated with Internet communication. Reducing such delays or interruptions also helps provide clear sound quality recordings for later analysis.

Online interviews suffer from a loss of nonverbal signals and important contextual information. However, they are often easier to conduct, especially when there are constraints like time or location. With this research, these constraints were concerns as many participants were located in Saudi Arabia and in different time zones. With a limited budget it was more difficult to travel around the world for interviews, but online applications made it possible to reach the participants effectively. Four of the total participants used the IMO programme for interviews due to various limitations of resources.

#### **4.4.2 Email Interviews**

The second method of interview used in this research was email. There were difficulties in conducting interviews using IMO for some participants because of the difficulty of setting a suitable time for the interviews. This was due to different circumstances, such as the time difference between Saudi Arabia and the UK (where I was based) and the interviews taking place around the beginning of the month of Ramadan. In these situations, one of the other methods of pre-determined contact was used to put participants at ease and make the interview process as simple as possible. As each interviewee has their own communication style, the interviewer has to adapt their personal communication style online accordingly (Kivits, 2005). To that end, email interviews were conducted for four out of ten participants. Questions were sent to the interviewees through email and then a message sent by WhatsApp to ensure the participant was aware that the questions had arrived, to confirm

receipt, and to continue follow ups with the participant until their answers had been received. It was observed at this stage that female participants cooperated more than male participants, and the answers received by female participants were, on average, longer than those received by male participants.

One of the advantages of email interviewing, due to asynchronous communication of place, is the extended access to participants, compared with face-to-face interviews (Coomber, 1997). Another advantage of asynchronous communication of place is that disturbing background noises are not recorded. Email interviewing has, of course, the extra advantage that the interviewer can formulate the questions, and the interviewee can answer the questions at his or her own convenience without noise disturbance due to the independence of place and time. This may also be a disadvantage as it allows the interviewee time to 'rehearse' their responses.

Asynchronous communication also has the advantage that an email interview can be much cheaper than, for example a face-to-face interview, because there are no travel costs incurred. On the other hand, this technique can cost a lot of time. Due to the asynchronous communication, the interviewee might have to wait sometimes days or weeks before they answer the questions. This can lead to the risk that the interviewee will lose interest in the research, and also they may forget to reply to questions (Kivits, 2005). Sending reminders to the interviewee at an appropriate time can reduce this problem. It is for this reason that I combined messages in WhatsApp with the emails in order to send reminders at the appropriate times and ensure that the interviewees did not lose interest in the research or fail to send in their responses.

With an email interview, synchronous communication is impossible. However, the advantage can be that the interviewee does not hesitate in giving a socially undesirable answer, although the chance of a spontaneous answer to a question is smaller because the interviewee has more time to reflect on the question. Spontaneity can be the basis of rich data collected in some interviews. The nature of the research questions dictates whether this reflective behaviour is a disadvantage or not. On the other hand, an email interview has the advantage that the interviewer can take time to respond to the developing dialogue (Bampton and Cowton, 2002; Kivits, 2005). According to Bampton and Cowton (2002, P.3) asynchronous communication, as is in an email interview, also has obvious advantages as *"busy interviewees do not have to identify a mutually convenient time to talk to each other."* Interviews over email also provided participants with the opportunity to dedicate the appropriate time and thought to their responses when it was convenient for them without

having to worry about a lack of interview skills or feel the pressure that might come from a face-to-face interview.

#### **4.4.3 Face-to-face Interviews**

The third method of interview used in this research was face-to-face interviews. In face-to-face interviews there is no significant time delay between question and answer; the interviewer and interviewee can directly react to what the other says or does. The interview was conducted face-to-face for four of the ten participants from the scholarship graduates. Those who opted for this method had an interview conducted by me.

While arranging the interviews, I was aware of the potential impact of the environment in which the interview took place and the interaction process and made attempts to place participants at ease and circumvent possible limitations. Locations were chosen which helped the respondent relax and concentrate on the topic of conversation. Easterby-Smith and colleagues (2012) argue against conducting interviews in offices where managers and employers of the participant could interrupt the course of the conversation. Along with such consideration, I selected places which were quiet and neutral, where an interviewee would not feel distracted or intimidated (such as a quiet office or, cafeteria during a quiet hour).

I recorded the interviews after receiving the participants' permission using a digital recorder. Digital recorders have the advantage that the interview record is more accurate than written notes taken during the interview. But recording also brings the danger of not taking any notes during the interview, which can be important for the interviewer, even if the interview is recorded: (1) to check if all the questions have been answered; (2) in case of malfunctioning recorder; and (3) in case of 'malfunctioning' of the interviewer. One of the disadvantages of recording the interview is the time that a transcription of the recording takes to produce. Bryman (2001) suggests that one hour of recording takes five to six hours to transcribe. Nonetheless the decision to use a recorder brought with it multiple benefits, the first of which was addressing the problem raised by Delamont (2004) of novice researchers being unsure what to write down. By recording everything, I did not have to determine what should be written down, and what may or may not be important in the future. Instead, all the information from the interview was recorded. More importantly, not writing things down and simply focusing on the face-to-face interview diminished any anxiety or questions the interviewees might have when noticing me writing down only certain parts of their responses.

The remaining two interviewees were officials of a scholarship programme at the Ministry of Education. I sent an email to the Ministry requesting an interview with the former Vice Minister for Scholarship Affairs. A response to the email was received two days before the



holiday of Eid Al-Fitr. He welcomed the idea of conducting an interview and asked me to get in touch to determine the approximate date of the interview. After continuous follow-up, I was given an appointment to conduct the interview two days before the Hajj, which is a very busy time of the year in Saudi Arabia. Face-to-face communication brought with it a great deal of time and expense. The travel and difficulties navigating a new city were repeated when face-to-face interview appointments were rescheduled. The interview lasted about 45 minutes and the former Vice Minister for Scholarship Affairs and the Development Manager were very helpful and showed their readiness to provide any additional information and channels of communication with them after the interview.

The remaining interviews with the managers of the programme did not take place because they were in a meeting at the time of my visit. They requested a copy of the questions to be sent by email, which was sent along with several follow up emails, but no response was ever received.

#### **4.4.4 Open-ended Interviews**

Regardless of the method of communication used for the interview, I used open-ended questions for each interview. Open-ended interviews, as pointed out by Cooper and colleagues (2010), constitute a verbal exchange of information, occurring between an interviewer and an interviewee, where the latter can provide any answer they wish without being forced to choose from a number of pre-designed options. Within the scope of the present study, I designed a set of preliminary questions (Appendix 2.1), which were asked of the study participants. The advantage of such an approach was that it allowed me to guide the conversation and ensure that it stayed relevant to the topic of the research, while at the same time providing the interviewer with enough flexibility to go off track and explore any unique or interesting opinions or issues that emerged during the course of the interview in greater detail.

The rationale for adoption of open-ended interviews is that they are exploratory in nature, and unlike closed-end surveys they allowed an exploration into the chosen topics to a greater degree of complexity and diversity (Creswell, 2009). The chosen approach provided the chance to interrupt the direction of the interview and to explore interviewees' personal perceptions and experiences related to the KASP scholarship, all of which significantly enhanced understandings of the topic and provided me with a number of unique first-hand experiences.

Saunders and colleagues (2012, p.324) point out that, "*semi-structured and in-depth interviews provide me with the opportunity to 'probe' answers, where you want your interviewees to explain, or build on, and their responses*" It was noted that study

participants, when responding to open-ended questions may use wording or ideas in a special way that may benefit the study and provide a unique insight on relationships between the study variables (Saunders et al., 2012). In addition, these voiced opinions or details highlighted to me areas of research or factors that had not previously been considered in relation to the studied phenomenon and therefore significantly added to understanding and knowledge of the research phenomenon in general (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012).

Among some of the key challenges of conducting an interview, as discussed by Brinkmann (2014), was to ensure that the interviewees provided answers which were relevant to the topic of the research. Another important limitation often encountered when adopting an interview-based approach is bias (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009). According to Yin (2013), the process of the interview itself, along with the behaviour of an interviewer, can significantly alter the response provided by the respondent. Moreover, Easterby-Smith and colleagues (2009, p.146) note that, *“since the aim of in-depth interviews is to uncover the meanings and interpretations that people attach to events, it follows that there is no one ‘objective’ view to be discovered which the process of interviewing may bias.”* More specifically, the disadvantage concerns how the interviewer may consciously or unconsciously impose their own reference frame on the study participants, altering the given answers. Such framing can be done either by asking specific types of questions, or during the process of data interpretation and analysis (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009). In addition, as discussed by Robson (2002), although open-ended interviews may be a very efficient way to obtain the relevant information, asking such questions is not always the most appropriate way to make an interviewee feel comfortable and at ease.

When preparing for and conducting the interviews, all of the limitations discussed above were considered and behavioural and other approaches were developed to mitigate the possible pitfalls of the open interview procedure. In addition to the considerations discussed above, in line with the argument by Easterby-Smith and colleagues (2009), I considered a number of other issues. As pointed out by Saunders and colleagues (2012), using an in-depth interview as the only method of data collection can help provide valuable insights about the studied phenomenon, however it requires the interviewer to be able to properly structure and organise the interview process. Easterby-Smith and colleagues (2009) argue that the researcher has to consider important practical issues when planning in-depth interviews:

- Obtaining the interviewee's trust;
- Understanding and being aware of social interactions that take place;

- Choosing an appropriate location for the interviews;
- Interview recording process;
- Using language that is appropriate for the interviewee.

Obtaining interviewees' trust was one of the most challenging tasks during the present research. Failure to obtain interviewees' trust could have resulted in a number of negative outcomes: refusal to participate in the study or provide answers to all of the questions; reluctance to provide thorough and in-depth answers during the course of the interview (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009). However, according to Jones (1985), the negative outcomes of lack of trust between the interviewer and their interviewees may result in more subtle but far more detrimental outcomes for the research. For instance, due to feeling suspicious or threatened by the interview, the respondents may choose to agree to participate but try to complete the process as soon as possible, while providing short or incomplete answers or even trying to share opinions that in their view would better satisfy the interviewer, but which are fundamentally different from what they believe in reality (Jones, 1985).

In order to develop trusting relationships with both gatekeepers and interviewees the use of appropriate language was considered during the course of the study. As pointed out by Easterby-Smith and colleagues (2009), the researcher should restrain from two potentially harmful approaches when communicating with study participants and gatekeepers: using too many complex theoretical phrases; and using a vague or overly simple conversational tone. Both approaches can harm reputation and relationships between the researcher and target audience, as use of overly complex language could confuse people and baffle gatekeepers (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009). On the other hand, using language which is too simple could make the potential study participants suspicious that the researcher is not serious enough about their study, and participating in it therefore may not be worth their time. The considerations voiced by Easterby-Smith and colleagues (2009) were taken into account, and the use of overly complex language was avoided. Instead, simple, yet very concrete terms were used, for example:

*I am conducting this research to better understand impact of the KASP scholarship. More specifically, I want to understand how the scholarship helps transition the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia into knowledge-based society. Therefore, I am interested in economic, human capital, cultural and other factors through which the KASP scholarship may affect the transfer.*

Table 4.4 below shows some of the example of phrasing used or abandoned during the course of the research. The first two pairs (student/researcher; interview/discussion) were

taken from the study by Easterby-Smith and colleagues (2009), while the other two were developed within the context of the present study. As demonstrated in Table 4.4, I avoided language that was too formal (interview, input, evidence) to make the respondents feel at ease, particularly when sharing some concerns or negative experiences in relation to the role of the KASP in transitioning into a knowledge-based economy for the KSA. On the other hand, use of terms such as ‘opinion’ and ‘perception’ within the context of the present study allowed me to develop a more trusting relationship with the interviewees. This also served as a form of disclaimer, which allowed the participants to honestly and more fully share the information they had relating to the topic of the research, as they understood that it would be treated as their opinion and not as hard evidence.

Finally, interview recording was another important consideration during the process of planning and designing interviews. According to Easterby-Smith and colleagues (2009), before deciding whether to audio record the interviews the researcher has to weigh a number of advantages and limitations of such an approach, see Table 4.5. The major advantage of recording the interviews within the context of the present study, was the fact that I have conducted the interviews in Arabic (see below), before the narratives were translated into English for the final analysis. To avoid any additional loss of information due to misinterpretation and translation issues, I considered it of vital importance to ensure that every word shared by the study participant had been documented and properly reflected upon within the scope of the research. In addition, as pointed out by Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005), when conducting proper audio recording of interviews, the researcher can gain important insights by understanding not only what their respondents are saying but also *how* they are saying it. For instance, pauses or slight hesitation may indicate that the respondent does not feel comfortable when answering a particular question, or perceives the topic as sensitive or intimidating (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Such pauses or hesitations were recorded more effectively with the tape recorder than by written notes.

**Table 4. 4 Use of appropriate language during the interviews (Source: Saunders et al., 2012, plus personal observations and experience)**

Word	Meaning	Action
Student	Amateur, lacking professional experience. Needing guidance and supervision.	Avoided
Researcher	Professional scholar, knows what they are doing.	Used

Interview	A formal procedure aimed at obtaining in-depth information. May make the gatekeeper of potential respondents feel uncomfortable if the topic of the research is sensitive.	Avoided
Discussion	A more informal approach to collection of information. Makes the gatekeeper more relaxed and likely to grant permission to carry out the research. The respondent may feel like they can share more information without feeling interrogated.	Used
Input / Evidence	Makes an interview participant feel like they are providing some piece of evidence (possibly) against an organisation or phenomenon.	Avoided
Opinion / Perception	Makes an interviewee feel more at ease and likely to share information, as the researcher puts a disclaimer on it – it is considered their own opinion and perception of the phenomenon, therefore it cannot serve as hard evidence.	Used

Use of a recording device during the process of an interview can make the respondent feel uncomfortable, reluctant to disclose sensitive information and self-conscious about their confidentiality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009). When dealing with these two rather contradictory factors, I decided to record all of the interviews, whilst adopting a number of steps to counter-balance the possible negative effects of the audio recording. More specifically, when seeing that a particular respondent was not feeling comfortable with their narrative being audio recorded, I suggested they take control over the recording device. This situation occurred six times during the course of the study, with only one participant actually agreeing to take control over the stop/start recording button. The other five individuals, who had at first displayed anxiety and distrust about the possibility of being recorded, started feeling at ease when they were offered the opportunity to take control, without actually resorting to it.

**Table 4. 5 Limitations of adoption of open-ended interviews and adopted approach**

Challenge	Adopted approach
An interview mostly provides short answers (yes, no, I do not know).	Using more pauses to indicate interest in what the interviewee is saying and giving them more space to follow up on their reply.
	Phrasing questions in a way that makes it difficult for the interviewee to respond with a monosyllabic answer.
An interviewee takes initiative and starts asking questions of the interviewer.	The researcher stresses that they are interested in the interviewee's opinions and will gladly share their view after the interview has taken place.
An interviewee is being critical about research or knowledge the interviewer possesses of the topic.	The researcher has to stay calm and polite throughout the course of the interview to address this challenging situation.
	The researcher may choose to admit their lack of knowledge and follow-up with an extra question inviting the interviewee to offer more insight.
A number of interviewees were reluctant to provide critical points concerning effectiveness of the KASP scholarship.	This issue was rather difficult to identify and address. The researcher has mildly stressed during the interview that the key stakeholder of the present research is the KSA, and that the results will benefit Saudi Arabian people in general through helping develop approaches to ensure more smooth transfer towards knowledge-based economy. This helped the participants understand the value of critical feedback.
A number of interviewees were conscious of and suspicious about the process of audio recording during the course of the interview.	To mitigate this issue, the researcher suggested that the concerned individuals take control of the stop/ start recording button on the audio recording device. This way they gain control over what information was recorded and when the recording was stopped. Only one out of six interviewees who complained about this issue took control of the audio recording device when interviewed.
Some of the respondents repeatedly went off topic during the course of the research (like discussing westernisation of the KSA).	In each such incident the researcher politely listened to the interviewee until they had finished expressing their opinion and sharing thoughts. Then the researcher politely posed the initial question again and steered the participant back to the topic.

The approach, recommended by Easterby-Smith and colleagues (2009), not only helped me gain valuable information necessary for understanding the complex process of the KSA transitioning towards a knowledge-based economy, but also achieved a greater degree of trust with the respondents. After being offered control over the course of the interview, the interviewees immediately felt more at ease and eager to share their opinions and express critical thoughts and analysis of the effectiveness of the KASP scholarship. In the case where one of the respondents agreed to take control over the stop/start recording button, after the interview was conducted, I made sure to immediately listen to the entire recording. This helped identify whether the respondent had stopped the recording through the important parts of the conversation. Fortunately, no such gaps were identified based on the comparison of the interview recording with the written notes I took during the course of the interview.

#### **4.4.5 Interview Language: Arabic**

The open-ended interviews were conducted in Arabic, while analysis of the obtained data was performed on the original transcripts, which were later translated into English. The key motivation for conducting the interviews in Arabic was that this language was native to all of the study participants and the researcher, who perceived it as being the most natural to express their opinions. However, three of the study participants expressed a desire to conduct interviews in English. I decided to conduct all of the interviews in Arabic to ensure that all of the narratives were obtained using the same rigorous established procedures, and therefore to avoid any language-related bias.

I considered a number of factors when deciding to translate the Arabic narratives and theming analysis in English. This issue has been widely discussed in the scholarly literature (Chen and Boore, 2009; Temple, 2002; Fenna et al., 2010). For instance, Chen and Boore (2009), argue that translating and back-translating within a context of grounded theory can be characterised as too time-consuming, and therefore not practically plausible. Smith and colleagues (2008) point out that when making a decision concerning translation of raw data, the researcher has to consider such issues as data validity. More specifically, important meanings and tones can be lost during the process of translation and back translation, thereby compromising research validity (Smith et al., 2008). Larkin and colleagues (2007) stress that researchers conducting cross-language studies should not translate the obtained preliminary data at all; instead they should translate the final manuscript before it is published.

Chen and Boore (2009) argue that it is acceptable to translate and back-translate raw and final data during the process of qualitative research. However, it is important for the

researcher to adopt a specific and rigid methodology when conducting such research, to ensure validity of the study and its replicability (Chen and Boore, 2009). In line with this consideration and another, discussed by Smith and colleagues (2008) – according to whom coding in the original language is more efficient and less prone to error – theming analysis was conducted on the original Arabic transcripts. Smith and colleagues (2009) point out that such procedure is much less time-consuming when compared to conducting theming analysis on translated transcripts. In line with an argument by Fenna and colleagues (2010), the original language (Arabic) was used within the scope of the research for as long as possible, to avoid any loss of valuable information. In addition, developing an analytical study based on grounded theory requires some thinking based on abductive logic, which may be quite challenging in a foreign language (Fenna et al., 2010). Moreover, when trying to develop complex constructs and rich text data analysis in a language other than the native tongue of the researcher may distract from some important findings due to the effort-intensive thinking and translation process (Smith et al., 2008). Indeed, in the present study, the use of Arabic was much easier for the procedure of data collection and data analysis.

#### **4.4.6 Use of Secondary Data: Reports and Documents**

In addition to reliance on qualitative primary data collected through open-ended interviews, the present research used secondary data to strengthen the case of the KASP scholarship and its potential role in development of the KSA. Saunders and colleagues (2012) noted that analysis of secondary data is an important approach when conducting research as it helps to consider large volumes of peer-reviewed data and industry reports. At the same time, it is essential to consider that the adopted secondary data may have a number of challenges, such as dependence on research that relies on methodology that is inappropriate for the present research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009). To counterbalance such limitations, all the reports were considered in relation to the research methodology employed for this study.

I focused on and collected secondary resources dedicated to the effectiveness and limitations of the KASP scholarship, characteristics of resources and resource-based economies, and case studies of different countries (US and UK) in developing their human capital. Scholarly sources and industry reports were used to investigate this complex problem. The following scientific databases were used to search for the necessary materials: Academic Search (by EBSCO Publishing), Google Scholar, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, EconBiz, and GeoRef (by the American Geoscience Institute). Among some of the most commonly used search strings within the present study were: 'knowledge-based economy', 'resource-based economy', 'transitioning economy', 'KSA economy', 'KASP



scholarship', 'international scholarships', 'national scholarships', 'impact of scholarships', 'brain drain and scholarships', 'exchange programmes', and 'developing economies'.

#### **4.5 Ethical Considerations**

A number of ethical issues were identified within the scope of the research. According to Saunders and colleagues (2012), conducting studies based on primary data is prone to a number of ethical considerations, including but not limited to safety and anonymity of the participants, data integrity, debriefing, and obtaining written consent. All of these issues were relevant to the scope of the present research. First, prior to conducting the open-ended interviews, I had to consider the issue of written consent – a formal agreement provided by the participant that they agreed to be involved in the study (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009). I provided each of the participants with the consent form presented in Appendix 2.3. This form addressed a number of ethical issues, ranging from formal agreement, anonymity of the respondents, voluntary participation in the study, and my right to audio record each of the conversations. Three of the study participants did not agree to sign the consent form using the argument that they were not happy with their responses being audio recorded. I further negotiated this issue with them, explaining the purpose of audio recording (avoiding bias and untruthful representation of their opinions and responses) and finally the three potential participants granted their permission and signed the consent form.

Another important issue discussed by Easterby-Smith and colleagues (2009) and Creswell (2009) concerns respondent safety. In order to ensure that each of the study participants is safe, I could not collect any personal information that could be used to identify them (including first and last names, passport data, addresses or bank information). According to Saunders and colleagues (2012), this point is particularly important to consider when a specific study targets a business or public organisation and therefore professional careers or positions of the interviewees may be put in jeopardy because of their voiced opinions. Within the context of the present research, this issue was also relevant because I interviewed several former and current recipients of the KASP scholarship. Therefore, to obtain their honest and critical opinions about the scholarship, I ensured that no personal details were collected that could reveal their identity. This, in line with the argument by Easterby-Smith and colleagues (2009), made participants feel more at ease during the course of the research, and allowed them to share both positive and critical observations about the scholarship programme in particular, as well as the KSA's transition in general.

Prior to conducting any of the scheduled interviews, I ensured that each of the study participants was informed about their rights to withdraw from the study at any given point, but prior to when analysis of the qualitative data had taken place. None of the interviewed

participants expressed their desire to withdraw from the research. Another important ethical consideration that emerged during the course of the study involved participant debriefing. Saunders and colleagues (2012) characterize the process as providing the study participants with a retrospective explanation of the study process, and why it has taken place. Within the context of the present research, after conducting a series of interviews with the study participants, I sat down with each of them to discuss the general purpose of the study and how the information obtained would potentially help to address it. Each of the debriefing sessions took 5-10 minutes on average and were greatly appreciated by the study participants.

In addition to the issues of safety and debriefing discussed above, I also considered data integrity as an important ethical issue. More specifically, to ensure the safety and integrity of the collected information, I stored files (including audio recordings, transcripts, translations, contact information) in a single copy on a password-protected USB stick, which was kept in a place only I had access to.

## **4.6 The Application of the TA Process**

### **4.6.1. Why TA was adopted for Data Analysis**

Braun and Clarke (2006) state that TA *“is the first qualitative method of analysis that researchers should learn, as it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis”* (p.78). Furthermore, TA provides an opportunity to find new themes and contribute to knowledge by taking into consideration all rich data gathered by the interviews. Section 4.4.7 in Chapter 4 explained how TA was adopted for this study (Brinkmann, 2014; Yin, 2003; Braun and Clarke, 2006); namely because of its ability to provide useful information, new themes, and contributions relevant to the research topic without being prohibitively difficult for me to learn and employ. This was an inductive TA process rather than theoretical. At the TA level, I had to decide between a semantic or latent identification, effectively an explicit, or interpretive level interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998). When applying TA, macro and micro-level analyses were conducted, starting with the macro, as indicated by the larger themes, and the micro, as indicated by the refined sub-themes.

### **4.6.2. Coding and Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis was used in conjunction with coding to analyse the data collected through the interviews. Thematic analysis is an approach commonly adopted within qualitative research to analyse complex data-rich texts (Brinkmann, 2014; Yin, 2003). Braun and Clarke (2006) point out that within the diverse and complex array of data analysis methods used within qualitative research, thematic analysis can be considered a foundation type of

method. Moreover, according to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.78), "*it is the first qualitative method of analysis that researchers should learn, as it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis.*" The method is often criticised for being rather generic (Holloway and Todres, 2003), however at the same time such a wide array of applicability and flexibility serves as an advantage for theming analysis, as it can be successfully used within a wide range of research areas and questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that within the approaches adopted by qualitative studies, two main camps can be identified. One camp chooses a specific tool based on the adopted epistemological stance. An example of such an approach may be conversation analysis along with interpretative phenomenological analysis. The second camp does not directly depend on the chosen research philosophy or epistemology, but instead is compatible with or can apply to a wide range of philosophical paradigms. Theming analysis, discussed within the present section, is one such methodological approach used for this research because of its universality and flexibility (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009).

Although procedures described as coding and theming vary among different research fields (such as psychology or sociology), as well as individual researchers, they are commonly based on a number of uniform steps, such as: (1) identification of the most relevant recurring research themes; (2) narrowing the obtained theme list to those that are most relevant and meaningful; (3) theme hierarchy development; and (4) critical analysis of the obtained themes in relation to the existent body of knowledge (Cooper, 2003). Saunders and colleagues (2012) point out that theming analysis can range from very simply techniques (such as word counting) to complex computerised algorithms that help identify relevant patterns. The present research adopted the technique of manual coding.

Berelson (1952) notes that theming analysis is often referred to by grounded theorists as open coding analysis. Ryan and Bernard (2000) argue that theming analysis should not be regarded as an analytical process as it is commonly used within specific research traditions (like grounded theory). Therefore, Ryan and Bernard point out, it cannot and should not be regarded as an independent approach. However, Braun and Clarke (2006) disagree, and along with Boyatzis (1998) and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), regard theming analysis as an independent tool. The present research, in line with Braun and Clarke (2006), considers the discussed analysis as an independent approach and adopts the following definition of theming: "*thematic analysis is a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon*" (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p.82). Boyatzis (1998) points out that theming analysis should not be perceived as a tool, but instead as a range of analytical approaches that can be applied across a wide variety of research methods. The theming process can be best characterised as a thorough search

for text patterns within the obtained qualitative data, with the identified themes being grouped and categorised so that they can better explain the studied phenomenon (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

Coding, on the other hand, as argued by Boyatzis (1998), is concerned with identification of the elements present within the obtained narratives, so that these elements can be related to the research topic and help to interpret it. There is no pre-defined procedure for coding analysis, however as Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) note, a development of an appropriate code helps capture maximum complexity and richness of the chosen research phenomenon. Boyatzis (1998) defines a theme as a specific pattern within a fragment of text. This pattern should capture the studied phenomenon, and preferably provide an interpretation of it (Boyatzis, 1998). Braun and Clarke (2006, p.82) provide an alternative definition of theme *“A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set.”*

While identifying and coding themes, I had to address an important question: what can be identified or considered as a theme or recurring pattern and what is the appropriate size of a theme? Answers to such questions can only be developed when analysing and working with a specific text (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). For instance, density of themes within a given text and their prevalence determines the specific procedure of theme searching and coding. However, it is also important to understand that the most recurrent themes are not necessarily the most relevant and important ones (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that an important theme may be present in one particular dataset fragment but absent in another narrative.

The rationale for adoption of coding and theming technique is that it is a data analysis approach characterised by a high degree of flexibility and can be easily adapted towards a specific research phenomenon (Yin, 2003). The discussed technique is flexible and helped me identify hidden meanings and opinion through pattern analysis. Another reason for adopting theming analysis is that no other qualitative analytical tool helps to make sense of highly rich text data representing the opinions and perceptions of multiple study participants (Creswell, 2009). At the same time, the discussed approach, similar to other analyses, is prone to a number of limitations (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Some of the disadvantages of coding/theming analysis include an overall lack of rigour within the research procedures (Tesch, 1990). More specifically, different researchers approach the process of theme identification in their own manner, which results in subjective interpretation of the studied

phenomenon and bias towards the researcher's own vision and preferences (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

The manual coding for this research began with the decision to use inductive coding. Themes or patterns within data can be identified in one of two primary ways in thematic analysis: inductive or '*bottom up*' (see Frith and Gleeson, 2004); and theoretical, deductive or '*top down*' (see Boyatzis, 1998; Hayes, 1997). An inductive approach means the themes identified are strongly linked to the data itself (Patton, 1990) (as such, this form of thematic analysis bears some similarity to grounded theory). Inductive coding, or open coding, starts from scratch and bases codes on the interview data itself, with codes arising directly from the responses. I started by breaking the dataset into smaller samples, with individual interviews as individual samples. I started with a single interview after which codes were created that applied to the first sample. These were generic codes that covered broad categories which showed up in the responses. After the codes were initially created, I re-read the first interview and applied those codes accordingly. I moved on to a second interview/sample and applied the codes created from the first sample. In situations where codes did not match, I noted this, and in situations where additional codes were needed for the second and subsequent interview samples, I noted this as well. New codes were created based on the second sample and all subsequent samples, and all responses were recoded from every interview until all interview data had been coded. In the event that a new code was added to subsequent interviews, an existing code was split into two categories, or the description of the code was changed, I reviewed how this change impacted coding for all of the previous and subsequent responses. I recorded the important data on each transcript, where I wrote a code for the participant and their job, social status, and duration of the interview and transcription.

Once the codes were created, I put them into a coding frame representative of the organisational structure for the themes that were revealed in the research. A hierarchical coding frame was used to organise the codes based on how they relate to one another.

At the thematic analysis level, I had to decide between semantic or latent identification, effectively an explicit or interpretive level of interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis typically focuses exclusively or primarily on one level. With a semantic approach, the themes are identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data and the analyst is not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written. In contrast, a thematic analysis at the latent level goes beyond the semantic content of the data and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies – that are theorised as shaping or informing the

semantic content of the data. The rationale for using latent themes in the present research is that it enabled me to investigate the phenomenon in more depth. When applying a thematic analysis, there are macro and micro level analyses possible. The micro level describes the immediate lexical, syntactic, or rhetorical relationships within a given text, which in this case would be the individual interviews. By comparison, the macro level represents the higher-level topics or themes, effectively, what main ideas the text was about, which in this case would encompass the main ideas or themes of the interviews (Al-Araji and Al-Azzawi, 2016). This research covered both levels but started with the macro and narrowed down to the micro.

During the coding process, I used a code book in which the given codes were organised. This was a simple word processor document, and as new codes were created, they were added to the code book and subsequently the categories and themes were reorganised with the new codes in mind. I used the same label for each code, recording a description of the concept of the theme related to the codes, the date that it was updated or created, and notes on how it related to other codes in the analysis. The codes were created to cover as many of the interviews as possible at the macro level, capture both positive and negative elements of the research topic, and provide information that helped reduce the data to the micro level. The responses were based on themes and not specifically on words. The manual coding frames were flexible enough to make the most of the results and place the responses in different contexts covering all of the interviews, contrasting one another, and striking a balance point between the macro and micro level information. By adhering to this coding procedure, I was able to periodically check for definitional drift from my own cognitive biases influencing the coding process.

The process of transcription, while it may seem time-consuming, frustrating, and at times boring, helped me become more familiar with the data (Riessman, 1993). While there are a lot of programmes which can transfer audio to transcripts, I recorded the interviews in Arabic and transcribed them by hand, word-for-word, which developed a far more thorough understanding of the data through the process of transcribing (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I dedicated many hours to the transcription process, between three to four and a half hours per interview. I translated one of the interviews into English to code as an experiment but found it too time-consuming. Therefore, the decision was made to continue with the coding in Arabic, after which the coded themes and subsequent analysis was translated into English.

#### **4.6.3. Application of Thematic Analysis**

This section presents the application of TA in this study. Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a useful six-step framework for conducting this kind of analysis: 1) become familiar with the data; 2) generate initial codes; 3) search for themes; 4) review themes; 5) define themes; and 6) write a report about the process and the outcome (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pp.77-101). Although I followed these steps individually, they did not necessarily occur in order, as I moved forward and back between them, many times, particularly when dealing with a lot of complex data.

##### **4.6.3.1. Step 1: *Becoming Familiar with the Data***

I started the process by reading and re-reading the transcripts, which helped me to become familiar with the data, making it easier to identify and collect incidents relevant to the research aim until themes were identified and clear patterns emerged. I also recorded important data on each transcript, where I wrote a code for the participant and their job, social status, and the duration of the interview and transcription. The terms 'themes' and 'codes' are different in that the themes are the overarching elements that arose from the research, such as the bigger ideas or concepts that were expressed in large phrases, sentences, or entire paragraphs. Codes are more succinct, shorter analytic units that better describe exactly what the participants said. Therefore, themes can encompass many codes that represent specific units of data within a larger theme. For example, the ideas of family, independence, social behaviour and responsibility were tangentially linked as codes and key incidents, therefore, grouped together to a higher level of the analysis, especially when they appeared in all of the interviews to some degree; while the specificity of the aforementioned participant who learned how to deal with those of the opposite gender would still fall under a broader sub-theme and/or theme. Finally, the outcome of this process was an overwhelming amount of data and potential codes, but I continued to re-read transcripts and listen to interviews. Early impressions were noted during each review of the interviews, an example of which is below:

*Analysis note 1: "In general these participants hold positive perspectives about KASP, however, it seems they faced finance, social and family challenges at different levels during the programme, which led, in their point of view to a deficiencies in the programme planning, particularly, at post the programme stage".*

*Analysis note 2: "For some of them the KASP was a serious challenge, particularly at the physiological level, whereas, they think the programme has a huge positive impact on the whole society as it could play a role in changing people's beliefs and social behaviours".*

It is important that the process of data collection, coding, organising, and analysing the data enables the reader to judge whether the final outcomes are rooted in the data generated (Ryan et al., 2007), thus I dedicated the time to familiarise myself with the data.

#### 4.6.3.2 Step 2: Generating Initial and Selected Codes

The coding process reduced lots of data into small chunks of meaning (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Moreover, generating initial codes required that the collected data be organised in a meaningful and thematic way (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pp.77-101). Therefore, the manual coding process for this research began with the decision to use inductive coding whereby the researcher reads and interprets raw textual data to develop concepts, themes or a process model through interpretations based on data (Thomas, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998; Corbin and Strauss, 1990). The manual coding frames were flexible enough to make the most out of the results and place the responses in different contexts covering all of the interviews, contrasting one with another, and striking a balance between the macro- and micro-level information to present the whole picture. This process was carried out using a line-by-line coding method for every piece of the transcripts with pens and highlighters, see Figure 4.2, with no software involved.

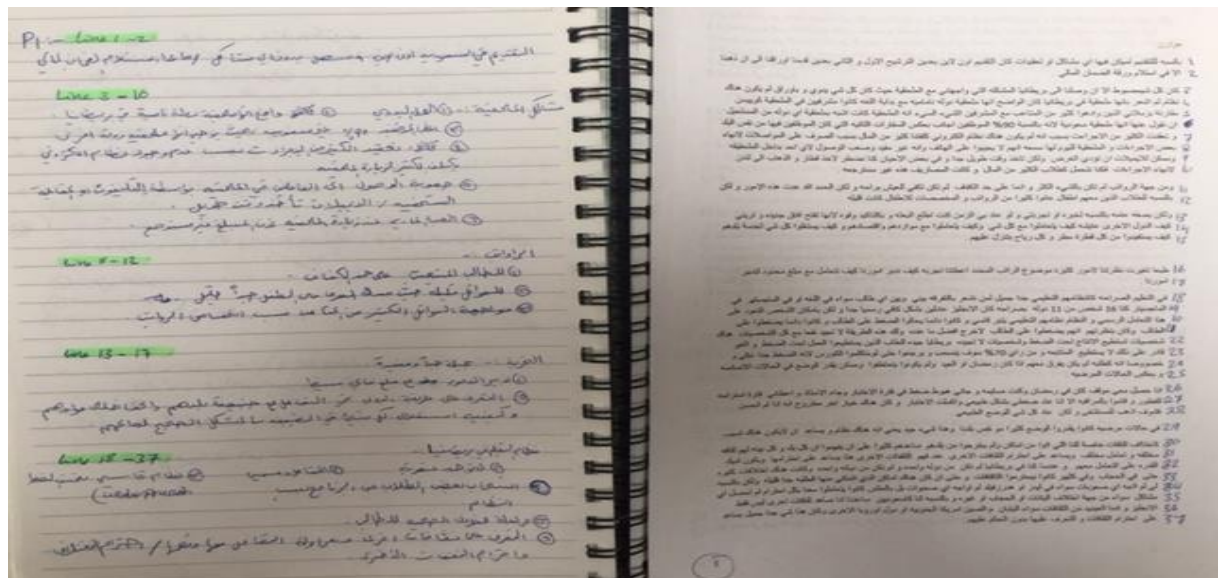


Figure 4. 2 Line-by-line coding process

I chose one interview as a sample and started to break the 'interview' dataset into smaller amounts of textual data to generate initial codes. These initial codes covered broad ideas and key incidents that showed up in the participants' responses, see Table 4.6. Moreover, the codes were created to cover as many of the interviews as possible at the macro level, to capture both positive and negative elements of the research topic, and to provide information that helped reduce the data to the micro level. Therefore, these initial codes



were decided upon by a) surprising or unexpected findings, such as one participant who mentioned how she learned to deal with other genders; b) how frequently an example appeared across multiple interviews, such as the initial code of 'being responsible' which appeared in 12 of the interviews; and c) interesting ideas that related to the investigated issue, for example, family circumstances.

**Table 4. 6 Extract data chosen from participant 1**

Data Extract P1	Initial Codes
<p>We were getting financial aid from the family because the monthly salary was not enough, especially since the city in which I was studying is very expensive, so that one of us pays for rent and we had to ask for help from the parents and most of the time we could not put the children in the custody of the children and we coordinate between me and between my husband during study and work times, or we seek the assistance of a friend.</p> <p>كنا نحصل على مساعدات مالية من والاهل لان الراتب الشهري لم يكن يكفي وخصوصا ان المدينة التي كنت ادرس فيها غاليه جدا حتى انه راتب واحد منا يدفع للايجار وكنا نضطر لطلب المساعده من الاهل وفي اغلب الاوقات لم نكون نستطيع وضع الاطفال في حضانه الاطفال و نقوم بالتنسيق بيني و بين زوجي في اوقات الدراسه و العمل او نستعين باحد الاصدقاء.</p>	<p>(الحصول على مساعدات مادية من الاهل) Obtaining financial aid from the family</p> <p>(التعاون بين الزوجين) Cooperation between couples</p>
<p>I learned patience, patience, patience, how to endure alienation, and worked out the importance of time, and that everything has time and everything with appointments, and that how do you sleep early and wake up early, and this makes a big difference.</p> <p>من الناحية الشخصية تعلمت الصبر الصبر وكيف تتحمل الغربة و تعلمت اهمية الوقت و ان كل شي له وقت</p>	<p>(الفائدة على الصعید الشخصي تعلم الصبر و المسؤول) Learn patience and responsibility</p>

وكل شي بمواعيد و انه كيف تنامي مبكرا و تستيقظي مبكرا  
وهذا يشكل فارق كبير

Once the initial codes begin to be generated, at the beginning I organised them into a coding frame list. A hierarchical coding frame was used, organising the codes based on how they related to each another. Then I decided to use a 'code book' in which the given codes were organised. This was a simple word processor document, and as new codes were created, they were added to the code book. This book includes the extract's date that created the selected codes or when it was updated, a label for each selected code, a description of the concept of the sub-theme or theme that related to the codes (see Table 4.7), and notes on how it related to other codes in the analysis.

After the initial codes list was created, I re-read the transcript to confirm that the identified codes represented the participants' wider perceptions and perspective, and to check whether any new initial codes emerged. At this stage of the analysis, I decided to apply the list of the initial codes that resulted from the first interview to the second transcript. Although some of the initial codes matched with the new data, a few others did not match, and therefore, I annotated them to be used for the third selected transcript.

**Table 4. 7 Process of coding and annotation to acquire coded data**

Code from sample 1 (Interview 1)	Code matched	Code from Sample 2 (Interview 2; then subsequent samples)	Annotation or Coding
Providing equal opportunity			Providing equal opportunity
Time management	→	Technological Skills	Skills
		Academic Issues	Academic Issues
		Brain drains	(no match)
Gender relation	→	Gender relation	Gender relation
Visa Issues			(no match)
Cronyism			(no match)
New culture	→	New culture	New culture
		University ranking (no match)	(no match)

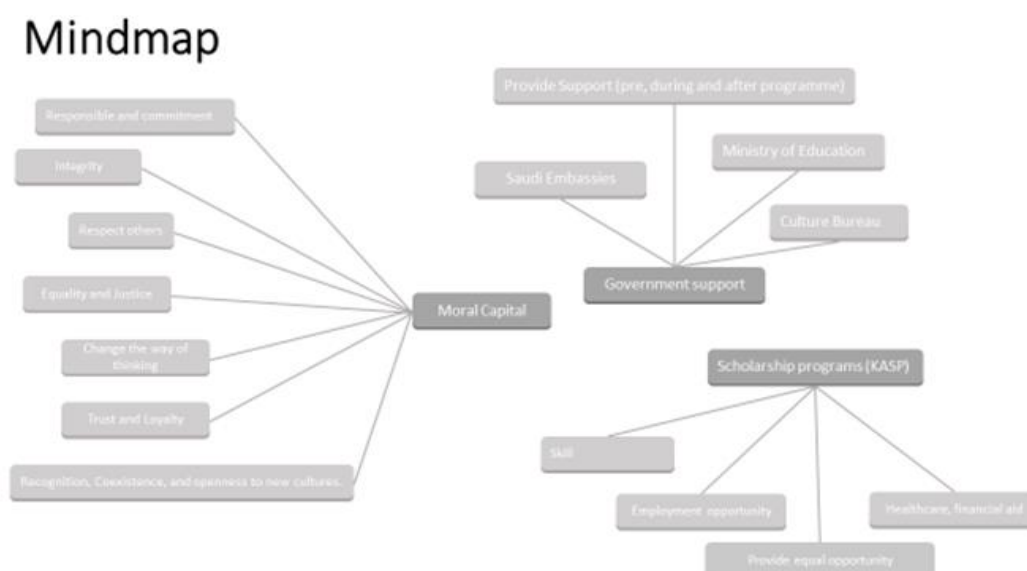
As presented in Table 4.7, this process generated new initial codes which were added to the previous coding list. Some of these existing codes were refined by splitting them into

two codes to give them more meaning. However, a few others were merged together if they had the same meaning. For example, the generated initial code 'time management', which resulted from the first interview, and the initial code 'technological skills', which resulted from the second interview, were merged together into 'skills'. I reviewed how this change impacted the generated codes by comparing them in the previous and subsequent coding list. I then repeated the same process with the rest of the interviews. As I worked through the coding process, new codes emerged and were modified. This process resulted in hundreds of selected codes (presented in Appendix 9.1).

#### 4.6.3.3 Step 3: Classifying Sub-Themes and Themes

- **Classifying Sub-Themes**

In order to create 'sub-themes', the list of the selected codes grouped and categorised by identifying a link between each of them. For this process, I used a mind map method which was helpful to think and rethink about the relationships between different selected codes to create the themes. Figure 4.3 presents an example of the mind map method used to classify the sub-themes 'Moral Capital', 'Government Support' and 'Scholarship Programmes (KASP)'.



**Figure 4. 3 An example of the mind map method**

From this point, I examined the selected codes and some of them clearly fitted together into a sub-theme. For example, the sub-theme 'Government Support', emerged from the selected codes 'Ministry of Education', 'Embassy', and 'Culture Bureau', which provided support to the students before, during and after the programme. This method was applied to the remainder of the selected codes to create the other sub-themes, 'Moral capital' and

'Scholarship Programmes (KASP)'. At the end of this step, three sub-themes were constructed to reflect the students' perceptions and expediencies of KASP. These sub-themes were predominately descriptive, as presented in Table 4.8.

- **Classifying Themes**

Although Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that there are no hard and fast rules about what makes a theme, they posit that themes often capture important information in relation to research questions. Therefore, in this research, 'themes' are characterised by their significance, and in order to classify them I refined the list of sub-themes by identifying a pattern that captures something significant or interesting about the data and/or research question. At this stage of the analysis, although there was perhaps considerable overlap between the coding process and identifying themes, I was able to construct three themes that occurred repeatedly among all interviewees. These themes were structured and classified from the sub-themes and its selected codes. For example, the theme 'Government' was constructed from the sub-theme 'Government support', which emerged from the selected codes 'Ministry of Education' 'Culture Bureau' 'Saudi Embassies' and 'Provide Support (pre, during and after programme)'.

Although these findings each feature sub-themes – different aspects the interviewees raised – they provide a complex picture of the perceived and experienced effects of KASP. Broadly, they allow for a visualisation of which factors influence the positioning of KASP as a contributing factor to a knowledge society in transition.

**Table 4. 8 Research themes linked with its sub-themes and selected codes**

<b>Themes</b>	Government	Opportunity	social capital
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Government support	Scholarship programmes (KASP)	Moral Capital
<b>Selected codes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Education</li> <li>• Culture Bureau</li> <li>• Saudi Embassies</li> <li>• Provide Support (pre, during and after programme)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide equal opportunity</li> <li>• Skill</li> <li>• Healthcare, financial aid</li> <li>• Employment opportunity'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrity</li> <li>• Equality and Justice</li> <li>• Trust and Loyalty</li> <li>• Responsible and commitment</li> <li>• Respect others</li> <li>• Recognition, Coexistence, and openness to new cultures</li> <li>• Change the way of thinking</li> </ul>

Once I finished the coding process, in order to confirm that nothing had been missed from what the participant said, I revised the process and I noticed that there was an important issue raised by P.3, one of the interviewed students. During the interview she mentioned that she faced a difficult situation with her colleagues when she returned to work in a Saudi Arabian hospital after she had studied for more than three years in both the UK and Malaysia with KASP. The issue related to unethical practices that, after her time abroad, she could no longer tolerate. In one instance, some of her colleagues tried to force her to work with them in such an unacceptable way that she was forced to step down from her position at the hospital as a result. P.3 developed her loyalty as well as honesty while she studied abroad and mentioned that "*I was inspired by ethical people I met when I was in England; I was pleased that they influenced me to be good in many ways.*" I felt this could be a challenge for students, which required the need for further investigation in the rest of the transcripts to see if there were similar experiences. This investigation resulted in a new initial code '*Challenges and potential solutions*'. The themes are explored in the next section, supported by participants' own words.

#### **4.7. Summary**

This chapter provided a review of the elements underpinning the selected research methodology for this study. The theoretical perspectives directed how the research methodology emerged and the research methods that were applied, using interviews as a data collection method. Furthermore, the chapter illustrated different strategies and methods in determining the methodological approach adopted in undertaking the study, such as the research strategy, the method of data collection, and the approach to data analysis. The methods used in the data collection were linked to the research methodology, which reflects how I saw reality and how my understanding of it was built. Thus, the qualitative methodology was adopted in this research and used in-depth semi-structured interviews to obtain a large volume of data. These particular methods were adopted with the aim of obtaining a sense of participants' social representation and behaviour. This was achieved based on the analysis and the justification given for their use. The mono-method design adopted a qualitative research design that employed a thematic analysis approach. The pre-interview process described the sample selection and sample size methods as well as data collection methods. Moreover, ethical considerations were discussed, which arose due to the sensitivity of this research. The following chapter presents the findings resulted from the application of thematic analysis for data analysis.

## **Chapter 5: Analysis and Findings**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter seeks to provide an analysis of 12 interviews that were carried out between 2016 and 2017. The main aim of this chapter is to present the participants' perspectives about the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP), as explained in Chapter 1. The Thematic Analysis (TA) method has been adopted to analyse the conducted interviews to explore the participants' experiences at both macro and micro levels, rather than a fragmented, narrowly-focused approach.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section demonstrates the application of the TA process, as well as providing a detail description of the analysis process of the 12 interviews. This included reading and re-reading the transcripts, extracting the important data offered by the participants to present their experiences thematically, then identifying and choosing the most relevant codes to build, develop and structure the them into sub-themes and themes (Braun and Clark, 2006, pp.77-101).

The second section presents the research findings as well as the participants' voices in relation to the key findings of the TA process. The main themes were developed from the transcripts and were created by emergent initial codes, selected codes, and structured sub-themes. These findings relate to '*KASP opportunity*', '*government*' and '*social capital*'. Finally, this section shows how the emergent model of this study was built in light of the key findings and the interpretation of these findings.

### **5.2. Process of Translating and Transcribing Interviews**

The interviews were transcribed verbatim by me – both the interviews and the analysis process were conducted in Arabic language, and the selected codes and developed themes were then translated into English, as explained below. Some researchers argue that the process of transcription should be seen as "*a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology*" (Bird, 2005, p.227). At the start of the translation and transcription process I organised the transcripts for the analysis. The pages and lines for each transcript were numbered, as demonstrated in Figures 5.1 and 5.2.

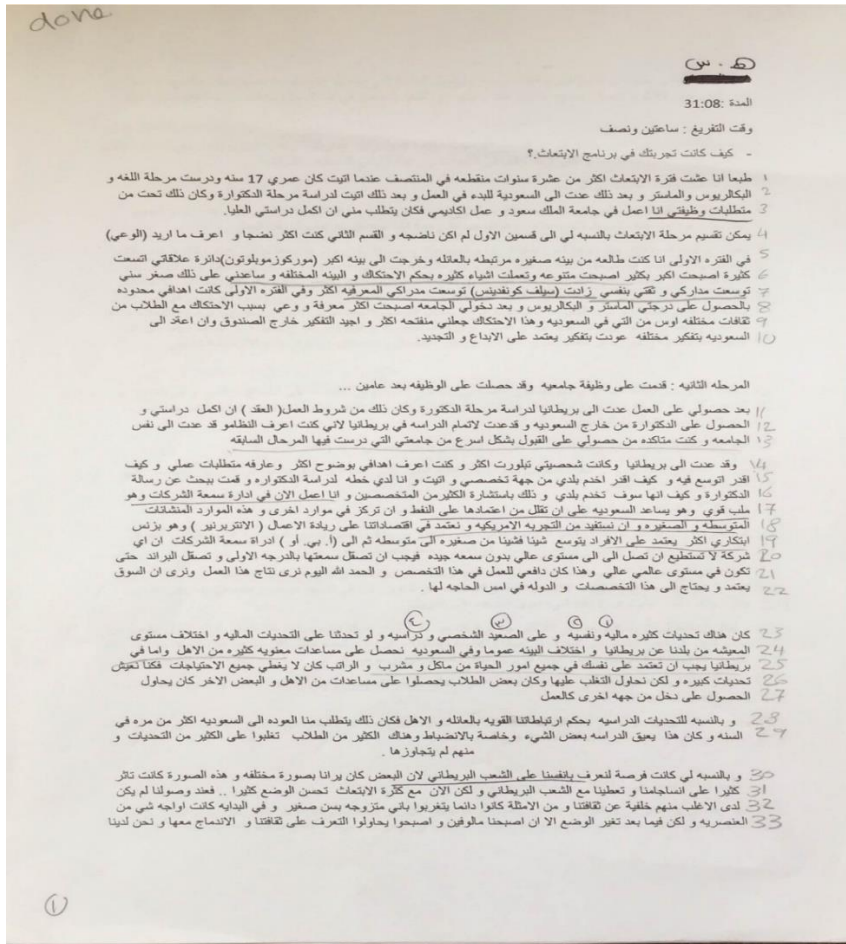


Figure 5. 1 An example of a notebook used for transcriptions

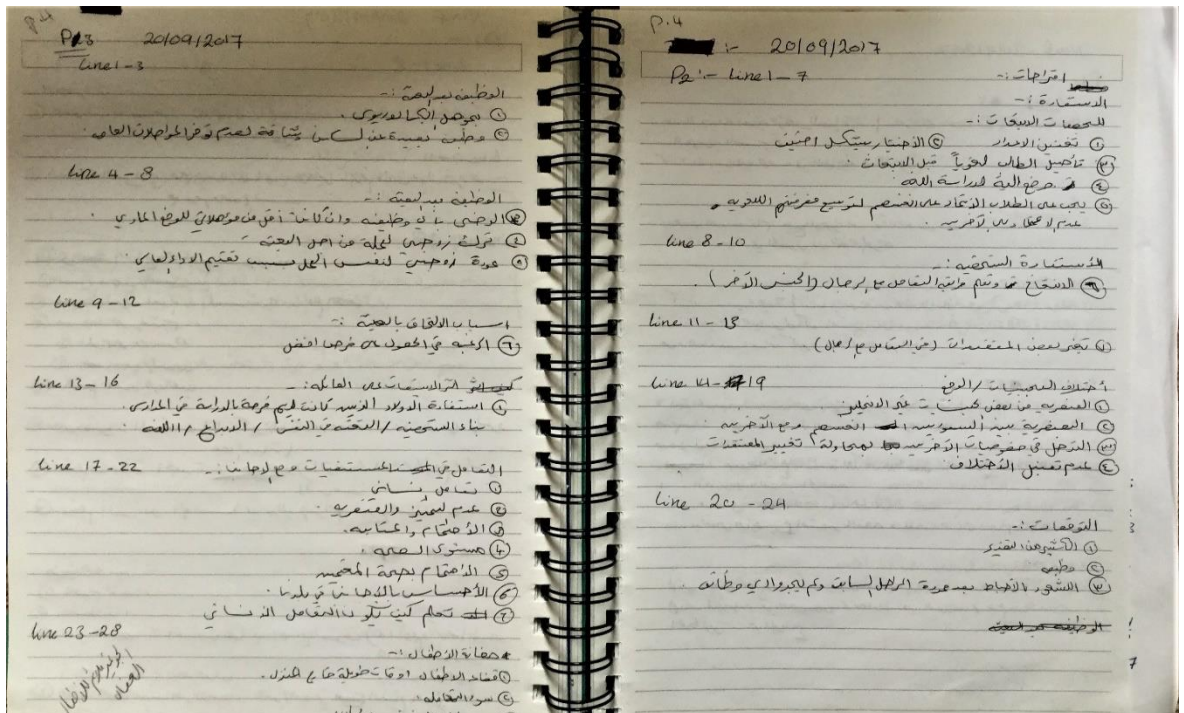


Figure 5. 2 An example of a notebook used for transcriptions



For the translation process one of the interviews was translated in its entirety to English, but this process was ruled out going forward because of time constraints. Instead, I decided to conduct the analysis process with the original transcripts in Arabic, in order to build the initial codes. Later, these initial codes were translated into English, as presented in Figure 5.3. For example, the initial codes 'تنظيم الوقت, التعامل مع الجنس الآخر, تعلمت المسؤولية', were translated as 'responsibility', 'gender relation', and 'time management'.

**Figure 5. 3 An example of initial codes translated into English**

This section of this chapter reports the findings of the TA on the data. This process started with checking the analysis and detailing the emerging themes. The application of TA highlighted an interesting pattern with regard to the transition from a resourced-based economy to a knowledge-based economy. This includes interpolations of the themes, sub-themes, and their related codes from participants' transcripts. The transition process to the knowledge economy, as this study found, required a strong '*Reciprocal Process*' between the '*Government*' – represented by the government support provided by the Ministry of Education, embassies, and Culture Bureau – and '*Opportunity*' – represented by the scholarship programme provided by the Saudi government. The ideas that relate to the



KASP case study and 'Social Capital', which represent the graduate students who benefited from this programme. The themes which emerged in this study, including its sub-themes and related codes, represent the experiences, perspectives and perceptions of both the graduated Saudi students and the administrators of the KASP programme at all stages (before, during and after the programme), as discussed in this section and demonstrated in Table 4.8 in the previous Chapter.

### 5.3.1 'Opportunity': KASP

This theme was constructed from the sub-theme 'Providing Scholarship (KASP)'. During the analysis process, I realised that several responses of the participants related to the experience of the KASP scholarship programme, which related to the main theme of opportunity. This sub-theme was built from several codes related to the participants' perceptions regarding the KASP programme, including: 'equal opportunity', 'skills', 'healthcare', 'financial aid', and 'employment opportunity'.

Several of the participants, including both students and administrators, mentioned this code during the interviews when asked about selection processes for the KASP. The respondents emphasised how the Saudi government provided equal educational opportunities for its citizens because they believe that education and skills significantly influence a person's life chances in terms of success in the labour market, preparation for democratic citizenship, general personal advancement, and life chances not being fixed by arbitrary circumstances of their birth such as social class, race and gender. For example, Administrator 1 in the Saudi Culture Bureau in London stated that:

*We selected the student for both scholarships and programmes, based on the effective online process. This process includes certain standards they need to meet, such as their GPA, market labour needs and subjects, regardless of their background, gender, or social class. Therefore, we provide equal educational opportunities for our citizens in order to prepare them for democratic citizenship and general human flourishing.*

Administrator 2 emphasised that one of the KASP objectives is to treat everyone equally:

*One of the main objectives of the programme is to qualify human resources according to the needs of the Saudi labour market in many western universities.*

The former Deputy Minister, Scholarship Affairs noted that participation encouraged Saudi women to work harder to find jobs and opportunities, but when those are scarce back home, they struggle, demonstrating the need for the increased social capital invested through the scholarship programme for Saudi citizens to beget increased local opportunity on the

ground. This current supply and demand example necessitate increased economic opportunity within the country, a potential next step in improving the economic status of the nation. He explained:

*From my point of view, I think Saudi women get the scholarship, they study hard, and when they come back to Saudi, they either find that the job market is not suitable for them – they are offered jobs far away from their hometowns. The question is what are the major changes that are needed in the job market? We see lots of cases where families suffer because women cannot find jobs close by where they live. Saudi men, on the other hand, do not face the same dilemma because they are willing to travel to work. The opportunities for Saudi women to work are limited in comparison to men. Problems arise because families refuse to let the ladies to travel alone to study abroad. We had cases for example when the male guardian decided to leave the scholarship destination and return to Saudi while the Saudi female student is in the middle of her studies. Some of these female students are PhD students and the guardian males are only 18 years old and she is in fact the one taking care of him, not the other way around.*

However, Participant 1 discussed how she was struggling with the online process for the scholarship. She claimed that one of the difficulties of the online process when she applied during the first phase of the KASP in 2005 was that there was no option on the website for women to apply. At this time, there were no specific criteria about gender to apply for the programme and everyone had the opportunity to apply online. She stated:

*In 2005, I was among the first scholarship group. At that time, the online application form did not specify gender, but when my husband tried to apply for me the system was refusing as I am a female. Eventually, I discovered the mistake was in the system because I knew that they were accepting females; I applied through the Embassy and my husband accompanied me and waited for about 4 to 6 months then joined the scholarship.*

In agreement with the Administrators' opinion mentioned above, Participant 2 stated that:

*The ministry depends on the excellence of the applicants to the beginning of the programme announced at specific times for all the graduates of public education in the Kingdom and are required to register on the site and attach the documents required by the ministry from the beginning of the application process. The selection criteria depends firstly on the highest GPAs and secondly, on the candidates' wishes to choose which majors they are going to study from the beginning until now.*

On the other hand, Participant 8 expressed his satisfaction with the online process:

*I am satisfied with this process as long as justice is achieved in who will get these opportunities. The criterion of practical excellence is a reasonable standard. Also, the ministry's announcement of this programme achieves a fair social justice for all.*

These findings indicate that the Saudi government has worked to develop the programme to fix certain problems, such as the online procedures, as well as creating criteria for those who wanted to join the programme. It seems that the procedure remains equal, and there has been an opportunity for everyone qualified to join it. However, the question remains of how the government can assess the needs of the labour market because it is not a static phenomenon and sending someone abroad to study may take four years, by which time the conditions of the labour market may have changed substantially. This idea was further investigated during the analysis. Moreover, throughout the comparative analysis approach with the forthcoming codes, several other questions were raised in relation to equality and opportunity, which will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

In terms of skill and personal development, a few of the students explained how the government helped them to gain the skills needed to finish their degrees and provide an opportunity to obtain these skills, such as time management, problem-solving and responsibility. The statements of the government officials also supported this. For instance, Administrator 1 stated:

*On the professional side, the young Saudis seemed to be actively involved in jobs, even though they were somewhat unsuited to the aspirations of the state. I think this is a good start for Saudi students, whether in the government or the private sector.*

Participant 3 stated:

*I was expecting that we will go to study and get a certificate only and come back to Saudi. However, when we went there, it was much better. When we went there, they gave us excellent interaction; it was known that we came from Saudi Arabia to study and gain better skills. The government paid us large amounts and we had a higher medical insurance and monthly salaries. It was a golden equal opportunity for education.*

Participant 2 said:

*I swear till this day, I am very grateful to King Abdallah for this opportunity to become educated. I got better skills during that programme; I was able to communicate with another student easily and I also got my degree in the English language, even*

*though I could not communicate in that language, before going there. King Abdallah visited the student twice in America; in one of his visits, he met the students and it was a good opportunity for us. I wish my daughters will get such an opportunity in the future.*

Participant 1 also asserted:

*I learned the importance of time, and that everything has a deadline. I learned how to be responsible and how to strike a balance between home, education and job.*

Participant 11 spoke about some of the skills gained simply by being abroad and away from their family:

*I have benefited personally and academically from my experience in the US. On a personal level, living in the States taught me to be responsible and made me self-dependent. On the academic level, studying in the States gave me the opportunity to take the full advantage of academia and expand my work experience.*

Participant 7 also found that the experience of studying abroad enhanced personal development:

*My personality has changed completely. I was a shy person, and the scholarship opportunity helped me build my character, and my self-confidence has grown. I was able to deal with people positively and actively.*

The above comments illustrate that it was important for the government to treat its people equally to fill the gap in the labour market and to contribute to developing its society. Therefore, Saudi Arabia offers a significant opportunity through the Ministry of Education for students who want to continue their study abroad and wish for all students to enhance their lives as much as possible from their experiences abroad. It is stated that the students receive monthly salaries that were more than sufficient to live on, with reasonable medical insurance coverage, generous family allowance, and also coverage of all tuition fees. Students not only receive financial support but also several rewards for excellent achievements. The Ministry of Education stated that King Abdallah personally visited and met Saudi students who were studying in the United States. The administrative officer, from the Saudi culture bureau, noted that in order to rich the primary goal of KASP, the Saudi students studying abroad should maximise their resources and improve their skills to satisfy the Saudi labour market. Moreover, there are several additional ways that the government has helped students, such as providing financial support to get extra or additional tutoring to assist students with achieving high grades. Also, in each university semester, the cultural

bureau also provides several awards to encourage the students to be more motivated towards their academic performance and development.

However, in terms of equality and opportunity, during the analysis certain questions arose. For example, although the criteria to receive a scholarship may well be equal for men and women, certain societal and cultural norms may have an impact on the procedure. For example, do schools and colleges actually provide equal learning opportunities for men and women? Are women equally able to achieve the required GPA or are they disadvantaged in this respect? Furthermore, do women have equal opportunities to travel abroad and study? Even though they may be legally allowed to do so, do cultural norms hinder this ability? Questions such as these required deeper investigation of the transcripts and potential follow-up research. While KASP has demonstrated that it can provide opportunities, there are issues around how those opportunities are apportioned or made accessible to particular groups, specifically women.

### **5.3.2 ‘Government’: Management Support**

During the analysis process I noted several responses regarding their experience of the KASP scholarship programme. Therefore, this theme was constructed and built from sub-themes related to management support. These sub-themes were built from several codes in terms of providing the participants’ and administrators’ perspectives, perceptions of the KASP programme. These codes are ‘Ministry of Education’, ‘Culture Bureau’ and ‘Programme plans and communication’ (before, during and after programme). The participants’ quotes below present how this theme was constructed.

**Ministry of education:** The previous Deputy Minister discussed the plans and challenges faced by the Ministry of Education as well as students during the KASP programme. For example, language is the biggest barrier for every student who has the dream to go abroad to pursue development of their academic skills. In agreement with this, Administrator 1, from the Saudi Culture Bureau London, stated:

*The subject of language is one of the obstacles for our students. The other factor is the confusion of educational systems between Britain and Saudi, especially for those studying baccalaureate in Britain. The system is based on the learner and in Saudi, it depends on the teacher and that causes many problems for the students.*

In order to break the language barrier, perhaps the students should be equipped before they travel abroad for their future education. Currently, the government is taking measures for students who are willing to travel abroad to study an English language course such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Test of English as a

Foreign Language (TOEFL) exams in Saudi Arabia rather than going abroad to learn the foundations of the English language. As Administrator 2 mentioned below, the government is performing a feasibility study to introduce an 18-month course for students to master the English language before they sit the IELTS or TOEFL exams in Saudi Arabia. The former Deputy Minister, Scholarships Affairs, Administrator 2 noted:

*Al-Multaqa or the symposium is to equip the students before they travel to their destinations abroad. We give the students handouts telling about the new culture... etc. We are also thinking about asking the Saudi students to do their English language course in Saudi before they travel so we can solve the issue of the language barrier because many students study English for 18 months or so without getting the TOEFL or IELTS score. Also, there are many ELC's which do not qualify the students well, so we decided to come up with the idea to train the students to learn English while he/she is in Saudi.*

The Deputy Minister of Education also noted that there were several students who had finished their studies abroad who were now looking for jobs; with that need in mind, the government planned a job fair in Riyadh where students and employers can meet. Job fairs had been held before in the US and UK for Saudi students studying there. Unfortunately, the outcome of this event was unremarkable – the job fair was considered by many as a tourist attraction rather than a legitimate resource. Administrator 2 recommended that future job fairs in Riyadh be conducted in a more serious environment:

*Also, we had an agreement to have job fair here in Riyadh. We had these occasions done in the past in the US and UK, but unfortunately it was misused for personal gains and some kind of tourism. For example, in one of those occasion they chose a resort in the States called National Harvard and they had the job fair there which was in my opinion was not suitable at all because of the so many entertainments they had in that resort. I believe one of the reasons to terminate these job fairs abroad was the misuse of the whole idea.*

Administrator 2 discussed the importance in incorporating advanced technology to provide reliable and effective services to its citizens. He mentioned that the Saudi government is looking to create an online database about all the Saudi students studying abroad using assistance from the embassy. This centralised information could assist the government and private sector who are looking to locate fresh graduates with specialised qualifications. Moreover, the database will focus on high-security features to enhance privacy as the government is concerned about the privacy and data protection of its citizens. This approach could assist in creating large data pools within years for the Saudi Arabian

government, which could be used for effective decision making in the area of education in Saudi Arabia. For example, Administrator 2 observed:

*We decided to establish an online portal in which you can find everything you need to know about the Saudi students abroad. It works as a database where it has all the information about the Saudi students which can be very helpful for the government and private sectors when they seek fresh graduates. By doing so, this database will ask every single private company in Saudi to register with the database which has full privacy with regard to its content and information related to the students. For example, when a company registers at our database, they can ask for a list of all the Saudi graduates from the US who have majored in law. All they have to do is sign some paperwork and the list would be theirs to use free of charge.*

**Cultural Bureau:** In order to clarify the Culture Bureau role during the KASP, Administrator 1, in the Culture Bureau in London, stated that there are two ways to perform the follow-up process with students:

*There are two parts for follow-up: follow-up within the mission [Culture Bureau] and follow-up within the universities through communication with the academic departments or through the administrative units responsible for managing the affairs of the demand in sufficient institutions (institutes of language, colleges, universities).*

Furthermore, he also stated that the complete process of receiving the scholarship to study abroad should be automated. It should be possible for the student to open a file and complete the English language requirement, after which they will automatically be provided with choices for where their scholarship can be applied at different universities around the world:

*The beginning of the process of opening the file and then the supervision of the study, which includes all the things of the study of the student whether he/she will start the study directly or will study the language first and ends with the completion of the student to the mission and meet all conditions and as you know, there is an electronic system that the student to do all his affairs through it. The point of having safer is to facilitate all procedures and this method is followed to ease the affairs of students and to adjust the supervisory process to the scholarship in different countries of the world. (Administrator 1)*

The importance of opening an automated system, noted by Administrator 1, was reiterated by Participant 7 who stated that the initial communication with the Saudi Culture Bureau in

London was difficult because it required them to travel to London to complete some required transactions:

*In the beginning, communication with the cultural attaché was difficult, especially in the critical cases, we had to go to London to end some urgent transactions. Travelling to London cost the student a lot of money, effort and time, but after the launch of the electronic system and with time, things improved.*

#### **5.3.2.1 Programmes, Plans and Communications (Before, During, and After)**

In the past, students had struggled to contact with their supervisors who were rarely answering their telephones, accustomed to ignoring phone calls from students desperate to open files or pay for student fees. With the launch of an online platform, things got easier, services were available online and they were faster to track. Also, the supervisor's work came to be monitored by the Ministry of Education in Riyadh, making it more difficult to ignore the proverbial ringing phone. The integration of new technology rectified many difficult issues that had plagued the programme in its earliest incarnation.

Participant 2 also supported the need for the Safeer platform, which it is an intermediary for communication tool between the students to communicate with Saudi Culture Bureau.

*Safeer platform is an important platform and a link between the student and the cultural attaché, and it is considered as a reference for the entire student's information and the electronic system considered to be easy use to facilitate communication between the students and their academic supervisor in the cultural attaché without any effort or cost.*

Notably, the government charged the Ministry of Education with handling the students who were willing to go abroad to study, and the Saudi Culture Bureau with the students who were already studying abroad. From the above findings, it is clear that the Saudi Arabian government has taken several steps to provide a suitable environment for students to go abroad to study as well as provide a suitable communication platform for students already studying abroad with the Culture Bureau.

Interviewed in mid-2017, the former Deputy Minister specified that the Ministry of Education were planning to introduce English language preparatory classes to assist students in overcoming the language barrier. Administration by the Saudi Culture Bureau and the participants emphasized the importance of using technology to improve the communication between the students and the Bureau, as well as easing the process for students by interacting via an online platform rather than travelling to London. Clearly the Covid-19



pandemic will further hinder this programme, but nonetheless, the manner in which students are interacting and how travel is being handled will remain critical for those who participate.

However, in terms of the management support, during the analysis certain questions arose. For example, would 18 months of English language preparatory classes be sufficient for students to master the language? Moreover, are there sufficient human resources to provide English language preparatory classes for all the students interested in going abroad? These will serve as questions for future research, particularly after the implementation of the aforementioned programmes.

### **5.3.3 ‘Social Capital’ and ‘Moral Capital’**

As discussed in Section 3.4, the idea of capital has changed. Initially it was a way of acquiring wealth and property, but the term has come to be used to refer to social capital, whereby people and their intellectual capabilities are more timely definitions and measures of capital. The in-depth discussion in section 3.4 provided a clear understanding of the term’s capitalism and capital forms, building on definitions and discussions by Bourdieu (1986) and Smith and others (1937; 1976). However, this research has uncovered a moral perspective that was surprisingly influential and had the potential to change the current idea of capital, as it is defined as a social construct. Moreover, scholarships programmes have been demonstrated to be an important component of social capital and the economic growth of a country, and while the term was not necessarily used by the interviewees, underlying themes were demonstrated throughout all interviews highlighting an added moral dimension to social capital.

Moral capital is the core of the main theme of social capital and is defined in this research as *“a capacity to consider one’s and other people’s actions in moral terms as well as the changes to one’s view of morality, or any influences”*. This theme was constructed and built from several sub-themes of ‘social capital’, which were built from several codes related to the participants’ and administrators’ perspectives of the KASP programme, which are ‘Integrity’, ‘Equity and Justice’, ‘Trust and Loyalty’, ‘Responsible and Commitment’, ‘Respect others’, ‘Recognition, coexistence and openness to new cultures’ and ‘Checking the way of thinking’.

**Integrity:** Participant 3 mentioned that she learnt how to have sincerity at work and share knowledge with others without discriminating due to gender or religion. She also stated that the need for teachers to have patience was learnt from her supervisor because the supervisor had spent time to ensure that she understood the required information:

*I learned to open up to others and learned sincerity at work and to give knowledge to those who ask for it without thinking about gender or religion. I had also learned patience in teaching others when I was in Britain. My supervisor was spending as much time with me as possible until I understood the smallest information.*

Participant 3 added that she applied what she learnt to be patient and respect the understanding of the other party during communication while she was studying abroad. This is one of the significant benefits that the country gets when students go abroad to learn: students learn both academic knowledge and day-to-day social skills:

*My self-respect and respect for others, even those we differed from have changed completely when I saw how people the people at the university treated us with respect and give us even more than what we deserved. I began to copy what I have learned, especially with those around me. For example, I try to serve the patients as I am required to do, and their conditions to them, ensuring that they understood everything I said. I patiently explained the reasons and the method of treatment and gave them their full time; learned this from my time in Britain. When I went to the doctor while I was studying, he was spending a long time explaining the treatment and the sickness in great detail.*

Participant 1 stated that he acquired a strong academic background and also learnt integrity in the workplace. He mentioned that the importance of putting the interest of the workplace over personal interest was also learnt while he was studying abroad:

*My educational level is higher than the level of my manager's, and sometimes he tries to convince me to do some work, and I did not accept because it is not in the interest of the workplace.*

**Equality and Justice:** Participant 5 noted how everyone was treated equally:

*We were 16 MA students from 11 different countries and to tell you the truth, we were treated equally. The staff in the UK universities were fair to us and that got my attention. I was paying attention to the way I treat people regardless of their religion, race, or nationality.*

Participant 4 said that she cherished the way she was treated in the UK, because she felt that the British and international students were treated equally without any discrimination. The exposure to treating everybody equally was learnt abroad because most universities have students from a variety of backgrounds with several cultures:

*The way I was treated was wonderful; I had not been treated that way before. There was no difference between the British students and us; we were treated equally.*

Gender equality is not common in Saudi Arabia and it is not always possible to mingle with people from the opposite sex. Nevertheless, Participant 1 stated that she learned about gender equality and how to communicate with other people while studying abroad. Similarly, Participant 2 observed that:

*I have learned how to deal with the opposite sex regardless of whether they are strangers or colleagues. I learned how to deal with people according to their positions; for example, doctors, teachers or professors. I have learned how to take full advantage of their experiences and knowledge.*

Similarly, Participant 4 emphasized a change in personality brought about by the changes in perceptions of gender equality:

*My personality changed a little, for example, I opened a little for men. In the lead I did not talk to men and I cannot, but after the scholarship was a very normal subject I talked with them as colleagues and discussed with them in the subjects of study and public events.*

*Before the scholarship, I was ashamed, and I was thinking about the men's look at the women who allowed to talk to them. I thought they were thinking badly about our Saudi society, but abroad it was different. I talked to them like friends and brothers. This changed a bit and I think it is beautiful.*

**Trust and Loyalty:** From my participants' point of view trust and loyalty are important skills that people should have in a country to ensure the development of the country. For example, Participant 3 stated that he learnt how to inspire people and use the knowledge he learnt to impact Saudi Arabia:

*My studies in England encouraged me to inspire people and transfer the education I learned from them to my country.*

Participant 3 decided to work in teaching in a Saudi Arabian university to impact young students who would shape the future of the country. He mentioned that a teacher requires self-confidence and he developed this while he was studying abroad because he had an opportunity to mingle with students from different cultures:

*I was hoping to work in one of the universities because I would be able to influence the students and an entire generation by teaching them good education and how to*

*be self-confident, which I got from Britain because these students will be able to spread the same culture.*

**Responsible and commitment:** Participant 1 emphasised that studying abroad required commitment, responsibility, and patience. However, it is a big step to shape one's personal life as well as the future of the country. Additionally, it was mentioned that studying abroad provides an opportunity for self-development, to be a better citizen of Saudi Arabia:

*Studying abroad needs commitment, responsibility, and patience to be able to complete it, as it is an opportunity that is not going to be repeated. And the shameful thing is that some scholars did not take advantage of the opportunity and indulge themselves in the host countries, and therefore they were unable to complete the mission. Some of them got the scholarship for fun, and thus, they lost the opportunity for themselves, depriving others of the opportunity in the process.*

Participant 4 stated that she did not feel that she was responsible for the tasks that require commitment while she was in Saudi Arabia; however, she learnt the true meaning of responsibility and the commitment to achieve what was started, after she travelled to England for her studies. As she mentioned, although she had help from her family abroad, she still felt the need to take responsibility in England:

*I wanted to go back home because when I was in Saudi Arabia, I was living a more luxurious life and I wanted that and in England but I did not feel it because of the great responsibility, even though there was much support and help from my mother and my husband and it was an extraordinary help.*

**Respect others:** The participants' perspective also tend to express that respecting others is one of the important skills that need to be developed among young people in a country, to have a bright future. Participants 3 and 4 stated that they learnt to respect themselves and others while they were studying in the UK because of the way others treated them while they were there:

*My experience in the UK influenced me psychologically and my dealings with others and my respect for myself and others, because everyone in the society respected me, and that made me believe that everyone is equal. (Participant 3)*

*My studies in Britain increased my respect for myself and people, regardless of our differences. We were not treated differently during our stay there. (Participant 4)*

**Recognition, coexistence and openness to new cultures:** Administrator 1 from the Saudi Culture Bureau in London stated that the main objective of the programme is to allow

people to recognise other cultures and differences and open themselves to accept other cultures:

*One of the main objectives of the program is a cultural goal and the integration of this segment of society in other societies. It aimed to create some cultural and intellectual communication with the people from other countries.*

He also added that he could see the distinction between young people who went abroad to study and those who did not. He further mentioned that there is a positive transformation in accepting other people's cultures:

*I see that there is a great shift in society and a great difference, and it is clear that there is a positive transformation (coexistence); which means accepting others as they are in the kingdom. He marvelled at the country, the presence of scholarship abroad, dealing with this kind of cultural diversity. (Administrator 1)*

Participant 1 stated that he had an opportunity to mingle with students from South Korea, Japan, and Africa. He also stated that their cultures were different, but he had so much to learn from them. The acceptance of a multicultural environment can improve the country. Participant 1 observed:

*I had to deal with how to balance home, education, and different cultures. There are students on scholarships from very advanced countries such as South Korea and Japan, and there are scholarships students from Africa; how to exchange ideas and cultures with these people impressed me significantly.*

Moreover, Participant 2 emphasized that studying abroad brought him an open mind to accept people and their differences:

*In my personal view, the positivity of such programmes is in creating an open-mindedness in people to make them imbibe the culture of accepting others, no matter how different their customs and cultures are in both religious and mundane level.*

Participant 8 stated that he learnt the importance of creativity and innovation and that it is important for the student to have an open mind and not limit themselves if they want to develop creativity and innovation to apply themselves in everything they do:

*My circle of relations has become much more numerous. The environment helped me at a young age to expand my perception, and my self-confidence has increased, my cognitive knowledge also expanded. In the beginning, my goals were limited to obtaining a bachelor's degrees and then Masters. After entering university, I became*

*more aware and conscious because of the interaction with the students from different cultures, which was way different from Saudi Arabia. This interaction made me more open-minded and led me to think outside the box. So, I returned to Saudi Arabia with an open mind with the reflection of creativity and innovation.*

**Changing ways of thinking:** Many participants emphasised that their ways of thinking completely changed from the time they started studying abroad. For example, Participant 7 said that he developed self-confidence, and he felt that he is now capable of achieving things by himself:

*I was able to build my personality well. My confidence rose. I started to deal with many people. The differences in cultures helped me handle students or educational board.*

This change in ways of thinking was not limited to the participants. In the case of Participant 7 it had a tertiary impact, spreading to friends and family, including her husband:

*When it comes to studying, my husband was not cooperative in the beginning... he was not supportive at all and that was a major problem for me. The long working hours and too much time spent on studying and my children's welfare were an issue for us as my husband could not speak the language properly. I used to do things myself which is not something I am used to doing back in Saudi.*

Participant 7 went on to further explain that when it came to opportunities and a change in the way of thinking, the evidence of advanced opportunities that were derived from the scholarship were enough to convince family who were otherwise not initially supportive:

*I had a lot of ambition, that's why I applied for the programme. I knew that I would overcome any obstacle while in the UK. I have lived in the UK for three years and I was able to find solutions for any problems that occurred to me. My husband was not cooperative at the beginning as he was afraid of the instability that that the new place will create for us, but I have assured him that we can overcome any obstacles and I was able to convince him. I was certain that the scholarship will get me a good job because after graduating with a bachelor's degree, I was not able to get a decent job as I got a job with a low salary as it was a private company. After working for this job with low salary, I got another job offer working for a private school for two months. Then, I applied for the scholarship programme believing that I will get a good job after getting the Master's degree from the UK.*

Participant 1 noted a reconciliation between home culture and education with that achieved overseas, and how that changed the ways of thinking for those who enjoyed the scholarships programme:

*The responsibility and how to reconcile between your home and your education and how to deal with different cultures – there are students on scholarships from the very advanced countries such as South Korea and Japan and there are scholarships students who come from Africa and how to exchange ideas and cultures and this thing impressed me significantly.*

Moreover, Participant 4 stated that the opportunity to study abroad built the self-confidence of not only themselves but also their children:

*We were on another planet. I thought that we lived at the best level, and the scholarship programme opened the minds of young people and their families for the better. The young people did not regard any culture as more superior than the other. In my opinion, the primary source of moral learning is education.*

*As for me, my children and my husband benefited less than my eldest daughter. She benefited in improving her language, her way of thinking and her confidence in herself. She felt that she was creative in these qualities at her school in Britain and she was the one that benefitted the most in my family.*

Participant 3 confirmed the response of Participant 4, saying that her son learnt to rely on himself. Additionally, Participant 3 also added that not only her son, but also her husband is now more self-confident than ever before:

*The effect of the programme affected my husband. He became a better person and more open-minded. My older son has benefited a lot as he learned to rely on himself. He has friends and hobbies, and he stands out from his peers.*

With these emergent themes in mind, the most unexpected finding from the analysis was the new moral aspect. As mentioned in Section 3.4, Adam Smith first initiated the search into what causes some countries to be wealthier than others. Warsh (2007) expounded upon these economic questions by arguing that a country becomes wealthier when things change such that there are economic increases, like better technology begetting productivity increases, or in the case of these findings, better cultural and psychological understanding of how different nations define morality, begetting international networking and increases the relationship between them.

Smith, though raising an economic issue, was a moral philosopher who entrenched notions of economics in their respective morality. The findings of this moral capital dimension, which indicate that some forms of capital have an ethical and moral perspective, were unexpected, but corroborate the theories presented by Smith, such that the economic growth of any nation, Saudi Arabia included, has a moral aspect to it which politicians, educators, and citizens must take into consideration for growth.

From personal experience, I expected my interviewees to share similar findings and feelings, in that they received a scholarship and were able to attend a prestigious school abroad, improve their linguistic, technical and network skills. Thereafter they would return to Saudi Arabia and be met with unexpected issues of social justice, inequality, and morality. In the aforementioned interviews, many moral issues were raised like that of gender inequality, something that Saudi Arabia still struggles with. For someone born and raised within Saudi Arabia, these differences in gender may not seem odd, with individuals accepting a local or national definition of what is right or wrong. But after returning to the country after KASP with new skills and new insights into what other parts of the world define as right or wrong on a local or national level, the moral discrepancies placed the interviewees in moral dilemmas. They now have to weigh what defines right or wrong in various contexts and how a change in said context or definition could propel a country like Saudi Arabia forward economically.

For social, political, and economic reasons, it becomes vital to consider the creation of new economic resources for the country. Resources include education and knowledge, which produce human and social capital that is flexible, well-trained, and equipped in terms of technology, cultural and scientific understanding, and can help the shift from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy. Again, the discovery of the moral dilemma expounds upon this same creation of a new resource, this idea of flexible capital, and begins to highlight the current shift in the thought processes of the interviewees and myself.

Only by reviewing the micro- and macro-level in connection with one another were these findings able to expose the dynamic character of capital as it is defined by the new moral dimension. Such a social phenomenon cannot be analysed without taking into consideration the structural components that influence it.

Giddens's structuration theory (1974) lends itself well to analysing information management through this perspective. Giddens proposes the so-called "*duality of structure*", which is part of his broader "*theory of structuration*". He postulates that two broad directions of social science study – macro-level studies and micro-level studies – can be reconciled through structuration theory. Macro-level studies provide explanations of social phenomena based



solely on structural forces. These forces can either empower or limit the individual. Micro-level studies, on the other hand, emphasise the role of the individual. Where the macro-level disregards the agency and influence of the individual, micro-level studies disregard external factors and the influences of broader phenomena. In combination, by balancing both the role of individual agency and structure, the so-called 'duality of structure' emerges. This duality posits that agency and structure are in constant interchange with one-another and continuously influence each other, thus, neither is the determining factor of a phenomenon; rather, both in combination create or construct a phenomenon.

Giddens's (1974) framework lends itself well to being applied to the micro-macro analysis of scholarships. Three core themes that underpin an information structure regarding scholarships have been identified: government, opportunity, and social capital. These three themes concern both the individual agent as well as the structure. They also stand in the same interrelation to one-another as the micro- and macro-level, and also agency and structure. Thus, it can be posited that an individual's social capital influences the structural components available to their opportunity (scholarship programmes), which in turn influences the government structure underpinning this. In light of the changes to thought processes and moral aspects, this means that one can posit that an individual's skills acquired (social capital) through the scholarship programme and the education received outside of Saudi Arabia are directly influencing the structural components of capital and, by extension, the very definition of what social capital is for a country. However, the changes in knowledge and the moral dilemmas facing scholarship winners provides them with the opportunity to alter their perception of right and wrong and put it into the context of groups and nationalities beyond those they grew up with.

In summary, social capital is not just about the education of the people of the country, but also their moral development. The findings show that the Saudi Arabian students who went abroad to study understood the importance of integrity and equality in society, as well as learning what justice is and how they should uphold it in a country. Moreover, loyalty and trust are other factors that are discussed as valuable moral skills that were developed while the students are studying abroad. Many participants also confirmed that they learnt to be responsible as well as the commitment to complete what they started while they studied and lived abroad. Administrator 1 from the Saudi Culture Bureau in London stated that the study programme not only focuses on the pedagogical knowledge but also develops recognition, coexistence, and openness to new cultures. The participants also confirmed that they developed the mindset to adopt and respect other cultures. Finally, the participants also stated that they, along with their families, had a completely transformed way of thinking.

In terms of moral capacity, during the analysis certain questions arose that necessitate further research, particularly around how long the capacity that the students developed during their stay abroad lasts when they continue to live in Saudi Arabia, and whether it has a direct influence on developments within their home country.

## **Chapter 6: Narrative Vignettes to Illustrate Research Findings**

### **6.1. Introduction**

In order to illustrate the research findings and develop short reflective vignettes based on data gathered and my knowledge of the impact of KASP, I kept a reflective journal over the period of a few weeks on the two stories presented by my participants. Furthermore, I added reflections on my own experiences, as I thought it would be interesting to add my perspective as a beneficiary of KASP. Throughout this process, I considered how reflections throughout data collection and my experiences of the programme have influenced the research findings. This section of the thesis highlights points of interest from these stories, reflects on my own story and presents the outcomes by developing a theory to explain the relationship between governments and students and broadens perspectives of capital; mainly how KASP impacted the students' moral capital and how they mobilised their moral capital through the KASP. These stories extend and elaborate on the themes and the findings in general, so they are more fully developed, particular in terms of mobilising capital forms through KASP (Devine, 2009; Modood, 2004; Shah, et al., 2010). The KASP programme, as demonstrated in this research, is an important component of growing the social capital and economic growth of Saudi Arabia. Although the terms 'social capital' and 'moral capital' were not used explicitly by the interviewees, the underlying themes were demonstrated throughout all the interviews, highlighting an interplay between the two. The narratives of some of my participants uncovered a moral perspective that was surprisingly influential and has the potential to change the current ideas of capital, even as it is defined as a social construct. This included the participants' perspective of 'Integrity', 'Equity and Justice', 'Trust and Loyalty', 'Responsible and Commitment', 'Respect others', 'Recognition, Coexistence and openness to new cultures' and 'Checking the way of thinking'. This chapter has been separated from the analysis, as I felt it made more sense that this part is supplementary to the analysis chapter. Here I explain how the developed theoretical model shed light on the issues they had, especially with regard to issues surrounding moral capital.

### **6.2. Reflection on P3's Story**

**P3** is a scholarship graduate. She is a specialist in clinical nutrition and initially chose to be sent to Malaysia. After a year of the scholarship, she decided to study in Britain instead because of the difficulties she faced in obtaining a residency visa for her family. This caused her a lot of psychological pressure and led to an inability to focus on her studies. In Britain, obtaining a visa is very easy, as it is sufficient to apply for a visa for her and for her family and present the papers that prove that she is on scholarship to obtain a visa for her and her

family for the duration of the study. This participant was speaking with pride and confidence about her scholarship experience. Evidently, she learned a range of skills that changed and developed her personality for the better as she increased her self-confidence by dealing with universities and language centres and managing her life, her family and her time in another country without the aid of her family. It is interesting that she mentioned that when she finished her scholarship and returned to Saudi Arabia, she had many ideas that she wanted to apply. For example, she did not feel that there is a difference between her and any British student, and she did not feel any prejudices, neither religious nor racial. Furthermore, she was impressed that one of her professors at the university was very keen to make sure that every student understood the provided information, giving them extra time after lectures to make sure that the information has been sufficiently understood, especially by the foreign students. Despite the fact that she lived in the Saudi social structure, which generally operates with the moral framework of Sharia, upon reflection on her exposure to a non-Muslim society that had, for her, a surprising level of integrity, she arrived at an understanding of how society could treat people from other backgrounds. Even though Islam emphasises the care and service of others and the courteous treatment of foreigners, local customs play a role in misinterpreting the meaning of foreigners. Hence, mobilising to the other culture helped her to develop a new moral perspective.

From her narrative, although she discovered that *“opportunities exist to develop the country and toward good projects that benefit the country”*, there was a lack of information at the beginning of her project, in regard to funding, as she sometimes *“personally had to go to the office to obtain information needed”*. However, while in the UK, she taught herself how to **integrate** within a new society by *“sharing knowledge to those who ask for it without thinking about gender or religion”*. Then she reflected on this by beginning to *“copy what I have learned, especially with those around me. For example, I try to serve the patients as I am required to do, and explain their conditions to them, ensuring that they understood everything I said. I patiently explained the reasons and the method of treatment and gave them their full time; I learned this from my time in Britain. When I went to the doctor while I was studying, he spent a considerable amount of time explaining the treatment and the sickness in great detail”*. Her sense of loyalty and honesty developed through the *“ethical people”* she integrated with during her time in the UK, who *“inspired”* her to be *“good in many ways”*. Thus, there are significant moral benefits that a country can obtain when students go abroad to learn, such as **self-respect and respect for others, responsibility and commitment, and equality and justice**. KASP also provided an opportunity for P3 to increase her independence and confidence and became *“dependent”* on herself. She *“wanted to communicate the good and the knowledge that I obtained to the largest possible*

segment of people [...] to help them change their thinking about diet." On reflection about her experience, **P3** mentioned that:

*"It was a very enjoyable experience and I was intending to complete the doctoral stage, but it did not take place due to my personal circumstances. I consider Britain a very comfortable country for families, but I have been psychologically affected by my experiences as I dealt with people, gaining a newfound self-respect and appreciation for others. I found respect despite not having a relationship of any kind, whether that be based on culture or religion, but their respect made me review my views; that there is no difference between one person and another and that all are equal. They dealt with us sincerely and tried to give us good education and, as they cooperated with us, I gained from them a desire to benefit people and transform education. What I learned from them is that when they teach you something they make sure that you understand the information in various ways and without any boredom, unlike the situation we have back home. In Britain, they spend as much time with you as possible until you understand the smallest detail of the information they provide."*

She faced many bureaucratic obstacles and many conditions that prevented her from working at a university. She "expected" to return and find work "quickly" and hoped to start work at a university to "teach students what I learned in Britain in terms of education". Moreover, after she had studied for more than three years in both the UK and Malaysia with KASP, she began working in a government hospital where she faced a range of difficulties with her colleagues. These issues related to unethical practices that, after her time abroad, she could no longer tolerate. In one instance, some of her colleagues tried to force her to work with them in such an unacceptable way that she was forced to step down from her position at the hospital:

*"I quit. I began to search again for another government job, but I did not find any. As I mentioned, I felt, like any Saudi youth who thinks there is safety in government work over the private sector, that it should be easy for a person who has overcome difficulties faced during the scholarship period and with a new-gained mentality to find a solution."*

She mentioned she began her own project (health club & nutrition clinics), through which she is able to implement everything she learned abroad. She stated that she uses the same method as her professor at the university, making sure that service users understand all the information provided through her centre. She received government support in the form of a very large amount of money to start her project, and the support was not made public, meaning that this support is not publicised. When asked about the way in which she learned

about this support, she said that it was through her circle of friends and she confirmed that the officials in the funding body are keen to finance projects that contribute to the development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. She obtained a large amount of financial support in very little time and without any interest, having very easy terms.

**On reflection** on her powerful story, I felt other students are likely to face similar challenges. Thus, further investigation in the rest of the transcripts was required to see if there were similar experiences that reveal how social and moral capital are more integrated than indicated by Bourdieu's original framing, which sees them as distinct.

### 6.3. Reflect on P4 story

**P4** is another KASP scholarship graduate. Contrary to **P3**, she was happy to return to her country as she struggled during her time in the UK. She mentioned the benefits she and her family obtained from the scholarship programme. For example, she stated that her *"eldest daughter benefited more when it comes to learning the language. Her thinking now and her self-confidence are different, she feels creative"*. Moreover, she seems to be happy about the *"wonderful way"* that she was treated in the UK, particularly when she gave birth to one of her children. She described these people as *"classy"*, and she felt she was treated the same as the *"the locals"*. She seems surprised with the way she was **treated equally**: *"they are strangers... They used to send messages to me on my mobile, and the midwives used to visit me periodically and ask about me. I felt that I was a human being and that, even though I was homesick, I did not feel it there. The registration procedures were very easy and their treatment very sophisticated. The level of healthcare is excellent, and they even follow-up with us; to the point that they used to remind us of the dates of prenatal tests from time to time"*. This made her think and feel about how foreigners are treated in Saudi Arabia, where there is no effort to treat them well, causing them to feel as though they are strangers. This humane treatment was very influential and important for her. In her opinion, *"they [the people who looked after her] learned the correct way of dealing by having good morals from their upbringing and from their schools and education."* Perhaps, her time in the UK increased the **respect for herself and people**, regardless of differences in race and ethnicity: *"We were not treated differently during our stay there."*

This confirms one of the findings of this research, as she does not equate the standards of healthcare and humane treatment she received, which are the two things that impacted her the most, are down to religion. In her opinion, the reason for this is the existence of high morals and the style of education provided in these societies. **Another benefit of KASP** that P4 mentioned was that she noticed changes in her personality brought about by the changes in perceptions of **gender equality**, as she *"became a little more open with respect*

*to male colleagues; we discuss both study and general topics*". She used to think that thought that *"men look badly at women who talk with them, according to the customs of our Saudi society"*. On reflection, as I noticed that she is a shy person, this is likely to be an important change in her attitude and personality in that it constitutes an increase in her self-confidence and belief in herself, which is perhaps an aim of the KASP.

This perhaps also indicates a **change in the way she thinks**, as *"the scholarship programme opened the minds of young people and their families for the better. The young people did not regard any culture as more superior to the other"*. She thus sees that it made her and other students think in ways they are not used to, which she asserts is a positive outcome of KASP. This may indicate that the main goal of the scholarship program to help Saudi society to become more open *"to other nations and other cultures"* is fulfilled in practice.

Despite these benefits, P4 mentioned that KASP was a difficult experience. Although her husband was the one who encouraged her and was the one who did the work to obtain the scholarship (which is not usual in Saudi culture), she described her experience in the UK as *"shock"*, and felt it came about by *"mere chance"*. Perhaps because her responsibility has increased, P4 stated that her life has changed a lot and that she has *"assumed her responsibilities - her family and her studies"*. However, when she was in Saudi Arabia she was used to receiving supported from her family and, thus, *"responsibility"* was the most difficult challenge she faced. Moreover, sadly, she went through a difficult time with *"psychological pressures"* which clearly affected her during the scholarship period, as a result of the considerable responsibilities to her children, issues with nurseries, and difficulties of finding suitable places to care for children under the age of four. Ultimately, she learnt the true meaning of **responsibility and the commitment** to achieve what was started, after she travelled to England for her studies. On reflection of her story, I think the hard times she faced taught her to become independent and more responsible about her tasks.

Another challenge that was apparent from her story was *"learning the language"*; she described her experience of this process as *"feeling lost"*. She mentioned that she *"made a wrong move, as after I studied six months at the Language Centre, which was offering a general English course, but did not include academic English. I moved to the English Language Centre at the university from which I obtained acceptance to facilitate my enrolment in the Master's degree program"*. For her, in the beginning, this was difficult because it was an academic program and she felt unready to understand the subjects and assignments. However, as time progressed, she *"enjoyed"* studying the English language

at a language centre outside the University, as she received great appreciation from her teachers and was praised for the improvement in her language, which made her feel "happy". Perhaps, this is because this was not a pressured environment, as starting her Master's degree was not conditional upon it. As she reflected on this point, she mentioned that perhaps, in order to avoid confusion between language institutes and language centres at universities, she would have studied English language in Saudi Arabia before obtaining the scholarship:

*"I think that it is better to prepare the student before going to the country of scholarship... so that they would not be shocked and lost when it comes to the English language. It would be better to prepare the students before traveling and if there was a preparation for a language study mechanism, for example, starting with a general language centre and after a certain period of time, the student moves to the university language centre, that would be better".* Nowadays, this is what was applied in the last stages of the scholarship program.

Furthermore, she observed that her advice for every scholarship student "*in the host country*" to conduct all their affairs by themselves, because, in this way, they will "*strengthen their language*" and other life-skills and acquire a lot of experience that would develop their personalities and increase their self-confidence. I feel this is a very good idea. She said that she missed many opportunities because of her dependence on her husband, unlike her sister, who was totally dependent on herself, which led to a change in her personality for the better and an increase in her self-confidence.

It was surprising that she was "happy" that her scholarship was coming to an end due to her luxurious life in Saudi Arabia, unlike the majority of scholarship students who seek to extend the scholarship period. She was referring here to family aid and indications that during her stay in Saudi Arabia, she did not feel fully "**responsible**" for this aid.

**In reflecting** on her narrative, I felt that both her moral as well as social beliefs changed toward the "**new her**" in Saudi society. This is further evidence of how social and moral capital are more integrated than Bourdieu's original enframement.

#### **6.4. Reflection on the researcher's experiences within the KASP**

Although Section 1.2 stated my position as a female scholarship student studying overseas, where I explained why and how I was interested in this research, and why I wrote about 'in the power of woman', my position as a female scholarship researcher seems to directly relate to my study. Therefore, I understand and am aware of the roles and responsibilities that surrounds being an overseas student. However, I lack any personal understanding of



what it is like to return to my home country and not be able to find a job, have difficulty with my own family or society, and how many other students at the scholar programme would experience their life differently. I wanted to understand more about the challenges they faced and how they and the government resolved them, how their relationship with families and/or society changed over time and how they would describe their experiences. Moreover, the academic study that I undertook as part of my MA degree encouraged me to investigate what happens to me to find answers to my questions. The preliminary literature review chapter, Chapter 3, showed that studies conducted within Middle East countries are very limited. In this part, I decided to reflect on my own experiences within the KASP and the data collection process. All this contributed to the development by my own personal experiences, as well as professional and academic research interests.

I believe that studying abroad is about more than simply obtaining a degree qualification. It was like a dream for me, as I knew it would be beneficial on so many levels. I was attracted to the idea that living abroad and studying overseas in a new place meeting new people would be fascinating, even though I knew at the time it would entail many difficulties. In 2005, I decided to apply for the second year of KASP, after reviewing the terms and conditions as well as the list of countries that the Ministry of Education had chosen for its sponsored students. At first, I chose Malaysia to be my place of study. After an eight-month process, I was accepted into KASP. However, after spending a couple of months in Malaysia, I faced challenges in getting a visa for my brother and my daughter. Therefore, I decided to send a request to the Ministry of Education to change my place of study to the UK. Unlike in Malaysia where one can obtain a maximum of three visas for the family, getting the visas for my brother and my daughter was straightforward and without any complications in the UK. Thus, I immediately contacted and communicated with the Saudi community in the UK, who have a support network for Saudis coming to the UK for work and/or study; they helped me to arrange everything before my arrival in the UK.

Interestingly, my criteria for my choices for where to live in the UK was based on where there was a good university, a good Arabic school, and a good Arabic-speaking community. I was worried about the culture and how people would accept me in the UK. However, since I came to the UK with the KASP programme in 2007, I feel indebted to myself and to my country, as they allowed me the opportunity to study abroad. I benefited greatly from this programme, as doing my English course, MA in Information Management, and a PhD in the UK had a profound impact on my personality. It has made me more open, especially in interacting with people who are very different from me. For example, before coming to the UK, I presumed that British people would be less open to people of other nations. However,

and based on my experience, I can say this is not true; I have made the best of friendships with the locals from Leeds. What I see is an amazing nation of people who are open to others, whether I am in the market, at university, at the language centres, or at the banks and bookstores. I have discovered that I am supposed to see the world with my own eyes and to continue to do so, enjoying every step of this journey. It helped me to change my ways of thinking, which was previously based on a “our way or the highway” mentality. The subtle differences in me and my thinking started after my MA, however, it developed and grew throughout the PhD process. The KASP also benefited me in improving my ability to manage responsibility and the commitment and allowed me to discover the importance of developing skills like time management, dealing with bureaucracy and paperwork, patience, self-reliance, finding the right source of information – to find the right information, childcare, home management (including house repairs), budgeting, as well as visa applications, etc. In Saudi Arabia, I would have relied on the support of my family in doing many of these things. As a result, I was able to learn and explore things I would not have even been able to know. Therefore, I felt I must give something back to my country and my country-people. I am proud of myself, and this encourages me to take more and more care of myself, and care more about myself.

Although I began to feel more tolerant of other cultures as a result engaging with people from all over the city of Leeds, this change was happening to me from within the relatively small circle around me, which was mainly comprise of my classmates and friends from university, and the Saudi friends I met in Leeds. Communication with the locals of Leeds was missing and circumstances were not ideal, as I was primarily focusing on my studies and on my relationships with my family and my Saudi friends. On reflection, I think the language centre could have provided more connection to UK students through events and activities, to provide opportunities for us to engage with each other and get to know each other. There was also not enough information on where else we could go to practice our English for free. Added to this is that students’ schedule is notoriously busy with classes, assessments, etc. Thus, language and time were two big challenges during this period, as well as knowing where to go to gain opportunities to improve this.

Once I finished my MA, I returned to Saudi Arabia as I was not able to extend our scholarship any further. I tried to find a job for two years, however, I mostly faced rejection in both the public and private sectors as I was either over-qualified or did not have enough experience for the job. Interestingly, when I applied at the university, I was rejected as my MA subject of Information Management was not seen as relevant to my BA studies in Mathematics & Science. Although, I tried to convince those at universities of the importance

of hiring young Saudi men and women who are qualified, unfortunately, I could not change or influence this situation. After two years of being rejected, a friend of mine told me about the opening at a new hospital in my hometown, and that they are recruiting Saudis. I submitted my application, was interviewed, and got a job that did not require more than a diploma. I accepted the role in the hope that my situation would improve by moving up the ladder from the administrative job at the hospital. Unfortunately, that was not the case, as the atmosphere in the hospital was built on a web of networks that looked after each other when it came to promotion. It was not about who was qualified or not, but rather, who you know; in other words, nepotism. Having said all that, and although I was not too happy with the situation, the salary was good. However, it came to a point where I felt I cannot develop my skills and personality in this job. At that time, I realised I needed to leave my job and continue my higher education by getting a Ph.D.

Since I started my Ph.D. in 2015, I tried to make the most of it by getting to know different people from diverse backgrounds in the UK. I started my Ph.D. and was enthusiastic about knowing people, so I started attending an 'English Conversation Club' in Leeds, called the Leeds Conversation Project. On reflection, I started to make new friends and learn new things and I started to become familiar with different cultures and traditions. What impressed me the most is the participation of the British people from different classes in society in such voluntary works, which ranged from teachers, professors, to doctors, including both younger and older people. Since then, I started to discover new adventures through volunteering and participating more in the language clubs. For example, I helped organise and support a project for a language club at the Grand Mosque in Leeds, for a women's only group. These experiences were enriching indeed. My personality has changed and developed completely, especially in terms of my self-confidence.

On a personal level, have gone through many experiences which impacted and shaped many of my beliefs and ideas; which of course was reflected in my relationship with me and those around me; my husband, children, family, and society as a whole. It led to many challenges in the beginning, however, everyone accepted and respected the person I chose to be. For example, when I returned to Saudi after my MA, I decided to not wear the hijab, which is generally seen as unacceptable in Saudi culture. My mother was not happy with my choice, but I felt I should defend my position. My own interpretation of the word "hijab" is to dress modestly, regardless of where you are.

Other experiences include my engagement with 'PATH', and 'Connecting Opportunity' in Leeds where I felt that I was treated equally. These are two charities that help people connect to each other and connects individuals with a range of development opportunities.

Through them, I have done such things as present reports to managers, organise and help with Christmas celebrations, and engaged in a befriending project with LASN access training. I was even given a key worker who maintained contact with me to ask how I am and direct me to places where I can get information.

Another experience that has changed me was the culture shock of meeting and connecting with people from other places in the world. I learnt the true meaning of respect for myself and others, and accepting people in relationships that are across race, religion, and/or culture. This might seem shocking, but in Saudi in the 1990s people judged you negatively if you had a satellite dish on your roof to receive satellite TV; now this has changed. The education system based on a sectarian religious teaching in Saudi Arabia makes this type of negative judgment a normal part of the society. Religious education is taught and learned by rote and is, sadly, not made applicable to life. These negative judgments are also learned rote and I believe they are not applicable to the modern world. Neither student nor citizen was allowed to ask the question 'why?' I am glad to say that things in Saudi have changed and that I have also changed. My personality has changed dramatically, as I have come to know the importance of coexistence with other cultures, being able to be objective in looking at things, regardless of culture, religion, or race. When I was studying for my MA, I was greatly affected by my supervisor who taught me that being different is not necessarily a bad thing. He also showed me how to be frank, straightforward, honest with myself, and with others as well. His ethics, manners, morals, and his fairness with his students are paramount. He taught me how to be a good student and researcher, which made me look at him as a great example to follow in academia.

On reflection, I think my way of thinking and outlook has changed so much that I now feel like a stranger in my own country, because I no-longer resonate with the prevalent norms of society. I cannot blame them because living abroad changes you as a person, which can become very apparent when discussing particular issues. Some of them feel that we are not the same, others look at me with pride and joy, and others look at me as someone who comes from a different world. Also, I feel that what is not accepted today will become acceptable tomorrow, because human societies continually change. I believe we have to experience life ourselves and ask where my mind and my choice in life is. I have noticed that this attitude is also linked to people's behaviour, i.e. behaviour that is a reaction to an attitude (often derived from a social norm). However, I experienced in my time abroad that, once the pressure to conform is gone, attitudes and behaviours change. I have overcome the need to impose my judgement on others and have learned to accepting reality as it is. I

feel free to make a judgement, but I will no longer expect someone to conform or react to my or society's expectations and/or judgement.

Moreover, I believe that one of the most important benefits of KASP is that it has given Saudi students the chance to introduce themselves correctly to other people from different nations and cultures, particularly, where misrepresentations of us as a people have been made. People either believe that Saudis are either better or worse than I believe we actually are. For example, we are not all rich, do not all wear expensive clothing and accessories, do not all have cars, do not all believe that we have the right to eternal salvation and do not all attend nightclubs. Even when some do have some of these traits, we are not that different to other students in the UK. Personally, when I have heard these kinds of stereotypes and judgments, I encourage people to go to Saudi and go see for themselves and engage with Saudis in order to overcome their prejudices.

Along with this misrepresentation of Saudi people come misunderstandings of Saudi Arabia. Like any country in the world, Saudi Arabia is a diverse and complex country. For example, Medina, a major city in Saudi, is seen as being a relaxed city to live in. People who live there often reflect this in their character, always making time for others, smiling often and always being ready to welcome and help outsiders. However, there are also many people who cannot be trusted, having what a 'silver tongue'. Conversely, in my hometown of Makkah, which is a very busy city, especially during the Hajj, the people tend to be very short and direct. There are no hypocrites in this city, if you are not liked you will be told. These observations constitute, of course, a very sweeping generalisation, but the point is that this is similar to life in other countries too. For example, Life in Leeds is much slower-paced, and the people are different than the life and people in London, and the climate is noticeably different.

The reason for reflecting on my own experience in this way and drawing attention to all of this is because the Saudi people need to become more aware of how they too are perceived, as well as how they perceive others. And this applies to Saudi's both at home, when receiving foreign businesspeople, tourists or pilgrims, and abroad, when studying, doing business or visiting as tourists. I have often witnessed how pilgrims who may have spent their life savings to make their once in a lifetime pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina to complete the Hajj or Umrah, leaving behind their lives and families, are received and spoken to by the airport staff. As mentioned in the analysis chapter, one of my research participants stressed the importance of how 'we' as Saudi's treat foreigners visiting or living and working in Saudi Arabia, which led my thoughts about Saudi students traveling and living abroad for their academic studies as part of the KASP.

Therefore, this research points to the fact that it is essential for Saudi students abroad to give a good impression of both Saudi people and of Saudi Arabia, by striving to engage with the local people of their host country. My own experiences and the way in which I have been received in the UK, and how I have been able to meet and connect with local people whilst developing myself and my experiences, reinforces my belief that this should also be returned by us as Saudis to foreigners visiting Saudi Arabia. This should be so that people coming to Saudi are welcomed and feel safe and so that they can have positive experiences of our culture. Yet, this needs Saudi to change culturally and become more open and welcoming as a country; as a society and as individual people.

On reflection, ultimately, if Saudi Arabia wants foreigners to invest in the Kingdom, then it needs to learn such lessons from its KASP graduates, who were sent to develop the country's knowledge economy by applying their skills and knowledge, building and using their networks and attracting investment from abroad. Therefore, language skills are essential for students to return with, not just at a professional level, but at a personal level too, backed up with experience of engaging with locals abroad, and being enriched in their own character development because of their experiences. This makes maintaining those networks easier, and investment from abroad more likely, as Saudi Arabia, as well as the Saudi people, will be seen in a better light.

## **6.5. Developing 'Moral capital theory'**

The powerful narratives above illustrate the most unexpected finding in this research; that social and moral capital are far more integrated than in Bourdieu's original framing. Moral and social capital are mobilised through KASP. Moral capital in this study is revealed as being at the core of social capital, which is defined as "*a capacity to consider one's and other people's actions in moral terms as well as the changes to one's view of morality, or any influences therein*". The narratives above, along with the other participants' stories, several aspects of social capital have been drawn from the data to include 'Integrity', 'Equity and Justice', 'Trust and Loyalty', 'Responsible and Commitment', 'Respect others', 'Recognition, coexistence and openness to new cultures' and 'Checking the way of thinking', as mentioned in the previous Chapter. These findings expose the dynamic character of "capital" as it is defined by the new moral dimension. Such a social phenomenon cannot be analysed without taking into consideration the structural components that influence it. This has only become apparent by reviewing the micro- and macro-levels in connection with one another.

Warsh (2007) expanded Adam Smith's question about "what causes some countries to be wealthier than others?" One answers, in the case of these findings, related to having a better

cultural and psychological understanding of how different nations define morality, begetting international networking and increasing the relationship between them. The findings of this moral capital dimension, which indicate that some forms of capital have an ethical and moral perspective, were unexpected, but corroborate the theories presented by Smith, such that the economic growth of any nation, Saudi Arabia included, has a moral aspect to it which politicians, educators, and citizens must take into consideration for growth.

However, in order to shift from a resource-based economy to one that is knowledge-based, most countries invest in human and social capital that is flexible, well-trained, and equipped in terms of technology, cultural and scientific understanding (Modood, 2004). Therefore, they consider education and knowledge as new social, political, and economic resources from which the country can benefit. Bourdieu defined social capital as “the sum of resources – be it actual or virtual – that accrue to a group or an individual merely by virtue of possessing a network, which is durable of institutionalized relationships of acquaintance and recognition which is mutual” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.119). Thus, social capital that can increase by relationships with people can be ‘inherited’ or conferred on a person through their family, or through the school they attend, or their social, ethnic, cultural group (structure), or even sub-culture, alumni networks, or caste/tribe system affiliation.

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership of a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a “credential” which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word (Bourdieu, 1986, p.21). Therefore, in relation to the topic at hand, university education also increases social capital in a number of ways. For example, this may be through building networks of people on a course of study, or through student societies and clubs, or even after leaving university through alumni networks. According to Bourdieu, as explained in *The Forms of Capital* (1986), capital is the currency that is capable of buying one a higher position in society and is what decides one's role within it (Shah, et al., 2010). In short, capital determines one's social well-being and status. Here, Bourdieu is expanding on Marx's idea that capital is what gives one control of the means of production and acquisition of wealth (Marx, 1865), but unlike Marx and Smith, Bourdieu conceptualises capital as going far beyond tangible and exchangeable commodities. He developed this aspect of capital as a social/cultural force and not simply as an economic one. For Bourdieu, therefore, the three forms of capital are economic, cultural and social. Moreover, the three types can transform into one another,

sometimes in a cyclical way in which the result is a net increase in capital when labour and time (sometimes called labour-time by Bourdieu) is injected into the process.

Capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: *economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights; *cultural capital*, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications; and *social capital*, made up of social connections, which are convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and maybe institutionalised in the form of a title of nobility (Bourdieu, 1986; Shah, et al., 2010). Moreover, there are three types of cultural capital: *embodied*, *objectified*, and *institutionalised* capital. Perhaps most pertinent to the current discussion, *embodied cultural capital* is intrinsic to the individual. It consists of skills that one has acquired through experience or schooling, but also one's presentation of oneself to society – one's accent, cultural tastes, vocabulary, even demeanour (Modood, 2004). Thus, certain behaviours, appearances, and ways of expressing oneself are associated with wealth and power, and having these will accelerate acceptance into higher social groups in terms of wealth acquisition, asset outlook, and individual social interactions. Embodied cultural capital may give one more influence and may even lead to an increase in the other forms as well (Modood, 2004).

Giddens's Structuration Theory (1974) lends itself well to analysing information management through this perspective. He introduced "duality of structure", which is part of his broader "theory of structuration". He postulates that two broad directions of social science study – macro-level studies and micro-level studies – can be reconciled through structuration theory. Macro-level studies provide explanations of social phenomena based solely on structural forces. These forces can either empower or limit the individual. Micro-level studies, on the other hand, emphasise the role of the individual. Where the macro-level disregards the agency and influence of the individual, micro-level studies disregard external factors and the influences of broader phenomena. In combination, by balancing both the role of individual agency and structure, the so-called 'duality of structure' emerges. This duality posits that agency and structure are in constant interchange with one another and continuously influence each other, thus, neither is the determining factor of a phenomenon; rather, both in combination create or construct a phenomenon. Therefore, the individual's own role and agency are paramount, and together they form a 'duality of structure'. Importantly, neither is the defining power, but both are in constant interplay, continuously influencing one another, something viewed, as aforementioned, in the social aspect of the findings – specifically the moral component – which could have consequences



for Saudi Arabia as it continues to send students abroad who develop new ideas of self, right and wrong.

Giddens's (1974) framework lends itself well to being applied to the micro-macro analysis of scholarships. Three core themes that underpin an information structure regarding scholarships have been identified: government, opportunity, and social capital. These three themes concern both the individual agent as well as the structure. They also stand in the same interrelation to one-another as the micro- and macro-level, and also agency and structure. Thus, it can be posited that an individual's social capital influences the structural components available to their opportunity (scholarship programmes), which in turn influences the government structure underpinning this. In light of the changes to thought processes and moral aspects, this means that one can posit that an individual's skills acquired (social capital) through the scholarship programme and the education received outside of Saudi Arabia are directly influencing the structural components of capital and, by extension, the very definition of what social capital is for a country. However, the changes in knowledge and the moral dilemmas facing scholarship winners provides them with the opportunity to alter their perception of right and wrong and put it into the context of groups and nationalities beyond those they grew up with.

In summary, social and moral capital are greatly integrated in practice, as social capital can be viewed as much more than the education of the people of the country, as it can also include their moral development. The findings of the present study show that Saudi students who went abroad to partake in study programmes as part of the KASP began to appreciate the importance of integrity and equality in society, as well as learning what justice is and how it should be upheld in a country. Moreover, loyalty and trust are other factors that were discussed by the participants as being valuable moral skills that were developed while studying abroad. In practice, and along with the aims of the KASP, it is expected that most of my participants share similar experiences and/or feelings about it which have contributed to them improving their linguistic, technical, and networking skills. Thereafter, they return to their home country and are often faced with unexpected issues of social justice, inequality, and morality. For example, some of the moral issues related to gender were raised by the participants. It seems likely that, for someone born and raised within Saudi Arabia and who has never set foot outside of it, these differences in gender may not seem as odd as they would to someone born in the UK, with individuals accepting a local or national definition of what is right or wrong. However, for someone who returns to the country after participating in the KASP and gaining new insights about what was considered morally right or wrong based on another cultural understanding or belief, their perspective is radically different.

This perhaps created a moral discrepancy for the interviewees who experienced this change in moral capital, as they no longer weighed things as right or wrong within the context of their upbringing but instead were forced to try and define what was right or wrong based on various contexts and what might better propel their country's economy and society forward.

The example of Saudi Arabia sufficiently illustrates the general concept. Saudi Arabia's dependence on oil is an example of the dependence on Smith's fixed and circulating capital as a source of economic growth. In this context, fixed capital consists of the machinery for extracting oil and the ownership of properties from which oil is extracted. It is important to note that oil is just a raw material whose value depends on market demand and supply. The vulnerability in this system of relying on tangible products and forms of capital for wealth and growth is the knowledge that the supply is not inexhaustible. This vulnerability may be alleviated if the fixed and circulating capital in question was diversified – if there were many natural resources and manufactured products on which the economy depends. However, dependence on a single, relatively raw product makes one extremely vulnerable. Wealth production exists only for so long as (a) that product is available and (b) there is a market for it. Moreover, wealth thus produced tends not to be distributed equitably throughout a society as the means of production are and can possibly (for capitalism's survival – as it presently operates) be owned only by a few. Further to which, the desire for wealth accumulation, rather than the distribution and circulation of wealth across the nation (Smith's original moral ideal for the economy of nations), has become the primary reason and enduring quest of many living and/or surviving under capitalist economic systems.

## **6.6. Summary**

This chapter demonstrated how reflections throughout data collection and experience in the scholarship have influenced the findings. It highlighted the main points understood, reflects on my own story then and reports its outcome by developing a broad perspective of moral capital mainly how KASP impacted the student's moral capital and mobilising moral capitals through KASP. These stories extend and elaborate on the themes and study findings. This has allowed them to become more fully developed, particular in terms of mobilising capital forms through the KASP. The narratives of some of my participants uncovered a moral perspective that was surprisingly influential and has the potential to change the current idea of capital, even as it is defined by a social construct. From the powerful narratives above, the most unexpected finding in this research is that the social and moral aspects are more integrated than Bourdieu's original framing. The next chapter will discuss all these findings in detail and Section 7.6. will present a model interplay between themes raised by

interviewees (Opportunity, Government and Social Capital) about KASP and possibilities for a broader analysis.

## **Chapter 7: Discussion**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to determine what the research findings mean in relation to existing literature. It shows and evaluates the findings of the research while adding personal insight and interpretation and finally making connections between the findings and its implications, how the findings inform the literature, and how it adds new knowledge to the field.

The chapter first provides a summary of the results, restating the research questions and their significance. It moves on to a discussion of the results centring on the interpretation of the findings in light of the original research objectives and subsequently contemplates the theoretical and practical implications. The chapter then explores how the results relate to the wider community of scholars and the connections and relationships that exist both academically and practically.

### **7.2 Summary of Results**

This research aimed to examine how Saudi Arabia can transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based society by developing human and social capital, through exploring the role of scholarship programmes over the years within the country. It included the importance of developing the human and social capital within a network society for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the importance of how resource-based societies have been transitioning into knowledge-based societies by developing human and social capital in countries such as the UK and the US.

The results explored the role of scholarship programmes through interviewing some of the students who graduated from the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) as well as some of the programme's current and previous administrators. The way in which the students benefit from the KASP, as discussed in this chapter, in identifying, informing and determining the challenges, and the skills needed, during and after the programme, and how it has had an impact on human and social capital were evident.

Thematic Analysis (TA) was adopted as an approach to analyse the conducted interviews, guided by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis process involved a process of structuring initial codes from the transcript and selecting the relevant codes. The transcripts were read repeatedly, and the researcher used the data offered by the participants to present their experiences thematically. The main themes were identified as Government, Opportunity, and Social Capital, which are further analysed in Chapter 9.

### 7.3 Discussion of the Results

The research findings, particularly the main ‘themes’ that developed into a model (see Section 9.2), have contributed to a number of areas that have been identified as important. These include several lessons for KASP, social (moral) capital, and the applicability of the greater Saudi Arabian context, as discussed below.

#### 7.3.1 KASP

The former Deputy Minister of Scholarship Affairs noted that “*the selection process of the KASP provided an educational opportunity for its citizens, men as well as women*”. However, he added that, although the Saudi females’ participation in KASP encourages them to work more diligently, they struggle to find job opportunities when they return home. This would perhaps demonstrate the need for increased social capital to be invested through the scholarship programme for Saudi citizens to create increased local opportunities on the ground. This current supply and demand example necessitates increased economic opportunity within the country, a potential next step in improving the economic status of the nation.

The KASP was shown in these findings to be successful in offering the chances for everyone to apply, but again, revealed a gap whereby the government needs to assess the needs of the labour market. The labour market is not a static phenomenon and sending someone abroad to study may take four years, by which time the conditions of the labour market may have changed substantially (see below). Once they became part of the programme, the findings indicate that students had issues at times with language barriers. This is something the government is currently in the process of rectifying by taking measures for students to do their English language course such as IELTS and TOEFL in Saudi Arabia rather than going abroad to learn the foundations of the English language. The government is performing a feasibility study to introduce an 18-month course for students to master the English language before they sit the IELTS or TOEFL exams in Saudi Arabia. This may, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, prove a useful act for those who are preparing to go abroad once the programme resumes, as it gives them something they can do under a range of quarantine conditions.

The programme, while incredibly useful, begets problems for the students coming home who are unable to find appropriate jobs. The government planned a job fair in Riyadh where students and employers can meet, however, with the current pandemic, there may be limitations to this opportunity, something the government will need to contend with in order to meet the need for additional jobs. Currently the programme is doing well insofar as the government has helped students to gain the skills needed to finish their degrees and provide

opportunities to obtain skills such as time management, problem-solving and responsibility. Findings corroborated the success of Saudi Arabia in offering a significant opportunity through the Ministry of Education for students who want to continue their study abroad, going so far as to offer monthly salaries, reasonable medical insurance coverage, generous family allowance, tuition fees and the provision of financial support to get extra or additional tutoring to assist the students to achieve high grades. A highlighted problem is communication, specifically students being able to communicate with the respective KASP offices once they are involved in the programme. Communication with the Saudi Culture Bureau has proven difficult, costing money, time, and effort because students were required to travel to London to carry out the transactions. While new technology has made it easier to use online resources for communication – although the Covid-19 pandemic will further hinder the programme – nonetheless, the manner in which students are interacting and how travel is handled will remain critical for those who participate. This, again, will be addressed in more detail later in this chapter.

### **7.3.2 Moral Capital**

Of the emergent themes, the most unexpected finding from the analysis was the new moral aspect. As mentioned in Chapter 7, Adam Smith initiated the search into what caused some countries to be wealthier than others. Later Warsh (2007) argued that access to better technology and productivity helps economies develop. However, while these were sentiments echoed in the thematic analysis, a better cultural and psychological understanding of morality among various nations was a sub theme responsible for improved international networking and relationship increases.

Smith was first and foremost a moral philosopher, so what is now regarded as his economic writings were always meant to be read from a moral or ethical perspective; he entrenched notions of economics in his respective morality. The moral capital dimension of the findings of the KASP research revealed that capital has an ethical and moral perspective which, while unexpected, corroborated the theories presented by Smith. The findings indicate that it is not merely the technical skills or academic achievements of an individual or society at large that influence the wealth of that nation, but more importantly, the subsequent exposure to different beliefs and a widening of morality from that exposure. In accordance with these findings, one can conclude that the economic growth of any nation, Saudi Arabia included, has a moral aspect to it which politicians, educators, and citizens must take into consideration for growth.

These sentiments from Smith were echoed by Giddens's structuration theory (1974) which uses the 'duality of structure', part of his broader 'theory of structuration' which explains by

balancing both the role of individual agency and structure how the so-called 'duality of structure' came to be coined. This duality posits that agency and structure are in constant interchange and continuously influence each other. Thus, neither is the determining factor of a phenomenon. Rather, both in combination create or construct a phenomenon. Giddens's (1974) framework lends itself to being applied to the micro-macro analysis of scholarships. Three core themes that underpin an information structure regarding scholarships have been identified: Government, Opportunity, and Social Capital. These three themes concern both the individual agent as well as the structure. They also stand in the same interrelation to each another at the micro- and macro-level, as do agency and structure. It can be posited that an individual's social capital influences the structural components available to them – opportunity (scholarship programmes) – which in turn influences the governmental structure underpinning it. Taken in light of the changes to thought processes and the moral aspects, this means that one can posit that an individual's skills acquired (social capital) through the scholarship programme and the education received outside of Saudi Arabia directly influence the structural components of capital and, by extension, the very definition of what social capital really is for a country. That said, the change in knowledge, the moral dilemma brought about by learning moral right and wrong from the perspective of others while overseas, now offers scholarship winners the opportunity to alter their perception of right or wrong and put it into the context of different groups and nationalities. There is a critical and important interaction between individuals developing skills and enhancing their forms of capital, and the ways in which economies develop – Giddens's duality of structure.

Therefore, social capital involves not just the education of the people of a country, but also their moral development. From the findings, it was identified that the Saudi Arabian students who went abroad to study understood the importance of integrity and to maintain equality in society, as described in Chapter 9. These same students learned what justice is and how they should uphold it in a country. As part of this, they understood that different ideas of justice manifest in different cultures/countries. They acquired loyalty and trust as valuable moral skills while studying abroad. Moreover, many participants also confirmed that they learnt to be responsible as well as have the commitment to complete what they started while they studied and lived abroad. The Administrator from the Saudi Culture Bureau in London stated that the study programme not only focuses on pedagogical knowledge but also develops the mentality of recognition, coexistence, and openness to new culture.

Although the researcher herself experienced a number of issues with KASP, which she therefore expected to discover in the research process, there were also other elements that were unexpected and worthy of further investigation. For example, it was expected that the

interviewees would share similar feelings about, for example, receiving a scholarship to attend a prestigious university abroad, improving their technical, linguistic, and network skills, and then returning to Saudi Arabia where they would face issues of social injustice, inequality, and different moralities. However, it was unexpected to identify issues like differences in gender for those born and raised within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia who at first did not see this as odd but then moved to a new country where they were offered new insights as to what was considered morally right or wrong based on another cultural understanding or belief.

This created a moral discrepancy for the interviewees who then found themselves in a moral dilemma upon returning to Saudi Arabia whereby the views they believed to be morally right and wrong were challenged by their exposure to new ideas of right and wrong for citizens in other countries, as discussed in Chapter 9. The interviewees who experienced this change in moral capital no longer weighed things as right or wrong within the context of their upbringing but instead had to try and define what was right or wrong based on various contexts and what might better propel their economy and society forward.

### **7.3.3 The Saudi Context**

Saudi Arabia's economy has long been reliant on a natural resource: oil. Recognising that this resource, while lucrative, is finite, the Kingdom has taken important steps to prepare for the future by transitioning to a knowledge-based rather than a resource-based economy. This is being done at least in part through the KASP, and while the scholarship programme has been successful according to several measures, it is yet to be determined whether it is succeeding in what has become its ultimate goal: transitioning the country to a knowledge-based economy. This research indicates that this is a far more complex and fraught process than first thought and is based on qualitative interviews with 10 recipients of KASP as well as several scholarly frameworks, most notably Pierre Bourdieu's theories regarding the various forms of intangible capital, and Anthony Giddens's structuration theory. The latter, in particular, allows us to understand the interplay between individuals and the social/structural frameworks within which they find themselves.

Recognising that there may be discrepancies between the normative values that KASP espouses and the actual experiences that individuals' qualitative interviews were conducted with recipients. Analysing the actual experiences of these recipients is important to the evaluation of KASP with regard to its potential to meet both personal and national goals. It should be noted that although participants were recruited using the snowballing effect, they were selected with consideration for diversity, so students of various genders, backgrounds,



and host countries were interviewed. In analysing the interviews, three themes were identified among participants: social capital, Opportunity, and Government.

#### *7.3.3.1 Social Capital*

Participants in KASP generally spoke highly of their experiences studying abroad, particularly regarding the skills they were able to acquire. From an educational standpoint, the experience of studying abroad was seen as rewarding and successful, though the work was regarded as challenging. Participants also spoke highly of the treatment they received during the course of their studies, how they were accepted by other students and treated similarly. This social aspect and the characteristic of acceptance is recognised as a prerequisite to learning. Participants did not mention any social barriers to their acquisition of skills.

#### *7.3.3.2 Opportunity*

Participants also identified the fact that they were exposed to new technologies and possibilities in the realm of technology, which they may not have encountered at home. Whether or not their studies were in a technical field, participants made use of technology and the social and knowledge networks arising from it as part of both their education and their daily lives while studying abroad.

#### *7.3.3.3 Government*

Positive comments were also identified regarding the management of the programme in relation to the Saudi Embassy and Culture Bureau. These played a vital role in facilitating students' studies abroad. The recurring theme here was the support given by these institutions regarding healthcare, financial aid, academic support and immigration help. These institutions in many cases made study abroad possible for the students, and also facilitated their return home in the case of a family emergency or other unexpected circumstance.

Students were asked to comment primarily on their experiences while studying abroad and what they had gained from the experience. It is worth noting that many made reference to the acceptance that they felt during the course of their educational experience. For example:

*The way I was treated was wonderful and I have not been treated like that before.  
There was no difference between us and the British and we were treated equally.  
(Participant 4)*

*I have learned how to deal with the opposite sex no matter if they are strangers or  
someone you know, learned how to deal according to their positions for example*

*like doctors or professors and how to benefit from their experience and knowledge.*  
(Participant 1)

The crucial question remains regarding how well the students will be able to utilize the skills they gained and maintain the advantages they garnered through KASP after returning home to Saudi Arabia, as most students do. According to their interview responses, independence is also a major factor contributing to their decision to study abroad and to their experience. Leaving home to study abroad in a foreign culture requires a sense of independence and fosters self-discovery. To capitalize on these qualities, opportunities must exist for the students upon their return home. For example, these students, regardless of gender, may wish to work in a technology field, perhaps starting their own business to further their ideas. If successful, such ventures would go towards promoting the desired transformation to a knowledge-based economy. In the absence of opportunities and support for innovation, however, the advantages gained through study abroad may go unrealized. Cultural changes are also necessary to allow Saudi Arabia to capitalize on the resources brought home by KASP scholars.

As noted above, much of the speculation regarding the ability of KASP scholars to fulfil their potential and desires upon returning home amounts to an interplay between the individual and society. It is easy to frame this interplay in terms of opposition, or potential opposition – the society may or may not be hospitable to the contributions and desires of the individual. This is where the work of Giddens becomes both relevant and helpful in allowing us to reframe the issue in a less oppositional configuration.

Giddens, one of the most influential social theorists alive today, states that there is in fact no opposition between the individual and society, as is often presented. For Giddens, the self is a "*reflexive project*", co-created by the ambient society and oneself. In other words, in a modern society (which, for Giddens, is one in which we are unhindered by time, space and tradition) we are free to create our identities, as informed by the society around us, which we in turn also have a hand in informing and creating.

This view of the self is coherent with Giddens' structuration theory. In this theory, Giddens rejects the opposition that is often posited as existing between the individual and the structures of society. Rather, the individual and society create one another, something echoed by the moral findings explained in Chapter 9 where students had their ideas of self, of moral right and wrong challenged and shaped by transitioning to a new society (temporarily, through the study abroad programme). Social action and change depend on the individual's agency, which may be enabled or constrained by resources. Society, then, is not a force, but creates the circumstances – positive or negative – that allow someone to

act or limit that action. Structure, moreover, is not an institution, but amounts to knowledge and resources (Lippuner, 2009).

Giddens identifies three resources: authoritative, allocative, and structural. Authoritative resources amount to the power to control the social world; allocative resources are material, and the power to control these; and structural resources are the social systems or systemic social relations (Lippuner, 2009). For Giddens, this allows simultaneous analysis on both a macro- and micro-level – analysis on both the level of society and of the individual in the society, with no artificial division between the two. Social phenomena are explained as structural forces, which can, as noted, empower or limit the individual on what would be regarded as the macro-level. On the micro-level, the individual's own role and agency are paramount, and together they form a 'duality of structure'. Importantly, neither is the defining power, but both are in constant interplay, continuously influencing one another, something viewed, as aforementioned, in the social aspect of the findings – specifically the moral component – which could have consequences for Saudi Arabia as it continues to send students abroad who develop new ideas of self, right and wrong.

#### **7.4 The Problem of Oppression**

In considering Giddens's (1974) framework and concept of the lack of duality between the individual and society – which continuously create one another – the question of oppression naturally arises. It is easy to see the cooperative, indivisible, interaction between the individual and society within a free society in which the individual is seen to play an active and autonomous role in creating practices, and such practices are then accepted and perhaps adopted by others. However, in a society where the desires and actions of the individual are overtly or covertly limited, constrained or punished, it is easier to see things in terms of an opposition between the two.

However, structuration theory is not derailed by instances of oppression; oppression can and does, of course, exist within a recursive or self-reflexive system, on both a micro- and macro-level. For Giddens, oppression is a type of social practice originating from the individual and affecting other individuals. Types of social practice are associated with different levels of consciousness, and therefore the way to overcome oppression is to raise consciousness (Giddens, 1984; Wheeler-Brooks, 2009). When one becomes conscious of the fact that a certain social practice is oppressive and begins to work to overcome it, consciousness is raised, and empowerment is achieved. This change matters not only for the individual but also for the society that the individual is creating, in accordance with the general lack of a breach or distinction between the two in Giddens's theory.

#### **7.4.1. Applicability of Giddens's Structuration to KASP and its Outcomes**

In Giddens's presentation of the interplay between individual agency and social structure, the individual agent is the only factor that is capable of change and not inherently constrained by external factors. Even in the midst of social practices that are oppressive, the individual has the chance to raise their consciousness and become empowered. As a result, over time, the whole society may change. It is possible that KASP students, however, have been given an advantage or a head start with regard to consciousness-raising, having been put into an environment where not only are they freed of the embedded tradition of their country of origin, but they are relatively free and independent.

As Giddens states, the self is reflexive – formed all that time in relation to what it is exposed to. Thus, in accordance with modernism (which, Giddens argues, we are still in the midst of – he rejects the notion that we have moved into a post-modern society), KASP students are being put into a domain that nurtures them but also makes them something other than what their home society would have brought out in them. It is significant that KASP actually takes students out of their social context rather than bolstering education within it.

Societies are what give individuals their agency or limit it – they are not two structures in opposition to one another. The allocative power given to students or used on their behalf by their government to administer KASP to send students abroad to learn puts them within a different structural norm. Students learn new ideas of self, of right and wrong, and what they can achieve regardless of previously applied social limits, like those placed on gender.

The question, of course, is what happens to these students when they return. What do the social and structural norms within Saudi Arabia allow them to accomplish, and how much ability do they have to expand or transcend these, while still contributing to the building of a new economy? Most striking in the findings is that students build a strong sense of unity, both with each other and with the country in which they are studying, during the course of their studies. The malleable structures within which they find themselves allow them to form bonds and attain skills.

Upon returning to Saudi Arabia, students will find that the connections they formed influence their ideas of how society should operate, the rules of society, and its morality. Once students return, the structure in which they exist – the morality and social rules of Saudi Arabia – are no longer accepted at face value, given that the students now have exposure to many other ideas of societal rules, morality, and things like right and wrong. The suggestion made by Giddens that we have presently transcended time, space and tradition indicates that they may be able to retain these ideas. According to Giddens, the individual is not only subject to the social structure but in part creates it even as they are created by

it; this suggests that a change in the individual students and their networks – an expansion, as it were – may manifest as a change in the society itself.

It is possible for social institutions to temporarily block social change. This does not belie Giddens's theory but is a further manifestation of it. As discussed earlier, Giddens provides a response to social practices that seem to constrain or oppress. When consciousness is raised, practices may eventually be altered through individual agency or perhaps even collectively.

To maximize the positive effects of KASP and to hasten the transformation of the society and economy to an innovative, knowledge-based economy, it is preferable that the government of Saudi Arabia recognise the extent of the change that they are inviting – and which they need – by sending students to study abroad. Acquiring skills is part of the experience, but not all. These students, upon returning, have had the opportunity to become a part of social structures that they would not otherwise have had access to, and have inevitably been altered by the experience. The society that they then help to create is not the same as it would have been without that experience. Unhindered, the changes brought about in individual students through KASP may bring about transformation to the society on a micro- and macro-level, much as predicted by Giddens.

However, even in the absence of sanctioned, societal change, it is possible and perhaps inevitable that the alumni of KASP will bring about eventual transformation to their society. As part of KASP, students are embedded in a unique and hospitable environment, acquire skills, and receive support and access to programmes not otherwise accessible to them. One result of such an experience will be empowerment, and Giddens assures us that individual empowerment brings about greater opportunities and greater freedom in the society that these individuals ultimately create. This will feed into other ways in which the world beyond KSA impinges on its development.

Granovetter (Kahin and Foray, 2006, p.76) noted that knowledge generation, as well as innovation, are key factors in improving the knowledge economy within which employment must operate and therefore serve as imperative to the advancement of the knowledge economy. The potential range of expertise and skills available to workers go hand-in-hand with the ability to move forward any given economy, including that of Saudi Arabia.

Improving knowledge can help improve the overall discipline and functionality of a social – and by extension economic – group in one of two ways. Firstly, at the micro-level, increased knowledge can expose individuals to the psychology of social bonds, particularly the notion of in-group versus out-group, which can help to better accommodate outsiders joining employment and trying to blend into existing employee landscapes. Secondly, increased

knowledge can help at the macro-level by exposing individuals to ideas that no longer exclude migrants from other countries or allow for racist or sexist behaviours. Removing this exclusionary and potentially pejorative climate by way of increased knowledge for the people within a given workplace can make that workplace more forward-thinking, more inclusive, and more accepting; therefore, a better workplace in which to operate with improved social bonds and overall advancement.

This macro- and micro-level economic potential is only gained by advancing the knowledge economy. The results of this study have revealed that acquired skills as well as exposure to new technology from those who are studying abroad provide a successful and rewarding experience that has caused many of the interviewees to change the way they treat other people and overcome social barriers that they may not even have realized existed.

Building off the need for knowledge advancement to improve the knowledge economy, as noted by Granovetter,(1983) the individuals who are able to gain independence and improve their knowledge economy, social skills, and openness to other cultures need to be able to implement them and continue the advancement not just for themselves but for those around them. Individuals who learn these skills while studying abroad and subsequently return to Saudi Arabia have to put those skills within the existing Saudi context.

## **7.5 Results in Relation to Literature**

In accordance with the findings of Hilal and colleagues (2015), the interviewees of this study largely reported benefits and advantages to their skills, know-how, and ideas. The common themes raised by students and programme administrators alike are grouped into three themes relevant for the application to Saudi Arabia's transition to a knowledge economy: Opportunity, Government, and Social Capital. These three themes intertwine in that students learned valuable know-how, tools to implement this know-how, as well as were shown about the positive impact of structural frameworks to achieve their personal goals.

Thus, the findings add a technological and cooperative aspect to Hilal and colleagues' threefold typology of benefits. Considering the prevalence of both government and opportunity in KASP, it can safely be assumed that these have positive effects on the acquisition of skills that have lent themselves to more opportunities. The combination of knowing that there is a support network and feeling confident to use it seems to have a positive effect on feeling comfortable in a new host environment and using this environment to flourish on a personal level. The fact that a certain level of structure is 'given', both from the support side (Saudi Arabia) and the hosting side (UK, US) seems to form a dynamic that has inherently positive effects on students and professionals alike. The feeling and knowledge that certain things are possible can themselves open the doors for many new

achievements and innovations along the lines of Hilal and colleagues' political, economic and socio-political typology. This finding is in line with Alyusuf (2016) who suggests that people can adapt to change better because they have learned the necessary skills to do so. Alyusuf also studied through KASP and experienced its impact on human capital.

It is noteworthy that all interviewees explicitly mentioned the fostering of tolerance, peaceful cultural coexistence and respect as positive aspects of their KASP experience. This is very much in line with the objectives of KASP. However, the question arises of how the fulfilment of these core objectives impacts students who end up going back home to Saudi Arabia.

The one factor that ties themes arising in the interviews together is independence. In going abroad, acquiring skills, making progress and learning about new technological and structural support possibilities, participants undertake these experiences by themselves and embark on a process of self-discovery. This means that one of the biggest factors of growth can be said to be the ability to be independent and the capacity to make use of this newly found independence. When applying this to their return to Saudi Arabia, several practical issues arise relating to employment and using the new skills acquired effectively. These highlight the increased needs for broader changes that enable KASP graduates to be the change they wish to see.

First, Saudis returning who seek an occupation in academia are confronted with a large foreign workforce. Many non-Saudis have found well-paying and highly-qualified jobs in Saudi Arabia. This on the one hand makes it more difficult for Saudis to find a position when returning, and on the other hand raises the question of what distinguishes equally qualified Saudis and non-Saudis from each another. It seems that institutions (for example higher education or governmental institutions) are more likely to employ non-Saudis in an effort to be international, rather than Saudis who return home from a scholarship abroad. The trust given by institutions towards these returnees seems very low, despite their skills in technology, language, and cultural diversity.

At the same time, the confidence put into these graduates upon their return home seems equally low. There are few training and growth opportunities for locals who already work at institutions, whereas non-Saudis often receive high-quality training and are pushed towards career growth in Saudi Arabia. When considering the wages that leave Saudi Arabia through non-Saudi employees, the remittances of expatriates are high. Overall, rather than investing in its own workforce, the economy seems to invest in a foreign workforce. Many qualified Saudis find themselves in low-skilled jobs which do not meet their expectations, particularly upon return from a prestigious scholarship programme. At the same time, many

qualified Saudis turn their backs on the Kingdom and look for work elsewhere around the world, contributing to a Saudi 'brain drain'.

Having acknowledged this, the Saudi government set up 'Saudization' (localization) programmes in 2009 that require companies to fill up their workforce with Saudi nationals (to a certain level). This so-called indigenisation of the economy and labour force focuses particularly on the private sector and has seen a series of employment-related plans seeking to increase the participation of nationals in the workforce. However, the unemployment rate is still high at 12.5% (ArabNews, 2019).

A second problem that is likely to arise when KASP alumni return home is that returnees will want to maintain the level of independence they have acquired abroad, including when it comes to finding a job that suits them. It is highly likely that a newly acquired independent mind-set will inform their choice of job; for example, jobs in start-up or technology are likely to be potential career choices, particularly when it comes to starting new projects involving innovation. Indeed, the government supports start-up businesses and small businesses with funding through various loans (Saudi Gazette, 2018). However, there is still a gap between providing these loans and providing young graduates with the knowledge that these loans exist. From the analysis for this study, while graduates from abroad are likely to be informed about such opportunities (and are equipped with the necessary skills to easily make use of such a loan), local students may not be. In this vein, Singapore acts as a great example of the positive role a government can play in providing adequate information and technology workshops to empower students to make use of their full potential. Particularly in light of returnees from prestigious scholarship programmes, it is likely that providing more training could boost the capacity of returnees and locals alike.

Through a simple step such as providing empowerment and information to people about existing resources, there is room for improvement when it comes to capacity building at the local, indigenous level. Indeed, much progress has already been made when it comes to the Saudi government and giving importance to education. The KASP programme in itself has been a giant leap forward in helping the development of human and social capital. The KASP assessment programme, which has been in place for more than a decade, shows that KASP plays a crucial factor in yielding a highly skilled workforce able to perform complex tasks and adapt rapidly. However, there is room for Saudi Arabia to take yet another valuable and encouraging step in helping the economy transition from oil-based to knowledge-based.

The expectations of Saudis returning from prestigious scholarships abroad tend to be high. Taking into account these two factors – heavy reliance on the non-Saudi workforce, and

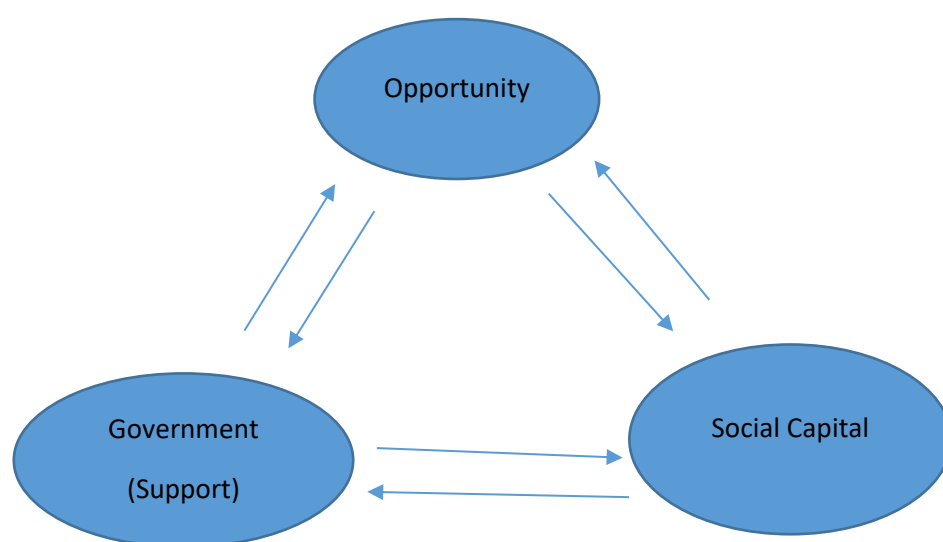


lack of training programmes for locals – two key issues are raised which the KASP programme can help curb. By helping Saudis re-integrate into the workforce upon their return and by helping already established business ventures make use of the local expertise, a first shift towards increasing the potential of the local workforce can be achieved. Second, by making use of KASP graduates and helping others embark upon similar opportunities and scholarship programmes, further exchange between countries and cultures can be fostered. This way, the international factor so vital for Saudi Arabia can be achieved from within, rather than only relying on non-Saudi experience within the Kingdom. The question thus arises, how the findings from this study can be made sense of given the problems faced by graduates and their embeddedness in Saudi Arabia's current economic orientation.

## 7.6 Interplaying Themes and Possibilities for Broader Analysis

Considering the undoubted relevance of KASP in helping Saudi Arabia shift to a knowledge-based economy, analysing this dynamic from a scalable and quantifiable theoretical viewpoint also enables an assessment of contextual phenomena beyond the KASP. More concretely, the established dynamics show that the KASP experience as well as the situation upon return for alumni sheds light on very practical problems and concerns that are required to help the transition to a knowledge economy.

**Figure 7.1** seeks to visualise the three themes and the manner in which the three theme clusters as derived from qualitative interviews play together within the KASP programme:



**Figure 7. 1 Interplay between themes raised by interviewees about KASP**

The direction in which the relation goes is not necessarily linear. Rather the main themes of Opportunity, Government and Social Capital, as well as the sub-themes, reflect an

interconnectedness that creates a unique dynamic, positioning KASP as a contributing tool in the context of a knowledge economy. As described above, KASP provides valuable opportunity, exposure to government support and social capital. In this vein, a unique dynamic is created that allows alumni to grow and learn. Similarly, it can be argued that the government support as well as the opportunities available to students influence their capacity to make use of new social capital, which in turn determines the degree of government support they need. This in turn positively influences opportunities, as graduates have an incentive to work hard in order to receive greater support. At the same time, one could argue that the level of social capital establishes the type of support offered, which again is correlated with the opportunities offered to students. These again impact and determine the skills a graduate of KASP takes back home.

However, taking into account the challenges mentioned above, returnees are often not in a position of being able to make use of their skills and know-how due to old ingrained mechanisms that see well-qualified Saudis struggling to find jobs, lacking information about how to make use of their skills, as well as having high expectations that the Kingdom cannot fulfil. Moreover, the specific findings related to social capital, especially changes in moral capital, leave returning students unable to seamlessly reintegrate given that they have new exposure to ideas about what defines morality. The question emerges of how the transition to a knowledge economy can be aided by KASP returnees, and on a broader level, how Saudi Arabia can commit more to fostering scholarships and also to fostering a culture that allows scholarship returnees to make an impact.

According to Pavan (2015, p.98), Saudi Arabia would benefit from a so-called 'glocal' model of higher education, incorporating both global aspirations and local determinations to retain traditional culture and beliefs. Indeed, the KASP seems to touch on both aspects, on the one hand fostering the individual agency Saudi students bring and, on the other, using the resources available to the Kingdom to further students in their achievement. Still, as Bremmer (2004) observed, Saudi Arabia is a closed society, which will not benefit from walls being torn down too quickly. While much has changed in the past 16 years, the importance of looking not only outwards but also the inwards remain vital. KASP alumni, despite their international placements or career paths, help Saudi Arabia to establish itself on a global level and slowly bring forth the change needed for the Kingdom to live up to global requirements of know-how, attitude, and experience.

Although there is a nonlinear relationship between the students who graduated and the government, we cannot say that this is a starting point that would make the KASP programme a positive influence and incubator for actors in a changing economy. On the

contrary, that a dynamic exists that makes factors on different levels work intimately together suggests that the way the programme is managed, the relationship it has with the Saudi government, and the type of students it attracts and enables all contribute in equal manner to this process. Building on this, it makes sense to hypothesise that any shift towards a knowledge-based economy, and understanding thereof, must jointly incorporate factors that relate to the (adaptable) capacity of individuals within KASP, as well as the (adaptable) framework KASP is embedded into. In social science terms, it therefore seems that in order to best understand the impact of KASP on a broader scale, a mixture of micro and macro factors is needed.

## **7.7 Using Structuration Theory for Micro and Macro Analysis**

The example of scholarships showcases the influence of social capital and government on students. The many challenges that face students directly or indirectly give them a plethora of skills, as does their setting in a country that is focused on exposure to new resources, new social capital, and new opportunities. After having taken part in a scholarship, these skills have often been nurtured and expanded so that the student who comes back can easily become a change-making agent in their community and become one of many new actors in the Saudi Arabic context. The new information, different cultural exposures and experiences well equip students to change and develop themselves (agent), which in turn can change their Saudi communities and norms (structure).

However, students are often faced with broader problems in Saudi Arabia, concerning unemployment, or an allocation of financial resources not suitable to their individual goals. Creating new economic resources, like education and knowledge, which sustainably produce human and social capital, therefore becomes inevitable. This capital is flexible, well-trained and equipped in terms of technology, cultural and scientific understanding and can help the shift from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy. However, both the individual and the structure in which the individual operates matter.

As the analysis of interview themes above has shown, KASP and the experiences and perceptions thereof can best be described as an interplay between three broad themes: opportunity, government and social capital. Having determined that the three themes seem interrelated and interdependent, a view at micro-level and macro-level in connection with each another would be most beneficial to apply what KASP holds to what Saudi Arabia needs. Individual agents and the structure within which they are embedded matter equally. The topic of information management concerns both those who are on the receiving end, as well as those who supply the information. Taking a constructivist perspective, social phenomena cannot be analysed without taking into consideration the structural components

that influence them. Conversely, structure also influences the social phenomena at hand as it constrains the 'playing field'. By analysing both levels, it is possible to gain broader and more quantifiable insights, which have a dynamic character due to the recognition of interplay between various factors. Although the picture becomes more complete, this does not mean that this approach is not flawed – in fact, findings may be less detailed and nuanced than a methodology only focusing on one level.

Based on the assumption that a combined micro- and macro-level analysis is best, Giddens's structuration theory lends itself to analysing information management through this perspective. Giddens proposes the so-called 'duality of structure', which is part of his broader 'theory of structuration'. He postulates that two broad directions of social science study – macro-level studies and micro-level studies – can be reconciled through structuration theory. Macro-level studies provide explanations of social phenomena based solely on structural forces. These forces can either empower or limit the individual. Micro-level studies on the other hand emphasise the role of the individual. Where the macro-level disregards the agency and influence of the individual, micro-level studies disregard external factors and influences of broader phenomena. In combination, by balancing both the role of individual agency and structure, the so-called 'duality of structure' comes into play. This duality posits that agency and structure are in constant interchange with and continuously influence each other. Thus, neither is the determining factor of a phenomenon. Rather, both in combination create or construct a phenomenon.

Giddens's (1974) framework lends itself well to being applied to the micro-macro analysis of scholarships. Three core themes that underpin an information structure regarding scholarships have been identified: opportunity, government, and social capital. These three themes concern both the individual agent as well as the structure provided by the KASP. In fact, they also stand in the same interrelation to one-another as the micro and macro level, and also agency and structure do. Thus, it can be posited that an individual's opportunity can influence the structural components available to them in the form of the government support they received which can in turn influence the management structure underpinning this. Management structure then again determines the skills an individual takes away. Conversely, an individual's social capital can make an impact on the opportunities afforded to them.

The three identified theme sets are interlinked and dependent on one another. Further, they cover the micro (individual) and macro (structural) levels of analysis. Thus, Giddens' framework may provide a model for investigating the relationship between scholarship programmes and the development of human/social capital, and vice versa. Upon return to

Saudi Arabia, individuals (returnees) must find and position themselves back in Saudi Arabia, which means that the structural level (the Kingdom) is to a large extent determinant of how and to what extent the inputs of the KASP can be made use of.

What is striking is that in this perception of agency and structure, the individual agent emerges as the only factor in the equation that is not static or determined/constrained by external factors. Rather, the individual at each point has the chance to act differently, thereby becoming of significant interest to the social scientist. By making a small change on the side of the agent, the entire dynamic of the three themes, or of the agency-structure duality can change (over time, not immediately).

When applied to the Saudi Arabian context, in shifting from a resource-based to a knowledge-based society, two aspects with high potential must be acknowledged: first, the power of the individual; second, the role of the individual in determining broader structures and their impact. By making use of Giddens's model it becomes possible to examine the interplay between opportunity, government, and social capital in a different light. Thus, it can be established that in order to make a sustainable change on a large scale, the significance of the individual with their needs, preferences, talents, and goals becomes central; also, to realise that actors or phenomena do not operate in isolation but are connected to deep-seated structures and dynamics that take time and active agency to change. In other words, in order for Saudi Arabia to successfully shift its economy, several local changes will be necessary to enable KASP graduates to fully achieve their potential and tap into the interrelated theme sets that arose in the interviews. Individuals in this process are a dynamic factor that possess the opportunity to make strategic choices and changes on a small scale, every day, and building on what they learnt in KASP.

In his 'structuration theory', Giddens characterises three core dimensions for 'agency' and 'structure'; which provide some starting points for this study analysis. The "*three kinds of structures in a social system: signification, legitimation and domination*" (Lamsal, 2012, p.114) and the "*dimensions of agency, described as communication, power and sanctions*" (Jones & Karsten, 2003, p.5). These dimensions interplay and produce trends. While Giddens applies them well in his study on e-learning, it becomes difficult to use his exact framework in the same manner for the present study. However, the dimensions of signification (meaning allocated to structure), legitimation (value/weight allocated to structure), communication (ability to convey messages) and sanctions (being constrained by norms) may be vital for the example of scholarships and their potential impact. Analysing these factors can raise issues such as the influence of norms and reputation on learning, or the influence of individual communication (word-of-mouth) on allocation of support

resources. Also, analysis can show how likely certain individuals are to partake in a certain scholarship, or to what extent cultural factors influence success in participation. Through Giddens's framework, the recursive interaction between individuals and structure can be better understood.

At the same time, these insights can be applied to the Saudi context and shed light on how KASP returnees (individuals and in this case, their skills) can aim to alter the Saudi economic context (structure) in order to help an economic transition. Giddens's points of analysis show that in order to positively impact an economic shift, the same factors of signification, legitimation, communication and sanctions are useful. An analysis thereof will help understand the dynamics that render the Saudi economy as it is and will help highlight the opportunities available to open doors for a transition. By considering what is already there, completely 'reinventing the wheel' can be avoided.

## **7.8 Structuration Theory, Capital and a Network Society**

The question arises how structuration theory applied to KASP can shed light on the potential of scholarship programmes for aiding Saudi Arabia's transition to a knowledge economy. In particular using Giddens's framework shows the potential for applying findings about themes and their dynamics to other scholarship programmes beyond KASP. When it comes to scaling up the findings and broadening their application, Lynch and Oakford (2014) note that the relationship between education (in this case, KASP) and economic growth (in this case, shifting to a knowledge economy) are not linear processes. Rather, these dynamics depend on complex social processes within which individual perceptions and understandings are crucial. It can thus be postulated that due to structuration theory's link between the individual and the structure, the chances are high that much of the effect of scholarships can be captured. This also fits Cohendet's and Diani's (2006) views, which suggests that transitioning to a knowledge-based economy is more likely when the conditions given (in this case, the framework into which KASP is embedded) enable the development of individual agency in the first place.

For Bremmer (2004) the long-term success of Saudi Arabia and reforms taking place therein depend on the emergence of a citizenry able to play an active and informed role within and beyond their society. Indeed, the emergence of a considerable number of opportunities leads to the creation of social capital and further on human capital. Social capital, for Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. By this definition, KASP represents the network embedded within the state, well-recognised within Saudi

Arabia and globally, that leads to the creation of a new dynamic. Putnam (1993) famously pointed towards the networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. These can be said to further civil society, support democratic values, and aid economic production. KASP therefore becomes a valuable tool that builds a bridge between Saudi Arabia's society and the world, constituting almost a microcosm of social capital embedded into both worlds.

Westlund (2006) sees social capital as a so-called 'spatial externality', building on its relevance for the emergence of entrepreneurship, innovation, and regional development. The potential for labour-market innovations and growth is immense once social capital is furthered (Westlund, 2006). Three levels of social growth can be furthered through social capital in a knowledge economy: organisations, society, and the individual. Society is formed by individuals, who group together in organisations. An organisation, in the context of this study, is the group of KASP alumni who have had certain shared experiences and then re-enter their home society. These individuals, unique and with their own factors in their own right, form a significant factor that influences society – both within and outside Saudi Arabia. It thus follows logically that once an individual changes, the group changes, therefore society will also change. Although KASP graduates faced challenges upon returning home, the potential for change becomes maximised when looking at the growth of KASP and other scholarships. KASP alone has seen a nearly 2,000% increase in participants since its creation in 2005 (see ICEF Monitor, 2016) and Saudi Arabia has become the fourth-largest sending country for the US alone.

This social capital constitutes the basis for the development of (measurable) human capital. Manzini (2007) notes that: *"a knowledge economy is an economy in which the creation of knowledge and its application in the production of goods and services provide the basis for wealth creation and socio-economic development."* Human capital, or the development thereof, therefore, very much depends on the actual people who bear the knowledge and know-how that end up constituting the knowledge economy. Therefore, the skills acquired must fulfil certain criteria to fit the abstract requirements for a knowledge economy to be successful. As pointed out in the themes above, these seem to be cosmopolitan and transferable in nature, and focus largely on resilience, adaptability, and growth.

Fittingly, in their research De la Fuente and Ciccone (2002) find that knowledge and skills embodied in humans directly raise productivity and increase an economy's ability to develop and to adopt new technologies. For example, transferred to the actual workings of an economy, these are values and skills that help businesses succeed in a globalized world. More than that, human capital development has the potential to help institutions become

more effective and can lead to an overall more educated citizenry, which in turn has the potential to minimize crime rates and raise social capital (De la Fuente and Ciccone, 2003). This fits Bashraheel's view (2013), which sees large potential for social change through returning students to bring about a more open society. Although many graduates may not return to Saudi Arabia, those who do have the potential to contribute to large-scale shifts within the Kingdom – both on an individual and a structural level.

The themes identified in interviews with KASP alumni adequately reflect these interactions and go on to corroborate how Giddens in his structuration theory argues that social structure and relations constantly and recursively re-invent themselves and hold an almost virtual existence outside time and space. KASP indeed seems to live a virtual existence that is very much a unique microcosm outside Saudi Arabian norms. Students are embedded into a unique environment, acquire unique skills, and receive support and access to programmes not accessible to those outside KASP. It is however within the source of these very resources that KASP becomes effective, and thereby constitutes applicability to Saudi Arabia's economy. KASP is a governmental scheme, and support and management are given by the government. This vital link between the government's interest in furthering its people, and KASP's vast resource possibilities allow for alumni to operate in a dynamic that affects – and is affected by – Saudi Arabia on equal terms.

Looking back to the interaction between themes, it becomes clear that individuals operate in intimate connection with their structure and vice versa. As KASP is embedded both within Saudi government (through opportunity and government) and Saudi society (through furthering Saudi students), it becomes clear that there exists an overarching interest to create a tool that allows for the creation of social and human capital. In this case, scholarships are a perfect example of a salient way for governments to 'nudge' citizenry, by offering opportunities that are hard to refuse yet yield extraordinary results. Al Yousef (2016) argues in her study on KASP that the scholarship has proven to be highly beneficial for the general Saudi economic and educational reform, as it has helped lay the groundwork for a diversified economy and the growth of the entrepreneurial sector.

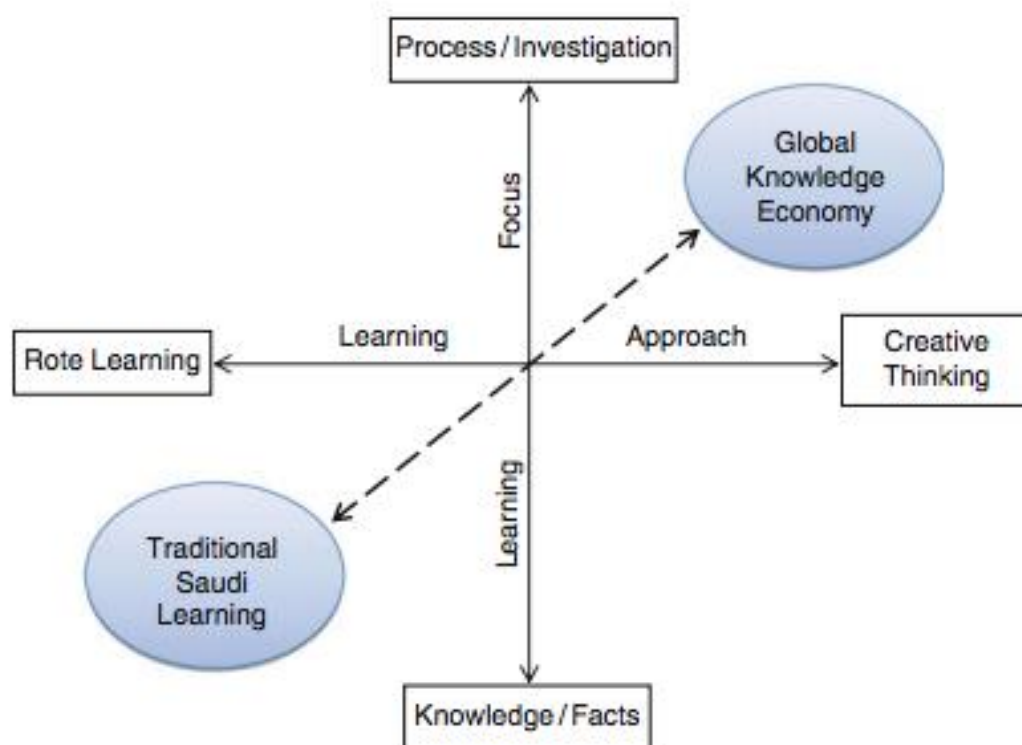
In a report by the Centre for Innovative Government (2015), it was found that researchers should pay attention to how scholarship students re-integrate into society, whilst keeping an eye on how they can offer new perspectives and new ideas. KASP relies on equal terms on motivated people seeking a challenge as it does on the government to provide incentives (and financial resources) to make KASP possible in the first place. Gallarotti and Al-Filali (2012) point out that Saudi Arabia should actively look beyond oil for answers to a stable and vibrant economy. However, when considering the situation awaiting returnees upon



their re-integration into Saudi society, it seems that not enough efforts are undertaken to facilitate re-entry into society or the labour market.

Even though scholars tend to agree on the positive impact of KASP on Saudi Arabia's economy and transition, it also remains open whether this is a linear correlation. As both individual and structural factors influence the existing dynamic of KASP alumni and their skills, changes both within students and within the KASP programme itself can likely lead to effects that go beyond KASP's original intentions. Examples of this include changing international relationships, different partnerships with universities, and factors rendering remaining abroad more beneficial to the Saudi workforce. Hence, the goal is to achieve a balance between providing global skills but rendering them relevant on the local level. Bukhari and Denman (2013) focus on the aim of KASP, which is essentially economic – to develop an effective and internationally competitive workforce. While the KASP programme seems to exceed expectations when it comes to fulfilling the stated objective, it must be acknowledged that in order to make individuals able to make use of their skills, certain factors within Saudi Arabia must also be considered, including attitudes towards returnees, opportunities available to them, and possibilities to disseminate their skills and make use of their innovative ideas.

In particular the question arises to what extent the balance between Saudi customs and traditions (and interests), and international learning outputs and goals, can be upheld. KASP is 'glocal' in that it builds on Saudis, and global in that it opens doors through skills and exposure. However, this scale can easily be tipped, for example through political changes or alterations in the global knowledge economy. Smith and Aboummoh (2013, p.187) visualize this well in the diagram replicated at Figure 10.2 – KASP in its current form can be interpreted as being in the middle of the diagram, where all points intersect.



**Figure 7. 2 Relationship between traditional Saudi teaching and learning approaches and the needs of the global knowledge economy**

Figure 10.2 shows that in order for KASP to remain truly 'glocal', the scholarship programme itself must strategically be re-evaluated and amended on a constant basis to fulfil both the needs of both the global knowledge economy and Saudi Arabia. In other words, KASP must equip students with enough local knowledge to want to and be able to return to Saudi Arabia. At the same time, it should always update its processes and structures to make sure it is aligned with the shifting characteristics of the global knowledge economy. While the latter is fulfilled (through Safeer, online opportunities, and timely skill-transmission), the challenge is to remain local enough for students to re-enter the Kingdom.

Considering the role and background of the KASP programme, the close relation to the government shows that despite the programme perhaps not being perfect, the funders have kept on top of 'glocal' requirements and enabled students enough of a mix of home-relevance and global experience to encourage the majority of graduates to return. Just based on the interviewees of this study, the majority returned to Saudi Arabia. However, it also means that the scholarship cannot and should not be seen in isolation from phenomena that underpin Saudi Arabia as a whole. While vital scholarship programmes like KASP are upheld and strengthened, existing channels must also be used to open doors for graduates back home.

Giddens's structuration theory is useful in that it shows that individuals and the structures within which they operate are interrelated and dynamic. Considering the many benefits of KASP yielded by the many useful skills and mechanisms students are exposed to, it makes sense to give the same attention to the situation in Saudi Arabia and to ask what must happen for KASP graduates to help the economic shift more easily.

Talpoş and colleagues (2017), in their paper 'Talent management and the quest for effective succession management in the knowledge-based economy', have explained the many benefits of Saudi Arabia focusing on the advancement of the knowledge economy, and the scholarship programme in particular, as part of the Vision 2030 plan. A knowledge economy provides the necessary background to stimulate investment growth, especially in the area of scientific investment and the practical knowledge that can be used to build knowledge capital, which will eventually add to knowledge production. Moreover, the knowledge economy adds to the enhancement of performance and helps cut production. It further enhances its standard by deploying technical means and approaches, most importantly, in the industry sector, where it helps in developing electronic devices, equipment, computers and software, something that would not only help the petroleum industry but subsequent industries that would help the KSA with its Vision 2030 plan to diversify. By increasing the current investment in knowledge and utilizing advanced technologies to boost knowledge products or service export would help the KSA knowledge capital and to increase the significance of workers in the knowledge sector of the economy.

One of the top codes found in the data gathered for this research was 'Exposure to New Technology' which, as noted by Moisio and Kangas (2016), is among the most important aspects of a knowledge economy, particularly the need for the building of technologies that bring about the knowledge economy's lifeblood: 'information and communication technology' (ICT). However, it is clear that the KSA has laid the foundation through the KASP to acquire the knowledge and skills the economy needs to enhance human capital, but the expansion of the investment in such skills acquisition and knowledge on a larger, national scale needs to be included in the newest government plans, like Vision 2030.

A networked society, like Saudi Arabia, needs to be expanded and improved, which can be achieved through the KASP. Castells (2004) notes the importance of economic and social change as it capitalizes upon the concurrent developments in economy, society, politics, culture, structure, technology, innovation and power, to name but a few. Castells (2004, p.17) observes that:

*A network society is a society whose social structure is made of networks powered by microelectronics-based information and communication technologies. By social*

*structure this refers to the organisational arrangements of humans in relationships of production, consumption, reproduction, experience, and power expressed in meaningful communication coded by culture. A network is a set of interconnected nodes.*

This level of interconnectedness was explained in Chapter 9 with many of the main themes and sub-themes identified among the participants as overlapping. Acquired skills and exposure to technology went hand-in-hand for participants who were able to acquire educational skills that allowed them to make the most out of the technology they were exposed to overseas, which they did not have access to at home. The support from management that was received helped to facilitate the better absorption of new technologies and acquired skills. The acquired skills themselves were not limited to educational skills but expanded to two different networks and to social and moral skills, much the same as the exposure to new technologies also exposed participants to new social and knowledge networks within their daily lives and education.

Castells (2004. P.20) goes on to explain that a network is “*a large system consisting of many similar parts that are connected together to allow movement or communication between or along the parts, or between the parts and a control centre.*” The characteristic of interconnectedness does not just refer to movement but communication is of particular importance given its relevance to the interview findings. This is corroborated by the findings of themes and subthemes, with the many areas in which education overlapped with social and moral development.

## **7.9 Summary**

This chapter has reviewed the results and discussed them in relation to the literature, expounding upon how the results of this research have real-world applicability in terms of practice and policy, and what recommendations there are for future research. This chapter has undertaken an evaluation of 12 interviews that were conducted with KASP students and programme administrators. The results show that there are several similarities in what interviewees say about KASP. These can be broadly grouped together as three, beneficial theme clusters: government, opportunity, and social capital. Taken together, these three themes jointly render students qualified, aware of technological opportunities, and apt to make changes upon returning to Saudi Arabia. However, most graduate scholarship holders who return to Saudi Arabia face problems in the job market, which makes it harder for them to make use of their newly acquired knowledge.

Giddens's structuration theory lends itself well to analysing how individuals and the structure within which they operate are related. In this vein, structuration theory was applied first to

the three thematic clusters mentioned by KASP interviewees, to highlight the vast potential that lies within the scholarship programme. When applied to the context of Saudi Arabia, structuration theory is also useful in that it shows the potential role KASP graduates can play in altering the economic structure of the Kingdom. Despite much agency residing within individuals, structure does play a role in determining to what extent individuals can make use of their skills. Hence, Saudi Arabia's economy as it stands has several challenges that make it difficult for KASP graduates to make use of their skills. However, it also shows that the requirements of both KASP and Saudi Arabia are 'glocal', which opens new space for analysis to search for remedies to this problem. In this vein, using structuration theory to make sense of interview findings makes it possible to undertake a micro- and macro-level analysis to show both the potential of the KASP scholarship and its graduates, as well as the necessity of better adaptation of the Saudi economy to give room to these incubators.

Moving deeper into the discussion of a knowledge-based economy, this chapter identified key characteristics and benefits of a knowledge economy, what the relationship is between these characteristics and benefits, and the results of the themes identified in the research. The next chapter will conclude this research.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusion**

The initial research aims of this study were to examine how Saudi Arabia has transitioned from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy by way of social capital and human capital. The study explored the role of scholarship programmes over the years within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) through interviews with students who had graduated from this programme as well as some of the programme's administrators since 2005. These interviews contributed to the existing knowledge about the KASP, and helped to identify, inform, and determine the challenges faced by participants and the skills needed, as well as how the programme has impacted human and social capital.

The research objectives were to critically review and analyse the relevant literature about human and social capital in the context of change through scholarships programmes such as KASP in order to develop an understanding of how resource-based societies are transitioning into a knowledge-based society by developing human and social capital. The research analysed the significance of different forms of capital in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, following Smith, Bourdieu, Castells, Benkler and others, explored the role of scholarship programmes over the years within the UK and the US, and introduced the KASP programme as a case study in examining how Saudi Arabia is attempting to develop new forms of capital, by moving away from their dependency on their oil industry. The research design limitations will be discussed also in this chapter, particularly whether the outcomes were expected, and concludes by suggesting how this study could be improved were it to be replicated. Further, the chapter explores the implications of these results in the context of the literature, how the results fill any potential gaps, what the implications are for this field, and what new knowledge is contributed by these findings. Furthermore, this chapter went on to explore what implications there are for Saudi Arabia given the unexpected finding of moral capital. It concluded by examining the relationship the findings have to the KSA's transition towards a knowledge-based economy and providing recommendations for better implementation and real policy on the ground.

## **8.1 Answering the Research Questions**

The research questions addressed the issues around building human and social capital in the 21<sup>st</sup> century facing the KSA as it transitioned from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy. Each of the research aims were addressed and successfully contributed to the knowledge and existing literature in addressing in particular the challenges faced by Saudi Arabia as it transitions. The existing literature on the topic has a great deal to do with why social capital is important and why a knowledge-based economy brings benefit, and how one can achieve that – this work fills the gap pertaining to how Saudi Arabia has succeeded in transitioning, particularly with regard to scholarship programmes.

Beginning in particular with a discussion of the push and pull factors of differing advocacies for the need to reduce carbon emissions to reduce climate change, to which fossil fuels are the number one contributor, and because of the dwindling price of oil in the global market, this work has made reference throughout to how and what Saudi Arabia is doing concerning human capital development, linking this to the country's massive investment in human capital through the KASP programme; and for the advancement of their Vision 2030 plan of diversification from an oil-based economy to a knowledge-based economy.

The results of this research give a greater understanding of where the foci are for investment of a knowledge-based economy, and that the KSA is therefore correct in its investment in human capital through KASP. It has delved deeper into these discussions especially with regards to a case study of KASP, but also of discussions of concepts such as capital forms, the research context of Saudi Arabia, other international scholarship programmes, as well as discussion of the primary research sample of Saudi nationals from the KASP programme.

The research explored and examined the issues around building human and social capital through in-depth interviews with some of the students who graduated from this programme as well as some of the programme's administrators since 2005. Their perceptions and perspectives contributed to an understanding of the transition to a knowledge-based economy, focusing on helping to benefit Saudi's economy. The outcome of these interviews, and the subsequent analysis of the collected data helped to develop a model which may explain the transition process to a knowledge-based society in Saudi Arabia, the government support provided, and the Social capital graduates bring. The findings provide groundwork for recommendations during the transition process for Saudi Arabia. As one reflects upon the initial aims of the research, all of those aims were met but some of them did change in the process of the research

in large part thanks to the revelation of moral capital as one of the major sub-themes unexpected among social capital, and the changes brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The approach taken for the study was qualitative in nature and the interviewees who were the participants in the programme were able to shed light on its successes and its flaws. The qualitative methodology was particularly important because the goal of the research was to examine generalized data, not statistics. The measure of the impact of the scholarship programmes was qualified through the knowledge gained, the social capital, and how that increased knowledge has contributed to the knowledge economy. Moreover, these interviews reveal the relationships socially and the content from everyday life for students across a range of demographics. The scale of the research made it possible to glean data quickly and provide useful information for those participating in scholarship programmes. It also revealed specific insights pertaining to human capital. The open-ended process allowed the researcher to collect a wide range of information and then structure it to reveal the main themes that were seen across most or all the participants. This more fluid operational structure helps incorporate the complexities of human and social capital.

There were some initial limitations specifically with regard to translating the interviews from Arabic to English and determining whether they should be translated in their entirety or analysed in the original Arabic for themes and then relevant components translated to English which, in the end was the method taken. This was only decided upon after it was revealed that the former would have been painstakingly time-consuming. Other issues had to do with potential biases, the limited amount of time for the study, and most importantly the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic near the end of the research, which had delay the writing up stage. While years have been invested in the research, the last six months saw a dramatic change in the way things were run, including these programmes. This led to a need for revisiting the findings, as discussed in Chapter 7. Given that the researcher participated in these programmes as well, as presented in section 8.7, it was anticipated that the findings would reveal some of the same successes and areas of improvement such as problems with communication early on, equal opportunities with regard to men and women taking part in the programme and receiving support while participating in the programme, and that the impact for the social capital and the knowledge and skills gained would be hindered by returning home and finding issues with employment. The findings revealed that those who returned home did have newly-acquired skills, exposure to new technology, and a different level of social capital which changed the way they thought about things like social behaviour or right and wrong. This caused some problems for interviewees on the ground who no longer saw



actions through the culturally accepted norms of right and wrong within Saudi Arabia but instead applied their definition of right and wrong to a greater, more globalized context based on their exposure to other cultures.

Unexpected insights arose during the process and that came under the theme of social capital which was that of moral capital. These findings echoed the sentiments of Adam Smith who initiated the search into what caused some countries to be wealthier than others and the findings of Warsh (2007) who argued that access to better technology and productivity that increased economies. However, while these sentiments were echoed in the thematic analysis, a better cultural and psychological understanding of morality among various nations was a sub-theme responsible for improved international networking and relationships. For example, several participants were exposed to a range of differing views and perspectives on moral and ethical issues. Some, such as Participant 3, mentioned in Section 9.2, no longer accepted certain moral behaviours that may be culturally acceptable in Saudi Arabia once they returned home because of what they had been exposed to while studying abroad. This is something that the Saudi Arabian government should take into consideration with regard to what behaviours are considered to be acceptable given the number of students who are encouraged to take these programmes and return with changes in moral capital.

## **8.2 Contributions to Knowledge**

At the outset of this work, the original problem was that Saudi Arabia was attempting to diversify its portfolio and move away from a petroleum-only economy by investing more in human and social capital as it transitions to a knowledge-based economy. The problem addressed by this research revealed how successful the KSA has been at that transition, particularly with regard to its investment in knowledge and social capital through the KASP. The literature to date has focused heavily on what defines a knowledge economy, why it is important, and the relevance of human capital and social capital for countries making the transition – but it has not explored the successes and challenges faced by individual countries as they make this transition, with no information pertaining to Saudi Arabia's current transition. Therefore, this study has contributed to the existing knowledge by addressing that gap, and these findings have confirmed the benefits afforded by the knowledge-based economy, the importance of a network society, and all the ways in which the main themes and sub-themes revealed by the analysis overlap. These findings have confirmed existing theories, particularly those of Adam Smith and Anthony Giddens, which have significantly contributed to a greater understanding of moral capital, particularly as it relates to the unanticipated finding of Saudi Arabian students who returned from their studies abroad with altered perceptions of morality and new beliefs about right and wrong. This study also stresses the point

about looking at the transition as one involving attention to forms of capital, the use of Bourdieu, Warsh, Benkler, and specifically the focus on moral capital and all that is involved in this.

### **8.3 Implications for Practice, Policy, and Theory**

Hadad (2017) notes that knowledge does not decrease and can even increase through sharing and application, which is how a knowledge economy makes itself economically competitive. The knowledge economy is also not bound by location (or time-zones), as virtual technologies facilitate the transfer of said knowledge (Hadad, 2017). Human capital skills increase the value of corporations, but these are not evaluated by companies in their annual statements (Hadad, 2017), indicating that there is employer/company amnesia resulting in an oversight of declaring employee's human capital contribution as company value; as well as failing to recognise and reward skills and capacity where it exists in employees. However, it is recommended that the KSA implements a policy change to acknowledge this particular corporate skill and require its inclusion in company annual statements. The government could, theoretically, offer a compensation programme as businesses adjust to understanding the value of human capital skills and reporting them, such as tax benefits or stipends for education or skill acquisition.

Scholars such as Chartrand (2006) have drawn out key themes from a knowledge economy, such as knowledge, networks and innovation, to which UN experts have added competitiveness and economic growth (Hadad, 2017, p.208). But in order for Saudi Arabia to overcome the challenges of such a transition, they need transitional steps to be implemented, like the aforementioned change in annual statement reporting of human capital skills.

However, there are many different challenges associated with transitioning to a knowledge economy, and they can be viewed from different angles (Moisio, 2018). The results of the thematic analysis have revealed the unexpected theme of moral capital, something that contributes strongly to the networks and knowledge aforementioned, which tangentially serves as a great steppingstone for individuals. Students who learned moral capital saw things from different angles, as explored in Chapter 5 and 6, but that must be maintained when they return to Saudi Arabia and be supported by the government. Again, it is preferable that the KSA government recognises the extent of the change that they are inviting by sending students to study abroad and allowing them the acquisition of new skills and exposure to new social structures. Moreover, students returning have had the opportunity to become a part of social structures that they would not otherwise have had access to, and have inevitably been altered by the experience,

but their return to Saudi Arabian society should theoretically allow them to bring their changes to the KSA on a micro- and macro-level, much as predicted by Giddens.

However, even in the absence of sanctioned, societal change, it is possible and perhaps inevitable that the alumni of KASP will bring about eventual transformation to their society. As part of KASP, students are embedded in a hospitable environment, acquire skills, and receive support and access to programmes not otherwise accessible to them, and Saudi Arabia would do well to find a way to accommodate these changes in an economically (if not socially) beneficial fashion.

In Saudi Arabia, presently, *“the new economy records that over 50% of gross domestic product in economically developed countries, based on the knowledge-based economy”* (Hadad, 2017, p.3), which means the knowledge-based economy is already a significant contributor to the existing economy, and with the right procedures and policies in place it can continue.

As noted in Chapter 2, the characteristics of a knowledge-based economy include: 1) pace of technological advancement, which brings with it the stimulation of investment growth that can eventually lead to knowledge production; 2) knowledge accessibility, which enhances performance and decreases unnecessary production by integrating a more technical approach; 3) new forms of education and training, which change how the economy is structured and adds new value; and 4) lifelong investment in training/learning, which creates jobs and produces more qualified and skilled workers.

The long-standing commitment the KSA has through its investment in educational institutions and programmes has added to knowledge production, which creates a cyclical system where value is placed on knowledge, investments are made for knowledge, and further knowledge is created. However, there remains a missing element between investment in knowledge and the creation therein based on a failure to realize the true value of knowledge and subsequently aim to increase it. To that end, it is recommended that the Saudi Arabian government begins to shift its policies toward an increased investment in knowledge production to reap this benefit.

The second benefit that enhances performance and improves productivity, particularly in the petroleum industry, requires an investment in better technology for refineries, which will not only impact the Saudi Arabian economy but the global economy. Although that Saudi Arabia is moving away from a reliance on oil production, oil remains the key industry in the country and will likely remain the future. Hence it is recommended that the government continues to find ways to enhance the technological knowledge of employees in such critical sectors as natural resources and petroleum refineries, as well as infrastructure for things like transportation that is necessary not just for the movement

of petroleum but the movement of people and access to better travel for situations where knowledge might be gained.

Within Saudi Arabia, there is evidence for the third benefit of the knowledge economy as it relates to economic structure, notably in the GDP for the country, although the impact of Covid-19 and the drop in demand for oil as well as the cancellation of travel for the annual Hajj pilgrimage will skew the figures for 2020. Had this research been completed last year, it might have concluded that the new scholarship programmes increased small and medium-sized businesses, and development for service industries and tourism lend credence to the steps currently taken by the KSA to capitalize upon this particular area of the knowledge economy. However, given that the continuation of the pandemic is projected for another year with its economic impact for at least a few more years, the investments currently made to capitalize upon this particular element of the knowledge economy may need to be adjusted. For example: the increase in the service industries and the investment in small and medium businesses go hand-in-hand with the increase in tourism and the annual Hajj pilgrimage. Therefore, if tourism continues to decline for the next few years, and with it the suspension of the Hajj pilgrimage, the KSA will need to find new ways to invest that produce the same economic outcome within the Kingdom.

The KSA was beginning to feel the effects of efforts of investing in the knowledge economy and its human capital. In the past, there was an absence of adequate employment opportunities for returning students from the KASP. Now, however, things are starting to improve with better availability for returning students in industries like education, academia, science research, small and medium sized businesses, marketing, information management, and ICT. As discussed in Chapters 6 and 9, there is still a problem area, however, as it has been projected that the labour force will increase to almost 8.6 million by 2030, at the participation rate of 44%. This means that on average, 203,000 jobs have to be created per year. Vision 2030's aim is to lower the unemployment rate to 7% from 11.6%. It further aims to include overhauling the entire education system, to accommodate the Vision. Had this research been completed one year ago, before the Covid-19 pandemic, the addressing of unemployment rates might have been supported by the recommendation for improved policies and plans on a national scale to continue investing in better education and resources to help those who are not actively participating in employment retain their employment. Moreover, the elements of moral capital might have been raised as it affects those who are actively participating in the job market when behaviours are allowed, which individuals no longer tolerate because of a change in moral ideology as a result of travelling abroad and learning about other nations.

But in the context of Covid-19, given that we do not know how long the pandemic will continue or for how long industries like tourism will be affected, a major economic industry for the KSA, the Vision 2030 plan and the problems with the labour force might get worse before they get better. On 22 June 2020, Saudi Arabia launched a \$4 billion investment fund to try and support the tourism industry during the pandemic, and while it is the first stimulant package deployed to help the tourism industry, travel restrictions are continuing to impact religious and secular tourists setting back the Vision 2030 plan to diversify the otherwise oil-dependent economy (Stratfor, 2020).

Saudi Arabia also announced on 23 June that only a very limited number of people would be allowed to perform the annual Hajj pilgrimage to prevent the spread of Covid-19, and within that group only domestic pilgrims are allowed to participate (Stratfor, 2020). All foreign pilgrims were banned from entering the country. Prior to the outbreak, this pilgrimage was projected to generate \$150 billion in annual tourism revenue by the year 2022 and this current cancellation might cost up to \$12 billion of annual GDP for the KSA and increases the chance that the Umrah pilgrimage will also be cancelled or restricted in future. The fourth quarter of 2020 shows crude oil prices likely to stall once again thanks to the resurgence of Covid-19 infections around the world, which has continued to undermine the recovery of petroleum product demand. As of 3 August 2020, Saudi Arabia has seen continued decline and the risk of continued lockdowns will exacerbate this falling demand from oil-consuming countries across places like Europe, the US, China, and India (Priddy, 2020). As these changes to the economy continue, issues with the labour force will likely fall as will the ability of the government to approve financial aid packages to all of the industries affected.

Moisio and Kangas (2016) noted that a knowledge economy needs a higher level of involvement from all areas of industry, innovation and business in education and training, as workers in these and other areas also need 'new forms of education and training'. ICT illiteracy is, therefore, a big impediment to progress and productivity.

Moreover, the development of fast-paced knowledge needs a total and 'lifelong investment in training'; both at a macro-level of government policy in education as well as a micro-level of human endeavours and commitment to lifelong learning (Moisio and Kangas, 2016). In order for Saudi Arabia to continue its current path towards economic development and knowledge advancement it must take into consideration the importance of training and education for all areas of business, something that the KASP has given to students studying abroad, but which is not furthered once they return to Saudi Arabia and transition into the workplace. In practice, Saudi Arabia will position itself to capitalize upon the projections a knowledge economy can provide only if existing government-run institutions and businesses alike, in conjunction with any new

government or business programmes, begin to implement programmes for continued education and training, investing not just in a one-time study abroad or one-off class, but through ongoing support.

Given the unexpected finding of moral capital, it is clear that the creation of new economic resources for the KSA, including education and knowledge, are imperative. Human and social capital is flexible, well-trained, and equipped in terms of technology, cultural understanding, and scientific understanding, and once Saudi Arabia invests in it that capital can help the shift from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy. The discovery of the moral dilemma expounds upon this same creation of a new resource, the idea of flexible capital has highlighted an unexpected shift in the current thought processes of interviewees as well as the researcher. Were this research to have been concluded one year ago, the recommendations and implications for future policy and planning for Saudi Arabia with regard to the elements of moral capital might have noted the need to rethink on a countrywide scale this potentially unexpected effect that comes from trying to improve the macro- and micro-level economic well-being of the country by sending students overseas. But this has to be analysed by policy decision-makers in the broader context of globalization. The KSA does not work in isolation. It has networks around the world, and a substantial portion of the economic development, which hinges on petroleum refineries is only successful in the context of globalization and the ability to market its oil globally. As these business networks expand their reach and need for the recognition of different viewpoints, the appreciation of the way different cultures or nations have set up the social, moral, and economic rules that govern them so that neighbouring businesses and countries can respect one another. To that end, only by reviewing the micro-level and macro-level in connection with each another were these findings able to expose the dynamic character of 'capital' as it is defined by the new moral dimension. Such a social phenomenon cannot be analysed without taking into consideration the structural components that influence it – structure also influences the social phenomena at hand.

Interviewees in Chapter 9 who noted a problem upon returning to the KSA, taking up employment, and no longer tolerating certain behaviours that they now defined as sexist because of this change in moral capital, were unable to continue in their employment because of it. This is something that could continue on a small scale, particularly with regard to those students who have benefited from the scholarship programme, and if enough have the same thoughts, the rules for social behaviour might have to be changed on a much wider scale throughout Saudi Arabia.

However, these findings relating to moral capital and the recommendations therein have to be placed within the context of a global pandemic. Given that students are not

travelling at present and may not be for the foreseeable future, there could repercussions for the social and moral thought processes of the coming generations. There may be a collection of students who have benefited from the scholarship programme and seen this change in moral capital, followed by a few years where students do not have that exposure and do not change the way they recontextualize their morality based on other cultures, but once the pandemic is over that development of moral capital could theoretically return. However, it is still important for the government to note this unexpected change and how it affects those coming back.

Beyond the issues pertaining to the Saudi Arabian context and the issue of moral capital, the findings for the KASP itself have revealed that steps are being implemented to improve things like communication between those who receive the scholarship and the Ministry of Education back home or the local representatives on the ground, but the Covid-19 pandemic will further hinder this programme – something that the government will need to address as the programme continues. Given the success of online portals and communication, it may be advisable that this be the continued method of communication in all areas, where feasible, particularly as people are encouraged to social distance and limit their interactions.

As aforementioned, language was another issue relating to the programme and students were encouraged to improve their proficiency before they left, with the government currently testing an 18-month language course for students prior to their departure. It is recommended that this policy be monitored and the plan and its implementation gauged for success as the KASP is very likely to change in the future given the Covid-19 but any interim intensive language course could serve as a great preparatory stage for students who plan to enter the programme after the pandemic eases.

## **8.4 Limitations**

In terms of the possible methodological limitations, the first limitation was the sample size. While the number of participants was enough to thoroughly investigate the case study of KASP, as it afforded the ability to find significant relationships from the data, in order to ensure a better representative distribution of the larger population, future work will require more extensive research beyond the single case of the KASP.

With regard to the methodology, some interviews were conducted in person and others virtually. Interviews represent a type of self-reported data which can contain several biases, such as the interviewees misremembering events or experiences, recalling events from another time, attributing positive or negative outcomes or events to some other force, or embellishing an outcome that makes it seem more significant than it actually was. However, given the structure of the interview questions and their deliberate

open-endedness, the interviewees were given the opportunity to provide information without giving the answer they thought the interviewer wanted to hear.

The measures used to collect the data also lent themselves to the potential limitation of linguistic issues. There were interviews conducted in Arabic and subsequently translated, which could lead to issues of thematic elements that were inappropriately translated or did not accurately translate the intended meaning. This extends itself to a possible limitation of the researcher where measuring the perceived value or changes brought about by this programme could have been inhibited by the fluency in English.

There could have potentially been biases on behalf of the researcher, which while normally negative could represent positive bias as well but in either case may have had repercussions on the selection of the thematic data, elements being omitted or on words used to convey either a positive or negative connotation. Steps were taken to avoid bias, but it must be acknowledged that the researcher had also participated in the same type of programme and shared some of the feelings and responses of the interviewees.

The biggest limitation to the work has been the changes brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. The work was developed over the last three to four years but it is only within the last six months that things have changed. For example, the writing upstage affected by the lockdown of the library where I use to do most of the PhD work. The international scholarships and programmes that form the basis of this work are not going to continue in the same way in the future, if at all. How the findings may have changed if completed prior to the pandemic was discussed in section 8.2.

The findings for the KASP programme have revealed that steps were being implemented to improve things like communication between those who received the scholarship and the Ministry of Education back home or the local Representatives on the ground, but the COVID-19 pandemic will further hinder this program in future. Given the success of online portals and communication, it may be advisable that this be the continued method of communication in all areas where it is feasible, particularly as people are encouraged to social distance and limit their interactions during the pandemic. As aforementioned, language was another issue relating to the program and students were encouraged to improve their proficiency before they left, with the government currently in the midst of testing an 18-month language course for students prior to their departure overseas, one that will need to be continually monitored for its success.

## **8.5 Recommendations**

The moral capital changes have necessitated that the government of Saudi Arabia recognise the extent of the change that they are inviting by sending students to study abroad and allowing them to acquire new skills and exposure to new social structures.



Moreover, students returning have had the opportunity to become a part of social structures that they would not otherwise have had access to, and have inevitably been altered by the experience but their return to Saudi Arabian society should theoretically allow them to bring transformation to society on a micro- and macro-level, as predicted by Giddens. As part of KASP, students are embedded in a hospitable environment, acquire skills, and receive support and access to programmes not otherwise accessible to them, and Saudi Arabia would do well to find a way to accommodate these changes in an economically (if not socially) beneficial fashion.

The KSA was beginning to really see and feel the effects of efforts of investing in the knowledge economy and indeed in its human capital. Now however, things are starting to improve with better availability for returning students in industries like education, academia, science research, small and medium sized businesses, marketing, information management, information technology and communications. But, there is still a problem area, as it has been projected that the labour force will increase to close to 8.6 million come 2030, at the participation rate of 44%. This means that on average, 203,000 jobs have to be created per year. Vision 2030 aim is to lower the unemployment rate to 7% from 11.6% but the covid-19 pandemic may hinder this, necessitating a change by the government to address unemployment.

In order for Saudi Arabia to continue its current path toward economic development and knowledge advancement, it must take into consideration the importance of training and education for all areas of business, something that the KASP program has given to students studying abroad, but which is not furthered once they return to Saudi Arabia and transition into the workplace. In practice, Saudi Arabia will position itself to capitalize upon the projections a knowledge economy can provide only if existing government run institutions and businesses alike, in conjunction with any new government programs or business programs required, begin to implement programs for continued education and training, investing not just in a one-time study abroad or one time class, but ongoing support.

Given the unexpected finding of moral capital, it is clear that the creation of new economic resources for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia including education and knowledge are imperative. Human and social capital is flexible, well-trained, and equipped in terms of technology, cultural understanding, and scientific understanding, and once Saudi Arabia invests in it, that capital can help the shift from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy.

This scholarship programme has changed the way of thinking for many of its participants, and in so doing improved their moral capital. While Saudi Arabia is not without moral

capital of its own, it has a particular type of moral viewpoint, one which the scholarship programme recipients have had to incorporate with the other viewpoints to which they were exposed during their time overseas. This idea of flexible capital highlighted an unexpected shift in the current thought processes of interviewees as well as the researcher. The KSA is not one that works in isolation. To that end, only by reviewing the micro-level and macro-level in connection with one another were these findings able to expose the dynamic character of “*capital*” as it is defined by the new moral dimension. Such a social phenomenon cannot be analysed without taking into consideration the structural components that influence it. Vice versa, structure also influences the social phenomena at hand.

Given the fact that students are not travelling at present and may not be travelling for the foreseeable future, there could be a gap for whatever the length of time is that the pandemic prohibits such international exchange and scholarship programs to take place, a gap that will exist within the social and moral thought processes of the coming generations. However, it is still important for the government to note this unexpected change and how it affects those coming back.

## **8.6 Future Research**

To strengthen or expand this work it is recommended that future research look for new opportunities for learning by identifying the limitations of the study and finding a way to overcome them. Interviews with neighbouring countries who have similar programmes would allow for a cross-border analysis between the themes and sub-themes of Saudi Arabian students participating in the study abroad programme and students from other countries.

In order to address the issues of potential fluency or mistranslation, any larger-scale research that builds off this particular design might invest in a professional translation service to guarantee the best accuracy and representation of comments made by interviewees in a foreign language. Other research could use a different type of interview structure that requires all interviewees to meet face-to-face, but this would require more funding to cover the cost of meeting each person in different countries.

The most prominent recommendation for future research is to address the impact of Covid-19. Given that the pandemic interrupted the last segment of this work, and the impact on my work and how I kept keeping myself sane and academically productive during these unprecedented times is profound. For example, I was not able to meet up with some of my colleagues at a convenient venue and write together and/or share our thought, in order to make the act of writing fun and relaxing. I was always interacting with my peers to ease any tension and stress as I was working with them at our desk on

campus. This of course along with the fear of the spread of the virus and the surrounding changes it has brought to my daily and academic lives, made me experience a significant level of stress. Staying home under these conditions, with my kids, had not allowed me to focus on the main task of my research, i.e. writing up my thesis; rather the pandemic frustrated me when I was trying to focus and write and/or sometimes blocked me.

Given all this, future research might replicate the findings by comparing and contrasting more longitudinal work, specifically what themes and sub-themes were found by students participating in these programmes before the pandemic, those whose studies were interrupted, and those taking part in KASP after the pandemic. While only a few years were devoted to studying this topic rather than a lifetime, the ability to investigate the research problem and measure its potential stability or changes over time would benefit the knowledge games for scholars within the field by providing a wider range of analysis into the impact of these programs on students throughout different time periods.

## **8.7 Personal Reflection**

As mentioned previously in Section 6.4, When it comes to reflecting on my journey into higher education, it feels like I have an attraction to education and academic study. It feels good to move from one degree to the next, gaining knowledge and breaking the walls of ignorance. It was my childhood dream to study abroad because I knew it would be beneficial on so many levels. I was attracted to the idea that living abroad and studying overseas in a new place and meeting new people would be fascinating, even though I knew at the time it would be difficult, but not impossible.

In 2005, a friend told me that the Ministry of Education had launched a scholarship programme for Saudis. I thought about it and decided to apply in the second year of KASP running as an international scholarship programme. I had reviewed the terms and conditions as well as the list of countries that the Ministry of Education had chosen for its sponsored students. I chose Malaysia to be my place of study. After an eight-month process of submitting my papers, I was accepted into KASP. After spending a couple of months in Malaysia and realising the difficulties in getting a visa for my brother and my daughter,<sup>9</sup> I decided to send a request to the Ministry of Education to change my place of study to the UK.

I was able to arrange everything before my arrival to the UK. I was able to contact and communicate with the Saudi community in the UK, who have a strong and supportive network for Saudis coming to the UK for work and study. My criteria for my choice was

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<sup>9</sup> At this time, Saudi law required all Saudi women (especially those who are not married) to be accompanied by a male guardian (Mah'ram) of the family when travelling for any purpose in public, including abroad. This is the why my brother needed to travel with me.

to be somewhere where there was a good university, a good Arabic school and a good Arabic-speaking community. This narrowed my choices down to London and Leeds.

Also, unlike in Malaysia where visas for family are only for three months and require the person to leave the country and then return every three months, the visa for the UK for my brother and daughter was linked to my visa and they could come and go as they please. This meant that getting the visas for my brother and my daughter was straightforward and without any complications.

From this point, my postgraduate studies have been in two phases. The first phase was from 2007 to 2011 in which I did my English language studies and my MA in Information Management. Change started to take place since the first phase. I was noticing subtle differences in myself and my thinking. I felt more tolerant to other cultures as I was beginning to see and engage with people from everywhere in the city of Leeds. But this change was happening within the small circle around me (classmates/friends from university, and the Saudi friends I met in Leeds). Communication with the locals of Leeds was missing and circumstances were not ideal, as I was focusing on my studies primarily, and on my relationship with family (I met my husband in Leeds and married him in 2008, during this first phase of my postgraduate study) and on my Saudi friends. Looking back, I think the language centre could have provided more connection to UK students through events and activities, to provide opportunities for us to engage with each other and get to know each other. There was also not enough information on where else we could go to practice our English for free. Added to this is a students' busy schedule with studies. Language and time were therefore two big challenges, as well as knowing where to go to gain the opportunity.

I have gone through many experiences that were helpful to me in changing who I am, such as discovering the importance of developing skills like time management, dealing with bureaucracy and paperwork, patience, self-reliance, finding the right source of information, as well as visa applications. Other experiences include my engagement with 'PATH Yorkshire', an organisation delivering employability projects, and 'Connecting Opportunity', a project working with new migrants to develop their skills and opportunities to find work and be part of the local community in Leeds. These are two charities which help people connect to each other and with opportunities. Through them I have done such things as present reports to managers, organise and help with holiday celebrations, engaged in a befriending project with Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network (LASN) in Leeds, and accessed training. I have even had a key worker who has kept in contact with me to ask how I am and to direct me to places where I can get information.

Another experience which has changed me was the culture shock of meeting and connecting with people from other places in the world, or even accepting people in relationships across races, religions and/or cultures. My personality has changed dramatically, as I have been able to know the importance of coexistence with other cultures, seeing beauty in difference, being able to be objective in looking at things. When I was studying for my MA, I was influenced by my supervisor as he taught me that it is okay to be different. He also showed me how to be frank, straightforward, honest with myself, and with others as well. His ethics, manners, morals, and his fairness with his students are paramount. He taught me how to be a good student and researcher, which made me look at him as a great example to follow in academia.

When I finished my MA, I had to go back to Saudi Arabia, because my husband had finished his studies, six months after I completed mine, and so we could not extend our scholarship any further. On my return to Saudi, I was looking for a job for almost two years. I got rejected in the private sector because I was over-qualified, and this was something that I came to accept. Also, when I applied for an academic post, they would reject my papers because my MA subject of Information Management is not relevant to my BA studies in Mathematics and Science. I tried to convince those at universities of the importance of hiring young Saudi men and women who are qualified, but unfortunately, I could not change or influence anything. After two years of being rejected, a friend told me about the opening of a new hospital in my hometown recruiting Saudis. I submitted an application, was interviewed, and got a job that did not require more than a diploma. Because of the shortage of opportunities, I accepted the role in the hope that things would get better by moving up the ladder from the administrative job. Unfortunately, that was not the case, as the atmosphere in the hospital was built on a web of networks who looked after each other when it came to promotion. So, it was not about who was qualified or not, but rather, who you know. Although I was not too happy with the situation, the salary was good. However, it came to a point where I felt I could not develop myself in the job. At that time, I realised I needed to quit my job and continue my higher education by getting a PhD.

Starting a PhD is the second phase of my higher education journey. I tried to make the most of it by getting to know different people from diverse backgrounds in the UK. I started my PhD and I was enthusiastic about knowing people, so I started attending the Leeds conversation project.<sup>10</sup> I started to make new friends and I have learnt new things and I am getting to know new cultures and traditions. What impressed me the most is the participation of the British people from different classes in society, into such voluntary

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<sup>10</sup> [www.leedsconversationproject.org](http://www.leedsconversationproject.org)

works (teachers, professors, doctors, younger and older people). Since then, I have started to discover new adventures through volunteering and participating more in the language clubs. For example, I helped organise and support a project for a language club at the Grand Mosque in Leeds, for a women's only group. These experiences were enriching indeed. My personality has changed and developed completely, especially in terms of my self-confidence.

On a personal level, many of my beliefs and ideas have also changed, which of course was reflected in my relationship with myself and those around me (my husband, children, family, and society as a whole). It led to many challenges. For example, my attitude to the hijab is to accept the meaning of it to dress modestly, but my own interpretation is that this is to be applied in the context of where you are. And so, to dress modestly in the UK does not necessitate the wearing of hijab, whereas in Saudi, it does.

Also, I feel that what is not accepted today will become acceptable tomorrow, because we change. I believe we have to experience life ourselves and ask where our minds and choices in life are. I have noticed that this attitude is also linked to people's behaviour – behaviour that is a reaction to an attitude (often derived from a social norm). However, once everything is gone in terms of the pressure to conform, like it did with me when I came to the UK to study, then both attitudes and behaviours change. My overcoming has been accepting the reality, and not obligating another with my judgement. I am free to make a judgement, but I will no longer expect someone to conform or react, to mine or societies expectations and/or judgement.

My way of thinking has changed to the point of feeling like a stranger in my own country. Living abroad changes you as a person, and I see that reflection in the eyes of those who are still in Saudi Arabia when we discuss certain issues. Some feel that we are not the same, some look at me with pride and joy, and others look at me as someone who comes from a different world.

On the other hand, studying abroad gave us the chance to know other people from different nations and cultures. At the same time, they know things about us as Saudis, how misrepresented we are. For example, we are not all rich, do not all wear expensive brands, do not all have a lack of care for others, or all think we will get into heaven – we are not that different to other students in the UK. People sometimes think we as Saudis are either too good, or too bad. When I have heard these kinds of stereotypes and judgements, I encourage people to go to Saudi and go see for themselves or engage with Saudis in order to overcome their prejudice. My own mindset has always been ready to engage the other and positively overcome barriers and misrepresentations. KASP has been a great opportunity to know others and to build new friendships.

This leads me to my thoughts about Saudi students travelling and living abroad for their academic studies as part of the KASP. My research points to the fact that it is essential for Saudi students abroad to give a good impression of both Saudi people and of Saudi Arabia, by making efforts to engage with the local people of their host country. My own experiences and the way in which I have been received in the UK, and how I have been able to meet and connect with local people, whilst developing myself and my experiences reinforces my belief that this should also be returned by us as Saudis to foreigners visiting Saudi Arabia. People coming to Saudi should be welcomed, made to feel safe and able to experience a good culture. But this needs Saudi to change its culture to be more open and welcoming as a country and as a society, and as individual people.

If Saudi Arabia wants foreigners to invest in the KSA, then it needs to learn this lesson from KASP, which sends its citizens to become students abroad to bring learning back, to develop its knowledge economy by applying their skills and knowledge, building and using their networks and attracting investment from abroad. Therefore, language skills are essential for students to return with, not just at a professional level, but at a personal level too, backed-up with experiences of engaging with locals abroad, and being enriched in their own character development because of their experiences. This makes maintaining those networks easier, and investment from abroad more likely, as Saudi Arabia, as well as the Saudi people, will be seen in a better perspective.

I feel indebted to myself and to my country to give me the chance to learn abroad, and to explore things I would not have even been able to know anything about if it was not for this experience. I feel that I must now give something back to my country and my country's people. I also feel I have to always improve myself, and do for myself, and that I have reached this point because of myself. I am justly proud of myself, and this encourages me to take more and more care of myself, and care more about myself. Doing my postgraduate studies in the UK developed my personality in a beautiful way. It has made me more open, especially with differences. I no longer see everything as black and white and my way of thinking has changed. Before it was always "*our way, or the highway*", but now, it all depends on the people, place, situation and circumstance.

Studying abroad is not only about getting the degree qualification. It is more than that. I found out that I love to experience new things, to listen to and consider other people's perspectives, whilst taking responsibility to judge things from my own perspective, without letting anyone dictate my way of looking at things. I had many concerns about things before coming to the UK, such as thinking that the British people are not open to people of other nations. This is not true, as I have made the best of friends with the locals in Leeds. What I see is an amazing nation of people who are open to others, whether I am in the market, at university, at the language centres, or at the banks and bookstores.

I have discovered that I am supposed to see the world with my own eyes, and to continue to do so, enjoying every step of this journey.



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## **Appendices**

### **Chapter 4 Appendices**

#### **Appendix 4.1: Students' Interview questions**

##### **Students' interview Questions**

- 1-Please tell me about your experience of the scholarship program?
- 2-How has your experience been after the program?
- 3-How might this change the way you do that today?
- 4-How did you benefits from KASP?
- 5-What was your expectations from this program?
- 6-What are the implications of this program on your family?
- 7-What are the implications of this program on Saudi society?
- 8-Do you think there are better way to improve KASP?
- 9-Tell me something that you have not expected?

#### **Appendix 4.2: Administrators' Interview questions**

##### **Administrators' interview Questions**

- 1-What is the aim of KASP?
- 2-Have the aims of the scholarship program changed over the years?
- 3-How has it changed over the years?
- 4-How do you distinguish the candidates?
- 5-How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this process?
- 6-How do you deal with student who apply in this program?
- 7-How do you follow the student afterword?
- 8-How is your link to the bigger issues around society and so on?
- 9-Do you think there are better ways to improve KASP?

## Appendix 4.3: Information Sheet and Consent Form

### 4.3a: Information Sheet

#### INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

##### Information Sheet

We would welcome your participation in the study outlined below, but before signing the consent form, please read the following information carefully and ask if you have any questions or would like further information.

**Organisation of the Research:** The study is being carried out by PhD candidate Ms Hadeel Alsharif, School of Computing and Creative Technologies, Leeds Beckett University, under the supervision of Professor Tony Bryant.

**Purpose of the Research:** A key part of my PhD research is the carrying out of in-depth interviews. My research is focused on studying how to develop Human and Social Capital for the 21st Century in Saudi Arabia and investigate the transition process of Saudi Arabia from a Resource-based economy to a Knowledge-based economy. To best achieve these research aims, in-depth interviews with individuals in Saudi 's governments and students are being carried out.

**Your Involvement in the Research:** Your involvement in this research is completely voluntary, you can choose not to take part and may withdraw from participating in the study at any point, without being obliged to provide a reason. The declaration of consent form emphasises the voluntary nature of your participation.

**Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Your anonymity is of the highest importance and will be maintained throughout the research process. Your personal data will not be linked at any point with the interview data.

**The end result of the research:** The results of the research will be presented as part of a PhD thesis. All personal data will be destroyed after the thesis and associated reports have been written.

If you have any questions regarding this research, please do not hesitate to contact:

**The Researcher:** Hadeel Alsharif

**Email address:** [H.alzaidalsharif9588@student.leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:H.alzaidalsharif9588@student.leedsbeckett.ac.uk)

If you have any queries about myself or my research, you are welcome to contact:

**Director of Studies Professor:** Tony Bryant

**Email address:** [A.bryant@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:A.bryant@leedsbeckett.ac.uk)

#### 4.3b: Consent Form

##### Declaration of Consent Form

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form:

I,..... agree to participate in Hadeel Alsharif's research in to Developing Human and Social Capital for the 21st Century: The Transition of Saudi Arabia from a Resource-based economy to a Knowledge-based economy.

- I,..... agree to participate in Hadeel Alsharif's research in to Developing Human and Social Capital for the 21st Century: The Transition of Saudi Arabia from a Resource-based economy to a Knowledge-based economy.  
☐
- The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.  
☐
- The purpose of the research is clear to me and I am participating voluntarily.  
☐
- I give permission for my interviewer Hadeel Alsharif to record my Interview.  
☐
- I understand that I have the authority to withdraw from the study at any time, either before or after the interview if I wish to do so.  
☐
- I understand that my identity will remain anonymous throughout the research.  
☐
- I understand that the content of my interview will be used for research purposes, either in thesis or any other form of research but my identity will remain anonymous.  
☐
- I understand that with my identity remaining anonymous, extracts and quotations may be used from my interview in the thesis or any other publications if I give permission below (**Please tick one box**):
  - a) I agree to quotations & extracts for publications purposes ☐
  - b) I do not agree to quotations and extracts for publications purposes ☐

Signed.....

Date.....

## Chapter 5 Appendix

### Appendix 5.1: Results – Initial Codes

صدمة معرفية فرق مستوى المعيشة	المعرفة عن الوظائف من خلال الاصدقاء	مؤثرات التوظيف (القطاع الحكومي)	دور الملحقيات	صعوبات نفسية	التقديم
مساعداًت الال	التعامل مع اصحاب العمل	مؤثرات التوظيف ( القطاع الخاص )	تحول كبير في المجتمع	صعوبات مادية	صعوبات
مساعداًت الازواج	تكيف الاطفال مع المجتمع بعد العودة	قاعدة بيانات	اكتساب مهارات	المكافئة	تعلم لغة جديدة
تلقواًت دراسية	مشكلة الاطفال اللغوية	مشاكل تواجه السيدات	نمو المهارة المعرفية	الموئل	معاهد اللغة
صعوبات لغوية	مشكلة المدارس العالمية	المدارس العربية في بلد الابعات	نمو المهارات المهنية	موجهة المجتمع بعد العودة	قبول الجامعات
تغير اشروط و الاختيار	تقبل المجتمع لافكار المجتمع بعد العودة	الملحقيات الطلبيه	مسؤولية وزارة التعليم ( تأهيل الكوادر على حسب احتياج سوق العمل )	مسؤوليه	التوفيق بين العائله و الدراسة
التأهيل قبل الابعات	تغير الافكار المبتعث	وظائف الاجانب	مراعاة احتياجات المرأة حضانات اطفال / اكواد العمل	التعامل مع الجنس الاخر	مساعدة الملحقية للطلاب
عدم تقبل الاختلاف	انفتاح المبتعث	مستوى المعيشة في بلد الابعات	التعايش	التعامل مع الزوج	التعاون بين المبتعثين
الشعور بالاحباط	رؤية البرنامج غير واضحة	التواصل مع الملحقيات	اكتساب مهارة في تقبل الآخر	الاخلاص	العنصرية
العنصريه	استقطاب الدول للمبتعثين	تقييم الطلبة	اهداف البرنامج	الثقة	الثقة
حضانات الاطفال	عدم الاستفادة من الطلاب بعد الابعات	اختلاف الخلفية التدراسيه	تاريخ برامج الابعات السعودية	الصدق	التعرف على ثقافة جديدة تغير الشخصية للافضل
التعامل الانساني	علاقة الانفتاح بالدين	توقعات الوظائف	نتائج الابعات	التسامح	المسؤولية
تعلم الاخلاقي الجيده و مصدرها	زيادة الوعي تقبل المجتمع للابعات	المحسوبيات	تطور برامج الابعات	الامانه	حرية الاختيار
تغير النظرة للدين	تقبل المجتمعات الاخرى للطلاب	الرغبة في نقل المعرفة	ربط الابعات بسوق العمل	مهارات تقنية	الغيزا



تعلم التفكير	تعلم الابداع و التجديد	الامانه العلمية	التدريب في بلد الابتنات	افتتاح	اختلاف طرق التدريس
تعلم النقد	تأثير العودة لبلد الابتنات مرة اخرى	تقدير العلم	محاولة استقطاب الكفاءات السعودية من خلال برامج التدريب	التقديم على البعثه	مهارات جديدة
اساليب التربية الخاصة	دور اليتيمين في التعريف بثقافتنا	الشكر و التقدير للحصول على الفرصة	تغير رؤية وزارة التعليم	فرص متساوية	تكنولوجيا جديدة
تحديد سن الابتنات	المسؤولية تجاه الوطن	العمل اليدوي	برامج دعم خريجي الداخل و الخارج	الملحقية	التدريب على استخدام التقنيات الجديدة
تعريف المتبعين عن البلد المستضيف	تقبل الآخر	المنصه التعليمية و تطورها	البرامج الغير معتة	الوزارة	الصبر
الاستفادة الأكاديمية	عدم تقبل المجتمع و انتقاده	العمل تحت الضغط	وحدة دعم الخريجين	ملتزمات	اهمية الوقت
موظفين الملحقية	تغير الدين و انتقاد المجتمع بشده	مراعاة الظروف الصحية للطلاب	قاعدة بيانات للمتبعين و محاولة الاستفادة منها	شح الوظائف	ادارة الوقت
صعوبة الغريه	رغبة المتبعين في التغيير	نظام الصحة	قضايا المراه	مشاكل زوجية	قطاع الخدمات
توقعات صعوبة شروط التوظيف	زيادة وعي المجتمع	متعة التجربة	المحرم	مشاكل عائلية	التقدير
عدم الإقبال على العمل الخاص	ظهور الكثير من المواهب السعودية	التأمين الطبي	ربط وظائف المعدين و المحاضرين مع برامج الابتنات	هجرة	مستوى التعليم أكثر من المطلوب
تصنيف الجامعات	دعم الملحقيات لطلاب	عدم التخطيط	صعوبة شروط التوظيف في الجامعات	طلاق	معاناة الشهادات
مشكلة تصنيف التخصصات الطبية	التوعية بأهمية التطوع	العمل في غير مجال الدراسة	دراسة اللغة قبل الابتنات	استفادة الأطفال	شح الوظائف النسائية

المحرم	الشعور بالامتنان	تغير عادات التسوق	استخدام التكنولوجيا في الاتصال	تعامل المدراء	معادلة الشهادات
معاهد الجامعات ( اللغة )	الاعتماد على مخرجات الامتحانات لتطوير التعليم	تقنين الاعداد	التأهيل قبل الامتحانات	شروط التوظيف	استقطاب
الإنسانية	مراعاة احتياجات سوق العمل	تشدد المجتمع	تحسين المدخلات	تأمين طبي	تسهيلات مشاريع
المساواة	تغير شروط الامتحانات على حسب المرحلة	تغير رأي المجتمع مع الوقت	الجامعات المتنزه	رسوم دراسية	فيزا
تعلم الاخلاص في العمل	الاختيار يتم بشكل عادل	اعتراض المجتمع	اتفاقيات مع معاهد اللغة و الجامعات	مكافآت تقوى	تغيير التخصص
القنوات الإلكترونية	متابعة الطالب ( داخل الملحقية و خارجها)	تغير طريقة التفكير	تطوير الكفاءه التشغيليه لبرنامج الامتحانات	اختلاف طيفه المتابعة باختلاف المرحلة الدراسية	الثقه في مخرجات البرنامج
ايجاد طريقة سهله للتعامل مع الملحقية	الاختلاط	تعر المبتعثين	التعامل مع الملحقية	تطوير الذات	الرغبة في مساعدة المجتمع
شروط المحرم	الاحترافية	تقدير معنوي	التعليم المستمر	اجراءات القبول	طرق التقديم
التعامل مع الملحقية	الراتب الشهري قليل	الراتب الشهري كافي	انتاج طاقة بشرية جديدة ومؤهله للتعامل مع التكنولوجيا	اسباب الالتحاق	طرق تحسين برنامج الامتحانات
برامج تسويق المبتعثين ( سابقه )	برامج لدعم الطلاب	الامتحانات في السابق من الجهات الحكومية فقط	البرامج التحضيريه	انشاء قنوات تواصل بين الملحقيات و قطاعات الاعمال	تغيير مستوى السلوك
حماية البيانات و عمل نظام	يوم المبتعث	اختلاف الأنظمة التعليمية	وحدة المنح	اسباب تعر طلاب الدكتوراه	الامل في تحقيق الطموح