Chapter 19
Comparing Teacher Experiences Using a Learning Management System in K–12 Schools in Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Since the school year of 2014-2015, the learning management system, Classera, has been implemented in many K-12 schools in Saudi Arabia with the aim of improving teaching and learning. In this study, an online survey was used to collect data to explore Saudi Arabia private and public school teacher differences in experiences with the use of Classera, and their satisfaction levels, perceived benefits, and perceived challenges in using Classera. The findings from this study have implications for the further implementation and adoption of Classera in the educational system in Saudi Arabia.

INTRODUCTION

There is a claim that private schools do a better job of educating their students than public schools based on the student achievement (Lubienski & Lubienski, 2005). Also, it has been argued that private schools are more successful in retaining the best teachers and in developing their teaching skills (Ballou & Podgursky, 1998). Indeed, the source of funding is the major difference between private and public schools in Saudi Arabia. Ali, Ghani and Ali (2011) defined the private school as “a school under financial and managerial control of a private or charitable trust accepting mostly fee paying students” (p.163). Thus, private schools rely on the tuition from their students while public schools receive government funding.
In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, public and private schools are led by principals who are overseen by the Ministry of Education and teachers are required to implement the government-directed curriculum (Deraney & Abdelsalam, 2012). Public education is free for all students with the government expending a large portion of the country’s budget on education (Algarni & Male 2014; Al-Seghayer, 2011). Private schools, on the other hand, are categorized into private traditional and private international schools. As the popularity of technology keeps growing, educators in Saudi Arabia continue the process of integrating educational technology tools into the traditional curriculum to enhance teaching and learning in both public and private schools. In fact, the Ministry of Education’s Ten-Year Plan (2004-2014), includes the need for developing the required infrastructure for digital technology to be better implemented in education (Ministry of Education, 2005).

According to Al-Asmari and Khan (2014), many public and private schools in Saudi Arabia are turning to e-learning and the development of infrastructure within their schools to enhance education and build connections between students, teachers, and parents. Since 2007, the Saudi government has made huge investments with the aim of developing education by introducing electronic devices to facilitate teaching and providing training and developmental programs for educators to ensure the effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) in education (Albugami & Ahmed, 2015).

More recently, the Saudi government has adopted and implemented the learning management system, Classera, in many public and private schools, which is considered a new and big movement in the K-12 education system in Saudi Arabia. Classera was originally piloted in 12 public schools for the school year of 2014-2015 (Alahmari & Kyei-Blankson, 2016). Later, the implementation of Classera has continued to include many other public and private schools across the country with the aim of improving and enhancing teaching and learning.

While Classera has been implemented in both public and private schools in Saudi Arabia for a while, there have been no studies that compare differences in public and private schools regarding the adoption and implementation of Classera. There is a need to examine whether the objectives for this implementation have been met in both types of schools. Such research in the Saudi Arabia education system has not been conducted as a thorough literature search did not yield any such studies. Therefore, comparing public and private schools in regards to the implementation of this system is the focus of this study. The issue central to this study is teachers’ perceptions of Classera. It is important to assess Classera from the teachers’ viewpoint as they are at the frontline of this implementation.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the differences between public and private schools in regards to the adoptions and implementation of Classera in K-12 education system in Saudi Arabia. This study specifically aims to explore teachers’ perceptions about the benefits, challenges, and concerns of the use of Classera in public and private schools. The research questions of interest include the following:

1. Is there any difference between public and private schools in regards to experiences with using Classera?
2. Do teachers’ levels of satisfaction with using Classera differ from public to private schools?
3. Are there significant differences between public and private school teachers’ perceived benefits with using Classera?