



## Research Article

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# Improving Higher Education Administration: A Case Study of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University

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## Abstract

*The study undertakes to identify the point of view of university leaders to develop university administration. The researcher used the descriptive-analytical method for the present study. The study uses a questionnaire as a tool for data collection. The questionnaire consists of four main dimensions to measure the competitiveness of university administration in Saudi universities. There are 37 items in the questionnaire. The research sample includes 172 deans of faculties, heads of academic departments, and administrations at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. The research concluded that Saudi universities' administration role in achieving a competitive advantage is moderate. There are no statistically significant differences according to the variable of gender and service years. Based on the findings, a proposal has been developed to advance university administration and improve the competitiveness at Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. The research also recommended establishing advisory councils to provide developmental consultations to the university to serve the vision 2030 of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.*

**Keywords:** administration, university, university system, vision 2030, Higher Education

## 1. Introduction

The current era is witnessing many changes and developments. The higher education institutions are diverse at various levels. They are diverse in terms of the number of students and workers. Their responsibility towards society is to select, train, and evaluate working individuals.

The university is a social institution with scientific and practical leadership goals. It is a social institution centrally linked to the state, providing independence in financial, administrative, and scientific matters (Al-Omari, 2002). University leaders gain great importance due to their significant role in combating the continuous changes and challenges universities face. The university leaders must be capable of continuing their academic missions to achieve their purpose (Al-Saleh and Abu Karim, 2020). The university administration is considered responsible for developing the university's functions. The absence of such efficient university administration that can understand the mechanisms and techniques of the modern age and accept the change is an obstacle to development. Therefore, efficient university administration is essential because of its significant role (Al-Deikah and A'alimat, 2020).

Universities need to be distinguished by their administrations to compete efficiently in their

markets. It will ensure their customers' satisfaction and achieve a competitive advantage for the university. Effective university administration contributes to overcoming problems and challenges, providing security and stability, and achieving a competitive advantage. The university enters advanced ranks of development and innovation by defining its mission according to a clear vision, well-thought-out plans, and effective strategic management (Smiley and Bin Omara, 2017).

## 2. Research Problem

Universities have witnessed great competition to survive and grow in the market. It is required to understand modern administrative complexities. The competition among universities at the global and local levels has been paramount. This competition has put pressure on universities. With the increasing competition at the local and international levels, the pressure is increasing for these universities to activate their plans, visions, paths, and work. Extreme precision is required in the management of universities to compete with the current threats. Competitive universities are defined as universities that can continuously improve their educational quality overtime or increase their demand. Thus these universities obtain advanced positions in the global ranking of universities and research institutions. Saudi universities have become essential to improving their regional and global competitiveness due to these transformations. It is necessary to rely on distinguished university management (Al-Shathri, 2016).

The importance of this research lies in terms of the university administration's priority. It is considered the basis for the success or failure of the institution. Without an effective leader, it is nothing more than a set of machines, equipment, buildings, and some money, in which there is no life or movement. The coming years will witness huge developments in all fields in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The obstacles and challenges that Saudi universities are confronting are achieving the 2030 vision of rehabilitating university leaders and human cadres so that these universities may cope with these developments in all fields. The highest standards of global competitiveness can't be achieved without a highly efficient university administration.

In light of these obstacles related to the development of a practical university administration, the researcher has undertaken the study on a proposal to develop the university administration in Saudi universities. University Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz is taken as a model.

The main research question is, "What is the proposal to develop university administration in Saudi universities to achieve competitive advantage taking Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University as a model?"

## 3. Significance of the Study

The importance of the research lies in its theoretical and practical aspects, as follows:

1. According to the vision 2030 of Saudi Arabia, the most crucial goal is to develop and improve at least five Saudi universities to bring them among the top 200 international universities in the world.
2. The decision-makers in Saudi universities will benefit from the proposal for the development of the university administration to improve the competitive advantage
3. It will be a scientific addition and new knowledge to the Arab and Saudi libraries. It will be a starting point for further research and studies in other educational institutions.

## 4. Limitation of the Study

The research is limited to developing a proposed vision for the development of university administration in Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage. It was also limited to Deans of faculties, Heads of academic departments, and heads of administrations at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University.

## 5. Theoretical Framework

The university administration is responsible for leading change, improving performance, and bringing institutional excellence. Thomas (2001) mentioned that university success depends on its quality in terms of the efforts and activities of the university administration. It is responsible for controlling and leading academic work and the creation of a scientific climate for better university performance. Abdul Hai (2007, 31) defined it as a set of various operations and activities carried out by employees, faculty members, and students in a manner of participation, cooperation, and mutual understanding among themselves in a democratic atmosphere to improve the educational process and achieve its aims. The efforts are mobilised, organised, coordinated, and directed to achieve the university institution's aims" (Samir, 2019, 16). University administration is a set of different processes, practices, and efforts undertaken to influence individuals' behaviour.

The new university system emphasises the necessity of upgrading the status of Saudi universities with their products and services globally. It calls for the inevitability of adopting the philosophy of institutional excellence that university institutions seek to achieve by providing high-quality services reflected positively on their outputs. It gives them capabilities and competitive advantages.

Al-Saleh (2012, p.60) maintains that the competitive advantage in universities depends on two main parts. The first part is the university's ability to excel in vital areas such as academic programs, characteristics of faculty members, techniques used, physical equipment, scientific research, management style, quality systems, innovation systems and new qualification and training programs to keep pace with developments. The second aspect is the university's ability to attract students and support and funding from the local and foreign markets. The competitive advantage is that the institution has something that distinguishes it from others and leads to an increase in its value in the markets and its profits and influence. It is also defined as the organisation's pursuit of excellence with the highest returns to maintain its current competitive capabilities while constantly enhancing its future capabilities (Wangari, 2015, 86). Al-Khawaldeh (2020) defined it as a distinct skill, technology, or resource that helps the organisation achieve its outcome in an inappropriate way for its competitors to imitate. It is achieved through the practice of activities at the lowest cost level.

Establishing a competitive university requires a strong leadership capable of developing an appropriate vision for the university's future. Such leadership must implement this vision ineffectively and apply the organisation's vision to achieve high competitiveness with the necessary skills (Victor, 2005). There are three essential methods to gain a competitive advantage: applying human resources management strategy, dealing with change, and building strategic unity (Sonia, 2016). The competitive advantage is a distinct resource that allows the organisation to produce customers' values, benefits, and services. The dimensions to build a competitive advantage through university administration are:

1. The economic ways represent the efficiency in which the operations related to the aims are accomplished. The actual efficiency is increasing production and converting inputs into outputs by ensuring an effective university administration that learns to increase its productivity to reach results with a highly competitive advantage locally and globally.
2. It is the appropriateness of the design characteristics of the product or service for the function, use and conformity of the product. The principle of continuous improvement provides renewable benefits to the institution (Taleb, 2012). The quality of services in universities provides a high-quality educational level, achieved through a university administration capable of achieving institutional aims to reach a competitive advantage in its outputs.
3. In light of the significant change and diversity in products and services, the short life cycle of products, the speed of their replacement, and the lack of continuity, flexibility imposes its presence as a competitive weapon. The flexibility measures the institution's ability to compete by providing products in large and new quantities that satisfy and meet the

beneficiary's needs. Flexibility has two types: flexibility in style means changes in product design, and flexibility in scale means changing production quantities (Hill and Jones, 2008). The universities are flexible with the modifications that educational institutions keep pace with within a highly competitive environment. The primary role of university administration has become to achieve a competitive advantage, change, and progress.

4. The institutions continuously respond to satisfy the beneficiary and obtain loyalty, leading to its distinction and development. So, institutions must meet the expectations of beneficiaries with the required quality and speed to attract them and achieve a competitive advantage (Al-Wadi, 2012). The ability of university administration and the ability to respond to developments that meet societies' expectations increases the opportunity for them to distinguish themselves and achieve a competitive advantage locally and globally.

University leaders with outstanding education and high skills represent an essential strategic dimension in achieving competitive advantage, as they are one of the crucial tangible resources. Such resources have a significant role in finding and applying technology and being an element that competitors cannot imitate quickly and easily (Al-Barqi, 2021). Both Hill and Jones (Hill & Jones, 2001) stated that the details of competitive advantage are as follows:

- Distinguished competencies are the strengths of the organisation that give it the opportunity for excellence and arise from the resources and capabilities.
- Modernisation is developing new processes and developing leadership and management methods.
- Responding to beneficiaries is done through the ability to perform tasks better than competitors and satisfy the needs of beneficiaries on time
- Quality of service is represented in the beneficiaries realising that there is quality in the service provided and that it is of high value, so it is considered a competitive advantage.

By reviewing the theoretical frameworks for the study's variables, we see that the development of university administration is necessary.

## 6. Research Methodology

The present study used the descriptive-analytical method for its relevance to the purposes of the research and its nature by reviewing and researching the literature of educational research and previous studies related to the topic of the study.

### 6.1 The Research Sample

The study sample includes deans of all colleges, heads of academic departments, and administration leaders (Table 1). 172 respondents are selected as a sample, as detailed in the table. Gender distribution and service length are given in Table 2.

**Table 1:** The research community and its sample

Career nature	Deans	Academic departments heads	Administrations heads	Total
No.	21	101	50	172

**Table 2:** Research sample characteristics

Gender		Service years		
Male	Female	Less than 5	More than 5- less than 10	More than 10
128	44	48	82	34

## 6.2 Research tool

The researcher developed the research tool based on a survey of previous theoretical literature related. Previous studies related to the research topic were referred to as Samir (2019). The research tool was a questionnaire to collect primary data for the study sample, which is 172 individuals.

The research tool consisted of four main dimensions of (37) items which are as follows:

- a. The efficiency of university administration 8 items
- b. Quality assurance of services 10 items
- c. Adaptation and flexibility 10 items
- d. The extent of the response to beneficiaries 9 items.

## 6.3 Validity of the Research Tool

The validity of the research tool was verified using the apparent validity by presenting the research tool in its initial form to a group of arbitrators from specialists and experienced faculty members in some Saudi universities. The necessary amendment, reformulation, or deletion was made.

## 6.4 Reliability of the Research Tool

To verify the stability of the tool, the researcher used two types of stability which are as follows:

1. The test-retest method selected a sample of (15) individuals from outside the research sample with an interval of two weeks, which was 0.87.
2. The internal consistency method used the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, which was 0.86.

## 7. Finding and Discussion

To analyse the reality of university administration to achieve a competitive advantage in Saudi universities, the results were as follows:

Results related to the first research question, which states, "What is the reality of the role of university administration in Saudi universities to achieve competitive advantage from the point of view of university leaders?" The arithmetic means, standard deviations, rank, and degree was extracted to answer the question, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Arithmetic means, standard deviations, and ranks of the degree of the university administration role in Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage from the university leaders' point of view, organised in a descending order

No.	Dimensions	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Rank	Degree
1	The efficiency of university administration	3.55	0.79	4	Medium
2	Quality assurance of services	3.72	0.83	1	High
3	adaptation and flexibility	3.56	0.72	2	Medium
4	The response of the beneficiaries	3.63	0.68	3	Medium
<b>The overall score for the response range of the beneficiaries</b>		<b>3.63</b>	<b>0.68</b>		<b>Medium</b>

Table 3 shows that the total degree of the university administration's role in Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage was medium. For all dimensions of competitive advantage, as the mean score was 3.63, the standard deviation was 0.73. The total score for ensuring the quality of services came in the first rank with a mean of 3.72, a standard deviation of 0.83, with a medium degree.

The dimension of adaptation and flexibility was on the second rank in a medium degree, with a

mean score of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 0.72. The dimension of response to the beneficiaries was in the third rank with a medium degree, as the mean was 3.63 and the standard deviation was 0.68. The university administration efficiency was in the fourth rank with a medium degree and a mean score of 3.55 and a standard deviation of 0.79.

The results reflect that the dimension of service quality that came in a medium degree and the first rank is attributed to the importance of providing high-quality services in higher education institutions. It aligns with the development required to achieve the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia vision 2030 in education and is in line with the new university system, which focuses on the quality of services and the importance of achieving excellence.

Institutional, as for the second rank, came to the dimension of adaptation and flexibility. The researcher believes that this may be due to Saudi universities' circumstances and are still under the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic. This pandemic has made universities a digital educational platform. The ability of Saudi universities to adapt and provide the highest degree of flexibility during the pandemic affected the members of the university leaders'.

Despite its importance in higher education institutions, the third rank came to a moderate and satisfactory degree in response. The educational system simulates the needs of societies and meets their requirements. As for the last rank, it came to the dimension of the efficiency of university administration in achieving competitive advantage. It is found that there is a significant gap and an urgent need to work on developing and building the capabilities of university leadership.

The findings are in line with the studies of Ahmed (2015), Al-A'ayasra and Tanash (2017), and Al-Barqi (2021). All these studies reflect a medium score for universities' overall degree of competitiveness ability.

The results, referring to the questionnaire items, were as follows:

1. **Ensuring the quality of services dimension:** the means, standard deviations, rank, and degree were extracted, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Arithmetic means, standard deviations, and ranks of the degree of the university administration role in Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage from the university leaders' point of view of ensuring the quality of services dimension

No.	Dimensions	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	rank	Degree
1	Encouraging employees to take the initiative to improve the services provided at the university	3.69	0.72	8	Medium
2	Seeking to obtain awards for excellence in the services provided	3.60	0.83	9	High
3	Does community partnership deliver outstanding programmes?	3.81	0.68	3	Medium
4	Commitment to developing the quality of service outputs at the university	3.77	0.81	6	High
5	Availability of the Quality Management Unit at the University	3.91	0.80	1	High
6	Encouraging teamwork and participation for creative purposes	3.70	0.82	7	High
7	Allocates financial resources on development plans and scientific research	3.79	0.68	5	High
8	The university administration builds a common vision and goals for the university with all employees	3.80	0.78	4	High
9	The university administration involves all employees in taking responsibility	3.32	0.78	10	Medium
10	The university administration feels that each of its employees plays a vital role in the success of the university	3.82	0.82	2	High
<b>The overall score for ensuring the quality of services dimension</b>		<b>3.72</b>	<b>0.83</b>		<b>High</b>

In Table 4, the total degree of the reality of the university administration's role in Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage in the dimension of ensuring the quality of services was high, as the mean was 3.72. The standard deviation was 0.73, and the items were medium and high. The first rank came for item 5, which states "the availability of the quality management unit at the university." It resulted in a mean of 3.91, a standard deviation of 0.80, and a high degree. It is due to the availability of an agency and a deanship for quality development.

The last rank came for item 9 with a mean of 3.32 and a standard deviation of 0.78, which states that "the university administration involves all employees in taking responsibility." This result may be due to the difference in the respondents' opinions about the participation of employees in bearing the responsibility of operation

### 8. Adaptation and Flexibility Dimension

The arithmetic means, standard deviations, rank, and degree was extracted, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Arithmetic means, standard deviations and ranks of the degree of the university administration role in Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage from the university leaders' point of view for the adaptation and flexibility dimension.

No.	Dimensions	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	rank	Degree
1	Developing plans to keep pace with developments.	3.91	0.68	1	High
2	Meet the needs of the university's faculty members	3.53	0.75	7	Medium
3	The university administration adopts a vision to update practices, policies, procedures, and instructions in line with developments	3.51	0.86	8	Medium
4	The university administration sees that its results are affected by different aspects of society	3.47	0.70	9	Medium
5	Harnessing information technology to serve his administrative work	3.82	0.79	4	High
6	Decision making in partnership with university employees	3.90	0.65	2	High
7	It offers flexible services.	3.61	0.81	5	Medium
8	The university administration is keen on the principle of delegating powers to employees	3.58	0.71	6	Medium
9	The university administration is keen on the need for employees to feel a sense of belonging to the university	3.85	0.83	3	High
10	The university administration is keen that the working atmosphere prevails in the spirit of one team	3.31	0.78	10	Medium
<b>The overall score for the adaptation and flexibility dimension</b>		<b>3.65</b>	<b>0.72</b>		<b>Medium</b>

Table 5 shows that the total degree of the reality of the university administration's role in Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage for the dimension of adaptation and flexibility was medium. The arithmetic mean was 3.65, the standard deviation was 0.72, and the items were between medium and high. The first rank came for item 1, which states, "developing plans to keep pace with developments," with a mean of 3.91, a standard deviation of 0.68, and a high degree due. The results have gone this way due to respondents' satisfaction with the university's strategic plans. They believe that the university's strategic plans are in line and developed to keep pace with developments at the local and global levels. The last rank came for item 10 with a medium degree, arithmetic mean of 3.31, and standard deviation of 0.78. The item states that "the university administration is keen to have an atmosphere of work in the spirit of one team." The result is that measuring the availability of a working atmosphere in one team changes according to the human factor and the extent of his sense of belonging to the place. However, it obtained a medium and satisfactory degree, indicating the university's availability of a team spirit.

8.1 The Beneficiaries' Response Range Dimension

The arithmetic means, standard deviations, rank, and degree was extracted, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6:** Arithmetic means, standard deviations, and ranks of the degree of the university administration role in Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage from the university leaders' point of view of the response to beneficiaries extent dimension

No.	Dimensions	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	rank	Degree
1	Excellence in responding quickly to the needs of beneficiaries.	3.61	0.71	6	Medium
2	Urging employees to carry out their duties to the fullest.	3.64	0.76	5	Medium
3	Attracting those with academic experience to the university	3.67	0.67	4	Medium
4	Keeping abreast of societal changes in the market	3.57	0.62	7	Medium
5	Develop plans in line with urgent changes.	3.68	0.60	3	High
6	A proposal to reduce university fees to adapt to the economic situation.	3.51	0.71	9	Medium
7	Diversity of methods of attracting students to the university	3.77	0.79	1	High
8	The university administration considers its success in its mission a success for all	3.71	0.82	2	High
9	The university administration emphasises seeing itself as a microcosm of the local community	3.56	0.72	8	Medium
<b>The overall score for the response to beneficiaries' extent dimension</b>		<b>3.63</b>	<b>0.68</b>		<b>Medium</b>

Table 6 shows the total degree of reality of the university administration's role in Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage in response to the beneficiaries. The arithmetic mean was 3.63, the standard deviation was 0.68, and the items were medium and high. The first rank came for item 7, which states "the diversity of methods of attracting students to the university." It showed an arithmetic mean of 3.77, a standard deviation of 0.79, and a high degree. The last rank was for item 6 with a medium degree, an arithmetic mean of 3.51, and a standard deviation of 0.71. This item states, "the proposal to reduce university fees to adapt to the economic situation." This result is due to the 'respondents' desire to reduce university fees in line with the requirements of the target groups.

8.2 The Efficiency of the University Administration Dimension

The arithmetic means, standard deviations, rank, and degree was extracted, as shown in Table 7.

**Table 7:** Arithmetic means, standard deviations, and ranks of the degree of the university administration role in Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage from the university leaders' point of view of the university administration efficiency dimension`

No.	Dimensions	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	rank	Degree
1	Provides selection and appointment policies and procedures to select the best talent for leadership positions	3.59	0.84	5	Medium
2	Provides policies and procedures for the development and training of university employees and leaders	3.11	0.85	8	Medium
3	The university administration provides an advanced information system in all fields	3.32	0.79	7	Medium
4	The university administration directs all employees towards adopting positive trends toward excellence	3.66	0.81	3	Medium

No.	Dimensions	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	rank	Degree
5	Participation in conferences to learn about new ideas and developments related to contemporary administrative trends	3.71	0.74	2	High
6	Implementation of performance evaluation procedures according to sound scientific foundations and standards	3.99	0.73	1	High
7	The university administration encourages the exchange of experiences between employees that are in the interest of work	3.45	0.82	6	Medium
8	The university administration is keen to use the leaders and employees of modern technology	3.61	0.84	4	Medium
<b>The overall score for the university administration efficiency dimension</b>		<b>3.55</b>	<b>0.79</b>		<b>Medium</b>

Table 7 shows that the total degree of the reality of the university administration's role in Saudi universities to achieve the competitive advantage for the dimension of efficiency of university administration was medium. It showed an arithmetic mean of 3.55, a standard deviation of 0.79, and the items were between medium and high. The first rank came for item 6, which states, "the implementation of performance evaluation procedures according to sound scientific foundations and standards," with a mean of 3.99 and a standard deviation of 0.73 at a high degree. The last rank for item 2 came with an arithmetic mean of 3.11 and a standard deviation of 0.85. This item states "the availability of policies and procedures for development and training for employees and leaders at the university". The result seems to be due to the desire of the respondents' to provide clear and approved policies and procedures to build capabilities and raise the efficiency of university employees. It came to a moderate and satisfactory degree, perhaps due to university employees' availability of qualifying training programs.

The results related to the second research question are given below. This research question states that;

Are there statistically significant differences at the significance level of 0.05 between the response averages of the sample of research of the deans and academic departments and administrations heads about the university administration's role in Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage from the university leaders' point of view due to gender and years of service?

The results of this question were as follows:

- Gender variable:** The arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the degree of university administration in Saudi universities were calculated to achieve a competitive advantage. The t-test was applied according to the gender variable, as shown in Table 8.

**Table 8:** Arithmetic means and standard deviations of the degree of the university administration role in Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage, and (t-test) according to the gender variable.

Dimension	gender	No.	mean	Standard deviation	T value	Statistical significance
The efficiency of university administration	Male	128	3.55	0.68	0.06	0.29
	Female	44	3.61	0.65		
Quality assurance of services	Male	128	3.90	0.82	0.16	0.37
	Female	44	3.81	0.71		
Adaptation and flexibility	Male	128	3.88	0.73	0.85	0.65
	Female	44	3.60	0.68		
The response of the beneficiaries	Male	128	3.64	0.75	-0.91	0.73
	Female	44	3.70	0.69		
The overall degree	Male	128	3.74	0.73	-0.17	0.47
	Female	44	3.68	0.81		

The results in Table 8 indicate no statistically significant differences at the level of significance ( $\alpha =$

0.05) between the response averages to the reality of the university administration role in Saudi universities to achieve the competitive advantage of the gender variable in the total score all dimensions. The researcher attributed it to the absence of differences due to gender in response to the dimensions of competitive advantage.

The research agreed with Al-A'ayasa and Tanash's (2017) study without statistically significant differences for the gender variable.

Years of service variable: The arithmetic means and standard deviations of the degree of the university administration role in Saudi universities were calculated to achieve a competitive advantage according to the variable years of service, as shown in Table 9.

**Table 9:** Arithmetic means and standard deviations of the degree of reality of the university administration role in Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage, according to the variable years of service.

Dimension	Service years	No.	Mean	Standard deviation
The efficiency of university administration	Less than 5	48	3.5	0.71
	More than 5-less than 10	82	3.44	0.68
	More than 10	34	3.68	0.82
Quality assurance of services	Less than 5	48	3.85	0.78
	More than 5-less than 10	82	3.81	0.72
	More than 10	34	3.89	0.85
adaptation and flexibility	Less than 5	48	3.67	0.72
	More than 5-less than 10	82	3.64	0.69
	More than 10	34	3.75	0.75
The response of the beneficiaries	Less than 5	48	3.67	0.78
	More than 5-less than 10	82	3.65	0.72
	More than 10	34	3.76	0.81
The overall degree	Less than 5	48	3.67	0.83
	More than 5-less than 10	82	3.64	0.75
	More than 10	34	3.77	0.76

Table 9. shows apparent differences between the arithmetic means of the dimensions of the reality of the university administration's role in achieving a competitive advantage in Saudi universities according to the variable years of service. Those with experience of fewer than 5 years got the highest arithmetic mean of 3.67, and in the second rank are those with an experience of more than 5 years and less than 10 years. The arithmetic mean was 3.64. Finally, the arithmetic mean of the experience of 10 years and more came at a rate of 3.77. A one-way analysis of variance was applied to determine whether the differences were statistically significant at the significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) (One way ANOVA). The results are shown in Table 10.

**Table 10:** One-way variance analysis to find the significance of the differences in the degree of the reality of the university administration role in Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage, according to the variable years of service.

Dimension	Variance source	Sum of squares	Freedom degree	Squares averages	F degree	Significance level
The efficiency of university administration	Between groups	0.25	2	0.13	0.75	0.48
	Inside groups	59.23	352	0.17		
	Total	59.48	354			
Quality assurance of services		1.94	2	0.97	3.84	0.06
		88.61	352	0.25		
		90.55	354			
Adaptation and flexibility		0.29	2	0.15	0.63	0.54
		82.41	352	0.24		
		82.71	354			
The response of the beneficiaries		0.29	2	0.15	0.86	0.43
		59.19	352	0.17		
		59.48	354			

Dimension	Variance source	Sum of squares	Freedom degree	Squares averages	F degree	Significance level
The overall degree		0.39	2	0.20	1.48	0.16
		37.57	352	0.11		
		37.96	354			

The results in Table 10 indicate no statistically significant differences at the significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) for the total degree of the reality of the university 'administration's role in achieving a competitive advantage. Based on the calculated (F) value, which amounted to 1.84 and with a degree of significance of 0.16 and the absence of statistical differences for all dimensions. The research agreed with Al-A'ayasa and Tanash's (2017) study for the lack of statistical differences due to the variable years of service, and it differed from Ahmed's (2015).

**The proposal:**

Based on the findings, the researcher developed the following proposal for university administration development to achieve a competitive advantage in Saudi universities.

**The Philosophy behind Proposal:**

The proposal is based on the foundations and principles that consider the nature of the current era, continuous developments, and the increase in international competition. The competitive advantage of universities has become a primary aim that universities seek to ensure their continuity and survival in a rapidly changing world.

**The starting points for the proposal:**

1. Directing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through Vision 2030 toward competitive university education that meets the requirements of comprehensive development.
2. The development indicators in Saudi Arabia are needed for progress in education.
3. University leaders and employees must possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to achieve a competitive advantage.
4. Senior management support is needed to achieve a competitive advantage in Saudi universities.

**The Aims of the proposal:**

The proposal seeks to achieve some aims, including:

1. The competitive advantage in Saudi universities in light of the Kingdom's vision of 2030
2. A practical vision for decision-makers about the development of university administration in Saudi universities to achieve a competitive advantage
3. Administrative and educational leaders availability at the central and local levels; a clear vision of the reality of university administration
4. Development of some procedural and organisational steps to form a framework to achieve a competitive advantage in Saudi universities
5. Development of all leaders' leadership and administrative skills at the university
6. Global, technological, and economic challenges and their impact in all fields have led to an environment of global competitiveness. They require leaders who know to contribute to the preparation of outputs from universities by international standards, which contributes to creating a kind of competitiveness in all fields and keeping pace with the scientific progress of developed countries.

**Mechanisms for implementing the proposal:**

The proposal relied on six main pillars of application that can contribute to achieving competitive advantage:

**First: Building a competitive strategy:**

To create a competitive strategy among universities, they must:

- Link the university's strategic plans with the Kingdom's vision 2030.
- Develop a shared vision for the future to adapt to the changing world to support competition and excellence in following the needs and requirements of the labour market.

- Form long-term plans to deal effectively with the opportunities and threats in the university's external environment in light of the internal sources
- Clarify the distinguished mission of the university as a basis for its strategic planning and competitiveness locally and globally.
- Establish a framework to define the university's direction to achieve a competitive ability for a desirable future.
- Design educational programs in rare disciplines that support competitive advantages and review training and rehabilitation programs and curricula in line with the labour market requirements.
- Expand the work of applied programs and their application in the local market by providing services related to the community's actual needs.
- Involve the local community in the university's plans and activities.
- Establish independent departments for planning, development, and training. These departments may include a technology department, a public relations department, a communication, control, and a quality department.
- Involve the private sector and business institutions in the studies conducted by the university to know the requirements of the labour market.
- Learn and benefit from global expertise and experiences to adapt to changes.

### **Second: Providing the Regulatory Environment**

Providing an excellent organisational environment is one of the most important things that give employees positive energy to work and increase their affiliation. It can also bring the achievement of high competitiveness through the accomplishment of the following mechanisms:

- Organising, coordinating, and directing the university's personnel to achieve the desired aims with the effective participation of its team.
- Taking the initiative, reducing conflict between employees, determining the relationships governing work, and activating continuous communication between employees.
- Delegating authority in decision-making and allowing subordinates to participate through teamwork and a dialogue based organisational culture. Spreading mutual trust between employees and the university administration, applying the concepts of affiliation, job loyalty, and advantages, and creating a supportive work environment for perseverance and high morale.
- Spreading the values and principles of excellence and creativity related to the interest in local and global competition and consolidating them among leaders and workers.
- Clarifying the methodology of joint work and the use of guidance and direction methods to work in a team.
- Creating organisational confidence that supports change.
- Emphasising outstanding performance standards for all leaders and employees of the university and considering each individual responsible for the quality of work.
- Adopting and implementing modern management thought and openness towards change.
- Strengthening the university's media structure and encouraging the marketing orientation of university services locally and globally to attract funding and support scientific research.
- Providing an atmosphere of good human relations between employees to encourage them to achieve the highest possible.

### **Third: Total Quality Management to Achieve a Competitive Advantage**

The entrance to total quality management is one of the modern and contemporary administrative trends which is based on the philosophy of customer satisfaction to strengthen the capabilities of universities, which must:

- Work continuously to improve the production and service delivery system and use the continuous development and improvement philosophy.
- Create new training and supervision methods and provide conscious, effective, and democratic university leaders.

- Create an environment that encourages creativity and builds confidence to eliminate leaders' fears about change and development.
- Provide a stimulating participatory environment with the abolition of barriers between employees and leaders and the need to work in a team.
- Work to achieve all management principles
- and continuously evaluate them to achieve institutional excellence in universities.
- Adopt an effective system for quality control in higher education and scientific research and establish quality assurance and accreditation centres in each university.
- Manage the institution's resources and develop universities' financial resources and human capabilities according to the Kingdom's vision 2030.
- Review university admission policies to be based on competition and equal opportunities.
- Develop educational programs that focus on developing students' scientific research skills.
- Respond to the needs and requirements of the labour market to develop students' skills to produce distinguished graduates.

#### **Fourth: Adopting Technology to Achieve a Competitive Advantage**

Modern technology has played a clear role in providing unique and contemporary educational mechanisms and methods that play a distinctive role in our academic life characterised by rapid change. With the technological revolution, universities maintain their ability to compete, grow and excel, and this is done through:

- Adopting digital learning in universities aligns with the Kingdom's vision of 2030.
- Developing the university's technological capabilities in line with the powers of competitors and the needs of the beneficiaries by modernising the university's technical infrastructure and building knowledge corridors.
- Providing advanced electronic libraries that contain modern and translated bibliographies.
- Enhancing 'universities' ability to build a competitive advantage through information technology, adopting many technical initiatives, and an announced strategy for information technology within the university.
- Adopting a culture promoting a belief in the importance of using technology in all university departments.
- Adopting electronic management applications within the university allows the university to develop and improve its work.
- Building the university's portal on the international information network and integrating it with electronic management applications, e-learning applications, and distance learning tools.
- Working on paying attention to modern information and communication technology such as smartphone applications and social networking sites and benefiting from them in supporting teaching and learning processes, scientific study, and administrative processes.

#### **Fifth: Developing and Building Human Resource Capacities in Universities**

The university's human resources are the essential factor in raising its competitive capabilities, as developing and building their capabilities is one of the most important means that help in creating work, and this can be achieved through:

- Attending to human resources and intellectual capital development by providing advanced education and training programs that keep pace with contemporary developments.
- Benefiting from international and global experiences and keeping pace with the rapid developments in the university environment.
- Involving employees in targeted training programs to keep pace with scientific, technological, professional, and knowledge development for all parties.
- Developing the employees' awareness of their role in achieving competitiveness and developing their skills and abilities in line with the competitiveness of universities.
- Paying attention to the human resource while allocating sufficient investments to maximise its productivity.

- Developing admission policies based on competitive foundations.
- Developing the pool of faculty members to keep pace with the needs of the era of knowledge and information technology.
- Establishing independent centres with its activities and programs in education, training, and innovation.

#### **Sixth: Supporting Scientific Research**

There is a close and robust relationship between scientific research and competitive advantage. The scientific research is the main engine of economic activity and growth and a fundamental guide to the well-being of society. Achieve the competitiveness of universities through scientific research is done through the following:

- Existence of a strategic plan for practical research and its connection with the Kingdom's Vision 2030.
- A specialised centre in each university for practical research, publishing, and arbitration of study and technical journals.
- Supporting scientific research and increasing the budget for scientific research in the country, for the university and research centres
- Raising the level of research skills of the faculty member by holding specialised courses, encouraging researchers and faculty members to conduct scientific research, and providing them with support and incentives.
- Providing an information base of Arab and foreign studies and research, indexing them, and constantly updating them.
- Establishing ethical controls that protect scientific research and studies and preserve study freedom.
- Encouraging participation of universities in research projects funded by local, national, and international research institutions.
- Adopting a partnership strategy between scientific research centres and the community to achieve community development

#### **Guarantees of the proposal's success**

We can verify the success of the proposal through the following:

1. Providing an atmosphere of friendliness and understanding among university employees in a way that encourages progress, advancement, and achieving excellence.
2. Developing admission policies and strategic plans and developing the efficiency of employees to achieve a competitive advantage.
3. Establishing a strategic planning unit that includes experts and linking it to the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

#### **Sectors participated in the proposal**

The following sectors/stakeholders participated in the making of this proposal:

The Ministry of Education, University administrations, Deans of faculties, Civil Society Organisations and the private sector in its various institutions participated.

### **9. Research Recommendations**

The findings of the research recommend:

- Establishing advisory councils to provide developmental consultations to the university to serve the Kingdom's vision of 2030.
- Designing and implementing training programs for leaders with the latest global developments in university administration.
- Designing and implementing training programs for all employees aimed at developing awareness of the concept of competitive advantage, its dimensions, and the mechanism of its application in universities.

- Benefiting from the experiences of developed countries concerning indicators of competitiveness to develop the competitiveness of Saudi universities to achieve the Kingdom's vision 2030 and the new university system.
- To gain a competitive advantage, determine the administrative, innovative, and development efforts, procedures, and activities universities practice.
- Applying the principle of transparency and clarity in evaluating the programs offered by the university through their presentation.
- The need to raise the level of efficiency and competitiveness of university education outputs in line with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 by holding workshops and discussion panels with specialists to identify the most prominent obstacles to universities and strategies to eliminate them and identifying requirements for upgrading university outputs.
- Conducting a comprehensive study of the status of university learning institutions to restructure them to achieve a competitive advantage at the global level.
- Implementation of a study on the development of the organisational structures of Saudi universities to achieve the dimensions of competitive advantage and the indicators for achieving them.
- Implementation of a study on measuring the impact of applying the new university system in achieving a competitive advantage in Saudi universities.

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