

**PIONEER SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPROVEMENT IN
SAUDI ARABIA:
THE CASE OF THE SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTIONS**

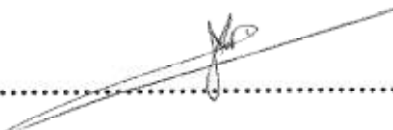
Submitted by

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**To the University of Exeter as a dissertation towards the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate School of Education**

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.......... (signature of candidate)

27 July 2011

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ABSTRACT

This study, *Pioneer Schools Effectiveness and Improvement in Saudi Arabia: The Case of the Secondary Educational Institutions*, is the first systematic investigation of school effectiveness (SE) and school improvement (SI) in relation to the Kingdom's ambitious *Pioneer Secondary Schools Programme* (PSP) first introduced in 2000. It selected all eight boys' Pioneer Schools in the Educational District of Al Madinah Al Munawwarah, as a case study to determine, a decade after its inception, how four key groups now understand and describe the attributes of an effective school: principals, teachers, students and parents. Its unique approach is to utilise a mixed research method by combining both quantitative statistical analysis and qualitative approaches, and using hermeneutics in the latter in order to triangulate the findings. The study departed from the once traditional approach which relied heavily on quantified test results or achievement scores to determine SE and methods of SI. Instead, this study posed three fundamental research questions and generated lists of identifiable indices of priorities and outlooks of the four respondent groups in relation to SESI for the schools in question. The findings of this study consistently show that, from the perspective of those surveyed and interviewed, much more has to be done in pioneer schools in Saudi Arabia before they can be considered truly effective schools in international terms. Moreover, the discussion of the data generated draws the further conclusion that international educational research on SESI issues points to a much more involved and sophisticated process than is suggested by the priorities and outlook of the respondents of this study in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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