



**Title:**

**The Professional Preparation, Knowledge and Beliefs of  
Kindergarten Teachers in Saudi Arabia**

**Submitted to**

The University of Exeter as a thesis towards the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in Education

**By**

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Date of submission: (April, 2012)

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## **Abstract**

The study used Social Cultural Theory as an analytical framework to understand the professional preparation of kindergarten teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). A multi-method approach to data collection was adopted, involving a questionnaire, interviews and documentary analysis of both the pre-school curriculum in KSA and the programme content. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were therefore employed to achieve the research objectives. The research methodology was based on the interpretive approach and included a case study. The participants were student-teachers studying on the four-year teacher training programme at one of the universities in KSA. Responses to four hundred and nineteen questionnaires completed by student-teachers across the four years of the programme were analysed, and a detailed case study involving 32 student-teachers was carried out. These student-teachers were interviewed three times each over three terms, with a focus on the nature of their knowledge and beliefs.

The quantitative and qualitative data were analysed using SPSS to summarise the results of the closed questions in the questionnaire and to compare the differences between the student-teachers' perspectives in each study year. All interviews were taped and transcribed. The data were coded and recoded several times using the continuous comparative process. When broad categories/themes emerged, these created sub-categories. Similarly, the data gained from the questionnaire's open-ended questions were also analysed qualitatively.

The findings focus on the results from the questionnaire for each study year, followed by a direct comparison of student-teachers' knowledge and beliefs across the four years. The findings from the interviews with student-teachers are presented separately for each study year in order that the development of their knowledge and beliefs over the four-year programme can be seen. The findings revealed that student-teachers' beliefs and their knowledge were closely linked. Although student-teachers' knowledge developed as a result of their learning, some of their beliefs about Early Childhood Education (ECE) in general seemed to remain stable over the period of their university course. Many factors influenced the training of the student-teacher within Saudi culture and practices, such as the cultural context, the society, national

policy, religion, module content, styles of teaching, visits to kindergarten, self-learning, and others' knowledge/experience and support. These others included friends, other student-teachers, and relatives who were studying on the kindergarten programme or worked in the field of ECE. The findings showed that student-teachers built their teaching identities on the wider social-cultural purposes of education in Saudi society, which were consistent with expectations of their roles in society. However, various constraints related to the university context, to the kindergarten context and to the social-cultural context influenced their preparation as teachers.

The study indicated many limitations to the current apprenticeship approach, due to the predominantly transmissive style of education at university. Student-teachers were not progressively immersed in a more fully developed apprenticeship model in which teachers learnt about the cultures and practices of ECE within the contexts of practice. This study strongly challenges a system where student-teachers only have one term of teaching practice. It is argued that teaching practice should start much earlier in the programme and be extended. A model for developing professional preparation programmes of Initial Teachers (IT) in the field of ECE is presented. Implications arising from this study and recommendations which could improve Teacher Education (TE) in KSA are outlined. Finally, suggestions for further research are presented.

## **Dedication**

*I dedicate this thesis to my late Dad and to my Mum,  
who believed in me when I did not believe in myself.*

*My deep gratitude goes to my sisters and brothers (Faizah, Nawal, Sarah, Turki,  
Mansoor, Ibraheem, Salah, Saad and Khalid). Without their support, encouragement  
and prayers, this work would not have been achieved.*

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to give all thanks to God 'Allah' for providing me with this opportunity to learn more and to complete this thesis. A special appreciation and thanks go to my mother, Muneerah, for her prayers and encouragement.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude from the bottom of my heart to my first supervisor Professor Elizabeth Wood for her professional and psychological support, guidance and encouragement throughout the journey of my thesis. Special thanks go to my second supervisor Dr. Fran Martin for her professional and constructive feedback. The academic support from both of them was invaluable, for each chapter in this thesis. They guided me throughout the writing of this thesis and, without their support, this thesis would not have been achieved and well organised.

I would like to thank the staff of the kindergarten programme, especially the coordinator Dr. Asma Ali for her continuous co-operation during the data collection stage for this study. I am also grateful to all of the study participants for their time and willingness to share their knowledge and beliefs. Special thanks are due to Dr. Aisha Hassan, who was a great model in my study and work life.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my sister Faizah for her endless encouragement, support, prayers and patience throughout my studies.

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## List of Abbreviations/Acronyms

| Abbreviations/<br>Acronyms | What does it stand for?   |
|----------------------------|---|
| [AGPUND]                   | Arab Gulf Programme for the United Nations Development Organisation |
| [BERA]                     | British Educational Research Association                            |
| [COE]                      | College of Education  |
| [DKC]                      | Developed Kindergarten Curriculum                                   |
| [EC]                       | Early Childhood   |
| [ECE]                      | Early Childhood Education   |
| [FCDM]                     | Family and Child Development Major                                  |
| [GPGE]                     | General Presidency of Girls Education                               |
| [GPA]                      | Grade Point Average   |
| [GSEC]                     | General Secondary Education Certificate                             |
| [HED]                      | Home Economics Department   |
| [ICT]                      | Information and Communication Technology                            |
| [IT]                       | Initial Teacher   |
| [ITE]                      | Initial Teacher Education   |
| [KC]                       | Kindergarten Curriculum   |
| [KFU]                      | King Faisal University  |
| [Kg]                       | Kindergarten  |
| [KSA]                      | The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia   |
| [MOE]                      | Ministry of Education   |
| [MOEP]                     | Ministry of Economy and Planning                                    |
| [MOHE]                     | Ministry of Higher Education  |
| [MOK]                      | Ministry of Knowledge   |
| [MPCK]                     | Mathematics Pedagogical Content Knowledge                           |
| [NCE-DL]                   | National Centre for E-learning and Distance Learning                |
| [NPIT]                     | National Plan for Information Technology                            |
| [PCK]                      | Pedagogical Content Knowledge                                       |
| [SEN]                      | Special Education Needs   |
| [SN]                       | Special Needs   |
| [TE]                       | Teacher Education   |
| [UNESCO]                   | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation     |