

**Humanities**

**Integrating Education for Sustainability into English as a Foreign  
Language Instruction in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

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**This thesis is presented for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
of  
Curtin University**

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# Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material, which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

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# Abstract

The incorporation of an effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction to support Education for Sustainable Development could immensely contribute to achieving some of the important educational goals of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's (KSA) Vision 2030 and could lead to improved employability of Saudi graduates.

This research analyses the questions surrounding education in the context of sustainability, specifically EFL in secondary schools in Saudi Arabia, to understand its current status as well as the impact of the sustainable development agenda in light of the Saudi Vision 2030. It explores students' and EFL teachers' perspectives on the current approach taken by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in its policy and practices to support the new sustainability agenda as well as EFL's contribution to Vision 2030. A case study mixed-methods approach is used to determine to what extent Education for Sustainable Development (EfSD) is understood and practised in the KSA. Different content analysis methods are utilised to investigate how the KSA school system, EFL textbooks, students and EFL teachers perceive the current policy and practices in relation to EfSD and the Vision 2030's sustainability agenda.

A content analysis conducted on documents pertaining to the reformation of education policy and curriculum development plans clearly indicated that Vision 2030 and the 2020 National Transformation Program (2020NTP) directly endorse sustainability. These policy documents assign a role to education to contribute to EfSD and the national developmental objectives.

To achieve a better understanding of the current situation of EfSD integration into the curriculum, the second objective of this research was the analysis of two currently used EFL textbooks (namely *Flying High 6* and *Traveller 6*) from a sustainability and Vision 2030 perspective. The analysis shows categorically that *Flying High 6*, containing a total of 58 sustainable development themes, offers a richer pattern of sustainability issues than *Traveller 6*, which contains only 29 such themes. *Flying High 6* also outperformed *Traveller 6* with regard to the number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) covered respectively, 12 topics compared to six. The findings of this research indicate that despite the many environmental, economic and social challenges faced by Saudi Arabia, the integration of education for sustainable development into

the EFL curriculum has never been reflected explicitly, either in the current materials or former curriculum development plans. If the targets of Vision 2030 are to be achieved within its implementation timeframe, a strategic, urgent and serious public education and curriculum reform should take place in the country. Such educational reformation should articulate the MoE's obligation to the sustainable development agenda in a clear manner, as stated in Vision 2030.

An exploratory survey of 279 female high-school students in the cities of Jeddah, Makkah and Al Taif indicates that the depiction of the integration of EfSD and Vision 2030's objectives in their EFL instruction is not satisfactory. Although most of the students have encountered the Saudi sustainable development agenda at school, a large proportion, namely 47 percent, believed that EfSD topics were not discussed during their English classes. Only 46 percent believed that sustainable development topics related to Vision 2030 were encountered in their EFL textbooks, with the remaining 7 percent being unsure. These results provided further evidence of the lack of adequate teaching of SD topics.

In relation to women's empowerment and representation in the EFL textbooks, there is room for significant improvement. The majority of the female respondents had a clear awareness of the limited representation of women in the textbooks used. Seven insights were generated from the interviews with six EFL female teachers:

- a.** Limited awareness about EfSD among EFL teachers;
- b.** Significant role of EFL for EfSD goals and the KSA Vision 2030;
- c.** The low level of English acquisition and achievement of students impacts on achieving Vision 2030;
- d.** Current practice of EfSD in EFL classes in KSA indicates that teachers play a significant role in integrating SD and Vision 2030 as they possibly can. Time limitation, heavy curriculums and prioritisation of language skills affect EFL teachers' ability for real integration of knowledge learned, values gained and attitudes towards SDGs.
- e.** Need for local sustainability issues infused in the textbooks;
- f.** Limited female representation in EFL textbooks in contradiction to Vision 2030's objectives for women's empowerment;
- g.** The MoE's role in implementing EfSD in the curriculums.

While there are positive signs, a lot more needs to be done to position the KSA's education system, and particularly its EFL component, to respond to the priorities identified in Vision 2030. Overall, the existing policy documents encourage such an integration but this has yet to be translated into curriculum reforms.

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# Dedication

*This thesis is dedicated to the person who encouraged me to embark on this journey and had always believed in me, my beloved late mother, Nafla Abdullah Alshahrani, may her humble soul rest in peace.*

*And to my father, to my husband and my children for their genuine love, prayers and advice.*

*Abeer*



# Publications

Chapter 7 of this thesis is published as Alshahrani, A., Samani, S., & Marinova, D. (2020). Gender parity through the Saudi Vision 2030: Female representation in English as a Foreign Language textbooks. *In Muslim Women in the Economy* (pp. 32-47). Routledge.

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# Co-Authors' Statement

I, Abeer Alshahrani, contributed 80% to the publication entitled:

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Abeer Alshahrani, 12 October 2020

I, as a co-author, endorse that this level of contribution by the candidate indicated above is appropriate.

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# Abbreviations

EFL	: English as a Foreign Language
MoE	: Ministry of Education
EfSD	: Education for Sustainable Development
NTP	: National Transformation Program
UNSDGs	: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
SDGs	: Sustainable Development Goals
EfS	: Education for Sustainability
GAS	: General Authority for Statistics
SD	: Sustainable Development
DESD	: Decade of Education for sustainable Development
UNDESD	: United Nations Decade of Education for sustainable Development

# Chapter 1:

## Introduction

### **Overview of the research and the KSA context**

In 2016, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) announced the inception of its Vision 2030, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG) of 2016–2030. The government pledged to focus on education that contributes to economic, social and environmental sustainability as one of its key commitments, and to refine the school curriculum to align it with the Saudi Vision 2030. Educating for sustainability is seen as the main contributor to bridging the gap between the outputs of higher education and the requirements of the Saudi job market.

The current approach of the Ministry of Education (MoE) to Education for Sustainable Development (EfSD) to achieve this goal is to embed sustainable development concepts and values across the curriculum in all school disciplines, including English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Addressing sustainability within the EFL curriculum is important; the MoE should adjust its current approach to instruction of English as a Foreign Language and utilize it to build the capacity of the human capital in such a way as to compete nationally or internationally using English. Evidence shows that English literacy is poor among Saudi graduates (Alrabai, 2016; Alrahaili, 2013; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Al-Seghayer, 2014; Elyas & Picard, 2010) and that the lack of this skill is affecting their employment chances in the Saudi workforce (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Al-Saraj, 2014).

English has a prominent position in Saudi Arabia and its direct and indirect relation to some of the major development goals of the country is the motive behind choosing this particular subject to be researched. Acquiring proficiency in English will reduce unemployment among young Saudis who could then replace large numbers of expatriates in the labour market in domains where English is an essential job requirement. The incorporation of effective EFL instruction to support education for sustainability could contribute immensely both to the achievement of some of the educational goals of Vision 2030 and to improved employment prospects for Saudi graduates.

Sustainability is imperative for Saudi Arabia for several reasons. The country is facing ecological, economic and social challenges that leave the KSA Government no choice other than to join the global community in the journey towards achieving sustainability. The government has taken on the huge responsibility of resolving some of the most problematic sustainability issues that could face any country.

Although education generally belongs to the social aspects of sustainability, it deserves particular consideration in the case of Saudi Arabia because of the history and nature of its economy. According to Aboudah (2015), the government has to consider dealing with the challenges of economic sustainability that have accompanied the fall in oil revenues by investing more efficiently in Saudi education. It has become necessary for the government to match educational outcomes with the needs of the labour market, to increase the employability of young people and close the expertise gap between nationals and expatriates.

This research analyses the questions surrounding education in the context of sustainability, specifically the subject of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in secondary schools in Saudi Arabia, to assess its likely impact on the sustainable development agenda in light of Vision 2030. It examines the effectiveness of the current approach to teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia and its appropriateness for delivering education for sustainability. It examines students' awareness of their role in the new sustainability agenda as well as the perspectives of the teachers of the role of EFL in contributing to the Vision 2030.

Teaching a foreign language relies on not only grammar but also uses texts and images that portray particular aspects of life, such as everyday situations, communication and descriptions. This indirectly shapes the perceptions and expectations of the students, creating particular perspectives as to their future role within society. In order to achieve an educational shift towards sustainability, the very concept of sustainable development must also permeate the EFL curriculum.

The research draws from Education for Sustainability (EFS) theories to form the study's theoretical framework. This study is exploratory in nature. A case study methodology is employed using a mixed-methods approach which includes: a literature review of pedagogy and education for sustainability, an analysis of documents pertaining to education policy in Saudi Arabia, the Vision 2030 and sustainability agenda of the MoE, including an exploration of two compulsory EFL textbooks currently used in Saudi schools. In particular, the study includes results from a survey conducted to elicit the current status of Education for Sustainable Development (EfSD) in EFL classes from the viewpoint of high school students in several all-girls' schools. Interviews with teachers from general public schools are also analysed. This approach provides a good understanding of the status of EfSD within one particular compulsory subject and explores how well it can contribute to implementing the Vision 2030.

Improvements in EFL instruction that would enhance education for sustainable development in light of the Vision 2030 agenda are also important, and this thesis puts forward some recommendations.

The educational sector is given special importance in the KSA. It received the biggest portion of the country's 2018 state budget allocation (USD 51 billion, or SAR 192 billion). On its official website, the Saudi General Authority for Statistics (GAS) announced in its 2018 report the current status of an indicator of the extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality are mainstreamed at all levels in: (a) national education policies; (b) curriculums; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment (GAS, 2018, p. 46). The GAS advised that this indicator was still under development; the indicator, to be based on reports from other nations, was not yet available when this thesis was prepared.

This probably explains the lack of research in the area of school education. No studies, as far as this researcher is aware, have been conducted to investigate the current status of EfS in the Saudi school system, neither the curriculum nor to what extent current practices support Vision 2030 and its underlying sustainability agenda. The limited research found in relation to Education for Sustainability in the KSA deals exclusively with sustainability awareness in higher education. Alkhayyal et al. (2019) prepared a case study that analysed sustainability awareness among higher education faculty members in universities in the KSA. Alshuwaikhat et al. (2016) propose an integrated approach to achieving campus sustainability, aiming at assessing the current individual campus environmental management practices in KSA. Alghamdi & El-Hassan (2019) solicit, through their qualitative study, the perceptions of ESL teachers of the university foundation year towards raising their students' awareness of energy and sustainability issues.

This may disclose a gap in the discourse of EfSD in the KSA, as there is limited acknowledgment in the research of its underlying theories and practices, not only at university level but also especially in the KSA public school system and the currently developed curriculums.

The focus of the present research is on education for sustainable development and, in particular, the underlying context of the Vision 2030 in relation to English as a foreign language education. This chapter introduces the concept of Education for Sustainability as a framework for the study, and the rationale behind, the use of education for sustainable development.

This chapter highlights the importance of instruction in English as a Foreign Language in Saudi Arabia: where the observed gaps are in relation to education for sustainable development, and what aspects of these gaps in EFL education this study has attempted to cover.

The KSA Vision 2030 is introduced as the motivating impetus for the study. This research gives an overview of what the Vision anticipates and why; how it is related to sustainable development, and particularly the SDGs; why education for sustainability is an important aspect of implementing the Vision and how English as a Foreign Language features in the implementation of the Vision.

## **The Structure of this Chapter**

- 1.1 The concept of Education for Sustainability
- 1.2 Sustainability challenges in Saudi Arabia
- 1.3 Teaching English in Saudi Arabia
- 1.4 Linking sustainability and EFL in Saudi Arabia
- 1.5 Sustainable development concepts across the current English as a Foreign Language curriculum in Saudi Arabia.

### **1.1 The concept of Education for Sustainability**

Education for Sustainable Development (EfSD) is defined by Longhurst et al. (2014, p. 4) as

“the process of equipping students with the knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes needed to work and live in a way that safeguards environmental, social and economic wellbeing, both in the present and for future generations.”

The UN realization and recognition of the concept of Education for Sustainability drew the new way forward to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was the leading organisation promoting UNDESD, which was declared for the decade 2005–2014. As the UN-assigned coordinator of the Decade, UNESCO established an action plan (UNESCO, 2004) to support the implementation of the DESD goals by governments and administrations around the world. Within the implementation agenda, UNESCO worked to build cooperation with the private sector, religious organisations, different media groups and Indigenous communities. It was also assigned to assess indicators to evaluate the Decade’s progress in areas related to education reforms and EfSD good practices (UNESCO, 2005).

In the 10 years of the UNDESD, governments and ministries of education around the world were required to include key sustainable development concepts in teaching and learning materials and in every possible educational practice, within or outside

schools. Some of the issues that education had to explore with existing and upcoming generations included climate change, poverty alleviation, high consumption levels, biodiversity, water scarcity, equity and equality. The central values of EfSD that were outlined by UNESCO in the 1990s also shaped the 2015 value-driven education plan (McKeown et al., 2002; UNESCO, 2015), which include: respecting others; respecting values of present and future generations; respecting differences and diversity; respecting the environment; and respecting the resources of the world we live in (UNESCO, 2015).

Although the DESD was from 2004 to 2015, this growing field and the explicit recognition of EfSD was not completely embraced by the Saudi education system until the Vision 2030 was publicised.

Recognition of EfSD in the 1990s produced environmentally and economically aware students and socially responsible global citizens, a fact that was considered by the Rio+20 discourse to be as important to the new generations as health and wellbeing (Venkataraman, 2009). While EfSD is believed to have been an international response to the call for sustainable development (Pauw et al., 2015), it provided a significant way forward for education to be recognised as Goal 4 of the crucial 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) for 2030, which states that countries around the world are responsible for ensuring

“... inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (United Nations, 2015, p. 21).

Goal 4.7 states that

“... by 2030 ensure [that] all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of cultures contribution to sustainable development” (United Nations, 2015, p. 21).

Education that includes sustainable development values and learning experiences will enable learners to gain information, sharpen awareness, and develop positive attitudes

towards becoming peaceful global citizens in societies which provide better opportunities for their citizens, while protecting the natural environment.

In many ways, Goal 4 is a continuation of the work done during the Decade for Sustainable Development. In 2007, the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States (including Saudi Arabia) was designated to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning in the Arab region (UNESCO, 2008). The Arab region vision of education for sustainable development is in line with UNDESD orientations and guiding principles, briefly summarised by the Arab Regional Bureau as the capacity to

“... arrange for individuals and communities to benefit from educational and training opportunities, which focus on knowledge, values and sustainable development behaviours, and to achieve a concrete progress in the social, economic and environmental aspects related to the objectives of the UNDESD (2005–2014), or any other relevant joint plan of action at the international, regional and national levels” (UNESCO, 2008, p. 9)

In 2019, the Saudi MoE explicitly in its official website, stated that the ministry is committed to sustainable development, noting the importance of incorporating sustainable development values as a fundamental objective across the curriculum ( <https://www.moe.gov.sa/ar/Pages/vision2030.aspx> ). It is critical at this point in Saudi education to include sufficient information about major sustainability issues that will have a direct impact on the future of students. This should, as the MoE stated, be an essential part of the curriculum reformation and curriculum development plans in all disciplines, including EFL classes.

## **1.2 An overview of sustainability in KSA**

McKeown et al. (2002) maintain that sustainable development is mostly believed to have three constituents: environment, society, and economy, and that these three parts are interwoven and cannot be isolated in any work that humans do. They (2002) argue that a vigorous, thriving civilisation depends on a healthy environment to provide resources as food, clean drinking water, and uncontaminated air for its residents. Furthermore, McKeown et al. (2002) assert that the sense of balance in these three aspects of sustainability is deliberated in the pursuit of development and improved



quality of human life of any community. In that sense, Stone (2010, p. 43) argued that sustainability is a

“... far richer conception than merely meeting material needs, continuing to exist, or trying to keep a degraded planet from getting worse”.

He goes further to describe communities worth sustaining as

“... alive — fresh, vital, evolving, diverse, dynamic — that would care about the quality as well as the continuation of life. It would recognize the need for social, economic, and environmental justice; and for physical, emotional, intellectual, cultural, and spiritual sustenance” (Stone, 2010, p. 43).

While this far-reaching model of developed communities is flawless, one can argue that such an understanding of sustained development is questionable and worthy of discussion. Despite the fact that this model of sustainability is desirable, it is clearly unattainable and unrealistic for the near future, given the current social, economic and ecological conditions all over the world.

Models of less-privileged communities that have not reached these sustainable goals and are struggling to develop, and others making the effort with the available resources and knowledge, continue to exist and deserve researching. Nevertheless, Stone's (2010) model of communities worth sustaining could be considered the final product of the UN recommendations and SDGs. On the other hand, less-developed communities should also be given the same chance and support to develop in a sustainable way.

The discourse on sustainable development appears idealistic and may be related more to industrialised countries where the conditions are perhaps more conducive to achieving what can be termed as “alive — fresh, vital, evolving, diverse, dynamic — that would care about the quality as well as the continuation of life. It would recognize the need for social, economic, and environmental justice; and for physical, emotional, intellectual, cultural, and spiritual sustenance”. While this may be desirable for all, the reality is that conditions are diverse in different countries; the challenges they face are related to the inherent characteristics of culture, the demographics and the developmental trajectories that have evolved over time. In the case of KSA, Stone's picture is a highly fundamental shift for a society that is Islamic at its core and has

been ruled as an Islamic theocracy from the time of its inception. The shift to sustainable development therefore needs to take into account the values that are at the heart of the society as well as the socio-economic conditions that need to change to achieve Vision 2030.

The case of KSA and its ecological, economic and social considerations is situated at opposite poles to Stone's argument: KSA as a developing country is facing challenges in all the three aspects of sustainability. However, the country is embarking on its journey in sustainability, directing the whole society towards a huge pragmatic shift that needs to be achieved by 2030 with all lessons learned — good or bad — from its current existence.

To start this research we should first introduce the challenges encountering KSA in its voyage in pursuing the sustainable development goals in the Vision 2030. According to the Saudi Central Department of Statistics and Information (2016), the population of the Kingdom in 2016 was 31787580, of whom more than 11 million were foreigners. More than half of the Saudi population consists of people aged between 15 and 24 years (Yusuf, 2014). It is important to give this group sufficient access to information through education about some of the major issues that will have a direct impact on their future, including the ecological, economic and social issues that will vitally affect them.

### ***1.2.1 Economic challenges***

Economic challenges have also emerged. Sustainable development in a country whose economic position is oil-led, and which is experiencing fluctuating rates of oil revenue, is made more difficult by the high population numbers, coupled with the high consumption levels of Saudi citizens. The high level of unemployment among Saudi nationals is another exacerbating factor, caused by the skill and expertise gap between nationals and foreign workers, which forces the country to rely on imported labour.

Being one of the leaders of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Saudi Arabia is a major international oil producer and exporter. Saudi Arabia owns about one-fourth of the world's total crude oil reserves, estimated at 264 billion barrels (Joharji, 2009), and the country has always depended on oil revenues to fund government development plans. According to Corneo (2011), oil production makes up

about 40 percent of the GDP and 90 percent of the entire exports of the Kingdom. The government realises the significance of diversifying the country's economic resources and the importance of pursuing alternative income avenues to ensure economic stability when oil prices drop, or when the world comes to the point of shifting to another type of energy resource. Johari (2009) and Yusuf (2014) have emphasised that the reliance on oil to finance public spending and stimulate the economy is unsustainable.

For example, at the end of 2015, oil prices dropped to their lowest level in several years. Saudi Arabia had to institute strict policies to reduce government expenditure, and some developmental projects and job opportunities for Saudi youth were either trimmed or cancelled. The traditional employment strategy whereby Saudi youth rely on the government to provide jobs in the governmental sector no longer applies. The expansion of the population and the large numbers of young Saudis looking for employment is a worrying economic and social issue affecting sustainable development.

The Saudi Vision 2030 announced three themes that embody its pioneering agenda, namely: Vibrant Society – A Thriving Economy – An Ambitious Nation. According to the Vision, the country should generate an economic atmosphere that has among its most substantial properties:

“... the lively and vibrant youth. We will guarantee their skills are developed and properly deployed. While many other countries are concerned with aging populations, more than half of the Saudi population is below the age of 25 years. We will take advantage of this demographic dividend by harnessing our youth's energy and by expanding entrepreneurship and enterprise opportunities. Saudi women are yet another great asset”(KSA, 2016a, p. 37).

It is interesting and worth noting that among the Vision commitments in the economic section of the policy document was the government's pledge for education that contributes to economic growth. The Vision promises:

“We will close the gap between the outputs of higher education and the requirements of the job market. We will also help our students make careful career decisions, while at the same time training them and facilitating their

transition between different educational pathways ... We will also work towards developing the job specifications of every education field” (KSA, 2016a, pp 40, 41).

### ***1.2.2 Social challenges***

The large number of expatriates in Saudi Arabia also raises social issues. They come from many different nations and cultures and mostly work in the oil sector, in industries and in low-paying jobs. According to Sabri (2001), the first oil boom period for Saudi Arabia was between 1973 to 1980 where oil prices rose from \$2 per barrel to \$42. This oil boom and the need to develop the country rapidly forced the government to rely on imported labour as the national population lacked key skills (Fakeeh, 2009).

To address the high rate of unemployment among Saudi nationals, in the late 1990s the government introduced an initiative to decrease unemployment among Saudi citizens, known as Saudization, promoting the replacement of the expatriate workforce in the Kingdom by Saudi nationals (Fakeeh, 2009); however, the private sector has shown little interest in employing Saudis in highly paid jobs for two reasons: first, the level of English language communication needed for current and future jobs is not as good among Saudi applicants as among foreign employees. Al Hamdan (2014) pointed out that despite the long history of English being a compulsory subject, the long years spent in EFL classes, in both general education and at university level, the proficiency of students tends to be unsatisfactory and their communication skills remain poor. The second reason is the fastidious nature of young Saudis in the area of employment (Alfawaz et al., 2014). Yusuf (2014, p. 7) argued that Saudis believe that jobs in the private sector are “demeaning due to the lower prestige and social status, less stability, job insecurity, and higher productivity demand in comparison with the public sector”.

Aboudah (2015) pointed out that it is important to increase government expenditure on human resources and to instil positive attitudes towards employment in the private sector if the younger generation is to acquire the technical and professional skills necessary to undertake the job responsibilities currently carried out by expatriates. Young Saudis in general do not consider positions with low pay, because all levels of education are free to citizens and there is no need to find money to pay for their education expenses. In addition, young Saudis tend to live with their families until they

complete a university degree, and at times until they find employment, therefore there is little incentive for them to take up employment of this nature.

### ***1.2.3 Educational challenges***

Although education generally resides within the social aspects of sustainability, it deserves particular consideration in the case of Saudi Arabia because of the history and nature of its economy. According to Aboudah (2015), the government has to consider dealing with the challenges of economic sustainability that have accompanied the fall in oil revenues by investing more efficiently in Saudi education. It has become necessary for the government to match education outcomes with the needs of the labour market, to increase the employability of young people and close the expertise gap between nationals and expatriates. One way is to open students' eyes to the new realities of job opportunities as an essential part of their education. According to Cooper (2015), students at the moment have limited information about job opportunities, qualification requirements or application processes and just 5% of male students feel they have sufficient information about such matters.

Yusuf (2014) argued that it is important to invest in young Saudis' education to become a productive labour force as well as "trustworthy stewards of the Saudi economy". He pointed out that

“... the government must act fast and invest in the education of young Saudis, as a stable human capital is a sustainable resource that can complement oil wealth in facilitating the growth of the economy” (p. 107).

In 2016, the KSA announced the inception of its Vision 2030, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals; however, the commitment of the Ministry of Education to sustainable development is not yet clearly reflected in the current education system. The questions which then arise are: what steps has the MoE taken to implement its vision towards education for sustainable development? How is this evident in its curriculum development planning, teaching strategies and teachers' development programs?

This study analyses the questions surrounding sustainability education in Saudi Arabia, specifically in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language, to support and enhance the sustainable development agenda. Therefore, it is worth understanding the

approach to EFL in Saudi Arabia and what potential it offers to support sustainability transition in the country.

#### ***1.2.4 Ecological considerations***

The UN General Assembly introduced the concept of sustainable development in 1987, when the notion of using education to support sustainable development was being discussed and promoted all over the globe (Hopkins & McKeown, 2002). Saudi Arabia was one of the countries that participated in the international efforts for environmental protection and resource conservation, which corresponded with Article 32 of the Basic Law of Saudi Governance (1993) stating that the government of the Kingdom would work towards the preservation, protection and improvement of the natural environment, as well as prevent pollution. While the Kingdom has developed economically, environmental challenges have emerged (Taher & Hajjar, 2014). Deterioration of air quality, industrial pollution, the pollution of fresh water and coastal areas, problems with waste management and stress on marine ecosystems have all come to light (Husain & Khalil, 2013).

The Saudi Vision 2030 takes the environmental issues and natural resources to be Islamic, human and moral duties. It asserts that the quality of the daily lives of ours as well as of future generations is the current government's responsibility. The Vision pledges to

“... safeguard our environment by increasing the efficiency of waste management, establishing comprehensive recycling projects, reducing all types of pollution and fighting desertification. We will also promote the optimal use of our water resources by reducing consumption and utilizing treated and renewable water. We will direct our efforts towards protecting and rehabilitating our beautiful beaches, natural reserves and islands, making them open to everyone. We will seek the participation of the private sector and government funds in these efforts” (KSA, 2016a, p.23).

It is argued that Vision 2030 defines the KSA's sustainability mainly in social, economic and religious terms and says little about environmental sustainability (Al Rasheed, 2019). However, Saudi Arabia affirmed during the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) of sustainable development in New York (2018), that the country will continue to reinforce its measures regarding climate change in order to achieve full implementation of the Paris Convention. In this forum, the country promised to

cooperate with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States to meet the challenges of global climate and environmental change linked to extensive use of fossil fuel in the region. To this end, the KSA assert that sustainability is key to its future as well as the future of all the GCC countries which, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), are expected to be affected by the increase in the average temperatures (UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), 2019).

### **1.3 English language for sustainability in Saudi Arabia**

The announced 2006 strategic project for public education and curriculum reform in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia articulated the MoE's commitment to sustainable development in its vision and mission (Wang, 2013). Tatweer project was one of the initiatives of the reform that aim to improve the quality of education including the foreign language education through the English language teaching and learning development program. According to Wang (2013) the MoE collaborated with several leading international companies and training programs specialising in the field of developing EFL textbooks and teaching materials with a significant budget of about SR 12 billion (US\$3.2 billion). A product of this program is *Flying High* and *Traveller*, two international series of EFL textbooks for secondary grade students in Saudi public schools. *Flying High* was published by Macmillan while *Traveller* was published by MM Publications.

An objective of current Saudi curriculum reform is to promote the values of sustainability at school through textbooks provided by the MoE. These are compulsory for all school subjects, including English language. Hence, in EFL classes, instruction that integrates sustainable development values in an age-appropriate manner, while keeping in mind students' capacity in their second language, should eventually raise their awareness and consciousness of sustainability and positively influence their interactions with the world around them.

In Saudi Arabia, EFL teachers have always worked in isolation from social, economic, political and global contexts. For effective teaching that also serves as a vehicle to introduce the new Vision 2030 and its social, economic and environmental goals, English teachers need to go beyond solely teaching language skills, and move towards making EFL classes a vast learning experience for their students. Teachers need to be

empowered to see themselves as agents of change towards sustainable societies. According to Birch (2009, p. 3):

“English language teachers are applied linguists, so big-picture questions are relevant to us because the context of our work is global”.

Birch (2009) points out that when English language teachers base their pedagogy merely on correct pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, and ignore global challenges, they fail to use their strategic position and power to educate for a peaceful and sustainable world.

One objective of the present research is to find out whether the compulsory English textbooks available now, and teachers' instruction from them, offer an adequate amount of information about sustainability; and whether learning about sustainability in English classes stimulates students to find out more about relevant issues. This kind of instruction is much needed at this crucial stage in the history of humanity in general, and of Saudi Arabia in particular — especially after the Vision 2030 of the country. An EFL instruction where students gain knowledge of the twenty-first century and are educated to act as global citizens who pursue sustainable development goals in their daily life is one step in the direction towards sustainability in Saudi Arabia.

Education that focuses on “closing the gap between the outputs of higher education and the requirements of the job market” is one of the strategic commitments of the Vision 2030 (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016). Being informed not only in their first but also in their second language about economic, environmental and social issues at school would be of a great value when applying to study at universities that teach in English and require students to be knowledgeable about sustainability in different science domains. According to Alrashidi and Phan (2015), universities in Saudi Arabia use English as the medium of teaching in most scientific courses since this is the dominant language in these fields. English skills are also required when applying for jobs in the public or private sector in Saudi Arabia. Alrashidi and Phan (2015) point out that the importance of learning effective English is linked in Saudi Arabia with factors that affect the sustainable development goals of the country, such as reducing unemployment. Proficiency in English is likely to reduce unemployment among young Saudis who can replace the large numbers of expatriates in the labour market, in domains where this is an essential job qualification. In the future, when sustainability is no longer



a matter of choice, education that equips students with such knowledge would create a generation of young employable people who can implement and utilise these skills in their future jobs. Alrashidi and Phan (2015, p. 40) suggest that

“... factors that contribute to the significance of teaching English to support sustainability in Saudi Arabia are the position of English as an internationalised language, the important role English plays in the Saudi Arabian economy, the utilisation of English in the labour market, the importance of English as the language of globalisation and information technology, and the religious duty of Muslims to communicate effectively with pilgrims and spread the message of Islam.”

An effective approach in English instruction about and for sustainability is an important facilitator in implementing the Vision 2030. This needs to be taken into consideration when planning and developing EFL curriculums, programs and instruction activities.

#### **1.4 Sustainable development concepts across EFL Curriculum in KSA**

Inherent to the recent Saudi Vision 2030 and the newly adopted UNSDGs are considerations for environmental, social and economic sustainability. These United Nations guidelines will inspire achievements within schools and educational systems until 2030 in areas that have urgent implications for humankind and the globe in general. The present research aims to examine to what extent these considerations, together with properly designed teaching topics, are integrated in the EFL curriculum and whether effective instruction is taking place in Saudi EFL classes around sustainable development.

This is the first study to attempt to link EFL instruction in the school level and education for sustainable development in the Saudi context. The lessons learned from the incorporation of EFL instruction to support education for sustainability could be applied to countries where English is used at schools teaching a foreign or a second language. They will reinforce the importance of incorporating education for sustainability and foreign language education into any learning experiences to move towards a sustainable world.

Recommendations for the improvement and enhancement of Education for Sustainable Development that is compatible with the Saudi Arabia Vision 2030 through English language instruction are derived from the study's findings and presented later in this work.

## **1.5 Thesis structure**

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 The theoretical framework and methodology

Chapter 3 The research literature

Chapter 4 An analysis of documents pertaining to education for sustainable development and English as a Foreign Language education

Chapter 5 Content analysis of two EFL textbooks

Chapter 6 The analysis of the Saudi female high school students survey on the status of sustainability in two EFL textbooks

Chapter 7 The analysis of the Saudi female high school students survey on the status of women's empowerment as a Sustainable Development goal in two EFL textbook

Chapter 8 EFL teachers' perspectives on the current status of EfSD, with special emphasis on EFL instruction and its implications for female students' future paths

Chapter 9 Conclusion.

# Chapter 2:

## The Research Methodology

### 2.1 Introduction

The fundamental methodologies of document analysis, textbook analysis, student surveys and semi-structured teacher interviews were used as the primary research methods to conduct this study, and are discussed in detail. This chapter reviews a collection of research methodologies on education that best serve an investigation on the integration of education for sustainable development through instruction in EFL in light of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Vision 2030.

### 2.2 Methodology

The study aims to broaden our understanding of the KSA capacity to advance the current education system towards the sustainable development agenda of the Vision 2030 of the KSA. The general aim of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology that formulates the structure of the questions of this research. This study will investigate how teaching EFL in Saudi schools can contribute to the sustainable development goals of Vision 2030.

### 2.3 Research question

To examine how English as a foreign language instruction (EFL) can contribute to EfSD in light of the Vision 2030 of the KSA, the following research question was developed:

*To what extent is the current approach of EFL instruction appropriate for building the capacity to position the current education system towards integrating the sustainable development agenda of the Vision 2030 of KSA?*

## 2.4 Objectives of the study and research questions

In order to answer this broad research question, the following four specific objectives were identified:

1. To analyse documents pertaining to the reformation of KSA education policy and curriculum development plans.
2. To analyse two EFL textbooks currently used in all-girls' high schools in the context of EfSD and the Saudi Vision 2030.
3. To examine the role of current EFL instruction towards achieving the objectives of the Vision 2030 as seen by female high school students and EFL teachers.
4. To make recommendations to improve EFL by strengthening its capacity to respond to the needs of the transitioning Saudi economy.

The primary questions of this research are:

1. To what extent documents pertaining to the reformation of education policy and the curriculum development plans support the integration of EfSD? What are the implications of these policy documents for female students' education and women's empowerment, as well as their implications for school curriculums, including EFL instruction in the country?
2. To what extent is Education for Sustainable Development integrated in the content of two EFL textbooks, namely; *Flying High 6* and *Traveller 6*, in light of the new Saudi Vision 2030?
3. To what extent is the level of EfSD integration, including women's representation in EFL instruction and textbooks, perceived by female third-grade high school students in KSA?
4. To what extent is EfSD integration in EFL instruction and textbooks perceived by female EFL teachers at high schools in KSA?

## 2.5 Research methods

This study is exploratory, as it is the first recognised effort to assess how EFL instruction can contribute to EfSD in the case of KSA. The research employs the case-study approach. According to Yin (2006),

“the strength of the case study method is its ability to examine, in-depth, a ‘case’ within its ‘real-life’ context” (p. 2).

The case this research deals with is the paradigm shift in the KSA that surfaced with the release of the country's Vision 2030 and its associated sustainable development agenda. To comprehend and assess the current status of the curriculum, as well as students' views and teachers' perspectives in relation to the goals of Vision 2030, a case-study methodology was chosen which employs a variety of approaches, because it was considered that case studies are one of the best approaches for exploring different aspects of an educational enterprise.

A case study can be qualitative or quantitative, or a combination of the two (Stake, 2000). A mix of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies is employed in this research. According to Yin (2003), case studies are considered to be more robust when researchers are able to rely on a variety of sources. According to Baxter and Jack (2008) 'possible data sources may include: documentation, archival records, interviews, physical artefacts, direct observations, and participant-observation' (p. 551-554). Rowley (2002) noted that

“... each source has its strengths and its weaknesses, and the richness of the case study evidence base derives largely from this multifaceted perspective yielded by using different sources of evidence” (p. 23).

Baxter and Jack (2008) pointed out that

“... each data source is one piece of the 'puzzle', with each piece contributing to the researcher's understanding of the whole phenomenon” (p. 554).

Using several methods to understand the status of education for sustainability in KSA and the role of EFL in the implementation of sustainable development goals as stated in Vision 2030 can be thought of as triangulation. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) point out that triangulation — the use of multimethod approaches in research — helps researchers to achieve broader and better outcomes by providing an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question.

## **2.6 Case-study aggregation analysis**

This research will first extensively investigate in Chapter 3 the literature review of the approaches to education for sustainability and foreign language education theory. A case-study method of exploring the extent to which EfSD is integrated into EFL

instruction in KSA will be employed. The case-study aggregation method is a means for aggregating ...

“... diverse case studies together under a common conceptual framework so that findings will be cumulative ... to identify what it is we already ‘know’, what it is we do not know, and what it is that we suspect” (Lucas, 1974b, p. 1).

The method has the capacity to

“... integrate the findings of diverse studies about organizations and programs. It is more flexible in that many different types of studies using different measurement techniques can be brought together, and new concepts can be developed and considered that none of the original research ever addressed” (Lucas, 1974a, p. 12).

This research employs the following different methods with the aim of obtaining the best in-depth evaluation of current education policy and practice in Saudi Arabia in relation to EfSD and the Vision 2030 and its impact on EFL education, and how EFL can contribute to the anticipated Vision 2030.

This approach is employed where the analysis of the two EFL textbooks under investigation is conducted as shown in Figure 2.1: (1) analysis of the content of documents, including textbooks; (2) a student survey; and (3) interviews with teachers.

This research aims at analysing documents, and also carrying out additional analysis of the findings of the student survey and teacher interviews.

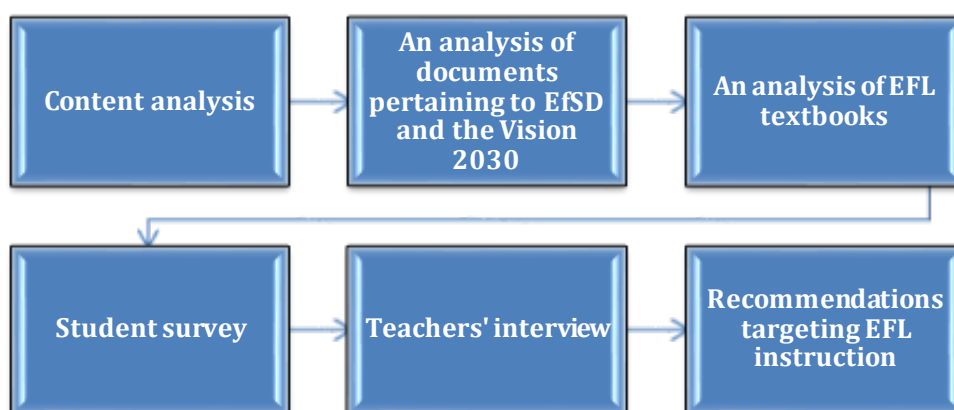


Figure 2.1. Methodology chart

### ***2.6.1 Documents pertaining to EfsD and Vision 2030***

Chapter 4 in this thesis examines the Vision 2030 document and the 2020 National Transformation Program (NTP) as the two main policy documents that inform the future national framework for curriculum standards in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as available national review documents on sustainable development. For that, the following three supplementary documents were reviewed as part of the content analysis:

- a. *The National Framework for Public Education Curricula Standards in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, produced as part of the Education and Training Evaluation Commission's plan in response to the Vision 2030, (ETEC, 2018).
- b. *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in KSA (Status-quo Statistical Report 2018)*. This is the general authority for statistics in KSA — a document initiated by the Saudi General Authority for Statistics for reporting on the UN Sustainable Development Objectives and the KSA response to the Saudi Vision 2030 (GAS, 2018).
- c. *Sustainable Development Goals—First Voluntary National Review of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, UN High-Level Political Forum, 2018, “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies”, (KSA , 2018).

First, the analysis of documents pertaining to the educational policy and the Vision 2030, as well as the analysis of the EFL textbook components, aim to generate themes related to education for sustainability in Saudi Arabia and to enable these themes to be further examined in student surveys and teacher interviews. Bowen (2009) emphasised that the importance of document analysis in research relies on the strength of these documents to provide background and context, to ask further questions to be answered in supplementary data, to establish a means of tracing modification and development, and to verify conclusions drawn from other data sources. Bowen (2009) asserted that in order for documentary evidence to be credible and unbiased, it needs to be combined with other data sources such as interviews and observation. In this research, the themes derived from the analysis of documents are identified and categorised to be further used in student surveys and interviews with teachers to create comprehensive discussions and deep understanding of the Vision 2030 and its anticipated impact on

education policy, specifically EFL education. Analysing the EFL textbooks in question and evaluating their validity as a source of information about sustainability issues in Saudi Arabia and in the world in general adds to the systematic document analysis in this research. Caulley, (1983) maintains that ‘Document analysis involves the selection of facts from documents. Questions, hypotheses or general ideas act as selection devices for facts and give rise to the interpretations gleaned from the analysis’ (Caulley, 1983, p. 19).

For the purpose of analysing documents pertaining to KSA Vision 2030 and the UNESDG, Chapter 4 will first analyse the Vision 2030 document and the 2020 NDP, a document of the National Framework for General Curriculum Standards in the KSA, a document initiated by the Saudi General Authority for Statistics on the UN Sustainable Development objective and finally the First Voluntary National Review of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia documents.

### ***2.6.2 Two compulsory EFL textbooks***

The textbook analysis in this research employs a content analysis approach. This study set out with the aim of assessing the status of EfSD in Saudi schools. The use of case studies, adopting either quantitative or qualitative methods, is a well-established approach for examining the integration of EfSD at any educational setting. Different content analysis methods have been proposed to classify the extent to which a textbook, a school program or a school system has been congruent with the ESDG, using different investigation measures. A mixed-methods approach may be beneficial to understand to what extent EfSD is understood and practised in the KSA.

- Content analysis theory

Merriam and Simpson (1995, p. 103) defined content analysis as the systematic investigation of communications, whether in visual, aural, or printed form. Holsi (1996) maintains that content analysis is concerned with the messages that people understand from these communications and how researchers will make inferences using different techniques to objectively and systematically specify the characteristics of such messages. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are applicable in the understanding of any content. These messages, according to Merriam and Simpson (1995), might be in the form of textbooks, essays, newspaper articles, novels, magazines, or any communication type that could be systematically analysed. ‘Any



research technique that allows for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of a communication is regarded as content analysis' (Berelson, 1954, p. 55).

Two textbooks were the subject of content analysis approach in this case-study research. The breadth of the applicability of content analysis is considered one of its advantages at the data-gathering stage, as it has considerable reliability, objectivity and efficiency, and it is economical (Merriam and Simpson, 1995).

- *Quantitative and qualitative content analysis*

Berelson (1954) identified five units for content analysis: words, themes, characters, items and space- and time measures. For example, by counting the number of times a word or an idea is used, one can possibly infer the preferences and values of the authors of the material (Merriam and Simpson, 1995). Using this quantitative approach, the number of occurrences of a theme, phrase or sentence as the second possible unit of content analysis will suggest a level of predisposition towards these issues (Merriam and Simpson, 1995). The third content analysis unit deals with how characters are portrayed in a communication, whether it be a textbook, a play, a book or a film, or whether in pictures or photos. The fourth unit of analysis according to Berelson (1954) is based on items, such as studying an entire production, whether a play or a book, in order to analyse one item present in these products. Finally, the fifth unit of analysis is based on space and time. This refers to the actual physical characteristics of the content, such as the number of paragraphs or columns dedicated to an issue in written material, or the time it takes to read them. An ultimate objective of any quantitative content analysis is "to quantify the content for purposes of comparison" (Merriam and Simpson, 1995, p. 158).

Data analysis, whether in naturalistic research or a positivist social sciences approach, aims to organise and elicit meaning from the collected information and ultimately to produce research findings and conclusions (Polit & Beck, 2006). For example, research conducted by Krippendorff (2004), Burnard (1991), Catanzaro (1988) and Downe-Wambolt (1992) all employed these two methods of content analysis in both quantitative and qualitative approaches within a deductive or inductive strategy.

- *Content analysis in this study*

Kassarjian (1977), referred to content analysis as a logical, neutral, organized, quantitative and generalizable account of communications so it represents the most suitable approach to the second objective of this study.

For instance, Weinbrenner (1992) suggests three classifications to expand the research on textbooks: first, a process-oriented research; second, product-oriented research and, finally, reception-oriented research. The first approach deals with the entire lifespan of a school textbook and the process of its design, authorisation, in-school use, and finally the reason why it was abandoned. By comparison, the second approach examines textbooks as teaching tools from ideological and cultural background perspectives. It emphasises and evaluates the quality of the textbook as a product used within the complex educational environment. The third research approach to analysing textbooks deals with their impact on students and teachers, and what the researcher can elicit from these groups' reactions to the material under investigation (Weinbrenner, 1992).

Two of the best-known tools for assessing textbooks are textbook analysis (which makes the content of the textbook the object of study), and teachers' and students' interviews to capture their opinions of the textbook. A case-study approach was used in this research to enable a flexible study design that aligns with the novelty of the topic in the KSA school system. This method is particularly useful in studying different trends in integrating EfSD and the educational community's recognition of the new phenomenon of 'sustainability'. It also allows adjustment and re-adjustment of some of the research instruments as the study progresses.

#### • *Methodology*

In 2002, McKeown developed and used a number of techniques to assess the extent to which EfSD is represented in school textbooks, embodied in the *Education for Sustainable Development Toolkit* (McKeown, 2002). This is applied in the present research to analyse two EFL textbooks, namely *Traveller 6* and *Flying High 6*, used by high-school students in Saudi Arabia in the final stage of their schooling. The analysis of these textbooks aims at investigating the extent to which they integrate EfSD into their content.

The justification for selecting McKeown's *Toolkit* is based on the following:

- this is one of a very few toolkits identified at the time of the study that allow for an assessment that meets the objectives of the current study
- the toolkit has been tested empirically with good results, albeit in a different educational context; it generates a spectrum of quantitative and qualitative results which are easy to understand and interpret

- it is relatively simple and straightforward to adapt the toolkit to the context of Saudi Arabia
- the approach of the toolkit is practical and not excessively demanding for any of the stakeholders involved.

The use of quantitative data is a well-established approach in determining the quantity of the usage of sustainable development concepts at school, whereas the actual teaching and learning taking place in the classroom is determined qualitatively. While both approaches are used in this study, chapter 5 deals exclusively with the quantitative aspect of EfSD, and how much sustainability-related content is included in the EFL curriculum. The qualitative data are presented and discussed in Chapter 8, together with a discussion of the underlying concepts and insights from other related studies.

The toolkit assesses EfSD based on the three commonly used dimensions, namely environmental, social and economic. According to the toolkit, the process of the reorientation of education towards embedding sustainable development involves the five thrusts of sustainable development teaching and learning: knowledge, issues, perspectives, skills and values. While there are some interrelationships between the environmental, social and economic concepts of sustainability in the textbooks, they are not measured in this study because the main focus is on teaching and learning the subject of English as a Foreign Language, where relational links are not as pronounced as they may be in subjects such as Geography, or Society and the Environment. If such interrelated topics are identified, they are arbitrarily assigned to one of the three main aspects of sustainability to avoid repetition in the data.

McKeown's (2002) toolkit implies that reorientation of teaching to support EfSD necessitates the need for 'basic knowledge' from the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities. The toolkit emphasises the importance of knowledge, as well as recognising the main values of sustainable development and their implementation, along with any ramifications.

The second thrust in reorienting education towards sustainable development is addressing 'issues' that threaten not only our planet overall, but also our local community. Most of these key issues were acknowledged in Rio de Janeiro during the UNCED Earth Summit in 1992, and are highlighted in Agenda 21 of that conference. Recognising and incorporating these issues should be at the heart of EfSD.

'Skills' is the third thrust of the reorientation of EfSD in McKeown's (2002) toolkit. In order for the reorientation of education towards sustainable development, and for

that to be effective, it must go beyond merely teaching about such national and international issues, and students should be enabled to gain hands-on skills. This will empower the new generations to act accordingly and to carry on with their learning, not only as school-age students but also ...

“... after they leave school, to have a sustainable livelihood, and to live sustainable lives” (McKeown, 2002, p. 20).

‘Perspectives’ is the fourth thrust in reorienting education to sustainable development, according to the toolkit:

“The ability to consider an issue from the view of different stakeholders is essential to EfSD. Considering an issue from another viewpoint besides your own leads to intra-national and international understanding. This understanding is essential for creating the mood of cooperation that will underpin sustainable development” (McKeown, 2002, p. 21).

The toolkit refers to an example relating to different viewpoints of an issue (the over-consumption of paper), and several future scenarios accordingly, such as deforestation, considered one of the main reasons for global climate change.

The fifth integral part of EfSD is ‘values’. The toolkit refers to values, since they are taught, discussed, modelled and analysed at school either in an open way or as part of ‘hidden’ curriculums. Being able to understand your own values and those of others around the world is “a central part of educating for a sustainable future” (McKeown, 2002, p. 21).

#### • *Coding*

The use of the tool requires developing a coding instrument by preparing tables for the analysis, drawing upon the procedure used by McKeown et al. (2002). Both textbooks were coded by marking by hand, in different colours, each occurrence of an environmental, societal or economic EfSD aspect. The learning strategies were also coded by placing the first letter of the skill used against each occurrence. The data was analysed and managed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 (2010) software.

According to Hak and Bernts (2009, p. 222),

“reliability can be improved by ... coding in pairs of coders, developing more detailed instructions, selecting professional coders (e.g., the researcher’s colleagues or graduate students) and, last but not least, coder training”.

In this study, the coding measures were carefully selected and reviewed by six people in total: two of the author's school supervisors, a higher education researcher and three of the author's EFL colleagues, which helped enrich the reliability of the coding process. Inter-coder reliability is constructed by checking "... whether a coding of an answer is identical to another coding of the same answer, whether done at another time by the same coder or at the same time by another coder" (Hak & Bernts, 2009, p. 221). This was achieved by analysing the first two modules in both textbooks at two different times. The first analysis was conducted in July–August 2018, and the second analysis of the same units one year later, in July–August 2019. Quite similar tabulations were obtained, which was a good indicator of the reliability of the coding.

### **2.6.3 Questionnaire-based survey**

A questionnaire-based survey to elicit the viewpoint of female high-school students in all-girls' schools regarding the current status of EfSD in EFL classes. Schools in the KSA are segregated by gender; since boys and girls study separately, there has been a need for research that looks exclusively at the case from Saudi female perspectives, in an in-depth examination of current practices in relation to education for sustainability and the recent efforts towards women's empowerment as one of the main objectives of the KSA sustainability vision and its associated programs.

Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis describe surveys where a questionnaire was conducted in three Saudi cities during the 2019 school year. A 14-item questionnaire was distributed to high-school teachers who helped facilitate the connection between the author and the students by sending an electronic version of the survey to students using the Google Forms application to construct the study tool. The survey, which was voluntary and anonymous, was conducted in Arabic as part of this exploratory research to examine the current status of EfSD in the school curriculum, specifically in EFL education, and what implications Vision 2030 has for the Saudi education system and for women represented in the current curriculum.

The total number of respondents to the survey was 279 students, made up of 195 who studying Traveller 6 in Makkah and Jeddah and 84 students from Al Taif city who study the Flying High 6 textbook. This research surveyed high school students in their final year of schooling as they prepare to pursue their university pathways and their future careers.

- What is a survey?

A survey uses a research instrument or tool which contains questions and allows for information to be collected. According to Merriam and Simpson (1995), questionnaires are of two general types: open questionnaires and closed (or forced-choice) questionnaires. The researcher chooses the design depending on the objectives and the research problem. If the researcher wants greater freedom of response, then a questionnaire containing open-ended questions will be appropriate. Otherwise, if the researcher is looking for specific factors regarding the research topic, a closed questionnaire is more appropriate. Merriam and Simpson (1995) claim that responses from closed questionnaires are easier to use at the analysis stage because data essentially have been categorised before being gathered. According to Merriam and Simpson (1995), if the study problem permits, it is better to design a questionnaire in a closed form, since it allows the researcher to guide the respondents along the lines of the phenomenon under investigation.

This research explores a new topic in which the researcher is investigating students' awareness and perspectives on the current status of EfSD in school EFL classes and textbooks, and also their views about the impact of the Vision 2030 on their future and how they would like to learn about sustainable development in EFL classes. Hence, the closed-form questionnaire is the most appropriate design, given the novelty of the topic to the students.

- Survey ethics

According to Schmidt (1997), ethics should be of the greatest concern when using surveys in research, whether in conventional or web-based modes. The present study used online surveys. When the research is internet-based, the researcher should be responsible for the receipt of 'informed consent' forms from all participants. These can be obtained from the respondents by different methods of ensuring that each user indicates their acknowledgement and understanding of the content of the form and gives their consent to participate in the survey (Schmidt, 1997). This can be done effortlessly in either of the two ways suggested by Schmidt (1997). First, the researcher may present a blank 'informed consent' form for the participant to indicate their agreement before a link is provided taking them to the questionnaire document. Alternatively, a distinct click to sign consent for viewing the survey before submission and informing the participants that they cannot submit their answers unless they read and consent to take part in the survey (Schmidt, 1997). In this research the second alternative was adopted, where students were not able to participate unless they had

read and agreed to the content of the 'informed consent' form and thus consented to taking part in the survey.

While in this research program the verification of the identity of respondents (i.e., participants who submitted their answers) was neither applicable nor desirable, the questionnaire tool used asked for the students' names, but maintained that they would remain anonymous. It was also explained that participation in the survey was voluntary and that students could choose not to provide any personal information, and could withdraw from participation at any time.

Hewson et al. (1996) refer to the benefit of anonymity and having the names of the respondents concealed if they so choose in any given research program. However, it is still reasonable — and adds to the authenticity of research using web-based tools, as in this study — to ask the respondents to provide some identity information regarding their name and age, as well as informing them that this is a voluntary exercise (Schmidt, 1997). Because web demographics might be skewed in some surveys, researchers must ensure that an adequate level of validity of their research is attained “by collecting demographic data along with other survey items, ... making sure that the population being considered is appropriate for the conclusions that are drawn” (Schmidt, 1997, p. 278).

In the present research, the validity of the study is attained by ensuring that it was only the teachers who administered the questionnaires and helped to facilitate the connection between the researcher and the students, who were asked to explain its purpose and objective to the targeted population before giving the questionnaire link to the respondents. Female students were requested to voluntarily participate in the research and were informed in the questionnaire forms that their participation would not interfere with their personal development, nor add to their end-of-year assessment.

#### **2.6.4 Interviews with teachers**

Semi-structured interviews are used in this study to elicit the views and attitudes of English language teachers in the cities of Makkah, Jeddah and Al Taif in the western province of the KSA, regarding the two textbooks in question and the status of EFL classes as a medium for education for sustainability. The interviews also explore whether English instruction could support the implementation of education for sustainability in the Vision 2030 agenda. Moreover, the role of EFL in the Vision 2030 for Saudi students is examined through the responses to the questionnaire.

Rowley (2012) points out that semi-structured interviews are considered to be the most common type of interview in research because they can take various forms: different numbers of questions, different levels of question alteration, and different arrangements of question order, to accommodate the interviewee. This research employs the semi-structured interview technique, as it is appropriate to the nature of this study given the ambition of the Vision 2030 and the relative vagueness of sustainability development themes in Saudi society and in the education system. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to give the necessary support to the interviewees when needed to explain some aspects of the topics to be researched in order to obtain the most out of every interview.

### ***2.6.5 Recommendations targeting curriculum developers***

First, the analysis of the educational policy documents and the textbook components generates themes related to education for sustainability and its challenges in Saudi Arabia. These themes are then identified and categorised. Each of the textbooks in question is evaluated in terms of its validity as a source of information about sustainability issues in Saudi Arabia and sustainability in the world in general.

This research approach is engaged with public schools, which represents one aspect of the case study. According to Yin (2003), the term ‘case study’ can refer to either single or multiple studies.

In this research, the researcher uses a multiple-case design to strengthen the findings, in line with Yin’s argument that the evidence from such analysis is considered more compelling. This is the first case study that takes place in public schools in three cities where teachers have diverse levels of knowledge and awareness of sustainability issues.

Teacher interviews are conducted to find out more about the strategy of the Saudi education system with regard to education for sustainability and the practical challenges that schools encounter when implementing the Vision 2030 in the field. Furthermore, the interviews aim to explore whether a quality EFL education, combined with education for sustainability, might help to enable students to obtain the necessary qualifications for tertiary education in English-medium universities and eventually allow them more employment chances in the future, which is one of the most important targets of the Vision 2030. They also aim to explore whether this goal



has been given any importance in the new curriculum reform in the KSA. Recommendations are developed from the findings of analysis using different research methods of this research.

## Chapter 3:

# The Theoretical Framework and the Research Literature

### 3.1 Introduction

The general aim of this section is to discuss the theoretical framework and the research literature that establish the basis for formulating the structure of the questions of this research. For that, this chapter is divided into two main themes: the first part analyses features of education for sustainability theory that delivered the principal theoretical framework of the main research question. It also deals with the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDES D). The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and education are discussed, and the responses from Saudi Arabia and the Middle East in relation to the sustainable development agenda are reviewed, together with the educational implications for the region. The chapter also sheds light on EfSD in the school system and at university level, and its implications for curriculum development.

The second part of the literature review is on English education in a foreign language: theory and practice, and its association with EfSD. The chapter also touches on EFL status in the education system of KSA. For that reason, the fundamental notion of sustainability as the primary research question is discussed in detail. The chapter reviews selected research literature on EfSD where Education support the new vision of sustainable global development (UNESCO, 2015).

### 3.2 Introducing the concept of sustainability and education for sustainability

According to Leal Filho (2000), until the late 1970s, records show that systematic use of the term 'sustainability' was not associated to any great extent with the concept that

we use today, either in dictionaries or in political discourse. He states that the term originated in the forestry sector in reference to the control and management of its resources. He claims that the term was conventionally used as an alternative word for 'long-term', 'durable', 'sound' or 'systematic', among others (Leal Filho, 2000, p. 9).

In the early 1980s, the term 'sustainable development' (SD) was widely used to refer to "systematic, long-term use of natural resources" (Leal Filho, 2000, p. 10). This understanding of the concept was described by the 1987 in-depth definition of SD in the Brundtland Report published by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). This milestone report referred to SD as

"... development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987, p. 43).

Leal Filho (2000) points out that the Brundtland Report profoundly employs the following three dimensions of SD:

1. The progress model that allows nations to develop socially and economically without terminating their ecological assets.
2. The form of progress which is publicly fair, ethically adequate and economically rigorous.
3. The form of progress in which ecological and economic indicators are equally important.

There has been criticism of the vagueness of the definition of sustainability, in that it describes a notion that cannot be interpreted or implemented in any clear manner. Bonnett (2007) argued that the definition of sustainability is a "seductive" concept, as it achieves two contrasting desired objectives:

"First, the idea of conserving those aspects of nature that are valued (i.e. in some sense 'needed') but that are currently endangered by human agency; secondly, the idea of accommodating ongoing human aspirations to 'develop', that is, in some sense to have more or better" (Bonnett 2007, p 709, 710).

According to Dobson (1996), more than 300 descriptions for 'sustainable development' and 'sustainability' were presented at the time of his research. This suggests that a decade of effort towards understanding and apprehending the sustainability notion produced less coherence and more divergence than had been

predicted by national governments, global organisations and non-governmental organisations supporting the sustainable development agenda (Jickling & Wals, 2008). Arriving at a common, global understanding of the concept, whether or not it is desirable, is seen by some researchers as distantly remote, and may simply be an illusion (Jickling & Wals, 2008).

According to Jickling and Wals (2008), the several terminologies for sustainability are not synonyms within the same field, because each one of these terms has its own focused theme and its underlying agenda, which is contested worldwide. This very contestability is seen by researchers such as Jickling and Wals, (2008) as producing a more refined and thoughtful understanding of concerns about, and reactions to, environmental challenges. McKeown (2002) and UNESCO (2005) recognised the difference between education *about* and *for* sustainable development. They explain that the notion of education about sustainable development is a theoretical exercise, whereas education for sustainable development is the utilisation of education as a means to attain sustainable development (McKeown et al., 2002). In this sense, the notion of education for sustainable development has been identified and recognised; this is also the way the term is used in the current research.

This attention to the concept of sustainability charted the new way forward for development and reflects the links between ecological, economic and social aspects in any community — the three pillars of sustainability for achieving progression and prosperity. In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), that came to be known later as the Earth Summit, took place in Rio de Janeiro. An urgent issue to be discussed during the Summit was the decline in Earth resources at a time of unbridled economic growth, and the disappointing inability of humanity to achieve balanced growth.

The Earth Summit was successful in bringing countries to agree to the Rio Declaration and its 27 principles for sustainable development. Agenda 21 of the Rio Declaration became the guiding manuscript for sustainable development, where education was perceived as indispensable for communicating and teaching the international society about sustainable development, and for promoting the sustainability movement on a far larger scale. Furthermore, Chapter 36 of Agenda 21, titled “Promoting education, public awareness and training”, stressed the importance of education in

“... changing people’s attitudes so that they have the capacity to assess and address their sustainable development concerns. It is also critical for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour consistent with sustainable development and for effective public participation in decision-making” (UNCED (Earth Summit), 1992: Agenda 21, Chapter 36.3).

According to McKeown (2002), the work on education for sustainable development (EfSD) was first introduced as a broad proposal in Chapter 36 of Agenda 21, where four major program areas were identified to promote the EfSD proposal as follows: (1) improve basic education; (2) reorient existing education to address sustainable development; (3) develop public understanding and awareness; and (4) provide training.

This understanding of SD during the 1990s and the growing attention to its ecological, economic and social pillars have led a respectable number of civil society institutions all over the world to embrace sustainability at different scale levels. Unfortunately, not all countries and governing policies have responded to the new phenomenon with the same high enthusiasm. For example, two neighbouring world-leading countries which would be expected to be big players in the sustainability movement, the United States of America and Canada, have different histories of response to the sustainability movement. According to McKeown and Nolet (2012), Canada adopted sustainability years before the United States, by accepting it as the new paradigm. This includes Canada’s establishing administrative structures to monitor the country’s sustainability efforts (McKeown & Nolet, 2012). The 1995 amendments to the Canadian Auditor General Act includes creating the position of Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development within the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. Agencies and federal subdivisions were mandatory requested to arrange for sustainable development plans and policies and update them every three years (McKeown & Nolet, 2012). By comparison, the United States was late to become involved with sustainability as a paradigm (McKeown & Nolet, 2012). Not until 1996 did the President’s Council on Sustainable Development during the Clinton administration publish an accelerative plan to incorporate EfSD into all levels of the US education system; nevertheless, this plan failed to be achieved in the subsequent George W. Bush government. The Bush administration and the American state governments did not use the word ‘sustainability’ between 2000 and 2008 (McKeown & Nolet, 2012).

During the Obama administration, Executive Order 13514 Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance was issued in 2009 to create a cohesive approach to sustainability in the US national administration. Regardless of some advancement in the sustainability agenda in the United States, it was felt by many individuals and areas of government that the sustainability initiatives were given the lowest attention, funding and dialogue (McKeown & Nolet, 2012), who noted in their research that the Department of Education in the United States admitted the insufficient efforts of the education system to embrace the sustainability movement until 2010, as the then Secretary of Education declared in one of his speeches.

Under the Trump administration the sustainability agenda has further deteriorated with the US withdrawing from the Paris Agreement due to the influence of the fossil fuel lobby. The federal budget for the 2018 fiscal year, named “America First: A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again”, saw cuts in the public budget on climate change research (Zhang et al., 2017). According to Zhang et al. (2017) more than 35 percent of published papers are from the US, making it the biggest contributor to climate change literature in the world. Among the most discernible impacts of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement is the effect of these budget cuts on international scientific research and the international commitment to action on climate change and its interrelated consequences.

The example of Canada and USA demonstrates that, despite the major global initiatives and progress in the area of EfSD in the 1990s as envisaged by Earth Summit Agenda 21, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002, the efforts in that area internationally were insufficient to address the proposed goals of the Rio Declaration. In 1996, and according to UNESCO’s report to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, where education was considered as being “the forgotten priority of Rio” (Wheeler & Bijur, 2000). For that reason the UN community of the WSSD agreed to push for a more profound understanding and commitment to the role of EfSD in December 2002, by declaring the decade 2005 to 2014 as the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD). Throughout that decade the definition of EfSD was solidified and framed. In 2015, the UN adopted the Sustainable Development Goals where education continues to play a major role. These two major initiatives are discussed in further detail below.

### **3.3 United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD)**

EfSD actions and activities were originated outside the realm of education. A significant development in the formulation and recognition of this new educational phenomenon was driven by several forums in the economic and political spheres, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations (McKeown et al., 2002). For that, governments and ministries of education around the world were required to consider working upon the UN sustainable development agenda in the planning of any possible educational practices within or outside of schools. They also had to encourage researchers and curriculum developers in the educational community to acknowledge the best practices of UNESD in schools, in order to help form the new generations' understanding of its themes and develop an appreciation of the planet we live in.

Fien's (2006) paper is in the form of a letter of appreciation from future generations acknowledging our generation's insight in starting the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. According to Fien (2006), acting upon the five key objectives and nine thematic programs, each related to a specific thrust of the UNDESD during the decade, would be the reason for appreciation by future generations. These objectives are identified by UNESCO (2004,p.4) as follows:

1. To give an enhanced profile to the central role of education and learning in the common pursuit of sustainable development.
2. To facilitate links and networking, exchange and interaction among stakeholders in EfSD.
3. To provide a space and opportunity for refining and promoting the vision of, and transition to, sustainable development through all forms of learning and public awareness.
4. To foster increased quality of teaching and learning in education for sustainable development.
5. To develop strategies at every level to strengthen capacity in EfSD (UNESCO, 2004).

The nine identified thematic programs related to a specific objective, thrust and/or theme of the UNDESD, are as follows Fien (2006, p. 69):

1. International leadership and advocacy of the DESD.
2. Integrating EfSD into basic education.
3. Reorienting general secondary education for EfSD.
4. Integrating EfSD into Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).
5. Integrating EfSD into higher education.
6. Teacher education for EfSD.
7. Education for cultural diversity.
8. Education for sustainable water management.
9. Education for sustainable ecosystems and livelihoods.

Although these nine themes do not exhaust the entire complex sustainability education agenda, they provide emphasis for the beginning of a major transformation in this sector.

### **3.4 The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and education**

In 2017, the *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives* document was published by UNESCO, addressing the holistic and transformational nature of EfSD. This document emphasises the importance of integrating sustainability-related subjects into existing educational experiences (e.g., sustainable consumption, poverty and climate change into the school curriculum). It furthermore encourages teachers to construct learner-centred learning and teaching situations in an interactive and engaging mode. The document urges for a paradigm shift in the way we perceive education — from teaching, to learning. This shift will allow the advance of the vital capabilities required for supporting SD. The document argues for

“... an action-oriented, transformative pedagogy, which supports self-directed learning, participation and collaboration, problem-orientation, inter- and transdisciplinary, and the linking of formal and informal learning” (UNESCO: *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives*, 2017, p. 7).

This UNESCO document extends the SDGs agenda further: Target 4.7 explicitly states:

“By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and



appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development” .

One of the 17 goals adopted by the UN, namely SDG4, specifically targets quality education; however, educating for sustainability penetrates the entire list of high-level objectives.

The SDGs recognised EfSD as illustrated in Target 4.7 of the SDG, and emphasised the importance of the integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in the realisation of the 2030 agenda. GCED is defined by Keevy and Chakroun (2015) as “a unique set of cross-cutting knowledge skills and competences that enables an individual to act collaboratively and responsibly, to find global solutions to global challenges, and to strive for the collective good” (p. 149). In recent UNESCO publications (e.g., UNESCO, 2018c), GCED is constructed on three conceptual fields: learning, cognitive, and socio-emotional and behavioural, and teachers should adopt new pedagogical approaches to emphasise global citizenship through these three domains to solve sustainable development issues including environmental problems.

The EfSD agenda needs to transcend the entire educational sector and all levels of education. Of particular importance is its adoption at school and university levels, as this is where the skills of the new professionals are being developed. These are the people who will control the transformation of the national and global economies.

### **3.5 Sustainable development response from the Middle East and educational implications**

The UNESCO (2014) document *Education Strategy 2014–2021* addresses the duty of education in bridging the gap between skills demand and supply as a contributing cause of the current rates of unemployment among people aged 15 to 24 in industrial and developing countries. A survey carried out in 2006 by the World Bank shows that these rates are two to three times higher than those for other adults in industrial countries, and are up to five to seven times higher in some developing countries (UNESCO, 2014). It is essential that education policy-makers chart the way forward, and equip learners to enter a workforce that is always changing its skills needs, by making them trainable and flexible to new prospects (UNESCO, 2014).

This is particularly relevant to the Arab countries, whose economies require significant transformations and skills shift. A study of youth in nine Arab countries found that only one-third of the participants were of the opinion that their education had equipped them effectively to enter the workforce (UNESCO, 2014). This study reveals that despite the five percent growth in the average annual GDP in Arab nations between 2000 and 2010 ‘the region still had the world’s highest youth unemployment rates — about 25 percent, and over 30 percent for young women’ (UNESCO, 2014, p. 15).

Goal 4 of the 2030 UNSDG states that nation states around the world are accountable to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UN, 2015, p. 21). Against this background, it is evident that youth education in Arab countries requires particular attention.

In 2007, and during the UNDESD, the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States (including Saudi Arabia) was assigned to incorporate the values, practices and principles, of sustainable development into various learning experiences and education systems in this region (UNESCO, 2008). The Arab region’s vision of education for sustainable development is in line with UNDESD orientations and guiding principles. They are briefly summarised by the Arab Regional Bureau as the capacity to

“... arrange for individuals and communities to benefit from educational and training opportunities, which focus on knowledge, values and sustainable development behaviours, and to achieve a concrete progress in the social, economic and environmental aspects related to the objectives of the UNDESD (2005–2014), or any other relevant joint plan of action at the international, regional and national levels” (UNESCO, 2008, p. 9).

In 2006, the Saudi Ministry of Education also declared its commitment to sustainable development, observing the significance of integrating SD issues as a vital objective through the national curriculum. Now, it is critical for Saudi education to include sufficient information about major sustainability issues to make a direct impact on the future of the country’s students. This should be, as the MoE stated, an essential part of the curriculum reformation and curriculum development plans in all disciplines, including EFL classes.

It is internationally accepted that “approaches to sustainability education include intra-

subject delivery usually in Geography and Science, cross-curricular delivery, and delivery via ‘special events’” (Buchanan, 2012, p. 110). However, it appears that, to date, there is no evidence as to what approach will be employed in the Saudi education system in response to the Vision 2030. While there has been very limited progress in sustainability education in the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia, there have been some moves toward improving environmental awareness in the region. This has been the main focus since the UNDESD.

Environmental education has so far been the only form available supporting this pillar of sustainable development, and it has to a certain degree shaped the views and attitudes of students and teachers in Saudi schools. This section first sheds some light on how this form of education has responded to the emergence of the SD agenda, and then how it might have contributed to EfSD in the KSA.

### **3.5.1 Environmental education (EE)**

According to Stapp (1970, p. 15),

“... environmental education is aimed at producing a citizenry that is knowledgeable concerning the bio-physical environment and its associated problems, aware of how to help solve these problems, and motivated to work toward their solution”.

In order for bring about its greatest impact on citizens, Stapp (1970) states that environmental education must deliver accurate information that will allow for a complete consideration of the biophysical environment, cultivate an apprehension for environmental quality among nations to work to resolve environmental concerns and enlighten them with regard to their role in reaching the aims resulting from their practices.

Programs and initiatives supporting environmental education around the world have stressed the significance of dynamic participation of schools and communities in joint environmental learning experiences, in transferring knowledge between generations and acting for the good of their local and global environments (Rodenburg, 1994; Sutherland & Ham, 1992; Tilbury, 1995; Uzzell & Rutland, 1993).

A critical review of the literature from the social sciences and education in relation to intergenerational influence (Ballantyne et al., 2006) found that encouraging students

to initiate debates about environmental issues with adults, whether at school, at home or in the larger circle of their community, will empower their perception as agents of change, both towards environmental issues and as transformational, sustainable development catalysts in their communities and beyond.

There is also an increasing literature discovering how in-nature experiences during childhood could have an impact on people's opinions and interaction with the biophysical world as they grow up (Broom, 2017; Carson, 1998; Cheng & Monroe, 2012; Kahn & Kellert, 2002; Pike, 2011; Ward Thompson et al., 2008).

Bergman (2016) examined an environmental education (EE) initiative planned at the classroom level and whether constant impact on learners' ecological attitudes, consciousness and behavioural intents may possibly be identified by grades four, five, and seven. The 432 students who took part in a quantitative assessment were surveyed at the start and end of the school year. By employing a factor analysis method to analyse the data from the study's quantitative questions adjusted from the Children's Environmental Perception Scale, Leeming, et al (1995), three factors were identified, associated with the following themes:

- a. environmental learning intention ;
- b. environmental gratitude; and
- c. consciousness of the possible impact on nature.

The findings showed that after one year of being part of the EE program, fourth- and fifth-grade EE students increased their consciousness about their potential to affect nature (Bergman, 2016). However, it also appears that EE students did not reveal modifications to environmental gratitude or intentions for environmental learning and behaviour. Students in this study were able to recall discussions linked to nature, cognitive and psychomotor spheres using insignificant reference of communal or social issues (Bergman, 2016). This study is consistent with other findings from EE research, that students appreciated the environmental experience for the chance to be out in the open air, away from the classroom. More than a third of all students liked the EE experience for the opportunity to be outdoor, however, five percent appreciated gaining environmental information (Bergman, 2016, p. 497).

Stevenson (2007) examined the persistence gap between environmental education, school practices and policy rhetoric; he claims that the gap between rhetoric and practice needs to be re-conceptualised in relation to teachers' theories and their in-class practices, and not the other way round. Stevenson's approach transfers the importance from implementing environmental education by educators to constructing students' "normative and technical capacity, both individually and collectively, to shape practice" (Newman, 2011, p. 155). Research has shown that environmental schools were able to educate people to be mindful, apprehensive and enthusiastically involved in working on the world environmental issues and avoiding new ones (UNEP and UNESCO, 1976). This was attainable when schools of EE are encouraged to construct connections and cooperation with diverse civic societies to enrich their local significance and escalate their multi-stakeholder contributions (Salter et al., 2011; Tilbury et al., 2002).

The merits of cooperative methodology — linking the school with public groups and networks outside the schools, who are interested in environmental education and sustainability — are significant in providing funding and support for school members in integrating sustainability curriculum and pedagogy.

In an Australian study, Salter et al. (2011) examined to what extent establishing a collaboration between organisers, external funding groups and staff members can support such integration, even in an elite private school where some tension exists between the environmental school's sustainability focus and the school's perceived status. The findings from that study reveal some challenges in handling families' anticipations, management that nurtures collective accountability, and educators' determinations to incorporate sustainability through teaching. They concluded that these encounters could hinder the durability, incorporation and funding for these enterprises forthcoming. Schools interested in EfS can profit from bearing in mind the tensions highlighted in this Australian study when designing and developing their own sustainability initiatives.

Wong and Stimpson (2003) conducted a research study at secondary school level in Singapore regarding the environmental curriculum. They identified a sequence of tensions between the remit of the conventional national curriculum and the environmental education curriculum development and. They argued that the schooling

in Singapore is to a great extent oriented towards examinations, and is dedicated more on content-knowledge achievement rather than on critical thinking skills. This has recently changed, with Singapore eliminating examinations from their school system, including in environmental education. Wong and Stimpson (2003) emphasised the need to develop an environmental education that is culturally sensitive, functional and attentive to the local environmental, and social and economic priorities.

### ***3.5.2 Environmental education in KSA***

In December 1994, the Saudi Government approved the international blueprint for sustainable development issued as Agenda 21 of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. Some of the Saudi environmental objectives, such as monitoring desertification, reducing pollution levels, adopting coastal management plans, conserving national wildlife, creating an environmental information network, and some related targets have been accomplished to some extent (Al-yami and Price, 2006). In October, 2001, the General Environmental Regulations were legislated and executive by-law put in place, which create the need to establish the Presidency of Meteorology and Environment. The chief agency in authority for the implementation of environmental conventions in Saudi Arabia in coordination with other government agencies (Al-yami and price , 2006). In its Seventh Five-Year Development Plan dated from 2000 to 2004, it was also noted that the Saudi Government has engaged in a dynamic role in initiating national sustainable development goals (Al-yami and price , 2006). The policies and practices of the Saudi education system led by the MoE have mostly emphasised the environmental aspect of sustainability. Attention to the social aspect of EfSD has not improved in an equal manner. Policies around sustainability values, such as free speech of citizens and civic engagement, have not been supported by the Ministry of Education, as this has to be approved by a national policy.

### ***3.5.3 Initiatives of environmental education in the Kingdom***

- *Aramco initiative*

The Saudi Aramco Environmental Education Program is the first initiative of its kind at Kingdom level to introduce the concept of environmental education within the extracurricular program in primary schools. It was launched in late 2007 as an initiative from the Saudi Aramco company in cooperation with the General Administration of

Education in the Eastern Region, with the aim of establishing the concept of environmental education in school students. The company has organised a set of workshops that are dedicated to training primary school teachers in Al-Ahsa, Dammam, Khobar, Dhahran, Qatif, Yanbu, Jubail, Madinah, Makkah, Riyadh and Qassim. The program was also reactivated in Al-Ahsa, Al-Khobar and Yanbu for boys and girls, so the number of schools in which the program was implemented exceeded 1630, and resulted in the establishment of 1,146 clubs for environmental friends in these schools. For their part, the teachers initiated clubs inside schools under the name 'Friends of the Environment Club', aiming to attract large groups of students, raise environmental awareness for them, and coordinate environmental visits, campaigns and exhibitions (Enviro News, 2016).

- *GLOBE environment program*

In 1994, the US Government announced the launch of The Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) on Earth Day and in 1995, the program was internationally implemented. GLOBE is a global education program that delivers learners universally with the chance to partake in statistics collection and the technical procedures to contribute to a significant understanding of the environment and the Earth system.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, represented by the General Department of Activity at the Ministry of Education (Boys – Girls), has achieved 38 medals in the evaluation of the fourth-quarter data in the Globe Global Environment Program for the year 2017, bringing the number of medals obtained by the Kingdom to 1,163. Research in which the Kingdom has participated included: advanced atmospheric research, atmospheric research, climate research, clouds research, land research as a system, water research, public research, soil properties research, and soil moisture and temperature research (Saudi Ministry of Education, 2017).

- *The School of Environmental Sense*

The School of Environmental Sense is a collaboration between the MoE and the Saudi Environmental Society, which is a national non-profit organisation established and funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs to promote environmental education in the country. This program sought to make schools in the KSA adopt the concept of the

School of Environmental Sense, which is a school that implements environmental management policies inside and outside the school perimeter in cooperation with the local community. These policies are reflected, but not limited to, programs to rationalise energy consumption, water consumption, waste disposal, the school recycling program, and rationalisation of consumption. The School of Environmental Sensitivity promotes education for sustainable development by adopting the following elements: vision and future thinking, organisational thinking, constructive critical thinking, active participation and building partnerships to find a common base with relevant agencies. The program includes preparing and issuing educational materials for students, in addition to holding training workshops for teachers, in addition to implementing some environmental applications in school facilities (Saudi Environmental Society, 2020).

### **3.6 EfSD in the school system and at university level**

The review of literature on EfSD shows that the research is rich in examining the influence of EfSD programs on the knowledge learned, skills, attitudes and values gained by university-level students and educators. Conversely, less has been written on the application of EfSD in the school system, either in pedagogy or practice. This could be a result of the novelty of the EfSD phenomenon, or perhaps because of the interdisciplinary nature of its themes, which could be perceived by some as a new burden for the educational ministries. It could also easily be lost in the existing heavy curriculum during the school day. The present research aims to review the literature related to the application of EfSD in both areas, starting with the school system and then summarising some of the issues at a university level.

#### ***3.6.1 School system response to EfSD***

Wake (2010) studied the Enviro-schools program and learning by 9-to-11-year-old students in the primary school level in New Zealand. The study observed different outcomes as a result of the students' participation in EfSD co-designed and built project with a special focus on four distinct areas: the issue of sustainability learning using participatory training as the scheme, communal enterprises as the sphere of involvement. The research employed qualitative data collection using a variety of tools, including: a narrative inquiry methodology based on participants' stories, focus groups with students participating in an Eco-building Working Party, discussions with



adults from the school staff and the broader society members, parents of the focus group students survey and analysis of the teacher visual diaries and observation.

According to Wake (2010), the research findings revealed that students and adults gained positively from the application of the EfSD project and learning taking place in all three pillars of sustainability. She explains that some EfSD gains among participants were related to architecture and the built environment, such as understanding a design and building process, and other gains were in cross-disciplinary training that comprised learning skills such as management, collaboration and public speaking. As for the adults involved in this, there was an link between the perception of action competence and the set-up and implementation of the eco-classroom project. This was demonstrated through a democratic, reliable and pertinent action-taking. The whole experience was associated to learning transformations as well as collective and individual learning.

Johnson (2014) reflects critically on the realities versus vision of EfSD by looking deeply at experiences of two different eco-schools', one in South Africa, the other in England. In this research Johnson (2014) sheds light on the lack of democratic involvement in the practice of these two schools, which is at odds with the sustainability philosophy which supports the idea that top-down traditional teaching approaches and outcome-based schooling are at odds with EfSD (Johnson, 2014).

### ***3.6.2 University system's and teachers' education response to EfSD***

There is a larger volume of published studies describing the role of EfSD education at university level and in pre-service teachers' education. In 2012, an interpretive study was carried out by Nielsen et al. (2012), where the researchers evaluated what they described at that time as a new course in teacher education known as 'Education for Sustainable Development'. The researchers aimed to examine the new course's capacity to provide the knowledge and skills needed for pre-service teachers to be able to become environmental educators in the future. They employed critical thinking and place-based pedagogy to enhance the subject design and the analysis process of the data obtained. Data sources used in this study were: interviews with students and diaries, planning documents, and instructor journals. Nielsen et al. (2012) noted that four themes of interest to the teachers emerged:

- (1) the constructed associations amongst environmental education and primary school education and;
- (2) the improvement of action competence through specific activities of each subject;
- (3) the challenge educators face to reflect on their own environmental practices; and,
- (4) the challenges of the subject design for both students and instructors.

Nielsen et al.'s (2012) findings from this research reveal that the vital outcomes from the first year implementation of the course was a greater awareness about wasted water and electricity, and shifts in the manners of transport and food selections among participants. Continuing to raise awareness of personal impacts is likely to be considered alongside a wider perspective on global issues of sustainability and social justice in future repetitions of the course. It was concluded that

“... as the Western, resource-based economy continues to struggle with its legacy of overuse, exploitation and waste, our responsibilities as educators become clear, and developing our personal consciousness through subjects in a teacher education program is a key component to future sustainability” (Nielsen et al., 2012, p. 104).

### **3.7 Education for Sustainable Development and the curriculum**

Education for Sustainability has been striving for a place in schools and in teacher education curriculums for the past twenty years. The need for looking at the curriculum level stems from the increasingly important theory of EfSD that provides a useful account of how the school systems around the world need to reorient their practices including the curriculums to embrace sustainability.

“It is not hard to identify, in our curriculum, where we are and where we are not integrating the concept of sustainability in our concrete educational practices” (Gadotti, 2010, p. 205).

Central to the entire discipline of sustainability is the concept of a new Eco-pedagogy. There is a growing literature that is concerned with Eco-pedagogy, which implies an instruction suitable to education practices based on sustainability. According to Gadotti (2010) the theory of sustainability has an brilliant educational element since the safeguarding of the ecology depends on environmental attentiveness, which basically

depends on education.

Stone (2010) asserts that the transformative work of schooling is viable through a broader and holistic definition of sustainability and a curriculum that views its role as the learning which occurs anywhere in the school, whether it is planned or not. He argues that students learn immensely from every single detail they encounter at school, starting with what the school provide for lunch, the way it uses facilities, resources and properties, the process of managing school waste, and how it relates to the local community and civic organizations:

“For better or worse, the unintended learning is often the most powerful; the soda machine in the hallway or the dump truck headed for the landfill can convey more memorable lessons about the school’s attitudes than repeated lectures on nutrition and recycling” (Stone, 2010, p. 35).

Based on Stone’s (2010) overarching definition of sustainability and curriculum, the four key administrative values for schooling for sustainability were identified as follows:

- Nature is our teacher.
- Sustainability is a community practice.
- The real world is the optimal learning environment.
- Sustainable living is rooted in a deep knowledge of place (Stone, 2010, p. 36).

Buchanan (2012) examined opportunities for and obstacles to the integration of sustainability education in an Australian university primary teacher education program. Three frameworks stem from the analysis of data gathered from three focus groups of participants from teachers’ educators and faculty and staff members from each of the K–6 key learning capacities as follows:

- a. Aspirations and practices of participants;
- b. Obstacles to sustainability education; and
- c. Initiatives nature with regard to activities related to teaching/learning, assessment tasks, and resources.

Findings from this research indicated that, other than Science and Technology and the Social Sciences classes, the inclusion of sustainability education is to some extent infrequent in the other K–6 key learning areas. Buchanan (2012) suggests that more efforts have to be supported to stimulate and encourage sustainability education in an all-school context, and particularly in tertiary schooling which is the framework of this research.

Research emphasising the demand for a transformation in the frame of reference in the way we perceive the world and its conventional education systems is emerging from the Education for Sustainability philosophy. Avriel-Avni's (2017) research analysis of teachers' reflection meetings and the transcripts of the lessons shows the significant practices of self-examination that they went through. The transformation in the paradigmatic notion of the teachers' role from being 'knowledge-agents' to moderators, who encourage their students' learning through actively research-based curriculum to empower commitment to their social–ecological system, as a fundamental concept of education for sustainability, was highlighted in this research.

Stubbs and Schapper (2011), in their case study research, suggest a variety of methods to learning and teaching that are applicable to EfS. The study provides different teaching methods of two separate subjects, namely corporate sustainability (CS) and corporate social responsibility (CSR). The two courses are intended for students with skills to react to CSR and sustainability issues challenges. The study motivated all academics to incorporate EfS into their curriculum and integrate its wide range of applications in their courses. Stubbs and Schapper (2011) explained that although these two stand-alone subjects would never be able to outweigh a fully integrated EfS program, they argued that it is still possible to add a substantial difference to any learning experience.

In the above study, for the assessment part of the course students were required to work in groups and submit a critical analysis of the literature on CSR as well as investigate its application to industries. Students had to present their research results in a one-day conference for guests, who may be other students, colleagues, friends or academics. Student papers were reviewed by students from other groups and one academic. One of the most important finding of this research is the students' positive comments on the experience of reviewing the papers of others and how this allowed them to reflect

on their own work. The authors argued that students in this study gained high-level skills that would prepare them to pursue independent enquiry and use these strategies when leaving the university. The strength of this approach in teaching and learning is that it encourages a humanistic learning approach consistent with EfS expectations for individual reflection, autonomous research, and broad investigation and discussion, within and outside the classroom. The study also recognised that the integration of EfS approach in each discipline is the best practice, whereas a stand-alone sustainability course may provide students with the necessary detailed knowledge, but may also result in the view that sustainability is an isolated branch of knowledge, disconnected in its application. On the other hand, a fragmentary approach to sustainability education in teaching disciplines that do not specifically need to meet the EfS objectives produces strong integration of independent learning and critical thinking skills into any discipline as a significant learning strategy.

The study by Laurie et al. (2016) analysed extensive research to examine the impact of EfSD on quality education. Interviews with education leaders and practitioners were conducted in 18 countries to investigate their views on the result of implementing EfSD in their educational systems. The study showed that key themes were constantly replicated in all 18 studies, revealing that EfSD contributes positively to primary and secondary schooling integration of quality education.

Kopnina and Meijers (2014) examined the consequences of multiplicity of EfSD perspectives and organisational methods as well as discrepancies in EfSD practices. The study argued that there is an inconclusive argument about the objectives of EfSD grounded on the assessment of the broad discourse and in the instrumentalism rooted in the specific. The study set out to investigate the usefulness of a proposed new scale that addressed the Ecocentric and Anthropocentric Attitudes towards Sustainable Development (i.e., the EAATSD scale) in higher-education students. The qualitative evaluation component of this study, which employed comprehensive interviews and discussion with students individually as well as classroom discussions, shows that the EAATSD scale was found to be practical as it revealed a critical interpretation of absurdities and challenges integral to numerous objectives of sustainable development. Hence, the scale was efficient in challenging ecocentric and anthropocentric perceptions of higher-education students. While this research sheds light on the way in which higher education tackles the issues surrounding EfSD, the EAATSD scale

could also be utilised with some modification in ministries of education policy rooms and in curriculum development divisions.

Dyment and Hill (2015) investigated sustainability and the Australian National Curriculum in response to the Sustainability Cross-Curricular Priority (CCP) as seen by initial teacher-education students (ITES). The study explores the readiness and aptitudes of 392 ITES to integrate the CCP into their own teaching practices. Findings from the quantitative survey reveal that the participants in this study had a narrow to moderate understanding of sustainability and EfSD, but less significant understanding of the Sustainability CCP. It also reported that an environmental emphasis dominated the ITES' understanding of sustainability. It also reported a list of influences that either limit or empower teacher educators to embed EfSD. These factors, according to Dyment and Hill (2015), include time restrictions, the potential for participants to inflate the reporting and the limited cognizance of sustainability initiatives within respondents schools.

Mills and Tomas (2013) stated that EfS has been a priority in the School of Education at James Cook University (JCU) in Australia, and teachers' educators have been incorporating EfS in diverse ways through their content, assessment and practice. Nevertheless, it appears that restraints functioning at the school level, such as teacher educators' views and willingness to integrate EfS, were observed to present significant challenges to the program integration. Funding, leadership and Vision, were also reported by Mills and Tomas (2013) in the analysis of semi-structured interviews with four subject coordinators, and their subjects in this case study were identified as enabler aspects regarding the integration of EfS at the university level.

In-service development programs are an important approach to reorienting education to include sustainability issues; however, it is unclear what a model of development program for EfSD might look like. Holdsworth and Thomas (2016) constructed a Sustainable Education and Academic Development framework (SEAD). The SEAD framework is grounded on an analysis of the literature in the fields of organisational change in higher education and academic development. This research compared three international academic development programs in education for sustainability designed for higher education, that use diverse methods and delivery means. The aim was to select the essential component of any academic improvement program that provides a

transformative results in education for sustainable development and delivery. The framework emphasised that any successful curriculum change is an outcome of a broader part of organisational change, and that the development of a curriculum based on sustainability should be holistic and contextually relevant, and flexible for any academic institution that aims to incorporate sustainability into their curriculum and educational practices.

From the research reviewed in this section it appears that the concept of EfSD was identified and recognised following a decade of mixed understandings of the notion of sustainability and its underlying ecological, economic and societal pillars. The recognition of the concept of sustainability has mapped the new way forward to global prosperity and communal development. This was not always the case, however, as not all nations embraced sustainability at the same level. For that reason, the United Nations declared the decade from 2005 to 2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD) to solidify international community commitment to EfSD. The DESD marked the beginning of a significant transformation in the way the educational sector perceives sustainability. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for 2030 adopted by the UN targeted quality education, specifically in SDG 4.

The review also indicates multi-layered approaches and levels of reactions to EfSD since the UNDESD. This chapter reveals an international recognition of environmental education and global citizenship education at university and higher education levels. While this is the case internationally, it appears from the initiatives in the KSA educational sector that environmental education has so far been the only form of support for EfSD. There has been no research conducted in KSA that investigates the views and attitudes to EfSD, either of students or teachers in the school system, in relation to its current approach to delivering SD associated with the national KSA Vision 2030.

### **3.8 English as a Foreign Language education and EfSD**

Given the Saudi Vision 2030, the question of whether EFL as a discipline is placed to address and deliver EfSD is the main focus of this research. The position of EFL education in relation to the global EfSD agenda brings to light the provocative dispute regarding boundaries between disciplines. On the one hand there is the nature of

English language education as a subject and, evidently, the expectations of students, teachers and policy makers that foreign languages are of significant importance for students' fruitful academic achievement. On the other hand, future attainment suggests that EFL is one of the best-suited means for EfSD.

In the High-Level International Conference on Education for Sustainable Development at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, 2–3 September 2002 in Johannesburg, it was stated that education has to integrate a new vision that

“... helps people of all ages better understand the world in which they live, addressing the complexity and interconnectedness of problems such as poverty, wasteful consumption, environmental degradation, urban decay, population growth, health, conflict and the violation of human rights that threaten our future” (UNESCO, 2003, p. 4).

Such a vision of education should emphasise

“... a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to developing the knowledge and skills needed for a sustainable future as well as changes in values, behaviour, and lifestyles. This requires us to reorient education systems, policies and practices in order to empower everyone, young and old, to make decisions and act in culturally appropriate and locally relevant ways to redress the problems that threaten our common future. In this way, people of all ages can become empowered to develop and evaluate alternative visions of a sustainable future and to fulfil these visions through working creatively with others” (UNESCO, 2004a, p. 86)

Higgitt's (2006) study looked into the likelihoods for each and every discipline to carry its role as a vehicle for EfSD. He argued that, to achieve EfSD, a radical re-engineering of disciplinary boundaries is simply the most correct but also the most difficult way to attain EfSD, and that interdisciplinary studies are the answer for a faster integration. However, there has been limited research focusing on foreign language studies and the role of teachers as educators in the new phenomenon of EfSD. When discussing the role of foreign language education in EfSD and, in particular, teaching the subject of EFL in the education system in Saudi Arabia, the globalisation phenomenon as a third dimension always arises. With the advent of the Saudi Vision 2030, neoliberalism and its instruments support high-scale sustainability projects in a country where English



plays a major role. Hence, a new dimension finds its way into the development of teaching English in Saudi Arabia together with the impacts of globalisation.

Recent events in Saudi foreign and domestic policy indicate its position in terms of the Vision 2030 objectives. The government plans to open the Saudi market to international investors and provide the necessary logistical support for international firms to work in Saudi. Some of the public sector is to be privatised, and subsidies on public services reduced. Also, some Saudi assets, including Aramco, are to be opened up for initial public offering. This is a direct indicator that the Saudi government is taking into consideration its obligations as a member of international peace efforts and its commitment to sustainability in its Vision 2030. In addition, the government is proceeding with the Islamic leadership promised in the Vision 2030.

To maintain Saudi Arabia's leadership in regional and international spheres, the Vision 2030 positions the country as an influential player after the oil period by embracing globalisation and converting to an economic model that takes on aspects of both neoliberalism and sustainability. This paradigm shift in the national economy is described as "the only way out", the phrase used in Britain in support of neoliberalism in 1970.

This inescapable decision is taken by the Saudi government at a vital time in the history of the country. There is uncertainty and transitioning in the global economy, and no other successful models for economic sustainability are applicable. The KSA, as other countries have done previously, has not only shifted to a more open economy but is influenced by cultural and societal shifts in other parts of the world. Globalisation has certainly had its opponents within Saudi society; however, the new generation in the country looks to globalisation as the key to becoming exposed to the world and to different cultures and schools of thought, after being dominated for more than two centuries by the Wahhabi doctrine, the only form of Islam accepted in KSA. This shift was affirmed by Saudi Arabia in a speech by the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, at a 2017 economic conference attended by global investors. He also explained the KSA's dedication to fighting extremist interpretations of Islam, while focusing on economic and societal reforms to serve the new young generation to *The Guardian*:

“Seventy percent of the Saudis are younger than 30. Honestly we won’t waste 30 years of our life combating extremist thoughts, we will destroy them now and immediately” ( The Guardian, 2017).

Although some may see this as a marketing tactic (Noack, 2017), The younger generation expects this openness towards globalisation to present them with better educational choices and give them a chance for more employment opportunities in their challenging unemployment situation. Learning a foreign language helps to shift learning patterns from a local to global scale, and could possibly broaden the students’ perspectives on the issue of sustainable development in other countries and globally. Foreign language competence is necessary to address global economic, environmental and societal problems as well as to suggest possible solutions that have been accomplished and confirmed across the world (Petkutė, 2012). It will allow for local solutions to also emerge drawing on the newly developed competences and values.

Bowden (2010) explored the connections between sustainability and education, making parallels between Education for Sustainability and English Language Teaching (ELT). She suggested connections as well as associations between EfS and ELT in what we teach, how we teach, where and who we teach, suggesting that building the capacity of teachers will reinforce the positive impact of ELT on sustainability.

Hubscher-Davidson and Panichelli-Batalla (2016) conducted a study that assessed two groups of language students their final year in the School of Languages and Social Sciences at Aston University in Birmingham, England. The study sample consisted of a first-year language students before and after the incorporation of SD themes in one of their units and the other group contains students about to enter the graduate labour market to examine their understanding of sustainability issues and their role in this field. The results of the two surveys, which contained qualitative and quantitative questions, suggested that only 48 percent of graduates of language schools are attentive to the environmental impact of their work as educators and practitioners. This study reveals that 52 percent of students do not believe it applicable to learn about SD in the course of their degree (Hubscher-Davidson & Panichelli-Batalla, 2014). Hence, their study recommends that including SD early in the language curriculum could contribute to the development of sustainability-literate graduates in a positive manner because of

the growing demand by employers for graduates who are sustainability literate. While this study is important as it sheds light on the relativity of language education contribution to EfSD through a multi-discipline facet, it did not elicit the individual views of the participants in order to gain a more comprehensive image about their opinions related to SD.

According to Canning (2005), EfSD is an increasingly important area in linguistics and language learning because of the fact that it is central to the entire discipline of foreign language education and the ethical dimension relating to the “distant others”. He states:

“Language learning and the study of other cultures place students into a social and geographical space where they engage with these others. On becoming sustainability literate, students will gain a greater understanding of the implications their choices may have on others” (Canning, 2005).

This emphasises the significance of interdisciplinary influences and declares that each subject at school has something distinctive to offer to the sustainability education recommended by the United Nations. The enthusiasm of Saudi EfL teachers should encourage them to take their work with students in the classroom as a contribution to the synchronised efforts between the Saudi national sustainability agenda, as in the Vision 2030 and the international efforts of the UNDES and the 2017 Sustainable Development Goals (ESDG).

Canning (2005), who worked in the online Centre of Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS), identifies the opportunities where language learning could serve EfSD in different ways. He argues that there is a huge opportunity for language studies students to contribute to EfSD because they are inherently interested in noticing cultures other than their own. These cultures’ reactions and responses to any global or local concerns — environmental concerns, for example — allow them in turn to reflect on their own reaction and practices. Canning (2005) argued that considerable barriers in recognising the potential of EfSD within the language learning area varied according to different contexts, but concludes that the main barrier is not the absence of attentiveness to issues in relation to environment, but rather the failure to detect, categorise and integrate EfSD into the disciplines.

Canning (2005) stressed that the real concern regarding the real integration of EfSD is being seen as something that is “bolted onto” the existing school curriculum. He suggests that EfSD has been framed predominantly by scientific discourse, which might affect its integration into social sciences and humanities, and that the scope and space of EfSD should be extended to be integrated into all disciplines, not only through science.

Yencken et al. (2002) used focus groups of secondary school in Asia–Pacific countries. They confirmed the commonly held notion by high school students that they come to university with presumptions about where different kinds of knowledge should be placed; for example, environmental knowledge is the responsibility of geography or some other cognate discipline. Yencken et al. (2002) also questioned whether the mission of developing an environmentally responsive and socially critical human being should be a university obligation, or the responsibility of the entire education system. For example, they noted that although there is a predisposition for environmental education to be located across diverse disciplines, students are poorly equipped to reflect and work systematically. Yencken et al. (2002) asserted that higher education should take the responsibility of enhancing systematic and critical thinking skills in its graduates, especially when the school system was not able to cater for that need.

### **3.9 Foreign language education: Theory and practice**

There is a large volume of published studies describing the positive role of foreign language education on the cognitive development of students. According to a study by Cooper (1987), there is a positive correlation between years of foreign language learning and essential skills among high school students (represented by Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) verbal scores). The SAT is a standardised test that evaluates writing, mathematics and verbal skills and assigns a score to a person’s abilities, which helps colleges and universities (in the USA) determine the students’ competitiveness in the application process. Cooper (1987) found that English study was associated with better SAT performance.

Adesope et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of 63 research investigating the cognitive associations of bilingualism. The analysis of these, involving 6,022 participants, documented major cognitive outcomes linked with bilingualism, including increased abstract and symbolic representational skills, working memory, increased

attentional control and metalinguistic responsiveness. According to Ralph (1995 p 4–5), the benefits of being bi- or multilingual include the following:

- (1) In general, people who know more than one language have a certain mental enrichment or cognitive stimulation about their personalities, not observable in comparable groups of monolinguals.
- (2) Bilingual/multilingual individuals' scores on psychological tests (both verbal and non-verbal) are higher, as a rule, for divergent thinking skills and diversified reasoning processes, than are similar scores for monolinguals.
- (3) People who know more than one language typically get to know their mother tongue better than the comparable groups of monolinguals.
- (4) Bi- or multilinguals, compared to their monolingual peers, tend to have a more socially relaxed reaction and are at ease when meeting others from different cultures.
- (5) They are generally less provincial, stereotypical, prejudiced and biased in their views of other cultures or individuals, than are similar groups of monolinguals.
- (6) Compared to monolingual peers, bilinguals as a group enjoy more pragmatic benefits, such as being more disposed towards travel to other countries overseas, and having access to broader job and career opportunities because of their language abilities (Ralph, 1995, pp 4–5).

This evidence supports the Saudi Arabian government's focus on teaching EFL in terms of creating better employment prospects for the younger generation. The following section examines previous research on the status of English within the Saudi educational system.

### **3.10 An overview of the status of EFL in the education system of KSA**

It is now well established in the literature that English is used across the world as a global language even though there are fewer native speakers of English than learners of English as a second or foreign language (Kachru, 1985; Fishman, 1996). English is considered as a global language in a number of countries around the world, including Saudi Arabia (Al Khateeb, 2015). Researchers argue that this is due to the fact that English is considered to be the lingua franca in numerous dynamic domains, such as

science, education, diplomacy, business, technology and tourism, to name a few (Al Khateeb, 2015; Block & Cameron, 2002; Fairclough, 2009; Fishman, 1996).

Kachru (1985) identified a model of three official norms for English language: norm-providing, norm-developing and norm-dependent. Previous research into these three norms attributed to the circles of English suggested by Kachru (1985) placed KSA in the third variety, where specific norms are usually assimilated as in British or American English (Al-Asmari & Khan, 2014; Al Khateeb, 2015; Kachru, 2006). Kachru (2006) further suggests that the main four reasons for using and performing in English are instrumental, interpersonal, regulative, and imaginative–innovative functions. Many recent studies suggest that English is performed by students in KSA for instrumental functions due to the fact that it is used generally and by most in the education context (Al-Asmari & Khan, 2014; Al-Mohanna, 2010; Al-Seghayer, 2011). Al-Abed and Samadi (1996) describe the four instrumental functions of English in Saudi Arabia as economic, spiritual, practical and political.

In 1928 and a few years after it was established, the Ministry of Education in KSA for the first time introduced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) into the school system (Al-Seghayer, 2011). Al-Ahaydib (1986) explains that EFL was introduced as a strategic move to meet the growing needs for development in the country. This was at the time of unprecedented social, economic and political development of the Middle Eastern region, including KSA and especially the gulf countries (Al-Ahaydib, 1986).

Other researchers have identified a good number of reasons for teaching EFL in the Saudi education system. Al-Hajailan (2003) argued that the Saudi government recognised the position of the English language as the first global language used in the world. English was considered the language of the most published resources in the world and the medium of international research, trade and economy. Al-Hajailan (2003) also argued that English was expected to be of particular importance since it was the formal language for education, trade and tourism adopted by the members of the United Nations.

Today, according to Al-Asmari and Khan (2014), numerous courses in the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science programs, such as medical science, physics, chemistry, business administration, engineering, information science, and diploma courses of intensive English use English as the medium of instruction in most Saudi universities.

Furthermore, English language proficiency is a prerequisite for admission to programs such as dentistry and medicine, and for most higher-degree courses (Al-Asmari and Khan, 2014).

According to Faruk (2013), people in Saudi Arabia have a positive attitude towards English and they are convinced of the vital role of English for the future prosperity of the younger generations' education. English is seen as being of considerable importance in numerous fields; nevertheless, English is considered to be the "language of the colonisers" (Charise, 2007). She explains that the unusual positive attitudes towards English in the gulf countries, including KSA, exist even with the previous colonial presence in the region. According to Charise (2007), this is to a certain extent uncommon in the sociolinguistic field of study, where the language of previous colonial authorities is usually avoided in the wake of asserting national independence. This is consistent with Fishman's (1996, p. 628) statement that "the world is linguistically dominated by English almost everywhere, regardless of how well established and well-protected local cultures, languages, and identities may otherwise be". This attention to English was shared and envisioned by the Saudi government, as it planned to connect the Saudis with the outside world and to improve the local educational systems by including a foreign language in the national education curriculum (Al-Seghayer, 2011).

The history of teaching EFL in KSA can be examined through looking into the stages that the EFL curriculum went through. Al-Hajailan (2003), Alhmadi (2014) and Al Khateeb (2015) and point out that teaching English as a Foreign Language in KSA passed through five phases, from its introduction as a compulsory subject at all schools in 1925 until the present day.

*Stage 1 from 1925 to 1942:* Secondary schooling in Saudi schools was five years long, but this was later reduced to three years (Al-Hajailan. 2003, Alhmadi 2014, Al Khateeb. 2015). English then was not introduced to students until they were at the secondary level. Each year was intended to cover one or two language skills. For example: the first year focused on handwriting, vocabulary, dictation and formation of sentences; during the second year, students learned the rules of compositions and storytelling, while keeping the focus on handwriting and dictation; the third year was mostly the time when students were introduced to English grammar and the use of

punctuation in writing sentences; the fourth year was to be devoted to writing skills and essay production; the fifth year was dedicated to learning translation skills and developing grammatical skills.

*stage 2 from 1942 to 1989* : The secondary and intermediate levels were separated, each of three years (Al-Hajailan. 2003, Alhmadi 2014, Al Khateeb. 2015). During this phase, the Saudi Ministry of Education collaborated with Macmillan and Longman Press to develop textbooks for Saudi students. The methods used in teaching the content of these textbooks gradually changed from the “aural-oral approach to the communicative approach” (Al Khateeb, 2015, p. 4).

*Stage 3 from 1989 to 2013* : A national project was introduced to develop curriculums for the public education sector to authorise English language textbooks by Saudi experts. The Ministry of Education sought to use the expertise of a number of Saudi professional writers who worked in the King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals in KSA (KFUPM) to modify aspects of the textbooks written during Phase 3, to make them appealing to the Saudi students and more suitable for the local communities (Alhmadi 2014, Al Khateeb. 2015).. Al-Hajailan (2003) argues that this set of textbooks was in line with the educational policies of EFL in Saudi Arabia, since they took into account the historical and cultural issues of the local people in a serious manner.

*Stage 4 from 2013 up to the present* : According to Al Khateeb (2015), this phase is represented by partnerships between the MoE and a number of major international publishers, such as MM Publications and MacMillan, to design new textbooks with content suited to the local context. The series of textbooks was first available in Saudi schools during the 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 academic years. According to Al Khateeb (2015), these textbooks eventually were considered to be a part of a pilot project which was approved and later implemented in the 2012/2013 academic year; they are still used today.

### **3.11 Concluding Remarks**

A great deal of previous research on EfSD is available, and overall studies highlight the need for integrating EfSD into the education systems and enterprises. However, it is worth directing the research to report on specific school subjects and curriculum



contributions and applications to EfSD. This literature review shows the transformation of education in all perspectives when EfS values, issues, skills and pedagogies are implemented in any educational enterprise to foster sustainable societies.

Three major recommendations can be identified in this review to ensure successful transformation to a quality education that supports and integrates EfSD into the educational spheres and enterprises. First, the need for the Saudi MoE to adopt EfSD policy and ensure management practices to support the integration of EfSD at the school level. Second, there is need to integrate EfSD across all subjects and school curriculums, including foreign language education. Third, professional development for teachers needs to be provided to ensure EfSD policy implementation across the KSA school system. The case of Saudi Arabia is of particular interest as the purpose of education in the country during the past three decades has been to educate a Muslim nation and to equip it with basic knowledge acquisition skills using to some extent the old non-operational teaching strategies. With the advent of Vision 2030 and the high rates of unemployed young Saudis, it seems that a shift in the thinking paradigm of Saudis towards economic competitiveness and a knowledgeable workforce is the only way out of the current reality, which is manifested by an insecure future for young people in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The next chapter will look into the first aim of this research to analyse documents pertaining to the reformation of education policy and the curriculum development plans.

# Chapter 4:

## Document Analysis and Implications for EFL Instruction

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter employs a mixed methods approach. Quantitative and qualitative tools are used to analyse documents, pertaining to EfSD and associated with the Saudi Vision 2030. Two main documents are analysed to explore to what extent these policy guidelines contribute to sustainability nationally and internationally, and how their objectives align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and education in particular. Three additional EfSD-related documents are also reviewed as part of the analysis. Before proceeding with the document analysis, Section 4.2 gives a brief demographic profile of Saudi Arabia. Section 4.3 elaborates on the methods used in this part of the study which aims to analyse policy documents using a content analysis approach. The results from the document analysis are presented in Section 4.4. Section 4.5 discusses the findings while section 4.6 delivers the conclusion for this chapter.

The chapter examines the Vision 2030 document and the 2020 National Transformation Program (2020 NDP) as the two main policy documents that inform any future national framework for curriculum Standards in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as any national sustainable-development review documents. For that, three supplementary documents were reviewed as part of the content analysis.

Furthermore, documents are scrutinised to answer questions regarding the contribution of the Vision 2030 document to education for sustainability, and sustainability in general. Another important aspect of this document analysis is to understand the MoE strategies, plans and achievements as part of the realisation to the Vision 2030 in

relation to Goal 4 of the UNSDGs. To understand the implications of the two main documents on school curriculums, including EFL instruction and female students' education and women's empowerment in the country, a content analysis of the policy documents was required.

Analysing the documents using both a quantitative and qualitative content analysis approach allows a reliable picture to be created. By searching keywords and terms related to the main aspects of this research in these documents, then collecting extracts examining the standpoints of each document from the main aspects of this study, the researcher is able to use the finding of this chapter to inform the tools applied in further content analysis of the EFL textbooks, students survey and teachers interviews described in the next four chapters. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis can provide significant information that can suggest questions that need to be asked in another part of the research. Bowen (2009) argues that generating questions for questionnaires and interviews is a distinctive benefit of document analysis as a research method that verifies how one research technique can complement another in a collaborative and synergistic manner.

Chapter 5 aims to gain a better understanding of the current role of EFL in achieving the Vision 2030 and its sustainability agenda, by examining the extent to which two Saudi textbooks incorporate sustainability issues in their instructional curriculums using content analysis. Chapters 6 and 7 build on the findings of Chapters 4 and 5, which inform the questions used in a survey initiated to examine how female students who study from these two textbooks perceive their learning experiences with regard to different aspects of sustainability. Chapter 7 involves the same sample of female students, while specifically focusing on the EFL textbooks' representation of women in light of the anticipated female roles in the Saudi Vision 2030.

The scarcity in previous scholarly research in content analysis of the two main documents — the Vision 2030 document and the 2020 National Transformation Program (NDP) — is perhaps justified by the novelty of these new policies and their associated phenomena. According to Mitchell and Alfuraih (2018) “ the release, content, and intention of the Vision 2030 document and the 2020 National Transformation Plan (NDP) indicate an overwhelmingly supportive, positive, and complementary nationally, regionally and globally because of the opportunities outlined in these documents for the current and future generations.” (2018, p.1).

Mitchell and Alfuraih (2018 ) stressed the need to re-orient the KSA's current and future curriculums in order to achieve the Saudi Vision 2030, as the first necessary part of social adaptation of Eisner, (1985) orientations to curriculum theory to provide graduates with the requisite skills to meet the economic needs and comply with the strategic plans of the country, whether in the public or private sector of the labour market. As keeping a global perspective is essential, the current study specifically examines Saudi Arabia's response to these globalised trends.

## 4.2 Demographic profile of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's population has grown to 34 million in 2020 and continues to expand at a rate of 1.6% per annum (see Table 4.1). It is a relatively young population, where 32% of the population are younger than 14 years of age. The nature of the education that Saudi youth is receiving is thus extremely important for the country's future.

Furthermore, although Saudi Arabia had a relatively high annual per capita income of US\$22,693 in 2020 (see Table 4.1), a commitment of Vision 2030 is to shift Saudi's.

Table 4.1. A demographic profile of Saudi Arabia

2004 population	22,678,262
2010 population	27,236,156
2020 population	34,218,169
GDP (IMF) 2020	US\$790.06 bn
GDP (UN) 2020	US\$639.62 bn
GDP per capita 2020	US\$22,693.89
2020 population rank	41
2020 world percentage	0.45%
2020 growth rate	1.59%
0–14 age group	32.4%
15–64 age group	64.8%
65+ age group	2.8%
Sex ratio at the time of birth	1.05 males per female
Sex ratio for under-15 age group	1.05 males per female
Sex ratio for the 15–64 age group	1.03 males per female
Sex ratio for the 65+ age group	1.03 males per female
Sex ratio, total population	1.21 males per female

Source: General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT) website <<https://www.stats.gov.sa/en>>

Dependence on fossil fuel extraction towards a more sustainable economic development. Education, again, is seen as a power lever to facilitate such a transition.

For the younger generation of people younger than 15, the demographic sex ratio of Saudi Arabia is 1.05 men per 100 women, which is aligned with the standard sex ratio at birth. This means that a large section of Saudi's population is female. Vision 2030 outlines the country's aspirations to see a greater involvement of Saudi women in the country's workforce, which also stresses the importance of girls' education, including English language skills.

The remainder of this chapter presents a thorough analysis of the policy documents which outline the Saudi Government's aspirations to change the development path of the country through its education system, while providing better prospects for its entire population. This educational transformation is also closely aligned with the country's national documents outlining its commitment to sustainable development and the SDGs.

### **4.3 Methodological approach**

This section presents the document sample, keywords used, identified themes and the four questions explored through the content analysis. It sets up the methodological approach to investigating the Saudi policy documents.

#### **4.3.1 Document sample**

The policy documents investigated use content analysis related to KSA Vision 2030, UN Education for Sustainable Development (UNESD) and UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) in the Saudi context and documents pertaining to the Saudi education system. This helps to understand the current position of the Vision regarding EfSD and the response of the MoE in this regard. All these documents are publicly available and they are the main data sources for this chapter. The document samples in this study comprise two main and three supplementary documents as follows:

- Main documents:
  - *Document 1*. The KSA Vision 2030 (KSA, 2016a)
  - *Document 2*. The 2020 National Transformation Program (KSA, 2016b)
- Supplementary documents:
  - *Document S1*. The National Framework for Public Education curricular Standards in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia — this forms part of the Education

and Training Evaluation Commission's (ETEC) plan as a response to Vision 2030.

- *Document S2*. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in KSA (Status-quo Statistical Report), 2018. General authority for statistics (GAS) in KSA — this is a document initiated by the Saudi General Authority for Statistics for reporting on the UN sustainable development objectives and the KSA reaction in light of the Saudi Vision 2030.
- *Document S3*. Sustainable Development Goals 1st Voluntary National Review of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. UN High-Level Political Forum 2018 “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies” — sustainability, EfSD, including the three dimensions (economic, environmental and social) are considered, together with 10 identified themes connected to EfSD and related to this research study, including curriculum reformation, women's equality, EFL instruction and unemployment.

#### **4.3.2 Coding, keywords and themes**

This chapter draws on coding approaches used in previous studies, such as by UNESCO (2015b, 2019), the European Commission (2017a) and UNESCO and IBE (2016). These studies focused on tracing the dimensions in relation to EfSD and GCED across countries' national legal documents, education strategic plans and policies, curriculum frameworks, EfSD/GCED-specific documents and subject-specific curriculums at all educational levels in the selected countries. The analysis procedure in those studies began by coding relevant material from all studied documents and developing coding categories related to EfSD, its three pillars, and several sustainability themes. This helped to define specific keyword searches for the coding process. These exact terms and their acronyms are coded by pertinent segments and extracts of texts to determine extent to which they were used and engaged in the relevant documents. A similar approach is adopted in this investigation.

The keyword search terms used for the selected codes are all related to EfSD and the curriculum, the three sustainable development pillars, economy, environment and society, and finally women's participation and empowerment. While all these listed keywords can have different wording variations and can refer to a wide range of terms and concepts, it was decided for the scope and limitation of this research that the

following basic terms be used in the coding of the document sample:

- Sustainability, sustainable, or sustainable development
- Economic, economy, or sustainable economy
- Environment or environmental sustainability
- Society, social development, social responsibility, or social empowerment
- Women, female, or women's participation
- Education for sustainable development, or education
- Curriculum.

Four major themes were defined for the document content analysis based on the study's research question and objectives:

- The contribution of the Vision 2030 document and the 2020 National Transformation Program (2020 NTP) to education for sustainability and sustainability in general
- MoE's plans, strategies and achievements as part of the realisation of Vision 2030 in relation to Goal 4 of the UNSDGs
- Implications of these policy documents on female students' education and women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia
- Implications of these policy documents on the school curriculums, specifically on EFL instruction in the country.

#### ***4.3.3 Quantitative and qualitative analysis***

Both the quantitative and qualitative analysis were based on the same five documents (two main and three supplementary). The researcher first read the two main official documents, namely the Vision 2030 and the 2020 National Transformation Program, and then searched for each of the identified key words and how many times they occurred in the text. A tool of coded terms based on the identified keywords was developed from the analysed documents to form the quantitative part of this chapter.

The qualitative analysis was carried out through a question-and-answer approach. Four questions were formulated based on the research themes identified above (see Table 4.2) and the documents were screened to find adequate answers. The most suitable extracts from each document are used to answer the questions posed.

Table 4.2. Questions used for the document content analysis

Question number	Question
Q1	To what extent do the objectives of Vision 2030 and The 2020 National Transformation Program(2020 NTP) documents aim to contribute to education for sustainability?
Q2	What are the MoE's plans, strategies and achievements as part of the realisation of Vision 2030 in relation to Goal 4 of the UNSDGs?
Q3	What is the implication of these policy documents on female students' education and women's empowerment?
Q4	What is the implication of these policy documents on school curriculums, including EFL instruction in the country?

#### 4.4 Document analysis results

In mixed methods research, it is important to distinguish clearly between the quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to be able to reconcile the findings. The quantitative data show the frequency of occurrence of certain terms, the qualitative data describe the exact language used, whether strong and explicit, or suggestive.

##### 4.4.1 Quantitative document content analysis

The frequency of occurrence of the specific keywords forms the basis of the quantitative analysis. They are presented in Table 4.3. The terms 'sustainability', 'sustainable' or 'sustainable development' as the framework of this research occurs four times in Document 1. As a road map to sustainability, the Vision 2030 document allows for the 2020 NTP document to implement the sustainability initiatives around the country, which explains the more frequent occurrences of these terms in the 2020 NTP document, in which the key words 'sustainability', 'sustainable' or 'sustainable development' appear 71 times.

As for the three sustainability pillars and the importance of their occurrence in this research, Table 4.3 shows that in Document 1 the terms 'economic', 'economy' or 'sustainable economy' are the most common with 85 occurrences, which indicates that a special importance is given to the 'economy' pillar of sustainability to lead the country towards its sustainability target. The terms 'society', 'social development', 'social responsibility' or 'social empowerment' were used interchangeably and occur 54 times,



whereas the terms ‘environment’ or ‘environmental sustainability’ came last, with six occurrences. These pillars occur with different frequencies in Document 2, where most occurrences were associated with the ‘society’ pillar 126 times. ‘Environment’ or ‘environmental sustainability’ came second, with 70 occurrences in Document 2, and 59 occurrences for terms associated with the economy. Another term that is vital to this research is ‘education’, and occurs at similar rates: 9 times in Document 1, and 26 in Document 2. Correspondingly, the term ‘curriculum’ occurs twice in Document 1 and once in Document 2. The terms ‘women’, ‘female’ or ‘women’s participation in the labour market’ occurs eight times in Document 1 but 29 times in Document 2, which assumes the importance of women’s empowerment to the realisation of Vision 2030.

Table 4.3. Quantitative analysis of the content of Documents 1 and 2

Key words	Document 1 Vision 2030	Document 2 2020 NTP
1. ‘Sustainability’, ‘sustainable’ or ‘sustainable development’	4	71
2. ‘Economic’, ‘economy’ or ‘sustainable economy’	85	59
3. ‘Environment’ or ‘environmental sustainability’	6	70
4. ‘Society’, ‘social development’, ‘social responsibility’ or ‘social empowerment’	54	126
5. ‘Education’	29	26
6. ‘Curriculum’	2	1
7. ‘Women’, ‘female’ or ‘women’s participation’	8	29

#### ***4.4.2 Qualitative document content analysis***

The answers to the four formulated questions are provided below using the two main documents. Analysing these two main documents was essential, as these policies have informed the content and work contained in the other three supplementary documents in the research sample. The three supplementary documents were used in the analysis as quotes from these documents were used to answer specific questions related to each one of them.

**Q1. To what extent has the Vision 2030 and The 2020 National Transformation Program (2020 NTP) documents aimed to contribute to education for sustainability?**

The first question in this analysis looks to what extent does the Vision 2030 document clearly aim to contribute to education for sustainability. For this, KSA Vision 2030 and the 2020 National Transformation Program (2020 NTP) documents are analysed in relation to the sustainable development pillars, with special emphasis on education for sustainable development, and on women's status, in these national documents, as they are significantly important to this research. The analysis of the two documents are presented separately below.

*4.4.2.1 KSA Vision 2030*

The Saudi Vision 2030 refers to the following three main objectives of the vision:

- (1) A vibrant society;
- (2) A thriving economy
- (3) An ambitious nation that is effectively governed and responsibly enabled.

The Vision document explicitly includes the words 'sustainability' and 'sustainable' four times to refer to the three pillars of sustainability. This occurs in two headings in different pages in the documents.

Under the first objective of document (1) *A Vibrant Society*, the first heading reads: "Our Vision is a Society in which All Enjoy a Good Quality of Life, a Healthy Lifestyle and an Attractive Living Environment" (KSA, 2016a, p. 23), which combines the social and environmental dimensions. Together with two other main sub-themes, this section takes up 10 of the 86 pages of the document and provides several objectives and initiatives relating to:

1. Developing our cities.
2. Achieving environmental sustainability (KSA, 2016a, p. 23).

The second heading explicitly refers to sustainability in its subheading "The Need for Environmental Sustainability and Diversifying our Economy is Vital for its Sustainability" (KSA a, 2016, p. 24). This heading comes under the second main objective of this document: (2) A Thriving Economy, and plainly states that the

Vision's aim is to maintain the natural environment associated with the economy. This implies that the environment is required to be at the heart of sustainability in any future social or economic governmental initiatives.

Educational themes are seen under these two main objectives, confirming the role of education in achieving the Vision. The use of the term 'education' recurs 29 times in the document. It is used 21 times in themes related to the economy, creating economic opportunities and aligning the education system with market needs. This surely implies an emphasis and commitment to an education that contributes to economic growth that will eventually impact on EfSD. The vision states that:

“We will track progress and publish a sophisticated range of education outcomes, showing year-on-year improvements. We will work closely with the private sector to ensure higher education outcomes are in line with the requirements of the job market. We will invest in strategic partnerships with apprenticeship providers, new skills councils from industry, and large private companies. We will also work towards developing the job specifications of every education field. Furthermore, we will build a centralised student database tracking students from early childhood through K–12 and beyond into tertiary education (higher and vocational) in order to improve education planning, monitoring, evaluation, and outcomes” (KSA, 2016a, p 40, 41).

The other eight mentions of the term 'education' occur associated with society and the environmental aspects of sustainability. A social emphasis is evident in the following extract from the Vision:

“The focus will be on the fundamental values of initiative, persistence and leadership, as well as social skills, cultural knowledge and self-awareness. We will also promote cultural, social, volunteering and athletic activities through empowering our educational, cultural and entertainment institutions” (KSA, 2016a, p. 28).

Environmental aspects of sustainability are seen by Vision 2030 as an Islamic and ethical duty that reflects the teaching of Islam in the Quranic verses and hadith of the Prophet (sayings of the Prophet Muhammed), stating:

“By preserving our environment and natural resources, we fulfil our Islamic, human and moral duties. Preservation is also our responsibility to future generations and essential to the quality of our daily lives” (KSA, 2016a, p. 23).

Several scholars provide an account of the Islamic point of view regarding sustainable development and identify 750 verses in the Quran which give the foundations of topics directly related to the environment, industrial development, agriculture and the whole universe (Ahmed, 2002; Adam & Ab Rahman, 2003). Islam is conceived in KSA as the cornerstone for a sustainable society and the Vision is devoted to identifying it as a social dimension of the national commitment review to SDGs that:

“... focuses on safeguarding Islamic values, development of human resources and improvement of social welfare of citizens through the scaling up of health, educational and cultural aspects” (KSA, 2018, p. 19).

This significantly indicates the role of religion in all aspects of life across the country. According to Islam, the construction of the national educational system is built and includes religion, while knowledge and science are also endorsed. Recently the KSA’s long-term vision embraced sustainable development as an educational curricular priority (KSA, 2018, p, 59).

The term ‘curriculum’ associated with themes related to the KSA’s school system and higher education is mentioned twice in connection with the economy dimension of the Vision, both times contributing to inform planning for a reformation of the education system towards EfSD.

It is first mentioned in connection with curriculum reform, where the Vision promises to “prepare a modern curriculum focused on rigorous standards in literacy, numeracy, skills and character development” (KSA, 2016a, p. 40). The second mention occurs under the headline “LEARNING FOR WORKING”, where it is stated that a special emphasis of this new curriculum is to serve the young students in their future jobs:

“We want Saudi children, wherever they live, to enjoy higher quality, multi-faceted education. We will invest particularly in developing early childhood education, refining our national curriculum and training our teachers and educational leaders” (KSA, 2016a, p. 36).

Vision 2030 emphasises that all efforts should be geared to:

“... close the gap between the outputs of higher education and the requirements of the job market. We will also help our students make careful career decisions, while at the same time training them and facilitating their transition between different educational pathways” (KSA, 2016a, pp 40, 41).

Higher education will have to unite the efforts to achieve the aim of scaling-up “five Saudi universities among the top 200 universities in international ranking” by 2030 (KSA, 2016a, pp 40, 41).

For this high-stand demand, work has to be done in the general education system to enhance the young nation’s education to be able to study in these universities and to make their learning profitable by being able to compete nationally and internationally. The Vision states:

“We shall help our students achieve results above international averages in global education indicators” (KSA, 2016a, pp 40, 41).

Although the phrase ‘education for sustainable development’ is not introduced explicitly in Vision 2030 nor in the 2020 NTP, it is clearly obvious that the Vision itself is about sustainability, as the themes identified in this document analysis show, and as the 2020 NTP in the next section will indicate.

#### *4.4.2.2 The 2020 National Transformation Program (2020 NTP)*

Since the announcement of the Vision 2030, 10 enterprises have been started by the Saudi Council of Ministries, one of which is the 2020 National Transformation Program (2020 NTP) established by the Council of Economic and Development Affairs to monitor, analyse, connect the mechanisms and measures necessary for the implementation of Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030. The 2020 NTP document maintains that the principal role of the initiative is to detect the challenges faced by government organisations in the development and economic sectors to help bring about the objectives of Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030.

The program establishes strategic objectives that are based on the Vision and addresses its challenges in accordance with specific targets until 2020. It identifies, each year, the initiatives necessary for achieving such goals and devises detailed plans on the basis of interim indicators that measure and monitor performance. In its first year, the

program was launched across 24 government bodies, and there are plans to expand its coverage annually. In the 2020 NTP, the Vision 2030 strategic objectives are cascaded down to NTP, and consequently the terms ‘sustainability’, ‘sustainable’ or ‘sustainable development’ recur 71 times in the NTP as important objectives of the Vision.

Goal 3 of the 2020 NTP *Ensure Sustainability of Vital Resources* is precisely directed at sustainability of resources. This implies that the Vision has given a road map to national governmental sectors and ministries to plan for a large measure on reforms to achieve its sustainability agenda. To learn more about the current reforms related to sustainability and EfSD in the 2020 NTP, the researcher looked for the identified keywords or terms related to the context of this research, such as education, curriculums, environment, society, economy, women, labour market and female participation. For instance, the term ‘education’ was used 26 times in this document. The role of the MoE as a major assigned entity by the NTP in the realisation of the Vision 2030 was identified in only two of the eight themes of the program, namely the first two themes: 1. Transform Healthcare, and 2. Improve Living Standards and Safety.

Several education-related initiatives are associated directly with the MoE, such as the Support Scholarship Program in the Ministry of Health, Prepare Tools and Materials to Teach Students about Traffic Safety, Provide education services for expatriates and their families by providing educational systems that are inclusive of expatriates’ children. The other MoE initiatives are segmented through the six themes of the program but with no reference to the basic role of the Ministry in any theme. These initiatives are:

- Develop Programs to Improve Finance and Savings Acumen and Spread Entrepreneurism to increase awareness of self-employment, financial savings, and the development of educational materials to educate the younger generation about entrepreneurship, self-employment, and finance and savings acumen (KSA, 2016b, p. 93).
- Develop and Promote Entrepreneurism to support local entrepreneurs and investors; promote entrepreneurship and the develop entrepreneurship programs and innovation in educational paths (KSA, 2016b, p. 99).

- Increase awareness and education of national heritage locally and promote the Kingdom as a global cultural destination (KSA, 2016b, p. 103).

While all these initiatives contribute significantly to EfSD, there has to be a greater role for the MoE, given its large share of the national budget, the Vision 2030 and the required response from all governmental entities.

**Q2. What are the MoE's plans, strategies, and achievements as part of the realisation of Vision 2030 in relation to Goal 4 of the UNSDGs?**

The General Authority for Statistics (GAS, 2018) document refers to education as the fourth global SDG that aims to ensure that everyone has equal access to quality education, and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. This is given an important priority in the Saudi National Sustainability Project of the Vision 2030, with a significant budget for 2018, earmarked for public and private education and training, amounting to SR192 billion (Saudi Riyals). The GAS document refers to KSA forming a national committee to follow up the implementation of SDG4. Other programs and initiatives acknowledging the MoE achievements in the GAS document to support quality education as part of EfSD include:

1. The national Summer Campaign for Awareness and Literacy in Remote Areas.
2. Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Centre for Special Education Support Services.
3. The Independent Schools Initiative, through the transformation of 25 public schools to be operated by the private sector to improve the quality of education and the school system.
4. The Lifelong Learning Initiative (sustainability of lifelong learning).
5. The National Strategy for Education for Persons with Disabilities.
6. Initiating a practical framework to ensure the harmonisation of university outputs with the needs of the labour market.
7. A cooperative project between the Ministry of Education and the General Investment Authority for the recruitment and training of scholars and scholarships.

‘Sustainability’ in the fourth initiative is related to education for sustainable development as lifelong learning for people in society in general, and not specifically to the education system. Missing in this list is any reference to the Vision’s main objectives associated with curriculum reform; for example, there is no mention of any strategic plans to reform the current curriculums and ensure genuine integration of education for sustainable development through the enacted curriculum, particularly since most of the current curriculums were originated before the inception of the Vision. Section 2 of the 2020 NTP illustrates the strategic objectives, key performance targets and benchmarks of the government bodies involved in the program, and links them to the strategic objectives of Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030. The MoE is one of the government bodies assigned in the 2020 NTP to bring forward the national sustainability plan, with eight main objectives flowing from the Vision 2030 to be the target of its 2020 Transformation plan. As the emphasis of the Vision is on education that contributes to economic growth, it pledges to close the gap between the outputs of higher education and the requirements of the job market in response to its main economic goals. The vision also promotes enhancing students’ awareness of their future career decisions by

“... training them and facilitating their transition between different educational pathways” (KSA, 2016a, p. 40).

In addition to this, the 2020 NTP document also refers to the Ministry of Education’s achievements in promoting a culture of peace, non-violence, global citizenship, appreciation of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development through its initiatives in several programs (GAS, 2018), including:

1. Schools promoting positive behaviour, a project to support and develop positive behaviour through environment, motivational and attractive guidance programs.
2. The ARAMCO (originally Arabian American Oil Company, now Saudi Aramco) Environmental Education Initiative, in which a team of students under the name of Friends of the Environment Club is formed within the school.
3. Volunteer program in the field of education.
4. A national initiative that protects individual people’s rights.
5. National project to prevent peer violence and bullying.
6. Child helpline program.



Again, while all these initiatives contribute to the three main pillars of sustainability, nothing so far refers to reform of the enacted curriculums to support sustainability or contribute to the explicit objectives of the Vision of reforming the current curriculums.

**Q3. What is the implication of these policy documents on female students' education and women's empowerment?**

Since the themes analysed in this review are related to the main fields of this study, such as sustainability and its associated pillars, education and curriculums and, finally, women and their participation in the workforce are of main interest to this research, and because this research deals exclusively with female students and female high-school teachers, examining to what extent women are represented in EFL textbooks. Extracts of the themes associated with women in the sustainability agenda were scrutinised. The term 'women' appears seven times, five of which are accompanied by the term 'men'. The phrase 'men and women' is frequently used with a reference to the economic and social dimensions of sustainability:

“We expect our companies to observe their social responsibilities and contribute to creating a sustainable economy, including by creating the stimulating opportunities for young men and women that can help them build their professional careers” (KSA, 2016a, p. 73).

The term 'women' alone appears in only two places; the term 'female', yet again, appears once. When used, the two terms are associated with economic and societal themes to send a strong message of the new role of women in the Vision and the Government's intentions to make a good use of women's talents in the workforce:

“Saudi women are yet another great asset. With over 50 percent of our university graduates being female, we will continue to develop their talents, invest in their productive capabilities and enable them to strengthen their future and contribute to the development of our society and economy” (KSA, 2016a, p. 37).

The term 'men' never appears on its own; it is always combined with the term 'women', which sends a strong message that the policy plans to improve gender parity and accelerate women's empowerment in the country.

In the sixth theme of the 2020 NTP “Labour Market Accessibility & Attractiveness”, the term 'women' and 'female' recurs 29 times, associated with women in the labour

market. This indicates that one of the main challenges for all governmental entities is women's participation in the labour force with a strong emphasis on all possible efforts to resolve the issues of limited female participation and employment in the country's economy.

Achieving the goal of increasing the contribution of women to economic and social development is delegated to the Ministry of Civil Service, Ministry of Labour and Social Development and Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF). Three of the main ten challenges identified by the three ministries to achieve this objective are:

1. Limited awareness of the positive role of women in the labour market and their contribution to economic development and improvement of the GDP;
2. Weak representation of women in leadership positions;
3. Limited training and development programs to enable female participation in the professional field. (KSA, 2016b, p. 79)

The 2020 NTP document refers to four strategies to overcome these obstacles and increase women's participation, namely:

1. Increase women's share in the labour market through training and awareness, encouraging flexible work, remote work and improving employment mechanisms
2. Increase women's share in managerial positions through training and leadership
3. Promote a work culture and develop skills (personal and technical) for women
4. Develop enabling and supporting work environment for women (e.g., transportation, nurseries, childcare and attractive work environment) (KSA, 2016b, p. 81)

The document goes further to set key performance indicators for the strategic objective of attracting more female employees into the labour market as follows:

- Women's share of the labour market (from the overall Saudi labour force) from a baseline of 21.2% in 2017 is expected to reach 24% by 2020.
- The economic participation rate of Saudi females over the age of 15 from a baseline of 17% in 2017 is expected to reach 25% by 2020 (KSA, 2016b)

The three ministries have put in place several initiatives to increase women's participation in the labour market, one of which aims to:

“... change the public perception of women's work and to transform society to become more supportive; this will occur by means of traditional and social media campaigns highlighting role models, success stories and different professions to be followed” ( KSA, 2016b. p. 83).

While there are benefits from the efforts of the organisations which tackle the awareness campaigns about women in the labour force, there is also room for the Ministry of Education to participate. It can organise campaigns to raise awareness of the issue of women in the labour force, and to review the current curriculums to ensure equal representation of both genders in the textbooks for kindergarten to Year 12 (K–12) as well as in the higher-education curriculums.

Since the inception of Vision 2030, women's empowerment in KSA has been reasonably encouraging. Recently, numerous prominent positions in the workforce have been assigned to women to an unprecedented extent. Another example is that, in 2017, women accounted for 20 percent of investors in the private sector. In the same year, over 450,000 jobs were created for female employees and around 127,000 new commercial registrations were issued for women.

Quality education is contributing significantly to workforce participation and gender equality is a vital necessity for its achievement. The interconnectedness between quality education and gender equality is acknowledged by both the SDGs and KSA Vision 2030. Goal 4 of the UNSDGs is ensuring quality education for all, emphasising gender equality as one of the guiding principles. The UNSDG and Goal 5 that focuses on gender equality is sending a robust message to the international community that emphasises the seriousness of this issue. Chapter 7 gives extensive details on the progress of gender parity through the Saudi Vision 2030 and the need to conduct a thorough revision of the curriculums, specifically EFL textbooks, to ensure proper female representation in the workforce in the current school system.

**Q4. What is the implication of these policy documents on the school curriculum, including EFL instruction in the country?**

These national policy documents have several implications for the school curriculum, including EFL curriculum, and implications for the role of a quality EFL education in the realisation of some of the Vision's major objectives. An example is increasing the country's capacity to welcome Umrah (pilgrimage to Mecca) visitors from eight million to 30 million per year. This implies that the workers facilitating this demand will have to be able to speak Arabic and English as the second official language in the country. The Vision 2030's prophecy of serving the increasing number of pilgrim visitors in the best way possible will be partially realisable by quality EFL education to support future employment requirements.

Vision 2030 provides some insight into to how to achieve this high level of promise by emphasising curriculum development that allow for outcomes contributing to EfSD and quality education:

“... [by preparing] a modern curriculum focused on rigorous standards in literacy, numeracy, skills and character development. We will track progress and publish a sophisticated range of education outcomes, showing year-on-year improvements. We will work closely with the private sector to ensure higher education outcomes are in line with the requirements of job market. We will invest in strategic partnerships with apprenticeship providers, new skills councils from industry, and large private companies [and] work towards developing the job specifications of every education field. Furthermore, we will build a centralised student database tracking students from early childhood through to K–12 and beyond into tertiary education (higher and vocational) in order to improve education planning, monitoring, evaluation, and outcomes” (KSA, 2016a , pp 40, 41).

Saudi Arabia's *SD National Voluntary Report 2018* identified the following values as the national curricular priorities: responsible citizenry, the Kingdom's stature and leading role, and sustainable development. According to the report, skills such as creative thinking, communication and auto-didacticism (self-education or self-directed learning) are very important if the new generation is to achieve the Vision. All these priorities and skills needed for the Vision have a place in the English as a Foreign

Language discipline, which adds to the value of a quality education through EFL instruction.

For example, global citizenship as a form of EfSD, a strategic goal of education in Saudi Arabia, is situated within the social studies curriculum in Saudi Arabia. Other subjects, such as forensic science, integrate aspects of global citizenship education into different curricular activities. This form of education has a pivotal place in EFL and the expected implication of these policy documents for school curriculums, including EFL, has to be recognised under a framework for each school subject area to inform a genuine implementation of EfSD through curriculum reformation at a ministerial level.

English as a Foreign Language together with a variety of disciplinary structures, such as religious sciences and knowledge, social studies and digital technology, are defined as significant majors for contributing to the Vision (KSA, 2018, p. 59). According to the *National Framework for Public Education Curricular Standards* document, the three curricular priorities to be presented in the learning fields over the coming years are:

- The Kingdom's Status and Leading Role
- Sustainable Development
- Responsible Citizenship.

These national orientations and major themes of importance to the Saudi society are priorities that guide the process of development, implementation and assessment of educational standards, through systemic integration into all educational fields across all levels and grades (KSA, 2018, p. 59). Prioritising sustainable development through all majors and school subjects might be implemented through two different scenarios: either by developing new EfSD curriculums, taking the cost and the time needed into consideration, or by integrating EfSD through revisions of the current curriculums. This priority is a vital objective for the realisation of the Vision 2030 and the 2020 NTP. Given the fact that the current curriculums were all developed before the Vision 2030, there is a need for urgent re-evaluation of the current curriculums to ascertain whether and to what extent they are already integrating the EfSD themes of knowledge, skills, issues, perspectives and values, and to revise aspects of these curriculums to align them with the Vision's objectives.

As a response to Vision 2030, the *National Framework for Public Education Curricular Standards* in Saudi Arabia was approved by the Board of Directors of the Education and Training Evaluation Commission in 2018. Being a reference framework for future programs and projects for the development of teaching and learning processes, it stresses that each curriculum should represent the essence of

“... quality education that enables development of community values, enhances creative capabilities, promotes professionalism, and enables participation in the country’s social and economic development” (ETEC, 2018, p. 10).

This document is a response to the national Vision 2030 and to the required 2020 NTP. The framework emphasises the importance of educating a human capital where each student learns, understands, and is able to perform after studying the target area of knowledge.

The *National Framework for Public Education Curricular Standards* document also gives absolute recognition to the importance of English language as a core learning area which all learners should study and should be assessed. The other eight core learning areas, according to the document, are: Islamic education, Arabic language, mathematics, science, social studies, digital technologies, art education, and finally health education (ETEC, 2018, p. 22). This is evident in two of the 36 Ministry of Education initiatives to be implemented under the 2020 NTP:

- to develop core life and employability skills and integrate them with curricular and extra-curricular activities;
- to establish a Centre for English Language Education Development.

The Education and Training Evaluation Commission (ETEC, 2018) in the KSA stressed the significant role of the *National Framework for Public Education Curricular Standards* published in early March, 2018, as a step on the road to building specialised frameworks for each learning area, in order to develop content standards and performance standards for each of them (ETEC, 2018, p. 11). These specialised frameworks for each learning area, including EFL, were not finalised or publicly available at the time of writing of this research in 2020. One wonders whether the delay in the expected curriculum reform in line with the objectives of the Vision 2030 is due to the fact that reviewing the curriculum is assigned to the Education and Training Evaluation Commission, a wholly different entity from the MoE, which

might have created a further layer of bureaucracy. To ensure this, Royal Decree No. 108 of 2018 (which included the amendment of the name of the Education Assessment Board to the Education and Training Evaluation Commission) was adopted with the recommendation of the General Committee of the Council of Ministers No. 837 in 2018 approving the organisation of the assessment of education and training in congruence with the objectives of Vision 2030, and to ensure the quality education required for achieving the Vision.

#### **4.5 Discussion**

Although the terminology ‘education for sustainable development’ is not introduced in the Vision 2030 nor in the 2020 NTP explicitly, it is clearly obvious that the Vision itself is about sustainability as the identified themes in this document analysis show. In December, 2019, the Saudi General Authority for Statistics posted two documents on their official website titled the *Sustainable Development Goals Preview* and *The KSA Sustainable Development Goals: The Statistics of the Current Situation Report*.

These two documents are compelling evidence that the Saudi Vision 2030 is a plan for sustainable development and is in line with the global agenda of SDGs.

The first document asserts without doubt that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a member of the UN General Assembly seeks to be one of the first countries to contribute towards achieving sustainable development globally, starting from inside the country, where the SDGs are harmonious and in line with the Kingdom’s Vision 2030. This document declares that the Kingdom has taken full responsibility for the SDGs implementation. As such, Saudi Arabia has participated in many conferences, workshops and summits, including: United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015, New York; the global commitment to sustainable transport by UN in 2016 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan; and in 2018, Saudi Arabia was part of the Voluntary National Review to the 2018 United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The KSA’s participation in this international review regarding the Sustainable Development Goals resulted in a turning point in the SDGs for national, regional and global transformation. In a clear manner, the document states that Saudi Arabia has developed a strategic plan to initiate and implement the objectives of the SDGs. The Saudi Vision 2030 brings together the public and private sectors to work in solidarity to achieve these national and international goals.

Since the General Authority for Statistics (GAS, 2018) declared that it is the cornerstone for all necessary information and data on indicators to achieve the SDGs in conjunction with Vision 2030, it has become a focal point, maintaining that it is the sole authority for monitoring stakeholders in achieving the targets and the overall progress in the KSA. For that reason, the GAS produced the second document, titled *The KSA Sustainable Development Goals, the Statistics of the Current Situation Report* in December, 2019. The document consisting of 141 pages aims to describe the current situation in the KSA according to the SDGs statistical indicators.

The importance of education in the Vision 2030 and its associated programs is clearly documented repeatedly, which demonstrates the Saudi Government's endeavour to create a culture that has a sense of responsibility to the country's youth, informing and guiding children through their journey in education to help them reach a safe future armed with the skills and qualifications for a place in the workforce. This document uses words related to human capital, such as men, women, children, teachers and educational leaders, to emphasise the role the Vision should play and the rights of all school-age students to a quality multi-faceted education. It is important that women are included in the attention given to education and its potential to prepare Saudi citizens for the job market. This is possible by an educational enterprise that provides training to teachers, not only for their subjects at school but also in the broader objectives of the country's Vision. The first EfSD course for Saudi teachers that was exclusively concerned with integrating EfSD into instruction, was provided across the country to all teachers in a three-day summer training program on 2019. This course, while appropriate and enough in terms of informing teachers with the basics of the required knowledge from them, is not mandatory for teachers' assessment and is one collective course among hundreds of similar training programs.

On its official website, the Ministry of Education announced its recognition of the world celebration of the International Education Day on 24 January, 2019, under the title "International Education Day for Sustainable and Resilient Societies".

His Excellency the Minister of Education, Dr Hamad bin Muhammad Al Sheikh, participated in the seventh meeting of the Steering Committee of the Sustainable Development Goals for Education 2030, held at the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris, November, 2019. The minister indicated that educators in the field should be aware of



the role of education in sustainable development and the achievement of its goals by building and implementing ambitious national plans, reviewing the role of curriculums in sustainable development, integrating these concepts and issues and their three dimensions in all school subjects (Saudi Press Agency, 2019).

This requires reassessment and provision of assistance programs to teachers and clarification of their roles in the field of sustainable development in order to benefit from their experiences in sensitising students and the community on these important issues. The diversification of various programs and activities, especially field activities, should reflect the genuine need for students to be aware of the problems in their environment and feel the importance of the ecological systems. In this way, teachers can be motivated to research and investigate the sustainability of their livelihoods, taking care of the development of skills-sets for students, such as planning, design, implementation, decision-making, and the development of reading and writing related to sustainable development. This will also activate competition between teachers inside and outside the school to introduce sustainable development and field training to ensure that education plays its required role.

From this research analysis, it is obvious that the Vision 2030's education component addresses three key areas: development of curricula, advancement of higher education and building of skills that are necessary for the labour market. It advances objectives, such as: "At least five Saudi universities should be among the top 200 universities in the World University Rankings"; "Assist students to acquire results higher than international rates in world education indicators"; and "Pursue work for development of job descriptions for each and every education field" (KSA, 2018, p. 54).

The successive 2020 National Transformation Program (2020, NTP) and the National Voluntary Report, declared that the education policy in KSA is concerned with education for sustainable development, and the Government of Saudi Arabia works to develop its education capacity in this area by focusing on topics such as climate change, biodiversity and pollution risk reduction, through successive curriculum development education, preparation and training of teachers to ensure that EfSD is incorporated into practices throughout all educational spheres.

#### 4.6 Concluding Remarks

The document analyses show that the Vision is a sustainability vision, and identified as such in its themes. The evidence presented in this section suggests that the majority of documents are able to communicate the role of quality education to contribute to EfSD, the national developmental objectives and the need for the education system to respond to the global ecological, social and economic objectives required by the national and international community. Overall, the extracts from the analysed documents highlight the need in the Kingdom for a radical rethinking with regard to the perceived role of the school system, curriculums, students and teachers — specifically, the current practices of teaching in Saudi school system and its entire role in building the capacity for the required knowledge, economy and society, and the sustainability agenda.

Many ideological battles were fought during the past three decades of education in Saudi Arabia with regard to teaching a second language and its ideologies. With the English as a Foreign Language finally being taught at the primary level, the English language becomes a compulsory subject in the Saudi school system for decades. It reflects without doubt the Saudi political agenda, which aims to build relations with English-speaking countries at the top of the country's political priorities. Collectively, the national policy documents reviewed in this chapter maintain the historical critical role of EFL education in the development of the country, and the new role of EFL as a vehicle for supporting sustainability in the Vision 2030.

Measures need to be taken to ensure that prospective educational policy documents will have a significant integration of education for sustainable development in their planning and practices, taking into considerations the Vision's objective emphasis on learning for working, women's participation in the workforce and the representation of women in textbooks, as an implication for women's empowerment in the Vision, and in curriculum reform, including in EFL instruction. This will ensure quality education that contributes to EfSD and the objectives of Vision 2030.

## Chapter 5:

# Content analysis of two EFL textbooks

Two textbooks used for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in the cities of Makkah, Jeddah and Al Taif in Saudi Arabia are analysed using the quantitative approach of content analysis. A survey was distributed in the same three cities to elicit high school students' views of the two textbooks in their final year of schooling (i.e., Year 3) based on a quantitative assessment. Finally, interviews were conducted with teachers from those cities to elicit their views and thoughts on the EfSD in EFL instruction in light of the Saudi Vision 2030. The three cities are all under the administration of Makkah District. The textbooks are *Flying High 6* (in Al Taif) and *Traveller 6* (in Jeddah and Makkah). This chapter presents an analysis of the content of the two textbooks; following chapters report the results from the survey and qualitative interviews. The aim is to gain a better understanding of the current role of EFL in achieving Vision 2030 and its sustainability agenda by examining to what extent the Saudi textbooks have incorporated the SDGs into the instructional curriculums.

### 5.1 Introduction

In the history of educational development, textbooks have been seen as a key factor in students' learning and school achievements. Textbooks in foreign language classes play a critical role for gaining not only the skills needed in the target language, but they are also becoming a key instrument in providing knowledge associated with English. Education for sustainable development (EfSD) has been an issue of great interest in a wide range of fields, and EFL is not an exception. EfSD has been studied by many researchers, and the past two decades have seen a growing trend towards

including aspects of EfSD in textbooks (Bonnett, 1999; Gadotti, 2008; Jickling & Wals, 2008; Jóhannesson et al., 2011; McKeown & Hopkins, 2007; Tilbury, 1995). When the decade of EfSD was announced, its themes generated considerable interest but also some denial among educationalists (Kopnina, 2012). In light of recent events in the area of climate change and the natural environment, it is becoming extremely difficult to ignore EfSD in the school systems, including the curriculum. One of the main obstacles to integrating EfSD into the school system in general, and into textbooks, is the associated cost (McKeown et al., 2002). However, reorienting the existing curriculum to integrate EfSD could be a contributing factor to enhancing the productivity and the value of any given textbook.

Conversely, to date there has been little agreement on what aspects of EfSD the school system should integrate as a part of the curriculum. This debate has been a controversial and much disputed subject within the field of curriculum development and education reform. Previously published studies are limited to local surveys regarding what part of EfSD should be taught in any school system. However, McKeown et al. (2002) has been able to draw on systematic research into how schools and teachers can include and integrate EfSD into the public discussion, and the local needs of any community to enhance their experience about sustainability. This thesis examines how EFL instruction can contribute to education for sustainable development in light of the Vision 2030 of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and this chapter gives an account of two current EFL textbooks. It analyses to what extent the three different sustainability aspects — environment, society and economy — are incorporated in EFL textbooks. While the approach taken in this study is a mixed-methods methodology based on the need to examine the status of EfSD in the Saudi school curriculum and particularly EFL textbooks, this part of the research is exploratory and interpretative in nature. It uses a quantitative approach to provide a more measurable dimension to the discussion.

EFL prepares students linguistically. However, this is done by using numerous examples and texts which can be drawn from all work- or life settings. Indirectly, these examples support certain cultural milieus and convey deeper messages than merely developing a vocabulary of foreign words and grammar skills. What examples are used can influence students' thinking and interests. With sustainability being a global priority endorsed by KSA, it makes sense to use texts which relate to EfSD in all

subjects, including EFL. Textbooks, as the main teaching tool in EFL tuition, should also be able to assist in educating for sustainability. This chapter analyses whether and to what degree they have endorsed this sustainability agenda.

The chapter is divided into four parts. Section 5.2 gives a brief overview of the education system and curriculum development in the Saudi context. The section to follow analyses the two EFL textbooks, *Traveller 6* and *Flying High 6*. Section 5.4 discusses the findings of the textbook analysis, and lastly, section 5.5 provides a conclusion and recommendation.

This chapter aims to systematically quantify the extent to which EfSD is integrated into EFL curriculums and whether there is a variation between two textbooks, each of which is from different series of texts used in the three cities. These two textbooks are international publications aimed for use by Saudi students in the school system.

The two EFL textbooks are originally produced by two prestigious book publication houses. The analysis allows the researcher to look at these texts from an objective standpoint. This is expected to give a more general idea about EfSD integration in EFL textbooks in Saudi Arabia.

## **5.2 Overview of EFL and curriculum development**

### **5.2.1 EFL documents in KSA**

The MoE introduced two main policy documents intended to define the objectives and aims of EFL in the KSA education system (Al-Asmari & Khan, 2014; Al-Hajailan, 2003). Both documents demonstrate the main aim of learning a second language for the Saudi students as:

1. to arm students with at least one of the living languages, adding to their first language;
2. to help students acquire arts and sciences knowledge from communities other than their own;
3. to help students participate in the service of Islam and humanity (Al-Hajailan, 2003).

In 2005, the MoE and its General Directorate of Curricula, the main governmental body responsible for teaching foreign languages in the KSA, listed the main goals for

teaching English in the Saudi Arabia school system. These goals are quoted directly from the document below:

- “1. To explain and defend the tenets of Islam with a vision to promoting international understanding and tolerance
2. Interact with an international community of English language users
3. Promote mutual cultural understanding
4. Enhance cognitive and problem-solving skills.” (Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 2)

While one of the main goals of the education system in KSA emphasised in the Saudi Ministry of Education Policy of English (2002) document is to provide students with proficiency in one foreign language, it is specifically English that is to be taught in all public and private schools. The document emphasises the importance of Islam in every single subject taught at school, including EFL. English in the document is seen as a medium of acquiring knowledge in the fields of sciences, arts and new inventions, and of conveying knowledge and the sciences to other societies in order to contribute to the spread of Islam and that will serve humankind in general (Moskovsky & Picard, 2019).

Several documents of particular importance in understanding the English curriculum and the objectives set for Saudi Arabia are described below.

### ***5.2.2 King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Curriculum Development Program***

The Saudi Ministry of Education introduced a Ten-Year Plan from 2004 to 2014 under the supervision of The King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Curriculum Development Program with the following main goals:

- Establishing general curriculum and specialised material standards along with curriculum development
- Building houses of expertise and instructional design centres
- Developing primary-level curriculums that enhance stable personality and values and develop life skills for the learners
- Developing secondary school curriculums to contribute in preparing for the labour market

- Complete development of interactive digital curricula which balances between the presented amount of knowledge with the learner's needs and requirements
- Orientation of staff working in creating the curriculums
- Prepare experts in creating curriculums. (Elyas & Badawood, 2017)

What is absent from this policy document, however, is any reference to the global education trend, which includes sustainability, in any Saudi national education policy and practice. There is no reference to education for sustainability that aims to

“... nurture responsibility of the learners in their choices on how to act in the local and the global environment” (UNESCO, 2005b).

### ***5.2.3 EFL and the Saudi national development plans***

From 1924 to 2013, the EFL instruction in KSA has been responding to the five-year development plans of the country at different levels. The content and pedagogy of the English textbooks also changed as a result of the country's passage towards modernisation. Faruk (2015) observed considerable differences between the English textbooks that were used in 1924 and those published in the 1980s, 1990s and more recently in 2013. He explains that this change was in response to the need for the country to establish its stature in the international society:

“The English textbooks that were used in 1924, when the country had to introduce ELT (English Language Teaching) in its formal education system to enter into the periphery zone of the capitalist world economy, are different from the books published in the 1980s and in the 1990s when it already established itself as a middle-income state. In the same vein, the books published in 2013 are completely different from the books published so far as the polity is determined to move with an unprecedented speed to the core zone of the modern world system” (Faruk, 2015, p. 524).

*Traveller* was the textbook introduced in 2013 for teaching English for the third-grade secondary school students. It provided a space for western and multicultural elements. However, Faruk (2015, p. 537) argues that while other cultures were included in this textbook, it is true to say that “nothing un-Islamic is included in the textbook — the western elements are chosen so carefully that they do not contradict Islamic culture”.

Faruk (2015) argued that the *Traveller* textbook is adjusted with Islamic teachings, as the Qur'an encourages Muslims to get to know people from different cultures and religions. This change in the content and pedagogy of the English textbooks was seen by Faruk (2015) as basically a way for the policy-makers in the KSA to promote global citizenship among the younger generation of Saudis and to increase their awareness of other cultures, especially the Western culture.

Further significant changes occurred following the international reaction to 9/11 in 2001, and had an impact on the Saudi EFL curriculum. Neoliberalism became the main philosophy penetrating the educational field.

### **5.3 Saudi Arabia's educational reform post-9/11**

The 9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA brought about a major turning point for the Saudi educational system and the school curriculums. This was due to the news that 15 of the 19 hijackers were identified as Saudi nationals who did most of their education in the KSA school system (Al Jumiah, 2016). After 9/11, globally and in the American media, including the Bush administration's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), a lot of pressure was put on the KSA Government to review, modify and change some of the curriculum components and to increase secular schooling in the Saudi school curriculum in order to promote tolerance among students (Al Jumiah, 2016). The KSA also gradually advanced neoliberal thinking, which positions the individual at the centre of the educational curriculum. These two reforms impacted EFL teaching, which became the conduit for the new aspirations in the educational reform of the country. They are further challenged by the sustainability imperatives of Vision 2030.

#### **5.3.1 Responses to 9/11**

According to Elyas (2008), Muslims all over the world consider Saudi Arabia to be the cradle of Islamic civilisation. As a result of the 9/11 terror attack, numerous news reports and commentaries in the US media were remarking about the Saudi education system, specifically the Islamic curriculums' role in generating a cohort of young adults who embrace extremist ideology as the only way to view life (Elyas, 2008). Karmani (2005a) and Elyas (2008) discuss some of the accusations that the Saudi public educational system and its national curriculums received for anti-American or



anti-Western views, exhibiting intolerance to other cultures and antagonism towards the US and the West.

Al-Essa (2009) referred in his publication titled “Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s educational reform 2009” to accusations from the international community regarding the formal national curriculum, especially the USA, viewing it to be the main influence behind the Islamic radical terrorism of 9/11 in the name of Jihad. The accusations went further to include the hidden curriculum carried by some radical teachers at Saudi schools to spread hatred and aggressiveness towards other religions and cultures. Al-Essa (2009) stated that the national Saudi education and its curriculum, hidden or formal, was not the only object of blame about this situation, but at least it was one reason, since it failed to create a positive impact on students’ minds, which made them vulnerable to any other school of thought. The Al-Essa (2009) book claims that the Saudi education system and its curriculums were unsuccessful in creating either positive or negative impacts on the country’s students, making it easier for radical Islamic groups to steal their minds. Al-Essa (2009) argues that the basic Saudi educational script represents an historical era, and is only used now as a tool in the spheres of political and cultural conflict. It represents a nation which is afraid, and wants to protect its religion.

Al-Essa (2009) argued that the government used the term “educational development” rather than “educational reform” to refer to improvements required in this realm. This use of the term implied that the Saudi government was not yet ready to admit the failure of its educational institutions and the lack of a clear political vision with regard to education.

The 9/11 event posed massive social, political, economic, cultural, religious, ideological and epistemological challenges and impacts on the oil-rich Gulf countries, mostly on KSA (Barnawi, 2017). According to Barnawi (2017), the Middle East region in general, and specifically the Arabian Gulf countries, have witnessed enormous socio-political, economic, geopolitical and ideological changes in the past two decades. These changes brought about arguments with regard to how to “harmonise Islam with global neoliberal capitalist development strategies for nation building in the Arabian Gulf region” (Barnawi, 2017, p. 55)

Almost all papers written about English education in Saudi Arabia in the past few years include a section relating to the impact of the 9/11 event on educational system reform and English curriculum development plans. For example, Al Jumiah, (2016), Alkhazim (2003), Al-Miziny (2010), Barnawi (2011, 2015), Elyas (2008), Karmani (2005b) and Phan and Barnawi (2015) all reported that a number of government educational curricular reforms have been introduced in the Arabian Gulf region and in many Islamic countries as a reaction to accusations that the current school curriculums in Muslim countries were conveying doctrines of violence to students (Barnawi, 2017). According to Karmani (2005b), Elyas (2008) and Elyas and Picard (2010), several Arab and Islamic countries, including KSA, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), made a move towards what Karmani (2005b) describes as “More English and less Islam education” reforms in the region. These governments’ justification of the increased English presence in the school curriculums and university programs was based on the belief that English will not only bring nations together and increase the openness among Arab and other communities, but also it will motivate values such as tolerance, justice and peace, and encourage democracy and freedom (Karnami, 2005). Barnawi (2017) added that governments in the region, and especially in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (the economic and political union of six Middle Eastern countries, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE), believed that when Muslims shared a common and neutral language of communication — in this case English — with the rest of the world, it would eventually prevent the embracing of radical opinions and would improve global safety. Karmani (2005a) further analysed the “petrolinguistics” as a connection between oil, English and Islam within the oil-rich GCC countries exploring the very special ...

“... social, economic and political conditions that (a) provide a fertile environment for the expansion of English and (b) disproportionately serve the economic interests of the English-speaking nations of the West” (Karmani, 2005a, p. 87).

The article goes further to add that the increased growth of English in the GCC countries is to some extent to pacify the political force of ‘Islam’ (Karmani, 2005a, p. 87). This also paved the way for neoliberalism and globalisation in KSA.

### ***5.3.2 Neoliberalism in education for Vision 2030 in KSA***

According to Harvey (2007), neoliberalism is

“... a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary” (p. 2).

Within a neoliberalist framework, the main goal of education is to prepare students as human capital for their roles in the labour market by providing them an education that allows them to perform and master particular skills to escalate their competitive-ness nationally and internationally for the job market (Apple, 2004; Block, 2012; Lipman, 2011). Harvey (2007) explains the “creative destruction” by neoliberalisation that challenges traditional ways of life and beliefs by imposing markets and profits on all human actions and social areas. This happens to the extent that markets are created, even by a state action if necessary, in areas where they did not exist, such as in education and social security (Harvey, 2007, p. 3).

Within the framework of neoliberalism, government and state policies are shifted from controlling to supporting the discourses of free market principles, so as to facilitate national economic welfare (Barnawi, 2017). Much of the current literature on EFL education policy in KSA pays particular attention to aspects of neoliberalism that surfaced as a new paradigm in the educational sector to solve the high rate of unemployed young Saudis who have been a product (or victims) of the current system, or soon would be. Today, and especially since the emergence of Vision 2030, where education is considered at the centre of achieving most of the national reform objectives, neoliberalism values could be seen as a solution — but not a painless one, especially in a conservative society such as the KSA.

Barnawi (2017) argues that in its journey from “renterism” to “developmentalism”, the KSA is negotiating the “neoliberal globalised economy” and its applications and

implications on the educational sector. He explains that neoliberal ideas affect not only the whole education system but also impact the foreign language education policy in KSA in many ways. According to Barnawi (2017), the foreign language education policy in KSA has started to be contextualised by neoliberal capitalist perspectives that consider English as linguistic, economic and cultural capital to secure economic mobility and employability in the country. Neoliberalism is seen at educational policy levels as well, as through new implementation of programs which indicate, as Barnawi (2017) argues, a recent desire for the Englishisation, internationalisation, privatisation and “mollification” of universities, and the emergence of English as a medium of instruction programs at all levels, with new large increases in the number of Western educational institutions, as well as international corporate agencies, appearing in the Gulf region (Barnawi, 2017). The new focus on cultivating the minds of students as human capital is one of the pillars of the neoliberal ideology, and is explicitly one of the objectives of the Saudi Vision 2030.

This new global space has found its place in Saudi education policy and has brought with it the emergence of English as a global language. The emphasis on English for economic purposes has been introduced to Saudi students at the expense of religious, Arabic, cultural and history material in the school curriculum (Al Jumiah, 2016; Barnawi, 2017). Barnawi (2017, p. 70) investigated the differential impacts of neoliberalism and globalisation ideologies on the formal education system and found that, “in the case of the renter economic structure of the KSA, moving from a socially grounded education system to education for economic purposes has given rise to some serious ideological, ethical and cultural challenges” which in turn could be seen in the Saudi society as a challenge with its own consequences. At the other end of the tunnel is the stakeholders’ and policy-makers’ eagerness to harmonise traditions, cultural and religious values with neoliberal Western-based strategies, ethics and values (Barnawi, 2017).

This was in response to the long-held beliefs that the lack of English proficiencies together with the necessary skills and knowledge essential for today’s workers in the Saudi labour market, is one reason behind the high unemployment rate among Saudi citizens (Phan and Barnawi, 2015). The internationalisation of education through the promotion of English is “a terrain where individual and societal worth are established” (Piller and Cho, 2013, p. 23). This was seen as a justified solution by KSA’s

stakeholders for a socioeconomic transformation in the country (Phan and Barnawi, 2015). An example quoted by Phan and Barnawi (2015) is the restructuring of the technical and vocational education system in KSA through the Colleges of Excellence (CoE) project which has allowed internationalisation and legitimised foreign education providers as a means of neoliberalism in the country, aimed at resolving its workforce problem. They also stress that

“... the hegemonic market dominance of English and the internationalisation of English-medium have been allowed to penetrate into the policy, curriculum, pedagogies, and practices of KSA’s immature and inexperienced [education] system that has been expanded over a short period of time” (Phan and Barnawi, 2015, p. 562).

An important question to be considered in this context is whether the Saudi national education system is ready to fully embrace neoliberalism as a transformational reform for the 21st century. Furthermore, it is not clear how sustainability is embraced through the education system, including in EFL, and to what extent teachers, students and schools are ready for this balance.

### ***5.3.3 Multilingualism, global citizenship and sustainability***

English and other foreign languages have always formed part of the school system. Graddol (2006) estimated the number of people learning English in general in 2010 to be two billion, but expected this to fall to 1.5 billion by 2030. According to him, this decline is for two reasons: first, because world population growth will stabilise by 2030, and second, effective primary school teaching of basic language competencies and knowledge that used to be taught in English classes during secondary schooling. The second reason will lead to an increased demand for teaching of other curriculum subjects through English and decreased demand for pure language instruction in secondary schools. This argument by Graddol (2006) is affirmed by the European Union’s emergent attention to Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) where English and other European languages are used as a medium for learning the required content, while the content itself is used as a source for learning the foreign languages (Wedell, 2008). Wedell (2008) argued that while this is the trend in Europe, parallel tendencies are present in the continuing consultations taking place in countries

such as Malaysia, Oman and Saudi Arabia on the topic of using English to teach mathematics and science curriculums in schools.

Nunan (2003) investigated the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) position in the Asia-Pacific region. He reported that TESOL professionals assert that the outcomes of global English as a socio-political phenomenon appeared in the policies in their countries in an explicit manner. Confirmation of this status of English as a global language is found in the introduction of English as a compulsory subject at younger ages by governments around the world and in the education policies in the Asia-Pacific region. This position of English is also confirmed by the increasing expectations for workers in industry, business and government sectors to develop proficiency in English.

Language proficiency is required across the globe, including for those whose native language is English. According to Loksan Harley (2013), almost three-quarters of businesses value foreign language skills among employees. A survey conducted by The Confederation of British Industry's Education and Skills in 2012 found that nearly 70 percent of employers are not satisfied with young peoples' linguistic skills. He also reported the finding of a separate survey of 1,000 UK graduates, which revealed that 14 percent of them had missed out on a job opportunity in the digital sector because they spoke only English.

While there is existing research recognising the critical role played by foreign language skills in the workplace, there is also a growing body of literature that shows the importance of bilingualism and multilingualism in the associated global citizenship and competencies. Stein-Smith (2016) highlights specifically the importance of multilingualism and being able to communicate in other languages in the workplace, in the classroom, and in the globally mobile and interrelated world. In this new global economy, sustainability has become a central issue for global citizenship. Stein-Smith (2016) explains that the foreign language teacher is a global citizen and teacher of global competencies. She maintains that there is an interconnectedness between multilingualism, sustainability and global citizenship as seen in the UN Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2015–2030 Global Development Agenda. Integral for the accomplishment of the 17 UN Goals is fostering global communication by

means of effective multilingualism among people in the world. Hence, multilingualism and foreign language skills are fast becoming a key instrument

“... in career opportunities in areas related to sustainability, such as environmental engineering, environmental science, and geoscience are predicted by the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* to increase faster than average ... and translation and interpreting skills are increasingly important in a globalised world” (Stein-Smith, 2016, p. 47)

### **5.3.4 The need for EFL textbook analysis**

#### *5.3.4.1 The MoE objectives for EFL teaching in KSA*

The MoE (2007) listed a number of objectives of EFL teaching in KSA at the secondary level:

1. To enable students to acquire basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).
2. To develop the students' awareness of the importance of English as a means of international communication.
3. To develop students' positive attitudes towards learning English.
4. To enable them to acquire the necessary linguistic competence required in various life situations and for different professions.
5. To develop their awareness of cultural, economic, religion and social issues in society, and prepare them to participate in possible solutions.
7. To develop the linguistic competence that enables students in the future to present and explain Islamic concepts and issues-
8. To enable students to benefit linguistically from English-speaking nations, that would enhance the concepts of international cooperation that would develop understanding of, and respect for, cultural differences between nations.
9. To provide students with the linguistic basis that would enable them to participate in transferring other nations' scientific and technological advances that can enhance the progress of KSA.

These are ambitious objectives which represent the desire of KSA to use English as a means of cultural and technological communication and collaboration. It is therefore

important that teaching is carried out in ways that deliver such outcomes. Furthermore, a transition to a more sustainable society also poses challenges to Saudi society.

While English as a Foreign Language is a compulsory subject starting from Class 4 at primary school in KSA, researchers have argued that Saudi students are mostly learning the language with the aim of passing the examination and not for acquiring proficiency skills (Al-Asmari & Khan, 2014; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). This does not allow the original objectives of the Saudi MoE (2007) to be achieved.

### ***5.3.5 An overview of general education in KSA***

According to Alsharif (2011) and Wiseman (2010), public schools were first established in KSA in 1930; these were exclusively for male students. Female students were not able to enrol at school until 1960 (Al-Zarah, 2008). Although education in KSA is segregated by gender for religious and cultural reasons, boys and girls both have the right to the same quality of the educational services (Wiseman, 2010). The academic year is basically similar throughout the country, with three levels of schooling: primary, intermediate and secondary stages. The school year consists of two eighteen-week terms (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). The primary stage is from 1st grade to 6th grade; the intermediate stage is from 7th to 9th grade; and the final years at school (secondary education) are grades 10 to 12. After completing their first year of secondary school (i.e., Grade 10), students must choose between studying Science subjects or Arts subjects for their final two school years. The Science subjects include mathematics, chemistry, geology, physics and computers, in addition to a selection of non-science subjects (e.g., Arabic, English, and Islamic studies). Students who choose the Arts strand study Arabic studies (Arabic literature, linguistics and rhetoric), Islamic studies (the holy Qur'an and Islamic law), social studies (history and geography), and English (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

There is no difference between public and private schools in terms of duration and structure of the academic year, starting dates, terms, holiday periods and textbooks. All private schools must use the compulsory textbooks provided at the beginning of the year by the MoE.



### 5.3.6 *EFL curriculum design and textbooks in KSA*

According to Hutchinson and Torres (1994), textbooks are a universal element of teaching English language, and the teaching–learning situation is not complete until it has its relevant texts. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) suggested that textbooks used in EFL classes should reflect the needs of the learners and the aims, methods and values of the program. According to Sheldon (1988), textbooks generally reflect vital organisational and educational decisions in which there is significant professional, financial, or even political investment, and for these reasons they should be evaluated to ensure that the targets of any selected program(s) are met. A comprehensive evaluation should be able to find out whether a particular textbook meets the aims of the organisational and educational authority — moreover, how it supports teachers with making any strong points and recognising the limitations of certain exercises and tasks within the text Sheldon (1988).

Previous research in textbook evaluation, such as by Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997), defines three different types of material evaluation: ‘predictive’, ‘in-use’ and ‘post-use’, to be conducted respectively before, during and after the text is used. They claim that the most common form is the predictive evaluation aiming at examine the prospective performance of a textbook. ‘In-use’ evaluation, intended to examine material that is currently being used, and ‘post-use’ — an evaluation of a textbook that has been used in a program — are applied less often. This study aims to examine to what extent existing EFL textbooks and curriculum currently taught in KSA contribute to education for sustainability, and whether they enhance the level of language-learning as well as the EfSD knowledge of students to support the sustainability agenda of Vision 2030.

According to Al-Abed and Smadi (1996), English has been taught in KSA since 1927. In 1969, it was introduced to students at the intermediate level as a compulsory subject throughout the secondary schooling period. Saudi students spend six years learning English, taking from four to six 45-minute classes every week. According to Al-Seghayer (2005), despite the large amount of time spent in English classes, the system produces lower than normal proficiency levels. This triggered a debate with regard to whether English should be taught at an earlier age at Saudi elementary schools to improve the students’ achievements. Opinions are divided; some say that improving

the students' achievement in English as a second language is necessary for young Saudis to gain future employment in the KSA job market and in the national and international oil companies located in KSA (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). Others claim that this would hinder children from learning their mother tongue and weaken their understanding of the Arab culture and Islamic values (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014).

After 9/11, an energetic scholarly debate regarding the cultural, linguistic, and ideological confrontation of English and Arabic started to take place in KSA (Charise, 2007). The Saudi Arabian National Ministry of Education received criticism for encouraging religious extremism and terrorism by concentrating solely on the Islamic and Arabic educational materials that prevent the students from exposure to other cultures (Charise, 2007). As a result of the debate within the Saudi society and criticism from outside the country, the Ministry of Education made the decision to introduce English in primary schools. English was introduced in 2004 as a mandatory component of basic education in grade 6 in public schools in KSA. Later, in the 2013–2014 academic year, Saudi Arabia implemented English language classes for fourth grade in public schools. This was an important milestone in EFL in KSA.

Despite these efforts, Saudi students continue to lack a good command of English. According to Al-Seghayer (2005), one of the main reasons behind the Saudi students' low proficiency level in English is attributable to the lack of adequate materials. However, as EFL has always been a controversial area in Saudi society, there has been limited research on English curriculum design and evaluation in KSA.

On the other hand, teaching English in Saudi Arabia is “centralized and controlled by the Ministry of Education” (Al-Seghayer, 2005). According to Alshaikhi (2015, p. 1), the Saudi educational policy is “top-down, deterministic and exclusionary in nature and English teachers at each grade are required to adhere to identical syllabus guidelines and deadlines”. This means that the teaching materials are uniform and subject to approval by the MoE. Good opportunities exist for suitable textbooks that reflect the emerging sustainability priorities. These could easily be implemented across the entire society.

The UNDESD highlighted several models for integrating EfSD in national curriculums. A 2014 review by the UN was centred around the monitoring and evaluation of the current documents of official curriculums around the world (UNESCO, 2014a). It

indicated that “many countries now include sustainability and/or environmental themes as one of the general goals of education” (UNESCO, 2014a, p. 30). Progression in curriculum development concerning EfSD has been mostly illustrated in primary and secondary education, where

“... close to 40% of Member States indicate that their greatest achievement over the DESD has been the integration of EfSD into formal curricula, with another fifth describing specific school projects as being their most important contributions to EfSD” (UNESCO, 2014a, p. 82).

Flexibility in curriculum policy is suggested as a possible action for adopting change in the school curriculum towards EfSD. This would allow primary and secondary schools to develop content and projects that are locally relevant (UNESCO, 2014a & 2014b). This equally applies to KSA, where the need to integrate EfSD with EFL is most pronounced.

The EFL curriculum in KSA is developed in a top-down manner by the Curriculum Design Department of the MoE, with limited input from teachers (Mullick, 2014). Although teachers are free to demonstrate creativity when introducing topics within the national curriculum, neither they nor their students are given full freedom to include topics of their own choice. One of the objectives of the King Abdullah Public Education Development Project was the Tatweer initiative. It explicitly lists the aim of integrating sustainable development values in new curriculums and teaching development programs in Saudi Arabia (Wang, 2013). However, including sustainable development topics relevant to students' experiences and needs is considered to be exclusively at the discretion of the MoE, and not of teachers. Hence, the English textbook represents the topics covered in the national curriculum and teachers cannot take the initiative to expand or narrow its scope. To the best of my knowledge, *Flying High* in particular and EFL curriculums in general, including students' outcomes and teachers' awareness and practices, have never been researched in relation to sustainable development values. This is despite the high-level rhetoric about the importance of both English as a foreign language and sustainability for the future of the country.

By 2020, the *Flying High* series would have been used in Saudi schools for about six years. It has been evaluated three times by three different researchers in terms of its

authenticity, quality and appearance, suitability as educational material for Saudi students and as a resource for teaching English language skills.

Alharbi (2015) evaluated *Flying High* from the teachers' perspective, and found that they received the textbook positively in general. Her evaluation revealed that teachers agreed that the textbook is of good quality and has an appealing layout, and is efficient as an instructional source. Almalki (2014) examined teachers' perceptions of the quality of *Flying High* with regard to preparation programs, the quality of the new curriculum, teacher practice and administrative support. His research findings confirmed the high quality of *Flying High* in terms of layout and instructional design. Nevertheless, its usefulness is not clear regarding sustainable development and Vision 2030.

In a study which examined the interrelated aspects between language, power and ideology in the textbook *Flying High*, Al Jumiah (2016) builds on Allen's (2001) neoliberal globalisation argument that a few European countries economically colonise the rest of the world and organise it into a "hierarchical world system of nation-states". According to Allen (2001), in terms of purpose and consequences, this is a persistent legacy and an

“... expansion, and reformulation of [the world's] previous modalities: European imperialism, feudalism, capitalism, and the brutal systems of slavery, genocide, and institutional violence” (Allen, 2001, p. 473).

Al Jumiah (2016) provides evidence supporting his argument that the EFL textbooks *Flying High* contribute to the persistence of the ideology of neoliberalism which privileges and perpetuates the ideology of “white male supremacy” outlined by Allen (2001). He critically examined the extent to which neoliberalism, as a Western political and socioeconomic ideology, formed the content of *Flying High*. The outcomes of this analysis pointed out that the explicit and unseen discourses in this EFL textbook helps to reproduce and maintain some of the

“... neoconservative and neoliberal ideologies and interests including male supremacy and dominance, patriarchy, sexism, women's subordination and marginalisation, functional illiteracy, meritocracy, individualism, and the achievement ideology” (Al Jumiah, 2016, p. 6).

So far there has been no attempt to review the integration of sustainability themes and related pedagogies in English as a Foreign Language instruction. The emphasis in EFL has been linked only to the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). While the researcher is fully aware of the fact that by using one textbook to investigate the status of sustainability in EFL education, generalisation will be difficult. Investigating two textbooks have allowed for a judgemental approach based on shared similarities. It is also fair to say that, while using three or four textbooks as samples would have been more time-demanding, the yield from findings of the study would have been greater. Most papers written about English education in Saudi Arabia in the past few years include a section relating to the impact of the 9/11 event on education reform and the EFL curriculum development plans. Since then, EFL curriculum has seen many improvements in the content towards educating the young nation about other cultures, practices and beliefs, and their right to be different. However, Al Jumiah (2016) study found several instances in the book of institutional legitimisation and continuance of

“... white male supremacy, institutional colour-blind racism, and the racialisation of the English language and the idealised native-speaker’s identity of English” (Al Jumiah, 2016, p. 7).

Despite the fact that several forms of education associated with EfSD (e.g., Global Citizenship education and Sustainability Humanistic education) find their way through numerous international curriculum development projects in the world, and although sustainability is now a main priority of Vision 2030, nobody has yet looked at the way the EFL textbooks reflect this requirement. The values of respect, sharing, participation, responsibility, transparency, accountability, justice, human dignity, freedom and sustainability are fundamental to the UN SDGs (Ethics.net, 2015. p. 1). These United Nations guidelines are expected to inspire schools and educational systems across the globe during the next decade in areas that have urgent implications for humankind and the planet in general. This research aims to examine the extent to which these values, together with properly designed teaching topics, are integrated in the EFL curriculum and whether effective instruction is taking place in English classes in Saudi Arabia around sustainable development. This also responds to previous research findings that question the effectiveness of the Saudi education system; for instance,

“... while financial investment has been evident in education and human capital development in Saudi Arabia for many years, knowledge acquisition, production, and diffusion remain problematic” (Spiess, 2008, p. 248).

According to Al-Essa (2009), it appears that the absence of a clear Saudi vision with regard to the essence of the country’s education philosophy and its general aims causes a delay in the process of any educational reform. There is also a lack of trust between the different intellectual streams within the country which treat each other with apprehensiveness and conspiracy, leading most educational efforts to either fail or to deliver inefficient solutions. Not only is political vision absent, but the lack of trust between the different schools of thinking lead to delays and conflicts of interest, including between members of educational commissions tasked with the agenda for reforms (Al-Essa, 2009).

Sheldon (1988) explains that textbooks are the heart of any program that aims to teach English language. The role of textbooks in ELT programs is positively perceived by educators such as Cunningsworth (1995), particularly in classrooms where teachers are the main source of information — or, in the case of self-directed learners, Cunningsworth (1995) states that for a successful engagement in the learning process, material in textbooks should reflect and effectively satisfy the learners’ needs, which include the need to embed sustainability education within the textbooks, including those used for teaching English.

### ***5.3.7 Embedding sustainability in EFL***

Sustainable Development Goal 4 of Quality Education, and specifically Target 4.7, declares that:

“... by 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including ... through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development” (United Nations, 2015a, p. 12)

The long-enduring incongruity in the understanding of EfSD as an individual discipline or as a multi-disciplinary subject ended with the consensus of the UN

members in 1992 and the global work that followed. Agenda 21, and particularly Chapter 36, refers to the international dialogue regarding EfSD and asks the international community to integrate sustainability in all school disciplines by placing its principles and values at the centre of any subject, in any education system, in the modern global community, and not as an addition at the fringes of the curriculum (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017). This process is described as ‘embedding’ (integrating or mainstreaming) sustainability in the school curriculum. It is a reaction to different attitudes, many of them represented in the Saudi society. Sterling (2004) identified four different reactions to the task of recognising and then integrating sustainable development into education systems that range between the following (Sterling, 2004):

- (a) Denial, meaning no action: EfSD is seen as propaganda that will fade away.
- (b) ‘Bolting-on’, suggesting adding on: supply the curriculum and the education program with brief ‘green’ content.
- (c) Built-in, implying embedding: incorporating EfSD in everything we teach and do at school.
- (d) Whole-system redesign, implying ‘infusion’: educational enterprises rethink the fundamentals of their practices and urgently respond to EfSD.

As textbooks are at the heart of any educational enterprise, the selection of content to be included is the most important tool of the school curriculum. The pedagogy chosen by textbook developers is a reflection of the country’s and its civil organisations’ educational norms and the continuous negotiation practices that form its citizens’ values. Textbooks also represent a significant vehicle of “peace education, human rights education, global citizenship education and education for sustainable development (EfSD) by endowing young people with the ability to arrive at independent opinions free of prejudice” (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017 p. 3). This is equally applicable to any country across the globe, and Saudi Arabia in particular. It seems that this is not just important but is also urgent and for this to happen, EfSD has to have a role in everything we do at school, starting from the curriculums for all subjects in all grades. English as a Foreign Language studies should also be part of this process.

The UNESCO guide titled *Textbooks for sustainable development: a guide to embedding* urges authors of school textbooks serving the primary and secondary school systems to address and mainstream EfSD in four core and compulsory subjects,

namely: mathematics, science, geography and language, particularly English (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017) According to this UNESCO guide, a global indicator of SDG 4.7 is the “extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment” (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 79).

The applicability of this approach as a tool for EfSD mainstreaming is particularly relevant in English language education. It relates to

“... how to use language to build social inclusivity, for example, how to ensure that the gender use of English does not exclude or privilege one gender. In addition, there is the issue of cultural context. Language is a tool of culture and identity. Language teaching and learning must now emphasise the importance of culture, particularly in teaching English as a second language or a foreign language — the culture of the learner is expected to provide the context even as other cultures or English culture is acknowledged’ (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017, p 158).

The role of English also depends on whether it is a foreign language (EFL), a second language (ESL), a native language, the official language in countries where English is the lingua franca but other languages and dialects occur. In the case of Saudi Arabia, although the official language is Arabic, there are many dialects, including the three main Najdi, Hejazi, and Gulf or Khaliiji Arabic dialects, and many other languages spoken by migrants from all around the world, Ghobain (2017). English tuition at school, therefore, is better defined as EFL, rather than ESL, as the majority of the students already speak two languages.

Embedding EfSD in language textbooks should follow three principles as advised in the UNESCO textbook guide:

*Principle 1:* Include SD content in language by using the ‘open content space’.

*Principle 2:* Recognise and use language as a ‘power tool’ to create a peaceful, just and ecologically sustainable world.

*Principle 3:* Use literature to enable learners to make informed decisions and take action as responsible global citizens (UNESCO MGIEP, p. 160).



The value of learning communication skills effectively at school drives English education and explains the focus on reading, speaking, listening and writing as ultimate and most important skills required in any foreign language class. Hence, it could conceivably be hypothesised that delivering EfSD content in EFL classrooms promotes “critical thinking skills, the practise of various types of discourse and the accurate use of language in terms of grammar, structure and mechanics” will positively affect the learners’ communication skills and improve English as a foreign language education in any given country (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017 , p. 162). This is particularly relevant to Saudi Arabia whose economy is likely to drastically transform in the future following Vision 2030.

According to Sterling (2010), a transformative learning experience will happen to the learner if the subsequent thinking skills are an essential part of the pedagogy teachers use to educate their students. These generic thinking skills are focused on being holistic, critical, appreciative, inclusive, systemic, creative, ethical and practical, with all of these aspects being crucial in the transformation process.

The role of EFL textbooks should not be underestimated, as they play an important part in addressing the issue of EfSD. As the UNESCO guide stressed, embedding textbooks with EfSD content will allow textbook developers and users deeper levels of comprehension. The literal, inferential, critical, appreciative and evaluative aspects (Sterling, 2010) can be expanded while reflecting the specifics of the place where they are being used.

According to Stray (1993, as cited in Lebrun et al., 2002), textbooks used in any field of knowledge are books that are intended to offer an educational and instructive production of the related knowledge. Stray (1993) claims that a textbook has to be seen through its wider context as “[it] is situated at the crossroads of culture, pedagogy, publishing, and society” (p.78). Purves (1993) goes further, to regard textbooks as being a part of a wider

“... political context no less than ... schools; we cannot discuss either as if they were representations of an isolated entity called ‘pure knowledge’ or ‘pure pedagogical practice ” (p. 14).

There is much that a textbook can reveal. In fact, textbook analysis is an increasingly important area in applied linguistics and curriculum studies. It also can help elucidate

worldviews and approaches to teaching. At this moment of time, sustainability is a global transformational agenda and philosophy which needs to be embedded, endorsed and supported by all textbooks, including those used in EFL in KSA. Agenda 21, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Sustainable Development Bonn Declaration (2009), stressed that EfSD should be endorsing the policy and the practice in any school system, while emphasising innovation and creativity by

“... strengthening and promoting sustainable development-related capacities such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and understanding complexities [that] need innovative methodologies. On the one hand, schools of education, curriculum development institutes and educational research institutes should be encouraged to identify and develop new forms of teaching and learning. And on the other, educational policies that allow for these new forms of teaching and learning should be promoted and strengthened” (Bonn Declaration, 2009, p. 11).

New pedagogy and pedagogical approaches such as ecopedagogy (Gadotti, 2010) and sustainability humanistic education (Raphaely & Marinova, 2018) have also emerged. They see education as creating new practices that are congruent with quality as well as with a broader societal agenda. Educating for sustainability means educating for the emergence of a different, possible world and the renewal of old education systems founded on competitive principles and values and based on a predatory view of the world (Gadotti, 2010, p. 2003). Education is no longer seen as a means to transmit knowledge, but as a way to transform society that

“... includes elements of insight, reflection, learning in the outdoors, and learning through sustainability themes, implementing EfSD in schools through a series of regional hubs with clusters of schools in partnerships with existing tertiary institutions, government and nongovernment organizations” (Centre for Environmental Education (CEE), 2007, p. 68).

This suggests the need for new educational practices that transform the way we see schools and their basic role in modern society. The teaching of English as a Foreign Language is part of the gamut of transformations that need to occur. In order to transition to better educational practices in Saudi Arabia within the spirit of Vision 2030, a good understanding of the tools that are currently used is essential. The remainder of this chapter conducts an evaluation of the main EFL textbooks.

## 5.4 Content analysis of *Traveller 6* and *Flying High 6*

This study set out with the aim of assessing the status of EfSD in Saudi schools. The use of case studies adopting either quantitative or qualitative methods is a well-established approach in examining the integration of EfSD at any educational setting. Different content analysis methods have been proposed to classify to what extent a textbook, a school program or a school system has been in congruence with the ESDG, using different investigation measures. A mixed-methods approach may also be suitable to understand to what extent EfSD is understood and practised in the KSA.

### 5.4.1 Content analysis themes

The content analysis of the two EFL textbooks aimed to identify the sustainability items which were represented, relate them to the specific UN SDGs, link them to particular instructional activities, such as reading, writing and listening, and also pinpoint any missing themes that should have been covered. The overarching question of this chapter is:

What is the current role and status of Education for Sustainable Development in two EFL textbooks, namely; *Flying High 6* and *Traveller 6*, in light of the new Saudi Vision 2030?

The questions used for the coding and subsequent analysis are:

1. To what extent are environmental aspects of EfSD incorporated in *Traveller 6* and in *Flying High 6* ?
2. To what extent are social aspects of EfSD incorporated in *Traveller 6* and in *Flying High 6*?
3. To what extent are economic aspects of EfSD incorporated in *Traveller 6* and in *Flying High 6*?
4. Which are the most- and the least-used sustainability thrusts (knowledge, skills, issues, values and perspective) used in *Traveller 6* and in *Flying High 6*?
5. What instructional strategy is used most often to incorporate EfSD in *Traveller 6* and in *Flying High 6*?

6. What is the most-used unit of occurrence (sentences or passages) in incorporating EfSD in *Traveller 6* and in *Flying High 6*?
7. Which textbooks units have the most SDG topics incorporated in *Traveller 6* and in *Flying High 6*?
8. What goals of the UN 2030 SDG are covered or referred to in *Traveller 6* and in *Flying High 6*?
9. What goals of the UN 2030 SDG are missing in *Traveller 6* and in *Flying High 6*?
10. How many sustainability topics per page are there in *Traveller 6* and in *Flying High 6*?
11. Are there any significant statistical differences between *Traveller 6* and *Flying High 6* regarding SDG occurrences?

These questions framed the textbook analysis and allowed for a quantitative assessment of the data and structure of the teaching books. The actual results from the application of the adapted McKeown et al. (2002) toolkit are presented in the section to follow.

## **5.5 Results from the textbook content analysis**

The different themes analysed in the two textbooks are shown below using a table to provide the actual quantitative data and a short discussion of the issue. Overall, the main outcome from the analysis is that although there was some presence of sustainability in the EFL textbooks, it was not sufficiently prominent to deliver the attitude, knowledge and skills required by the students. This means that the EFL textbooks are missing out on the opportunity to properly prepare the Saudi students to respond to the Vision 2030 and find employability in the country's transforming economy.

### **5.5.1 Environmental topics**

*Traveller 6* is analysed first followed by *Flying High 6*. The same approach is consistently applied for all themes of the content analysis.

## 5.5.1.1 Traveller 6

Table 5.1. Environmental sustainability themes in *Traveller 6*

Environmental sustainability concept	Sustainability thrust	Module in the textbook	Unit of occurrence of the idea on the page (word, sentence, paragraph)	Page number	Instructional activity	UN 2030 SDG
1. Human activity has increased the number of endangered species	Knowledge	1	Passage	9	Reading	15
2. Respecting the environment	Value	2	One sentence	25	Writing	15
3. Earth Day as a school event	Value	3	Passage	41	Writing	13, 14 & 15
4. Green Fingers and gardening	Value	4	Passage	52	Reading	15
5. Aroma therapy and people's health	Perspective	6	Passage	70	Listening	15
6. Writing about a local beach in your country	Issue	6	Passage	75	Writing	14

From Table 5.1 it appears that occurrences that support sustainability and deal with its environmental dimension start from the first main concept appearing in this textbook. They include the following issues:

- human activity has increased the number of endangered species on Earth;
- respecting the environment;
- Earth Day as a school event;
- Green Fingers and gardening;
- aroma therapy and people's health; and
- writing about a local beach in your country.

These six environmental topics seem to cover the four main facets of sustainability, with Values appearing three times, while Knowledge, Perspective, Issue and Skill appear once each.

These aspects of the environment integrate three of the UN 2030 SDGs, namely: Goal 13: Climate Action; Goal 14: Life Below Water; and Goal 15: Life on Land. Environmental themes were found through the textbook's units 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 leaving Unit 5 with no reference to any environmentally related topics.

Given the fact that unit 5 is exclusively about The Mind, this seems to be an omission, as humans operate within the natural environment and it is important to understand how our minds connect to the biophysical world. Within the text, five passages deal with environmental topics, while one sentence appears on page 25 in a vocabulary activity. The ‘environmental’ topics cover four EFL skills, with two requiring reading activities, three writing activities, one listening activity and one speaking activity.

### 5.5.1.2 *Flying High 6*

Table 5.2. Environmental sustainability themes in *Flying High 6*

Environmental sustainability concept	Sustainability thrust	Module in the textbook	Unit of occurrence of the idea on the page (word, sentence, paragraph)	Page number	Instructional activity	UN 2030 SDG
1. Being a guard for a national park is the best job in the world? Why?/ Why not?	Perspective	2	Passage	17	Reading	8
2. Space junk and how it will affect our live.	Knowledge	3	Passage	29	Reading	15
3. What will be the most important problems for our planet in the next twenty years?	Perspective	3	Sentence	29	Speaking	13
4. Experts know that we need a solution now, but governments are in no hurry	Perspective	3	Sentence	29	Reading	17
5. Destroying the Earth's natural resources	Knowledge	3	Sentence	34	Speaking	15
6. Protecting the Earth	Perspective	3	Sentence	34	Speaking	15
7. Using up all the natural resources of the Earth	Knowledge	3	Sentence	34	Speaking	12
8. Scientists predict that there will be a new Ice Age	Knowledge	3	Sentence	30	Writing	4 & 15
9. Space junk would be such a big problem	Knowledge	3	Sentence	30	Writing	15
10. The situation with space pollution is going to get much worse	Perspective	3	2 sentences	30	Writing	15
11. The invention of gas lighting, which was not the safest form of illumination	Knowledge	4	Sentence	41	Reading	7
12. Humans are connected to animals and can sometimes feel their emotions	Value	4	Passage	43	Reading	3
13. Positive effects of the green parts of the land on human health	Knowledge	6	7 sentences	61	Reading	3

Table 5.2 shows that topics supporting sustainability that deal with the environment as their main dimension appearing in this textbook are: space junk and how it will affect our life, destroying the Earth's natural resources, protecting the Earth, using up all the natural resources of the Earth, scientists predicting that there will be a new Ice Age; space junk would be a big problem, the situation with space pollution is going to get much worse, the invention of gas lighting, which was not the safest form of illumination, humans are connected to animals and can sometimes feel their emotions, positive effects of the green parts of the land on human health, being a guard for a national park is the best job in the world — why?/why not? What will be the most important problems for our planet in the next twenty years? Environmental experts know that we need a solution now but governments are in no hurry, and finally, dealing with health issues related to the environment in an economically efficient way.

These 13 environmental topics appear to cover three thrusts of sustainability: knowledge (seven times), value (once) and perspective (Five times). The issue and skill dimensions are not present. These aspects of the environment integrate seven goals of the UN 2030 SDGs: Goal 3: Good health and well-being; Goal 4: Quality education; Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy; Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth; Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production; Goal 13: Climate action; and Goal 15: Life on land.

Environmental themes were found in textbook units 2, 3, 4 and 6, leaving units 1 and 5 with no reference to any environmentally related topics. Within the text, three passages and 17 sentences deal with environmental topics.

The other environmental topics require a range of the four EFL skills, two of them including reading activities, three including writing, and one each for listening and speaking.

It appears from this analysis that *Flying High 6* contains a good environmental coverage of 13 topics, and incorporates seven goals of the UN 2030 SDGs. This indicates that *Flying High 6* contains more environmental topics than *Traveller 6* and addresses a greater variety of SDG throughout the text.

## 5.5.2 Social topics

### 5.5.2.1 Traveller 6

Table 5.3. Social sustainability themes in *Traveller 6*

Social sustainability concept	Sustainability thrust	Module in the textbook	Unit of occurrence of the idea on the page (word, sentence, paragraph)	Page number	Instructional activity	UN 2030 SDG
1. Immigration	Knowledge	1	Passage	8	Reading	16
2. Individualism in the industrial revolution	Knowledge	2	Passage	26	Reading	16
3. Studying in a university in an English-speaking country	Skills	3	Passage	32	Reading	4
4. School of the Air in Australia, a long-distance school for students in remote areas.	Issues	3	Passage	35	Reading	4 & 11
5. Home schooling versus traditional schools	Issues	3	Passage	39	Reading	4 & 11
6. Advantages and disadvantages of Internet usage by teens	Issue	4	Passage	50	Writing	4
7. The importance of communication skills for children at school	Knowledge	4	Passage	51	Reading	3, 4 & 10
8. Are you happy?	Skills	5	Passage	57	Reading	3
9. Thinking about your future career	Skills	5	4 sentences	62	Speaking	8
10. Teaching kids to be happy	Knowledge	5	Passage	63	Reading	3 & 4
11. Being physically fit	Knowledge	6	Passage	66-67	Reading	3
12. Finding time for exercise	Value	6	Sentence	69	Writing	3
13. Smoking as an unhealthy habit	Knowledge	6	Sentence	73	Writing	3
14. Ways to promote health and wellbeing	Knowledge	6	Passage	72	Speaking	3
15. The Saudi Vision 2030 as a vision of wellbeing	Knowledge	6	Passage	73	Reading	3 & 4
16. Healthy places to eat in your town	Issue	6	1 Sentence	75	Writing	3
17. The relationship between nutrition and thinking	Knowledge	6	Passage	76	Reading	3
18. Exercise can increase the wellbeing	Knowledge	6	Passage	77	Reading	3
19. Teens and peer pressure	Knowledge	6	1 sentence	76	writing	3



From Table 5.3, it appears that there are many themes in this textbook that support the sustainability agenda and deal with its social dimensions, namely: immigration; studying at a university in an English-speaking country; School of the Air in Australia (a long-distance school for students living in remote areas); home schooling versus traditional schools; advantages and disadvantages of Internet usage by teens; the importance of communication skills for children at school; are you happy?; thinking about your future career; teaching kids to be happy; being physically fit; finding time for exercise; smoking as an unhealthy habit; ways to promote health and wellbeing; the Saudi Vision 2030 as a vision of wellbeing; healthy places to eat in your town; the relationship between nutrition and thinking; exercise can increase the wellbeing; and, teens and peer pressure.

These 19 society-related topics cover the three main facets of sustainability with knowledge appearing 11 times, three times for skills, once for values, and four times for issues.

While society is an important sphere to discuss in relation to local and global issues and encourage students to express their own perspectives, there seems to be more emphasis on personal aspects than on social, which are under-represented in the *Traveller 6* textbook. These 19 social aspects incorporate five of the SDGs: 3, 4, 8, 11 and 16.

Society-related themes were found throughout Modules 1 to 6. Within the text, 14 passages deal with social topics, as well as eight sentences; four of these appear on page 26 in a vocabulary activity. The social topics in the textbook cover four EFL skills with 12 requiring reading activities, five – writing, two – speaking and there was no listening activity included.

This textbook was able to integrate 19 social sustainability issues and 5 SDG with a balanced representation of these topics found throughout the six modules of the text which reflects a decent exposure to the intended issues.

5.5.2.2 *Flying High 6*Table 5.4. Social sustainability themes in *Flying High 6*

Social sustainability concept	Sustainability thrust	Module in the textbook	Unit of occurrence of the idea on the page (word, sentence, paragraph)	Page number	Instructional activity	UN 2030 SDG
1. Making new friends	Skill	1	4 sentences	7	Reading	3
2. Value of being independent	Values	1	2 sentences	7	Reading	3
3. Studying university at home or away from your family	Knowledge	1	Sentence	7	Reading	4
4. The advantages and disadvantages of studying at the university in your home town?	Perspective	1	Passage	7	Speaking	4
5. Efficient revision and practice are important at school	Skills	1	Sentence	11	Reading	3
6. King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) and Saudi youth	Knowledge	2	Passage	26	Reading	4
7. What are the advantages of applying for the KASP?	Perspective	2	Sentence	26	Speaking	4
8. Space junk and how it will affect humans.	Knowledge	3	Passage	29	Reading	4 & 8
9. Overpopulated Earth and the need to colonise other planets before we use our natural resources	Perspective	3	Sentence	34	Speaking	8
10. US Government announces cuts in space program as it considered this money should be given to poor people	Perspective	3	Sentence	34	Speaking	2
11. Setting goals and writing a five-year plan for the future	Skill	3	Sentence	32	listening	3 & 4
12. Famous public figures who are important for their intelligence, ability or personal qualities	Values	4	Sentence	44	Writing	3
13. Working with different kinds of personalities	Skill	4	Passage	38	Reading	3
14. Being able to understand different kinds of personality	Perspective	4	Sentence	38	Speaking	3
15. Working hard and consistently will open up more opportunities	Value	4	Passage	39	Reading	3
16. The value of teamwork	Perspective	4	Sentence	44	Speaking	3
17. A Saudi businessman who serves Islam	Values	4	Passage	45	Reading	8
18. The value of hard work	Value	4	Sentence	45	Reading	3
19. Generosity and helping others	Values	4	Sentence	45	Reading	16
20. Importance of a healthy lifestyle	Perspective	6	Sentence	67	Writing	3
21. The importance of a healthy diet	Knowledge	6	Sentence	67	Writing	3
22. Healthy eating habits against unhealthy processed food	Knowledge	6	Sentence	67	Writing	3
23. The pressures of work and faster communication	Issues	6	Sentence	67	Writing	3
24. Keep in shape and practise sports	Skills	6	Sentence	66	Speaking	3
25. Different activities can help to beat stress	Skills	6	Sentence	66	Speaking	3
26. Healthy eating habits	Knowledge	5	Passage	60	Reading	3
27. Eating meat is bad for our health	Perspective	6	Sentence	60	Speaking	3
28. Life today is healthier than in the past	Perspective	6	Sentence	60	Speaking	3
29. Eating a typical Saudi breakfast can negatively affect your health	Issue	6	Sentence	60	Reading	3

From Table 5.4, it appears that a range of themes support the sustainability perspectives that deal with society in this textbook, including: dealing with skills for making new friends; the value of being independent; practice is important and it can help to get things done; King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) and Saudi youth; the advantages of applying for the KASP; space junk and how it will affect human life; the overpopulated Earth and the need to colonise other planets before we use up all our natural resources; the US Government announced cuts in its space program as it considered this money supposed to be given to poor people; setting goals and writing a five-year plan for the future, famous public figures who are important for their intelligence, ability or personal qualities; working with different kinds of personalities; being able to understand different kinds of personality; working hard and consistently will open up more opportunities; the value of teamwork; a Saudi Businessman who serves Islam; the value of hard work; generosity and helping others; the importance of a healthy lifestyle; the importance of a healthy diet; healthy eating habits against unhealthy processed food; the pressures of work and faster communication; keep in shape and practise sports; different activities can help to beat stress; healthy eating habits; eating meat is bad for our health; life today is unhealthier than in the past; and consuming a typical Saudi breakfast can negatively affect your health.

These 29 society-related topics appear to cover the five main facets of sustainability with knowledge, skills and values represented six times each, twice for issues and nine times for perspectives. The covered SDGs are: 2, 3, 4, 8 and 16.

Society-related themes were found throughout the units 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. Within the text, 6 passages and 25 sentences deal with the wide range of social topics. The range of activities represent the four EFL skills, namely 12 reading, five writing and two speaking with no listening activity.

Once again, it appears from this analysis that *Flying High 6* contains a wider range of social coverage, 29 as against 19 topics, 10 more than *Traveller 6*. This again indicates that *Flying High 6* contains more relevant content than *Traveller 6*, both in the number of environmental topics and the variety of social issues mentioned throughout the text.

### 5.5.3 Economic topics

#### 5.5.3.1 Traveller 6

Table 5.5. Economic sustainability themes in *Traveller 6*

Economic sustainability concept	Sustainability thrust	Module in the textbook	Unit of occurrence of the idea on the page (word, sentence, paragraph)	Page number	Instructional activity	UN 2030 SDG
1. Second-hand booksale	Value	1	Sentence	10	Writing	12
2. The rise of the price of petrol	Issue	1	Sentence	10	Writing	8 & 11
3. Smaller cars are more economical	Issue	1	Sentence	10	Writing	12
4. Skills required for the job market	Skills	5	Sentence	62	Speaking	4, 8 & 11
5. A letter of application for a scholarship	Skill	5	Passage	64	Writing	4

Table 5.5 shows that topics supporting the economic aspects of the sustainability agenda in this textbook deal with: second-hand book sale; rise petrol price; smaller cars more economical; skills required for the job market, and finally, a letter of application for a scholarship. These five economic topics appear to cover the three main facets of sustainability with ‘Values’ appearing once, ‘Issue’ and ‘Skill’ twice each. There are no ‘Knowledge’-related topics, even in topics related to studying at home and abroad and related to employment and writing a CV. It covers UN SDGs 4, 8, 11 and 12. One passage deals with an economic topic, while three sentences are economy-related and appear on page 10 in a vocabulary activity. The other economic mention is in a sentence on page 62 in a speaking activity. All these occurrences were found in units 1 and 5, which left the other four units without any economy related themes.

5.5.3.2 *Flying High 6*Table 5.6. Economic sustainability themes in *Flying High 6*

Economic sustainability concept	Sustainability thrust	Module in the textbook	Unit of occurrence of the idea on the page (word, sentence, paragraph)	Page number	Instructional activity	UN 2030 SDG
1. Planning for studying at university	Skill	1	2 sentences	7	Speaking	4
2. Studying abroad comparing to studying in Saudi Arabia	Perspective	1	Passage	7	Reading	4
3. Information about different kinds of jobs	Knowledge	2	Sentence	16	Speaking	8
4. Work conditions, responsibilities and qualifications	Knowledge	2	Passage	16	Reading	8
5. Planning for jobs of the future	Skill	2	Sentence	12	Speaking	8
6. What is more important to you in a job or the conditions? Why?	Perspective	2	Question	17	Speaking	8
7. Young people out of work because of economic recession and unsuitable education	Issue	2	4 sentences	22	Speaking	8
8. Who will pay to clean up space?	Perspective	3	Sentence	34	Speaking	17
9. Reading charts regarding the economy	Skills	3	3 sentences	34	Speaking	4
10. Saving money for the future to protect the world	Value	3	Sentence	34	Speaking	7
11. Helping the hungry and defeating poverty	Issue	3	Sentence	34	Speaking	1&2
12. The possibility of a future without mobile phones, GPS and weather forecasts as a consequence of space pollution	Knowledge	3	Sentence	29	Speaking	7
13. The invention of electric light bulbs meant the disappearance of gas lighting, which was not the safest form of illumination	Knowledge	4	Passage	4	Reading	7
14. The role of businesspeople in fighting poverty around the world	Value	4	Passage	45	Reading	1
15. Zakat, money you give to the poor and is one of the five pillars of Islam	knowledge	5	Sentence	50	Reading	10
16. Dealing with health issues in an economically efficient way. The need for a tax on cigarettes because we know they are bad for us. Now we urgently need a tax on fast food	Perspective	6	Sentence	71	Writing	3

From Table 5.6, it appears that 16 topics in this textbook support the sustainability agenda that deals with economic aspects, covering the following economic matters: planning for studying at university; studying abroad compared to studying in Saudi; information about different kinds of jobs — work conditions, responsibilities and qualifications; planning for jobs of the future; what is more important to you in a job — the salary or the conditions, and why?; young people out of work because of economic recession and unsuitable education; who will pay to clean up space?; reading charts regarding the economy; saving money for the future to protect the world;

helping the hungry and defeating poverty; the possibility of a future without mobile phones, GPS or weather forecasts as a consequence of space pollution; the invention of electric light bulbs, spelling the disappearance of gas lighting, which had not been the safest form of illumination; the role of businessmen in fighting poverty around the world; Zakat (money you give to the poor and which is one of the five pillars of Islam); dealing with health issues in an economically efficient way; and finally, the issue of the need for a tax on cigarettes because we know that they are bad for us, and now we urgently need a tax on fast food.

These economic topics appear to cover the three main facets of sustainability: twice both for issues and values, four times for perspectives, five times for knowledge and three times for skills. The topics covered nine SD goals, namely: SDG 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12 and 17. In the text, four passages deal with an economic topic, while 18 sentences are economics-related. All these topics were found throughout the six units.

It appears from this analysis that once again *Flying High 6* outperformed *Traveller 6* in the number of economic topics included in the text and the range of SDG included throughout the text.

#### 5.5.4 Overall numbers

Table 5.7. Overall numbers for *Traveller 6* and *Flying High 6*

<i>Traveller 6</i>				
	<b>Environment</b>	<b>Society</b>	<b>Economic</b>	<b>Total</b>
Knowledge	1	11	0	11
Skills	0	3	2	5
Perspectives	1	0	0	1
Values	3	1	1	5
Issues	1	4	2	7
Total	6	19	5	29
<i>Flying High 6</i>				
	<b>Environment</b>	<b>Society</b>	<b>Economic</b>	<b>Total</b>
Knowledge	7	6	5	18
Skills	0	6	3	9
Perspectives	5	9	4	18
Values	1	6	2	9
Issues	0	2	2	4
Total	13	29	16	58

Table 5.7 shows that the total number of SD themes in the Environmental, Social and Economic dimensions was 29 in *Traveller 6* and exactly double this number, at 58, for *Flying High 6*. Social topics are mentioned most in both books: 19 times in *Traveller 6* and 29 times in for *Flying High 6*. The Knowledge themes have the highest mentions

in both books (11 in *Traveller 6* and 18 in *Flying High 6*). The Perspectives themes are mentioned 18 times in *Flying High 6*, whereas they appear only once in *Traveller*.

Further overall numbers for *Traveller 6* are: writing, including vocabulary, 11; reading 13; speaking 3; listening 1. As instructional activities; the occurrence rate is 19 passages and 13 sentences. The appearance of units is: Unit 1 five times, Unit 2 once, Unit 3 four times, Unit 4 three times, Unit 5 five times, and Unit 6 ten times.

The overall numbers for *Flying High 6* are: instructional activities, 11; writing, including vocabulary, 13; reading, 3; speaking and 1 listening. The occurrence rate is 19 passages and 13 sentences; the units appear 5 times for Unit 1, once for Unit 2; four times for Unit 3; three times for Unit 4; five times for Unit 5; and 10 times for Unit 6.

### 5.5.5 Instructional activities in *Traveller 6* and *Flying High 6*

Table 5.8. Instructional activities in *Traveller 6* and *Flying High 6*

<b>Instructional activities</b>	<b><i>Traveller 6</i></b>	<b><i>Flying High 6</i></b>
Writing	9	9
Reading	13	25
Speaking	3	23
Listening	1	1
Total	26	58

In Table 5.8, reading activities score the highest in both textbooks, with 13 out of 26 in *Traveller 6* and 26 out of 56 in *Flying High 6*. Listening activities related to SD scores 1 in each textbook, and is the lowest among all skills. Writing scores equally for the two textbooks at 9 for each. The highest significant scores appear in the speaking activities with 3 for *Traveller 6*, and 22 for *Flying High 6*.

### 5.5.6 Occurrence rate of EfSD topics in *Traveller 6* and *Flying High 6*

Table 5.9. Occurrence rate of EfSD topics in *Traveller 6* and *Flying High 6*

<b>Occurrence rate</b>	<b><i>Traveller 6</i></b>	<b><i>Flying High 6</i></b>
Passage	20	14
Sentence	13	62
Total	33	76

*Traveller 6* contains 20 passages related to SDG topics, and *Flying High 6* contains a similar number of 14 passages. A significantly different number of sentences were found: 13 occurrences in *Traveller 6* and 62 in *Flying High 6*.

### 5.5.7 Repetition of sustainability per module in *Traveller 6* and *Flying High 6*

Table 5.10. Repetition of the three sustainability dimensions per module in *Traveller 6* and *Flying High 6*

Repetition of the three sustainability criteria per module	Module 1	Module 2	Module 3	Module 4	Module 5	Module 6
<i>Traveller 6</i>	5	2	4	3	5	11
<i>Flying High 6</i>	7	8	17	12	2	10

*Traveller 6* appears to cover all six modules of the curriculum, and the highest significant number appears in Module 6 with 11 occurrences, while topics related to SDG appeared least in Module 2. In *Flying High 6*, SDGs appeared with the highest significant number in Module 3, with almost 17 occurrences. The lowest score in *Flying High 6* was in Module 5, with two mentions.

### 5.5.8 Sustainable development goals (SDG) in both textbooks

Table 5.11. SDG in *Traveller 6* and *Flying High 6*

SDG	<i>Traveller 6</i>	<i>Flying High 6</i>
Goal 1	0	3
Goal 2	0	1
Goal 3	12	2
Goal 4	8	10
Goal 5	0	0
Goal 6	0	0
Goal 7	0	4
Goal 8	2	9
Goal 9	0	0
Goal 10	1	1
Goal 11	4	0
Goal 12	2	1
Goal 13	1	1
Goal 14	2	0
Goal 15	5	6
Goal 16	2	1
Goal 17	0	2
<b>SDG covered</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Total repetitions</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>60</b>



Table 5.11 shows that *Traveller 6* focuses most on Goal 3, with 12 occurrences. Goal 4 is second with eight occurrences. Goals 15 and 11 are similar, with five and four occurrences each. Goals 8, 12, 14 and 16 each occur twice. Goals 10 and 13 each appear once. Similarly, *Flying High 6* focuses most on Goal 3, with 21 occurrences. Goals 4 with ten and Goal 8 with nine occurrences are the next most frequent. Goals 15 and 7 are similar, occurring 6 and 4 times, respectively. *Traveller 6* covers 10 SDGs, while *Flying High 6* covers 12 SDG.

### 5.5.9 Repetition of reference to SD per page

Table 5.12. Percentage of all pages in each book containing reference to SD issues

	<i>Traveller 6</i> Page number	Repetition within one page	<i>Flying High 6</i> Page number	Repetition within one page
1	8	1	7	6
2	9	1	11	1
3	10	3	12	1
4	25	1	17	2
5	26	1	22	1
6	32	1	26	1
7	35	1	29	5
8	39	1	30	3
9	41	1	32	1
10	50	1	34	8
11	51	1	38	2
12	52	1	39	1
13	57	1	40	1
14	62	2	41	1
15	63	1	43	1
16	64	1	44	2
17	66	1	45	4
18	67	1	50	1
19	69	1	60	4
20	70	1	61	1
21	72	1	66	2
22	73	2	67	4
23	75	2	71	
24	76	2		
25	77	1		
<b>Percentage of total number of pages in each textbook</b>		<b>35.2</b>		<b>35.4</b>

Table 5.12 shows the percentage of the total number of pages in each textbook that contain some reference to a sustainable development issue. Only 35.2 percent of the analysed 71 pages of *Traveller 6* contain themes with reference to SDG topics. *Flying High 6* has a very similar proportion: 35.4 percent of the analysed 65 pages contain themes referring to SDG topics.

## 5.6 Discussion

The document analysis in this research has shown that EfSD is at the heart of the Saudi Vision 2030. As mentioned in the literature review, limited research has been conducted to examine to what extent EfSD is incorporated to the Saudi curriculums. Prior studies have noted the importance of including SD in the school curriculum. The analysis here also aims to investigate the two EFL textbooks and determine whether any variation exists between them in the inclusion of SD related issues.

The first three questions aimed to examine to what extent environment, social and economic aspects of EfSD are incorporated in both textbooks. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 list the findings of the preliminary analysis of both textbooks for environmental topics. The data from these two tables can be compared; what stands out is the significant difference, with environmental themes mentioned twice as often in *Flying High 6*.

What can be seen from the data in Table 5.3 and 5.4 in regard to social issues is that *Flying High 6* reported significantly more occurrences than *Traveller 6*. The results once again indicate that *Flying High 6* includes more sustainability topics, with 29 society-related occurrences compared to 19 for *Traveller 6*.

The third question asked to what extent the economy is incorporated in these two textbooks. Tables 5.5 and 5.6 reveal again significant differences, with *Flying High 6* containing 16 ‘economic’ occurrences compared to five for *Traveller 6*.

Question number 4 looked at the most and the least occurrences of sustainability thrusts of knowledge, skills, issues, values and perspective represented in *Traveller 6* and in *Flying High 6*. The knowledge criterion scores the highest in both textbooks (11 for *Traveller 6* and 18 for *Flying High 6*). The perspective thrust scores high in *Flying High 6*, with also another 18 times, but appears only once in *Traveller 6*. The emphasis on the knowledge criterion indicates its importance for this age group.

While the social aspects are an important sphere for discussion in relation to local and global issues, and to encourage students to express their perspectives and viewpoints on significant issues, the ‘perspective’ criterion seems to be under-represented in *Traveller 6*, with limited appearance of instructional activities that required students to express their views and perspectives regarding social sustainability issues. Table 5.12 indicates that again, *Flying High 6* (12 SDG) out rates *Traveller 6* (10 SDG).

The most widely used instructional strategy incorporating EfSD in both *Traveller 6* and in *Flying High 6* in the Speaking category.

### **5.7 Concluding Remarks**

The second objective of this study was to analyse documents pertaining to EfSD and the Saudi Vision 2030, including two English as a Foreign Language textbooks used in the country's high-school system. The analysis shows categorically that *Flying High 6* offers a richer pattern of sustainability issues than *Traveller 6*. The broader social aspects however are under-represented in both textbooks, which centre on individual rather than societal characteristics. These findings can inform the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders as to the suitability of these textbooks, and how better to incorporate EfSD and varied learning strategies aligned with sustainability.

Aforementioned studies have illustrated the prominence of including SD in the school subjects, including English as Foreign Language instruction. Language education has a pivotal role in EfSD and using the power of language to educate and support the global community through their journey to reach a peaceful and sustainable world (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017). For example and in different parts of the world where there is a crucial need for English as a lingua franca language that will allow people to share a common perspective of the notion of EfSD and its practices (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017).

How students perceive their EFL textbooks in relation to EfSD and its likely significant impact on their future paths, are separate issues that will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. Additionally, in Chapter 8 this research will shed light on the way teachers evaluate textbooks. Those that are limited, or that have sparse EfSD content, can be called into question as to their efficacy in informing students regarding EfSD.

For instance, having a one-size-fits-all EfSD curriculum is unwise. Discrepancies in understanding EfSD nationally and internationally will always play their part, not only in determining the most appropriate EfSD topics, but also in the tension and complexity of these topics, even within one nation and a smaller community. For this reason, stakeholders should consider the prospect of selecting textbooks that take into account the broader range of urgent national and international EfSD issues and reflect the educational ambitions of a particular country, as was intended in the formulation of Vision 2030.

## Chapter 6:

# Saudi Female High-school Students' Perspectives on EfSD in EFL Textbooks

### 6.1 Introduction

Education for sustainability is fundamental to Vision 2030. The new Saudi generation has a pivotal role in accomplishing the objectives of the country's promising national vision. Education, including its sustainable development component, is fast becoming a key instrument in any modern governmental enterprise that aims to stand tall and respond to the priorities of the contemporary world. A key aspect of education for sustainability is educating the new generations to be more open to the idea of seeing the globe as one community and communicating with others in the world. The analogy with the world as a small village requires putting global welfare as the most important priority, and working towards balancing national and international priorities, taking into consideration specific nationwide interests and needs. Foreign language education is of interest because concepts like sustainable development and its three dimensions are central to topics that could be introduced to students in English education classes. Sustainability is not a topic that can only be dealt with from a local perspective, but should be discoursed at the macro level using internationally communal means, such as a shared language. This justifies understanding teachers' and students' perspectives about the learning of English through the lens of educating for sustainability.

Previous research confirms the importance of foreign language education. For example, Zygmunt (2016) claimed that more attention is given to the environmental and economic sphere than the socio-cultural aspect of sustainability, and argued that researchers, administrators and educators should direct their attention to foreign language education as an important part of the socio-cultural sphere and its related issues, such as equal opportunity, tolerance and respect. Furthermore, Zygmunt (2016) maintains that sustainability is not an area that can only be dealt with from a confined standpoint, but should be debated at the world-wide level using an internationally reciprocated means of communication such as a shared language. For example, competence in the socio-linguistic field becomes a critical element in negotiations and international contacts which require the language user to be tactful and tolerant (Zygmunt, 2016, p. 112).

Foreign language education allows for concepts such as sustainable development and its goals to be introduced to students, giving them the chance to create links between diverse disciplines. Making cultural and linguistic comparisons is an important aspect of pedagogy in foreign language education (Ter Horst and Pearce, 2010), who conclude, for example, that German taught as a foreign language allows an integration that

“... provides significant opportunities for students to increase their language proficiency, develop their understanding of concepts related to the environment, and become more involved in a global community through a virtual service learning project” (Ter Horst and Pearce, 2010, p. 365).

Although all foreign language education is beneficial, English is considered the most internationally recognised option that facilitates the connections between members of the global community (Tomasz, 2016).

The last two decades have seen a growing trend towards environmental education and environmental topics being prevalent in English textbooks, but there has been very limited enquiry into whether or not this content is used to educate students and encourage environmental behaviour in an effective way. Jodoin and Singer (2020) found, in the case of Japan, that the image–text interplay in a selection from sample texts with environmental themes in EFL textbooks used in Japanese universities often has a limited impact on promoting the attitudes, values and practices considered

fundamental to effective EfSD. They also found that there was limited thematic interconnectedness between topics, images and texts in these textbooks (Jodoin and Singer, 2020) and advised textbook authors to pay more attention to the integral goals of incorporating environmental content, either to support SDG or stimulate EfSD-linked competencies. To date, there has been no exploration of the sustainability attitudes among Saudi students or their EFL teachers. After examining the content of the EFL textbooks, it is interesting to understand their effect on both students and teachers.

## **6.2 Survey description**

The focus of this chapter is on Saudi female high-school students' perspectives on the current status of EfSD, particularly in EFL instruction. A questionnaire-based survey was administered in three Saudi cities during the second term of the school year of 2019 in the KSA, (see Table 2.1).

A 13-item survey questionnaire was distributed to high-school teachers who helped to facilitate the connection between the researcher and the students by sending an electronic version of the survey to students through the social network application WhatsApp using the Google Forms application to build the study tool. The survey was voluntary and anonymous, and it was conducted in Arabic.

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number # HRE2017-0626.

The questionnaire information page was divided into four parts, beginning by introducing the research topic and giving a general overview of sustainable development and its connections to the Saudi national Vision 2030. This part also included a brief outline of what was requested from the students, and the researcher's name, telephone and email contact for further information regarding the survey questions.

The second section was to collect some personal data, such as the participant's name (voluntarily), the city where they were studying, the textbook they were using, and a

participant consent statement. The students were not permitted to start the survey unless they explicitly gave their consent. They were further asked to include their email address so that they, or their families, could receive the results of the study if they wished.

The third part of the questionnaire contained 7 questions. Questions from 1 to 7, were asking students about education for sustainable development in the Saudi school system and the current status of EfSD in their EFL classes, in the textbooks they used and in the instruction in general (see Table 6.1). Saudi high-school girls were asked whether their EFL instruction, including their textbooks, facilitated the integration of EfSD and the Vision 2030's objectives into their English language learning experiences. In addition to direct insights into how sustainability values, issues, skills, knowledge and perspectives are integrated in the school curriculum. The collected data would potentially also allow for comparison between the two EFL textbooks used. As discussed in section 6.5 below, the analysis of the results of this part of the questionnaire allowed for only a collective understanding of the status of EfSD in general in the two textbooks and the way they are perceived by the students. The questions required the students to select between the following answers: 'Yes', 'No', or 'Maybe'. The fourth and final part included 6 questions related to the extent to which the Saudi curriculum empowers women and provides an acceptable representation of women in their EFL textbooks. Given the Vision 2030 agenda of empowering women, the questions referred to how the EFL textbooks *Flying High 6* and *Traveller 6* represent women in general, and specifically their contribution to the country's labour force was discussed in chapter 7 of this thesis(see Table 6.1). This section asked students to consider whether their EFL textbooks encouraged them to explore new futures for Saudi women, or to endorse traditional roles. The result of this section of the survey was analysed in a way that allowed a comparison between the two textbooks, given the sensitivity and the specificity of the topic.

Table 6.1. Survey questions

1. Did you hear about the Saudi sustainable development plan called The Vision 2030 at your school? a. Yes      b. No      c. Maybe
2. Have you discussed topics related to the Saudi sustainable development plan called The Vision 2030 in your English as a Foreign Language classes? a. Yes      b. No      c. Maybe
3. Do you think your EFL education is important for you in light of the Saudi Vision 2030 to achieve your plans for the future? For example, will it give you better chances for college entry and employment in the future? a. Yes      b. No      c. Maybe
4. In your EFL textbook, have you encountered sustainable development topics related to The Vision 2030 goals, such as environmental conservation, water preservation, employment and women empowerment, or any national health improvement goals? a. Yes      b. No      c. Maybe
5. Would you like your EFL textbook to include sustainable development topics related to the Saudi Vision 2030 goals such as environmental conservation, water preservation, employment and women empowerment in Saudi, or any national health improvement goals? a. Yes      b. No      c. Maybe
6. Would you like your EFL classes to be taught in a different way that would enable you to have better employment chances in the future? For example, do you think it may be useful to have a specific curriculum and more course loads of English which support education for sustainability and Vision 2030 for the different high school pathways, scientific or literary streams? a. Yes      b. No      c. Maybe
7. What is the most preferred EFL skill you would like to be taught to learn about sustainability? a. Speaking      b. Reading      c. Listening      c. Writing
8. Are women represented adequately in your EFL textbook? a. Yes      b. No      c. Maybe
9. Are e women represented in your EFL textbook (whether in traditional roles or those anticipated in Vision 2030) at an equal rate to men? a. Yes      b. No      c. Maybe
10. What do you think is the reason for the degree of representation of women in your textbook? a. Religious reasons.      b. Social reasons      c. Economic reasons.      d. All the above
11. What roles would you prefer to see women performing in your textbook? a. I would like to see women represented in the book in the traditional way: mother and her house or just a teacher in the school. b. I like to see women working in all disciplines and fields without exception. c. The appearance of women in the book does not bother me.
12. Do you think a traditional or non-traditional representation of women in your textbook will affect your employment pathway later in life? a. Yes      b. No      c. Maybe
13. Do you think your textbook prepares female students for their new roles in line with Vision 2030? a. Yes      b. No      c. Maybe



### 6.3 Sample description

The total number of respondents to the survey was 279 students: 195 respondents from Makkah and Jeddah where *Traveller 6* is the EFL textbook, and 84 respondents were from Al Taif city who study the *Flying High 6* textbook. Table 6.2 lists the distribution of the sample.

Table 6.2. Survey sample

City	<i>Traveller 6</i>	<i>Flying High 6</i>	Total
Makkah	98	–	98
Jeddah	97	–	97
Al Taif	–	84	84
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>279</b>

Most of the participants in the total survey sample, namely 70 percent, use the *Traveller 6* textbook. Teachers currently do not have a choice of textbook. The survey nevertheless provides insight into how the two EFL textbooks contribute to shaping Saudi girls' future.

Overall, there were good response rates from the high schools. As this is the first study of its kind in Saudi Arabia, it did not seek statistical representation but rather aimed to explore these particular issues. As a result, this is an exploratory study where statistical coefficients and values are not used to describe the outcomes. Irrespective of this, the high level of participation of Saudi high-school girls allows the study's results and findings to shed light on the current status of EFL education and inform any recommendations for the Ministry of Education in relation to future English curriculum.

The remainder of this chapter describes the survey results and findings in relation to the general themes relating to EfSD in the third part of the questionnaire, while Chapter 7 outlines and discusses the issues related to women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia.

## 6.4 Study results

The results from the exploratory student survey are presented below, while section 6.5 provides some discussion. The results are structured around the questions in the survey and allow for comparisons between the two EFL textbooks.

### ***Q1. Did you hear about the Saudi sustainable development plan called The Vision 2030 at your school?***

The majority of the respondents (44%) from the three cities had heard about the Saudi sustainable development plan called The Vision 2030 at their school (see Table 6.3). This seems to be most pronounced for those using *Traveller 6* in Jeddah, where respectively 49 percent of the respondents were of the opinion that The Vision 2030 was encountered and introduced at their school. Almost a third of the respondents, namely 30 percent, were unsure whether they had encountered EfSD and The Vision 2030. More than a quarter (26%) were of the opinion that they had not. This indicates that the school educational curriculum has not been very strong in supporting the Saudi sustainable development agenda and the country's Vision 2030.

Table 6.3. Did you hear about the Saudi sustainable development plan called The Vision 2030 at your school?

<b>Answer</b>	<b><i>Flying High 6</i> Al Taif</b>	<b>%</b>	<b><i>Traveller 6</i> Makkah</b>	<b>%</b>	<b><i>Traveller 6</i> Jeddah</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	39	46.42	36	36.73	48	49.48	123	44.08
No	20	23.80	26	26.53	26	26.80	72	25.80
Maybe	25	29.76	36	36.73	23	23.71	84	30.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>30.10</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>35.12</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>24.76</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100</b>

### ***Q2. Have you discussed topics related to the Saudi sustainable development plan called The Vision 2030 in your English as a Foreign Language classes?***

The most common answer provided by nearly 47 percent of the survey participants (see Table 6.4) was that topics related to the Saudi sustainable development plan called The Vision 2030 were not discussed in their English as a Foreign Language classes. Fewer than one-third of the high-school girls (29%) were of the opinion that such topics were included while another 24% were unsure. These results show that the EFL classes are not a reliable way of engaging with The Vision 2030 for the Saudi high-school girls.

Table 6.4. Have you discussed topics related to the Saudi sustainable development plan called The Vision 2030 in your English as a Foreign Language classes?

<b>Answer</b>	<b><i>Flying High 6</i> Al Taif</b>	<b><i>Traveller 6</i> Makkah</b>	<b><i>Traveller 6</i> Jeddah</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	29	24	28	81	29.03
No	33	55	42	130	46.59
Maybe	22	19	27	68	24.37
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100</b>

***Q3. Do you think your EFL education is important for you in light of the Saudi Vision 2030 to achieve your plans for the future? For example, will it give you better chances for college entry and employment in the future?***

An overwhelming majority of the respondents, namely 99 percent, from the three cities considered that EFL education would allow them to achieve their plans for the future, including better chances for college entry and in employment prospects (see Table 6.5). A very small proportion, namely one percent, were unsure, while nobody disagreed with the proposition that EFL education is useful in opening up better options for Saudi girls. There was hence a very good awareness of the importance of English as a communication language for the Saudi economy.

Table 6.5. Do you think your EFL education is important for you in light of the Saudi Vision 2030 to achieve your plans for the future? For example, will it give you better chances for college entry and employment in the future?

<b>Answer</b>	<b><i>Flying High 6</i> Al Taif</b>	<b><i>Traveller 6</i> Makkah</b>	<b><i>Traveller 6</i> Jeddah</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	81	98	97	276	98.92
No	0	0	0	0	0
Maybe	3	0	0	3	1.07
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100</b>

***Q4. In your EFL textbook, have you encountered sustainable development topics related to The Vision 2030 goals, such as environmental conservation, water preservation, employment and women empowerment, or any national health improvement goals?***

The largest fraction of the sample, namely 46 percent, have encountered sustainable development topics related to the goals of Vision 2030, such as environmental conservation, water preservation, employment, women empowerment or any national health improvement goals in their EFL textbooks (see Table 6.6). A smaller share of 35 percent were unsure whether they had come across such topics, and another group of 19 percent provided a negative response.

These results indicate that, despite the policy prominence of the Saudi sustainability agenda, the EFL textbooks do not represent a good conduit for students' engagement with its topics.

Table 6.6. In your EFL textbook, have you encountered sustainable development topics related to the goals of Vision 2030, such as environmental conservation, water preservation, employment and women empowerment, or any national health improvement goals?

Answer	<i>Flying High 6</i>	<i>Traveller 6</i>	<i>Traveller 6</i>	Total	Percent
	Al Taif	Makkah	Jeddah		
Yes	44	43	42	129	46.23
No	10	16	27	53	18.99
Maybe	30	39	28	97	34.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100</b>

*Q5. Would you like your EFL textbook to include more sustainable development topics related to the goals of the Saudi Vision 2030, such as environmental conservation, water preservation, employment, women empowerment in Saudi or any national health improvement goals?*

Question 5 tested the opinion of the female students in relation to whether they would prefer EFL textbooks to include sustainable development topics related to the goals of Vision 2030, such as environmental conservation, water preservation, employment and women empowerment in Saudi Arabia, or any national health improvement goals.

The results in Table 6.7 show that 69 percent of the sample thought that they would like EFL textbooks to include sustainable development topics related to the Saudi Vision 2030's goals, while 12 percent were against and 19 percent were unsure. These results were relatively similar for both EFL textbooks, indicating that the majority of high school female students are interested in these issues.

Table 6.7. Would you like your EFL textbook to include more sustainable development topics related to the goals of the Saudi Vision 2030, such as environmental conservation, water preservation, employment, women empowerment in Saudi or any national health improvement goals?

Answer	<i>Flying High</i> 6 Al Taif	<i>Traveller 6</i> Makkah	<i>Traveller 6</i> Jeddah	Total	Percent
Yes	59	70	63	192	68.81
No	5	11	17	33	11.82
Maybe	20	17	17	54	19.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100</b>

*Q6. Would you like your EFL classes to be taught in a different way that would enable you to have better employment chances in the future? For example, do you think it may be useful to have a specific curriculum and more course loads of English which support education for sustainability and Vision 2030 for the different high school pathways, scientific or literary streams?*

The majority of the respondents, namely 80 percent overall, indicated that they would like EFL classes to be taught in a different way that would enable them to have improved employment chances in the future. For example, the inclusion of more English classes that support education for sustainability and Vision 2030, combined with an improved curriculum and course loads for different high school pathways, scientific or literary streams (see Table 6.8).

A relatively small percentage of the sample, namely eight percent, are not interested in any such changes while 11 percent are unsure. These results indicate that there is potential for positive changes which can provide better opportunities for the Saudi girls.

Table 6.8. Would you like your EFL classes to be taught in a different way that would enable you to have better employment chances in the future? For example, do you think it may be useful to have a specific curriculum and more course loads of English which support education for sustainability and Vision 2030 for the different high school pathways, scientific or literary streams?

<b>Answer</b>	<b><i>Flying High 6</i> Al Taif</b>	<b><i>Traveller 6</i> Makkah</b>	<b><i>Traveller 6</i> Jeddah</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	63	83	80	226	81 %
No	8	8	7	23	8.24
Maybe	13	7	10	30	10.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100</b>

***Q7. What is the most preferred EFL skill you would like to be taught to learn about sustainability?***

The students' responses to this question indicate that speaking is their most favoured skill for introducing and learning about sustainability topics, with 66 percent of the sample indicating this preference (see Table 6.9). Listening comes second with preference from 18 percent of the respondents. The respective shares for reading and writing are 10 and 8 percent. It is clear that communication in English through speaking is the most valuable and desirable skill that the students want to apply while learning about sustainability.

Table 6.9. What is the most preferred EFL skill you would like to be taught to learn about sustainability?

<b>English skill</b>	<b><i>Flying High 6</i> Al Taif</b>	<b><i>Traveller 6</i> Makkah</b>	<b><i>Traveller 6</i> Jeddah</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Speaking	57	68	58	183	65.59
Reading	8	9	12	29	10
Listening	16	12	21	49	17.56
Writing	3	9	6	21	7.52
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100</b>

## **6.5 Discussion**

Given Vision 2030 and its agenda of integrating values, issues, skills, knowledge and perspectives of the UNSDG into the school curriculum, the survey was designed to

determine to what extent the Saudi EFL curriculum and instruction, including textbooks, facilitate the integration of EfSD and the Saudi policy's objectives into the learning process at all-girls high schools. The results from the survey show that the majority of female high-school students encounter the Saudi sustainable development agenda at their school. While Vision 2030 is a national project and is present everywhere in the media and official documents of the MoE, there is still a large proportion (26%) of students who have not heard about it, and almost one-third (30%) more of the sample who did not have a proper recollection. Hence, there was not adequate cognizance of this new phenomenon. While it is known that Vision 2030 was enacted in 2016, the current survey was administered during the first half of 2019. This suggests a gap in the delivery of the Vision's message between the MoE and the school system. While this finding is preliminary and based only on an exploratory survey, it suggests that such a gap is an important issue for policy action and future research.

Regarding the presence of EfSD in EFL instruction, a large share of the students, namely 47 percent, believed that such topics were not discussed during their English classes. On the other hand, 46 percent of the sample believed that sustainable development topics related to Vision 2030 were encountered in their EFL textbooks. Although on the surface these two findings may appear conflicting, there is the possibility that, although sustainable development topics are present in the EFL textbooks, they may not have been actually covered in the classroom. To develop a full picture of this hypothesis, interviews with teachers will be needed to understand their perception and attitude towards integrating EfSD in their EFL classes.

It is interesting to note that in all three cities of this study, most of the respondents considered that EFL education would allow them to achieve their plans for the future; for example, give them better chances for college entry and employment. This finding has important implications for improving EFL instruction to respond to the students' needs and hopes for a better reality.

Examining the opinion of the female students in relation to whether they would like EFL textbooks to include sustainable development topics related to the Saudi Vision 2030's goals, two-thirds of the sample thought that this would be a good option. This combination of findings provides some support for the conceptual premise covered in

the literature review that EfSD in EFL classes significantly improves students' awareness of their world and enhances their learning experiences.

The survey also supported a change in the nature and extent of a possible different approach in the way EFL is taught in KSA to support sustainability. A clear majority of the respondents would prefer EFL classes to be taught in a different way that would enable them to have better employment chances in the future. One of the issues that emerges from this finding is that students at this age are aware of the implication of foreign language education for their future and that they would like to see a change in the way they make use of it. Related to this is the finding that speaking is their most preferred English language skill for introducing and learning about sustainability topics, with 66 percent indicating such a preference. It is also interesting to see to what extent teachers give this skill a priority when teaching topics related to EfSD.

## **6.6 Concluding Remarks**

This chapter described the results from an exploratory survey of the perceptions among Saudi high-school female students about the extent their EFL instruction, including textbooks, facilitating the integration of EfSD and the Vision 2030's objectives into their learning experiences. Given Vision 2030 and its agenda of integrating values, issues, skills, knowledge and the UNSDG into the school curriculum, it was important to understand how the two EFL textbooks, namely *Flying High 6* and *Traveller 6*, and the overall EFL instruction, contribute to these new policy directions of the country.

In addition to the direct insights in Chapter 5 regarding how differently sustainability issues are incorporated in the two textbooks, the analysis of the collected data in this chapter was intended to be collectively performed. The questionnaire results provide a collective understanding of the status of EfSD in general in the school system, the EFL classroom, and finally in the two textbooks and the way they are perceived by the students.

The current study found that most female high-school students encountered the Saudi sustainable development agenda at their school. One unanticipated finding was that a large share of the students, namely 47 percent, believed that EfSD topics were not discussed during their English classes, but that conversely about 46 percent of the sample believed that sustainable development topics related to Vision 2030 are



included in their EFL textbooks. A possible explanation for these results may be the lack of adequate EFL teaching of SD topics which, although present in the textbooks, might not have been actually covered in the classroom.

The findings from this survey can inform the developmental structure of an EFL educational textbook that takes into consideration the sensitivity and priorities of this current phase of Saudi history and contributes towards the achievement of the national Vision 2030. Although in this instance the analysis was purposely focused on EFL instruction and textbooks, its findings may inform other disciplines and school subjects taught in educational bodies in Saudi Arabia and beyond.

## Chapter 7:

# Gender Parity through the Saudi Vision 2030 Female Representation in English as a Foreign Language Textbooks

### 7.1 Introduction

According to the 2018 Global Gender Gap (World Economic Forum, 2018), the population of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is 32,275,690; around 12 million of whom are migrants. Of the approximately 20 million Saudi nationals, 40% of men and only 10% of women are in employment (Hvidt, 2018a, p. 3). The country scores well in educational attainment for women ranking at 93, yet, this is not matched in labour market participation placing the KSA 145 out of 149 countries in terms of its gender gap. Although nearly 50% of university graduates are female, the country is still considered to have a large workplace participation gender gap, despite the educational parity (Varshney, 2019). According to Saudi Arabia's voluntary national review (VNR) of the country's progress towards the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2018, women account for 49.6% of the total Saudi population; however, they have a very low economic participation rate at just 19%, compared to 64.6% for men (KSA, 2018, p. 64). Nonetheless, the labour force participation for women while low by international standards has been growing steadily since the 1990s – from 14.5% in 1990 to nearly 23.4% in 2018 (World Economic Forum, 2018). Looking towards the future, through its strategic policy directions, the country has embarked on a mission to fully utilise its workforce and capacity potential, including that of women, and created significant opportunities to transform the economy to be more sustainable and less dependent on oil for its future

prosperity. In 2016, Saudi Arabia announced the Saudi Vision 2030 which is a plan to reduce the country's dependency on oil revenues for economic growth and diversify its economy through non-oil sectors such as health, education, infrastructure, recreation and tourism. With Vision 2030, the Kingdom has endorsed a resolute program that aims to build a thriving modern society where

“... all citizens can fulfil their dreams, hopes and ambition [and] provide opportunities for all through education and training, and high-quality services such as employment initiatives, health, housing, and entertainment” ( Saudi Vision 2030, 2016, p. 7).

While investing in the education and training of Saudi young men and women is a key intention to equip the nation with future labour market needs, the focus on women is clearly prioritised and articulated in the vision as: “Saudi women are yet another great asset. With over 50 percent of our university graduates being female, we will continue to develop their talents, invest in their productive capabilities and enable them to strengthen their future and contribute to the development of our society and economy” (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016, p. 37). As the largest economy in the Middle East, the KSA also plays an important role within the G20, a group of countries that aims to coordinate economic policies across significant industrialised and developing countries. The G20 promotes gender parity as a priority, as can be seen in its “25 by 25” program, agreed upon by its members including KSA. This program aims to reduce the gender gap in the labour force and to increase women's labour inclusion by 25% in the G20 economies as a priority by 2025 (Langou et al., 2018). To this end, a commitment to the Vision 2030, the SDGs as well as the “25 by 25” is observed within the country's SDGs' voluntary national review in 2018 where a section on “Women in the Saudi Vision 2030” outlines major areas of women's participation in Saudi Arabia's development (KSA, 2018, p. 63). Since the announcement of the Vision and the Kingdom's obligation under the SDGs, a large number of initiatives particularly addressing youth and the role of women in Saudi Arabia's economy have been launched and implemented. These include the largest share of the 2018 national budget allocated to education where a total of USD 51 billion (SAR 192 billion) were earmarked for general education, higher education and the training sector (KSA, 2018, p. 53). The number of students enrolled in general education has increased fourfold since 1980 and the growth of enrolment for female students has been markedly high

whereby it has increased by an average annual rate of about 5.3% since 1980 (KSA, 2018, p. 55). As a building block for a sustainable society, Islam is at the forefront of the Kingdom's commitment to its vision as well as the SDGs agenda and its importance is clearly articulated within the social dimension of the SDGs review which "focuses on safeguarding Islamic values, development of human resources and improvement of social welfare of citizens through scaling up of health, educational and cultural aspects" (KSA, 2018, p. 19). This shows the esteem of religion as a significant aspect of Saudi life and well-being and is reflected in the structure of standards where the educational disciplines embrace religious sciences and knowledge. At the same time, the importance of sustainable development is also highly evident for the country's long-term vision as it is listed as an education curricular priority (KSA, 2018, p. 59). The noteworthy developments with regard to women's emancipation in the Kingdom since the inception of Vision 2020 are very promising. These include Saudi women's participation in initiatives holding several leading positions, such as vice minister, chairperson of councils and deputy minister; women holding chief executive officer (CEO) positions of leading banks and in several companies; the first appointment of a woman as Dean of Student Affairs at Taif University as well as allowing women to pursue business without the consent of a guardian. In addition, women accounted for 20% of the private sector's investments in 2017; 127,000 new commercial registrations were issued for women in 2017 and over 450,000 jobs created for female employees. On the political side, women account for 20% of the Shura Council (the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia; a formal advisory body permitted to propose draft laws and forward them to the King of Saudi Arabia and the cabinet) members and actively participated in municipal elections, having run for over 19 seats in 2016. The country has launched an electronic portal that allows job seeking women to register and obtain information on employment opportunities, a program supporting the transport of working women and providing childcare facilities for their children. A national observatory for women established at the King Saud University in 2018 monitors Saudi women's participation in development initiatives and supports them in reaching their potential (KSA, 2018, p. 83). An important move to bring women into the job market and change their status in society was the decree issued by King Salman that instated the right of women to drive from 24 June 2018. Unaffordable or inaccessible transport is just one factor that is an impediment to women taking part in the economy. Allowing women to drive offers

opportunities for economic empowerment, previously unavailable, as many who wanted to were unable to participate in formal employment because of the struggles of commuting or not being able to afford hiring drivers to get them to work (Hvidt, 2018b). While it is a given that quality of education plays an important role in labour market participation, gender equality in education is an essential requirement for this. As interrelated elements, both are major goals of the national Saudi Vision 2030 as well as the SDGs. The fourth SDG is about ensuring quality education for all and this goal puts an explicit emphasis on gender equality as a guiding principle linked to the recognition of the right to education. Furthermore, the global community through the United Nations sends a strong message about the realisation of gender equality in different sectors by stressing this in its fifth SDG. A gender review prepared by the Global Education Monitoring Report team emphasises that gender equality in education “requires unbiased curricula and textbook, how students perceive themselves and how they project their role in society is shaped to some extent by what they experience at school, including by how they are represented in textbooks” (GEM Report Team, 2018, p. 52). There is strong evidence that gender perceptions about occupations and working life that individuals aspire to are shaped by what they see around them. A report on exploring the career aspirations of primary school children from around the world shows that a conscious and unconscious classification system starts at an early age through which individuals often rule themselves out of careers that they might otherwise successfully pursue (Chambers et al., 2018). This also means that diverse sectors of employment globally do not benefit from all the talent that is potentially available within an economy (Chambers et al., 2018). The extent to which the Saudi Vision 2030 and its associated modifications diversify the economy of KSA and ensure greater participation of women in the workforce will rest on the provision of an education where equal opportunities for both genders are reflected in the curriculum and where women are represented equally to men in textbooks, modelling opportunities across different career paths. The prominent position of the English language in Saudi Arabia and its direct and indirect relation to some of the major development goals of the country are the motives behind choosing this particular topic for analysis in the chapter. Incorporating an effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) of instruction could immensely contribute to achieve some of the educational goals of the Vision 2030 and lead to improved employability among Saudi graduates. This chapter thus examines the effectiveness of the current approach of teaching EFL

in Saudi Arabia and the appropriateness of the curriculum's capacity to model female roles in the evolving modern economy. The chapter examines female students' awareness of their part in the new development agenda as well as their perspectives of the current EFL curriculum and its role in contributing to the Vision 2030.

## **7.2 Traditional role-modelling through female education**

Before 1960, most women in Saudi Arabia were only provided with informal education and girls were taught in religious schools to recite the holy Quran and learn about matters that would prepare them for the roles of wives, mothers and daughters (Alyami, 2014). A few women were allowed to receive primary and secondary education and to attend college; however, this was the exception as cultural norms had a strong resistance to female education. Structured education for females in the KSA started in 1960 (Yizraeli, 2012). Since then, Saudi women have faced political and social pressures precluding them from entering the labour force. Disputes concerning the right of women to have formal education and work have evoked intense debate between conservative religious scholars and progressives. According to Hamdan (2005), in some instances Islamic and religious texts are interpreted literally, which provides the conservative religious scholars opportunities to silence women's voices in the name of the religion (Hamdan, 2005, p. 45). The role played by religious scholars (the Ulama) in guiding morality in the Kingdom has been applied to the general society and is not just related to education and therefore has had wide-ranging gender related effects. Some researchers argue that deep-rooted beliefs in Arab culture concerning women existed before Islam and were incorporated into the Islamic traditions. It is difficult to distinguish between religious and social attitudes when these are so inextricably mixed in a culture (Hamdan, 2005; Spierings et al., 2009) such as this. The modelling of female roles through education has over time, therefore been mostly about maintaining women's dependability as primary caregivers. Until 2002, female education came under the aegis of the General Presidency for Girls (GPG), which had the function of responsibility for all female education from primary through to the secondary level and worked under the guidance of a conservative group of Ulama. Male students studied under the supervision of the Ministry of Education (MoE) which is less restrictive and more open to societal demands and economic reforms. Under the supervision of the GPG, women's education was protected from "deviations" from "the original purpose of female education, which was to make women good wives and

mothers, and to prepare them for “acceptable” jobs such as teaching and nursing that were believed to suit their nature” (Hamdan, 2005, p. 44). This gender segregation and persistent direction of girls’ education influenced all aspects of the Saudi society, restricted women’s areas of study and thus limited their fitness for many jobs. The Saudi curriculum endorsed conservative religious and social norms dictating how women should appear in public spheres. Such norms have long been accepted by a large part of the public, who were taught not only to agree with this through the system of education, but also through the characterisation presented in textbooks. Having different administrators for male and female education has inevitably led to differences in focus and direction, with the more conservative approach to girls’ education not offering them the same breadth of opportunities that are provided for boys. Vision 2030 offers a whole shift in what Saudi women can aspire to do that moves away from these views. However religious interpretation and cultural adaptation are not the only reasons for women’s limited presence in the labour force in KSA. According to Sabri (2001), the first oil boom in Saudi Arabia between 1973 and 1980 and the sudden need to develop the country forced the government to rely on imported labour with key skills to boost its economy. Fakeeh (2009) notes that the Saudi labour market did not have time to make a gradual transition to the new economy, or to build necessary expertise and work ethics among its population. The country has thus relied largely on foreign labour to develop its economy with little role for women in the workforce as well as in the public sphere. Vision 2030 aims to change that through an ambitious undertaking to empower women and increase their public roles in society.

### **7.3 Portrayal of women in the Saudi English as a Foreign Language curriculum**

In Saudi Arabia, photographs of females have been banned from textbooks for both boys and girls since 1926, and only drawings of fully covered women are allowed (Al Arabiya, 2012). In 2012, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks designed for Saudi schools included photographs of veiled women in the medical and educational fields. In 2013, EFL textbooks were revised and the photographs removed. Sulaimani’s (2017) study of a university-level EFL textbook found that women were under-represented and less frequently characterised than men, and that the textbook was biased in terms of gender representation. This study (Sulaimani, 2017) shows that even in the progression of education there is a biased representation of gender in textbooks

which further leaves an impression on aspirations. It is generally considered that the representation of men and women in any school system in any society accords with classifications that have been socially constructed; and that each gender may agree with and follow the norms or undermine, challenge or sometimes redefine them (Kang, 2009; Stromquist, 1990). A few studies have examined images of both genders in higher education textbooks used by male and female students in different Saudi universities, in terms of gender positioning. Sulaimani and Elyas's (2018) investigation confirms bias in gender representation in these materials. The study argues that a "glocalised" edition of textbooks that ensures equal representation of both sexes and contains images that present the current political and societal stances on men and women is required for learners. Their study finds that not only is there limited representation of women, but that men are presented as having higher status positions and are shown working hard, while women are shown in pictures that indicate the lack of seriousness required in the work environment. Similarly, Aljuaythin's (2018) study that scrutinises the illustration of gender in two EFL textbooks for elementary students in the KSA, reveals imbalanced representation of both genders in favour of males. These findings indicate a need to review textbook representations of men and women in the workforce and public spheres, to help shift perceptions required for an effective increase of women in the workplace. The current EFL curriculum in Saudi Arabia covers three years of the secondary program, with a different textbook for each semester. The subject is compulsory in both humanities and science pathways and students must pass it to graduate. Four classes of 45 minutes are allotted to EFL each week which demonstrates the importance given to English as a vital skill that aligns with the country's development plans and vision. The textbooks under examination, *Traveller 6* and *Flying High 6*, are part of two series of texts used within the curriculum and are the last of each series. They are intended to include exposure to various aspects of the workforce and a variety of possible opportunities and pathways to the future, whether these be university study, the labour market, or supporting the family through caregiving. There are few references to females in general, and limited depictions of successful professional Saudi women in the texts. *Traveller 6* shows no women in photographs or drawings at all. *Flying High 6* offers ten images of women and 59 of men. Of the ten, six are in stereotypical female roles: cooking, cleaning, shopping, chatting, and taking care of the family. Two seem to be of students at university, with their faces covered with the niqab (face covering). The only two depicted as



professionals are one photographed at a desk, back to the camera, and the other one is of Marie Curie, the well-known historical female physicist and chemist. Only one photograph shows a woman's full face who appears to be at home playing a board game with her son in the presence of her husband. This image is questionable too, as the woman is wearing a full abaya — the long black gown and a headscarf usually worn in public spaces. It is unlikely that a woman in her own household, engaging with her own family would wear these outer garments. The question raised here is whether Saudi female students notice the limited presence of females in textbooks that are taught at all schools across the country. Do they see this as a deliberate omission, or something required and intended or yet something that needs to be questioned in light of a new vision for the women of the country?

#### **7.4 *Flying High and Traveller* textbooks**

According to Al-Haq and Smadi (1996), English has been taught in KSA since 1927. In 1969 it became compulsory at the intermediate level, which lasts for three years in KSA and starts at the age of 13. Until the completion of secondary education, students spend six years learning English. The strategic project for public education and curriculum reform announced in 2006 articulated the MoE's commitment to sustainable development. A major initiative of the reform was the establishment of the Tatweer project to improve the quality of education, with a budget of about 12 billion Saudi Riyal (US\$3.2 billion) (Wang, 2013). One of the initiatives of Tatweer was the English language teaching and learning program on which the MoE collaborated with a number of international companies and training providers specialising in EFL to develop textbooks and teaching materials for Saudi students. A product of this partnership was an international series of EFL textbooks customised for the Saudi context, including *Flying High*, written by David Spencer which has been used in Saudi schools since 2012. It has been evaluated several times by researchers in terms of authenticity, quality, appearance, and suitability as educational material for Saudi students, as well as a resource for teaching English language skills. Alshumaimeri and Alzyadi (2015) examined its use of authentic materials that can deliver actual native speakers' experiences of the target language through a survey distributed to female EFL teachers in public secondary schools in Riyadh. The findings revealed that *Flying High* has a moderate level of authentic material, but that some is beyond learners' level and there is some need to adjust the book to the students' proficiency level. Al Harbi

(2017) and Almalki (2014) evaluated *Flying High* in terms of layout and instructional design from the perspective of teachers and found that they generally received the textbook positively. *Traveller 6*, written by H. Q. Mitchell and Marileni Malkogianni, was first published in 2012. This text is one of the series approved by the English Language Development Project in the Saudi MoE. Like *Flying High*, the *Traveller* series consists of six textbooks covering the three secondary years. This series has also been evaluated several times and analysed by different researchers, usually one textbook of the series at a time. Some of the research that deals exclusively with a single part of the series or one textbook appears in Alhamlan's (2013) study, where the researcher examines the *Traveller 5* textbook taught in a third of secondary schools. A checklist was distributed to students to explore their perceptions of the textbook. The students' perceptions were positive except in some areas. With reference to culture, around 60% of the students believed that the cultural context was suitable (Alhamlan, 2013, p. 14). A study by Alharbi (2017) exclusively evaluated teachers' views on *Traveller 3* and *4*, taught in the second secondary grade. The results indicated that these texts need more development to be effective in learning and teaching EFL. Allehyani et al. (2017) studied the extent to which *Traveller 5* textbooks referred to inner-circle cultures – countries that use English as a first language, such as the United Kingdom and the United States. The study concluded that *Traveller 5* needs to give more attention to the learners' introduction to inner-circle culture, in ways that will be acceptable to their local culture. The review of literature shows that gender is an under-researched topic in the case of Saudi EFL textbooks. Furthermore, from the literature review it is not clear how useful *Flying High* and *Traveller* are in relation to sustainable development, Vision 2030 and gender empowerment and more importantly for this study, to what extent they motivate or inspire female role modelling in educational and career aspirations among young Saudi girls.

### **7.5 Study design and methodology**

The survey, which is the focus of this chapter, was administered in three Saudi cities (see Table 2.1). A six-item questionnaire was distributed in 2019 to high-school teachers who helped facilitate the connection between the researcher and the students. The survey was conducted as part of the larger PhD research which takes an exploratory approach to what implications Vision 2030 has for the Saudi education system. The total number of respondents to the survey was 279 students; 195

respondents who study *Traveller 6* were from the cities of Makkah and Jeddah and 84 respondents who study the *Flying High 6* text were from Al Taif city. To determine to what extent the EFL curriculum reflects the economic empowerment of women, the study asked Saudi high school girls to consider whether their EFL textbooks encourage them to explore new future career possibilities or endorse traditional roles for women.

Table 7.1. City locations and EFL textbooks analysed – number of participants

<b>City</b>	<b><i>Traveller 6</i></b>	<b><i>Flying High 6</i></b>	<b>Total</b>
Makkah	98	–	98
Jeddah	97	–	97
Al Taif	–	84	84
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>279</b>

Given the new Vision 2030 and its agenda of empowering women, how do the EFL textbooks *Flying High 6* and *Traveller 6* represent women in general, and their contribution to the labour force? Is there any statistical evidence that one textbook does this better than the other, or that students perceive their textbooks differently?

The questions were:

1. Are women represented adequately in your EFL textbook?
2. Are women represented in your EFL textbook (whether in traditional roles or those anticipated in Vision 2030) at an equal rate to men?
3. What do you think is the reason for the degree of representation of women in your textbook?
4. What roles would you prefer to see women performing in your textbook?
5. Do you think a traditional or non-traditional representation of women in your textbook will affect your employment pathway later in life?
6. Do you think your textbook prepares female students for their new roles in line with Vision 2030?

## 7.6 Study findings

The majority of participants in the total survey sample, namely 70 percent, is using the *Traveller 6* textbook and teachers currently do not have the choice of which book to use. It is still insightful to understand how the two EFL textbooks contribute towards shaping Saudi girls' futures. The next section sets out the findings according to each of the six questions contained in the survey.

### *Q1. Are women represented adequately in your EFL textbook?*

The majority of the respondents (78%), from the three cities did not consider that women in general or Saudi women in particular were well represented in the English language book they studied (see Table 2.2). This seems to be more pronounced in relation to the *Traveller 6* textbook where respectively 82 and 79 percent of the respondents were of the opinion that women are not adequately represented. A small and the same percentage, namely 11 percent, thought that the representation was or may be adequate.

Table 7.2. Adequate representation in EFL textbooks – number of participants

<b>1. Are women represented adequately in your EFL textbook?</b>					
<b>Variable</b>	<i>Flying High 6</i> <b>Al Taif</b>	<i>Traveller 6</i> <b>Makkah</b>	<i>Traveller 6</i> <b>Jeddah</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	8	16	6	30	10.8
No	58	79	82	219	78.5
Maybe	18	3	9	30	10.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100</b>

### *Q2. Are women represented in your EFL textbook (whether in traditional or non-traditional and anticipated roles in Vision 2030) at an equal rate to men?*

The majority of the survey participants, nearly 77 percent, did not consider the topics and images in the book talked about women and their different roles, both traditional and modern roles, at an equal or similar rate to men (see Table 2.3 for more details).

There was a comparable response across all three schools with no differences between the EFL textbooks used.

Table 7.3 Equal representation in EFL textbooks – number of participants

<b>2. Are women represented in your EFL textbook (whether in traditional or anticipated roles in Vision 2030) at an equal rate to men?</b>					
<b>Variable</b>	<i>Flying High 6</i> <b>Al Taif</b>	<i>Traveller 6</i> <b>Makkah</b>	<i>Traveller 6</i> <b>Jeddah</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	13	18	11	42	15.1
No	62	75	77	214	76.7
Maybe	9	5	9	23	8.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Q3. What do you think is the reason for the degree of representation of women in your text book?**

As seen in Table 2.4, the reasons behind the poor representation of women in the Saudi EFL textbooks were similarly divided between religious, social, economic and a combination of these. Although overall the combination of reasons dominated the survey sample, those who were using the *Flying High 6* textbook were more inclined to see religion as being at the core of the inadequate representation of women.

Table 7.4. Reason for the degree of representation – number of participants

<b>3. What do you think is the reason for the degree of representation of women in your textbook?</b>					
<b>Variable</b>	<i>Flying High 6</i> <b>Al Taif</b>	<i>Traveller 6</i> <b>Makkah</b>	<i>Traveller 6</i> <b>Jeddah</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Religious reasons	30	17	26	73	26.2
Social reasons	15	21	22	58	20.8
Economic reasons	23	25	16	64	23.3
All the above	16	35	33	84	29.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Q4. What roles would you prefer to see women performing in your textbook?**

While a large share of the sample liked to see images of women working in all disciplines and fields without exception, a slightly smaller percentage preferred women to be represented in traditional roles and an even smaller group had no strong opinion as the representation of women in the textbooks did not worry them (see Table 2.5). The girls using the *Flying High 6* textbook seemed to be more indifferent to the

way women are represented while those studying *Traveller 6* expressed a slightly higher preference for seeing women across all fields and disciplines.

Table 7.5 Impact of representation on future career pathway – number of participants

<b>4. What roles would you prefer to see women performing in your textbook?</b>					
<b>Variable</b>	<i>Flying High 6</i> <b>Al Taif</b>	<i>Traveller 6</i> <b>Makkah</b>	<i>Traveller 6</i> <b>Jeddah</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
I would like to see women represented in the book in the traditional way: mother and her house or just a teacher in the school	14	43	27	84	30.1
I like to see women working in all disciplines and fields without exception	30	38	47	115	41.2
The appearance of women in the book does not bother me	40	17	23	80	28.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100.0</b>

***Q5.-Do you think a traditional or non-traditional representation of women in your textbook will affect your employment pathway later on?***

Interestingly, more than three-quarters of the respondents felt that the representation of women in either traditional or non-traditional roles would not influence their choice of career, as seen in Table 2.6. This was consistently the preferred response irrespective of the EFL textbook used. However, 17 percent of the respondents felt that it would make a difference which means that close to 1 in 5 female students is likely to be influenced by the images of Saudi women in the EFL school textbooks when selecting future employment pathways.

Table 7.6 Preferred rôles represented in EFL textbooks – number of participants

<b>5. Do you think a traditional or non-traditional representation of women in your textbook will affect your employment pathway later on?</b>					
<b>Variable</b>	<i>Flying High 6</i> <b>Al Taif</b>	<i>Traveller 6</i> <b>Makkah</b>	<i>Traveller 6</i> <b>Jeddah</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	20	14	13	47	16.8
No	59	84	82	225	80.6
Maybe	5	0	2	7	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Q6. Do you think your textbook will prepare female students for their new roles in Vision 2030?**

This last question tested the opinion of the female students in relation to the ambitious plans for women and vision set by the Saudi Government. The findings in Table 2.7 show that two-thirds of the sample thought that their English language curriculum will prepare them for Vision 2030, while 22.6 percent felt the opposite and only 10.4 percent were unsure (see Table 2.7). These results were similar for both EFL textbooks used.

Table 7.7 Preparation for the anticipated rôles in Vision 2030 – number of participants

<b>6. Do you think your textbook and the degree of women's representation prepares female students for their new roles in Vision 2030?</b>					
<b>Variable</b>	<i>Flying High 6</i> <b>Al Taif</b>	<i>Traveller 6</i> <b>Makkah</b>	<i>Traveller 6</i> <b>Jeddah</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	51	67	69	187	67.0
No	21	22	20	63	22.6
Maybe	12	9	8	29	10.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 7.7 Discussion

This study is the first to explore gender and its connection to education for sustainable development in the context of the Saudi EFL curriculum after the inception of the Vision 2030. The majority of the respondents to the survey indicated a clear awareness of the limited representation of women in their textbooks. It was expected that *Traveller 6*, which is devoid of any visual representation of women and has very few references to them in the text, would see most respondents agreeing that women were underrepresented. The significant difference in the answers to this question was attributed to *Flying High 6*. This suggests that the *Flying High 6* textbook is seen to be making a difference to the way the girls perceive themselves and their role in society. Hence, this indicates that a greater push towards more equal and wider representation should be made in the other textbook, that is *Traveller 6*. The invisibility of women in *Traveller 6* is noted by Fakeeh (2008) as a major issue in textbooks and an impediment to quality education. *Flying High 6* offers ten visual images of women in a mix of traditional and non-traditional roles, and students from Al Taif indicated that they

were aware of the percentage of female representation in the text. This suggests that they feel their textbook is not ignoring them, even if they are not yet represented in the full range of social and public spheres. As Question 4 reveals, a large majority of students using *Flying High 6* liked seeing images of women in all disciplines and fields. This indicates that the students recognise that traditional roles are already represented in their textbook and they desire women to be shown in more non-traditional roles. The two unanticipated findings were that two thirds of the sample think the representation of women in the textbook will not affect their employment pathway later in life. Similarly, it is surprising that two thirds of the sample think that their EFL textbook even with the limited representation of women in the workforce, would prepare them for their new roles in Vision 2030, which promises to create more opportunities for Saudi women. The study suggests that the majority of female students surveyed were aware not only of their limited representation in the textbooks they study from, but also that this dearth of representation is due to a combination of religious, economic and social factors. The importance of religion in Saudi society is a given, and gender roles according to prevalent interpretations can explain why a relatively higher percentage of respondents thought that the degree of representation in the textbooks is determined by religion. Another justification for the results may be attributed to what Hamdan (2005) notes as the normalisation of gender differences through the national curriculum which emphasises traditional and socio-economic values that have gained legal force in Saudi society associated with particular Islamic teachings (Hamdan, 2005, p. 45). The acceptance among students of gender inequality in the textbook can also be ascribed to what Offenhauer (2005) and Stromquist et al. (1998) note as the taken for granted invisibility that reflects larger gender stereotypes and stratification in a system. Yet many do not see this as a hindrance to their job opportunities in the future which shows young females are finding role models through mediums other than school texts and are modelling their aspirations on these. While there are indications that current reforms have started to impact upon society, gender equality is a narrative that has yet to catch up in the educational sphere in Saudi Arabia. Sections of the Saudi society have embraced gender equality, but further work needs to be done to alter cultural attitudes towards the new roles of women in the workforce anticipated in Vision 2030. The study thus raises an important question regarding the society's endorsement of the phenomena of women's empowerment. We see that a small percentage of respondents still prefer women to be presented in traditional roles



only. If a change at the macro-level is to take place, then it must also take place at the level of the individual student to support women's empowerment. This can provide modelling of women's roles that offers equal opportunities for aspirations within curriculum texts for both girls and boys. Such a change would move modelling beyond traditional home-based roles and also depict women as being able to tackle diverse challenging professions and career pathways expected in Vision 2030.

## **7.8 Conclusion**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 is unprecedented with respect to the historical ideals regarding gender roles held, inculcated and absorbed within the Saudi society. These ideals inform aspirations that young girls may have with regard to career choices or indeed pursuing further or higher education. As many positive structural reforms and changes are underway and already happening, the revision of women's images in the Saudi textbooks is an important contribution with respect to what may be a small change, but a necessary one in the bigger picture of attaining the outcomes of the Vision. The Saudi Vision 2030 sees women as valuable human capital and undertakes political and social revisions that will make the most of women's underutilised talents in the workforce. Part of the challenge lies in how the education system of the country responds to the new anticipated roles for women. With revised content that offers positive role modelling of women's empowerment and embraces Saudi values as envisioned in Vision 2030 and Saudi Arabia's commitment to the SDGs, EFL textbooks can make a difference in the contemporary environment where the local and global interrelate and interact to promote gender parity.

# Chapter 8:

## EFL Teachers' Perspectives on EfSD

### 8.1 Introduction

It would not have been fair to determine the appropriateness of the current practices in EFL instruction by examining only the textbooks and students' perceptions, without providing teachers' inputs towards understanding the wider picture of the phenomenon under investigation. Hence, further data collection was considered necessary from the teachers' perspectives to determine exactly how EFL instruction affects students in relation to EfSD and the KSA Vision 2030.

This chapter hence aims to find out what EFL female teachers' perceptions are about the importance of EFL instruction in achieving sustainable development, and realising the goals of the Vision 2030 and how learning English is related to this. Qualitative content analysis of data was obtained using semi-structured interviews was used. According to Kondracki and Wellman (2002), open-ended survey questions provide a good basis for qualitative content analysis, whether in verbal, electronic or print form. The questions used in this research elicited information about the participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of English as a Foreign Language as taught today in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in building the capacity for education for sustainability in order to achieve the country's sustainable development goals of Vision 2030. Previous literature on education for sustainable development establishes the important roles of teachers in EfSD and different aspects of teaching practices, opportunities and challenges that arise when teaching sustainability issues (Hart, 2003; Nickel, 2005; Sund, 2015; Sund and Wickman, 2008). The chapter aims also to elicit views from

female EFL teachers regarding the two current textbooks currently used in KSA and the extent of these textbooks' contribution to sustainability education. Economic, environmental and social themes, the three dimensions of sustainability, were discussed in detail. Special importance was given to youth employment and women empowerment as major thrusts of the Saudi Vision 2030 and the country's 2020 Transformation Plan. Evidence from Chapter 4 of this research suggests that most documents are able to communicate the role of quality education to contribute to EfSD and the national development objectives and the need for the education system to respond to the global ecological, social, economic objectives required by national and international community.

The aim of this chapter is also connected to the general aim of the thesis, as it sheds light on the current practices of EFL educators and their role in relation to EfSD and quality education required by Vision 2030. High-school age was most appropriate, as it represents a significant phase when students become adults and make some of the most important decisions in their lives, such as university majors and future job choices and preferences. Teachers were asked to give their views on the consequences of current EFL practices, including curriculums and textbook content, and how they can inform students' preparation for the next phase in their lives given the new national and international sustainable developmental plans.

Interviews are fast becoming a key instrument in qualitative research. The theory of qualitative research provides a useful account of how interviews are central to the entire discipline (Creswell, 2005; Gubrium & Holstein, 2003; Kvale, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Interviews are currently one of the most popular methods for qualitative case studies and are considered a well-established approach in the field of education research (Sund, 2015). Interviews with teachers was the method chosen in this exploratory study in order to obtain further in-depth information and insights into the current status of EfSD and its actual practices in the different school environments. Specifically, interviewing EFL teachers can play an important role in addressing the issue of EfSD and the recent inception of Vision 2030. The interview analysis is based on the conceptual framework proposed by Ose (2016) using Microsoft Word to structure qualitative data.

## 8.2 Method description

Conducting quality in-depth interviews with a small sample of EFL teachers was the aim of this research. A pilot interview was conducted informally first and some of the questions were modified with prompts added to facilitate the data collection process.

The teachers' interviews were designed around the same themes as those in the students' questionnaires. This approach was based on what both Catanzaro (1988) and Patton (2002) describe as domains themes, where the data are divided into wide-ranging groups based on different considerations of the research. Graneheim and Lundman (2004) similarly refer to domains, or themes, which align with the research questions or theoretical frameworks used in the study. Accordingly, the analytical tool was organised around the following nine themes:

*Theme 1:* English as a Foreign Language and its effectiveness in building capacity for education for sustainability in achieving Saudi Vision 2030's sustainable development goals.

*Theme 2:* The current EFL textbooks' contribution to EfSD and the Saudi sustainable development plan in Vision 2030.

*Theme 3:* The current approach to teaching sustainable development issues.

*Theme 4:* New approach for building capacity to achieve Vision 2030.

*Theme 5:* Women's empowerment and adequate representation in the EFL textbook used.

*Theme 6:* Equal gender representation in the EFL textbooks.

*Theme 7:* Reasons for the degree of representation of women in the EFL textbooks.

*Theme 8:* The impact of the current representation of women in the EFL textbook on students' future.

*Theme 9:* The current EFL curriculum and the new roles of women in Vision 2030.

The actual questions used for the teachers' interviews are presented in Table 8.1. They reflect the nine themes identified above.

Table 8.1. Teachers' semi-structured interview questions

Theme	Interview Questions
1	Do you think teaching English as a foreign language is important in achieving some of the Saudi sustainable development goals of the Vision 2030? How is Learning English related to the Vision 2030?
2	To what extent you think that the current EFL curriculum, including the textbook you teach, supports and contribute to the Saudi Sustainable development plan in Vision 2030? For example: in the EFL textbook you teach, have you encountered sustainable development topics related to the Vision 2030 goals such as environmental conservation, water preservation, employment in Saudi, national health improvement and women empowerment goals?
3	How do you approach teaching sustainable development issues, if they exist in the textbook? Do you make reference to the Vision 2030? Do you tend to avoid them, or do you integrate topics related to the Vision 2030? Why? Why not?
4	To what extent do you think that building capacity in the new generation to achieve Vision 2030 and its sustainability agenda through more and focused EFL instruction that support students in their different high- school pathways?
5	Are women represented adequately in the EFL textbook you teach?
6	Are women represented in the EFL textbook you teach (whether in traditional or non-traditional and anticipated roles in Vision 2030) at an equal rate to men?
7	What do you think is the reason for the degree of representation of women in the textbook you teach?
8	Do you think a traditional or non-traditional representation of women in the textbook you teach will affect your students' employment pathway later on?
9	Do you think the textbook you teach will prepare female students for their new roles in Vision 2030?

### 8.3 Description of the interview sample and process

Six female high-school teachers who use two different textbooks, namely *Flying High 6* and *Traveller 6*, in three cities — Jeddah, Makkah and Al Taif, were interviewed. All cities are located in the western part of KSA and are under the Makkah educational administration.

The primary inclusion criterion for the participants was for them to have had at least two semesters' experience teaching with either of these textbooks, which represent the final texts from the respective EFL series used in Saudi public high schools. A further eligibility criterion required was that individuals had obtained at least a bachelor's degree of four years duration in teaching EFL. The participants were recruited on a voluntary basis from three EFL WhatsApp groups of teachers in the three cities of Makkah, Jeddah and Al Taif, following a call of expressions of interest to participate in this study.

The mean age of the six female teachers with whom the semi-structured interviews were conducted was 38 years. In order to make each interviewee feel as comfortable as possible, the researcher sent each of the participants an email outlining the details of the study, the topic of EfSD and the Saudi Vision 2030. The participating teachers had been in the profession for longer than the required minimal time, and had different teaching backgrounds. They had a varied awareness of sustainable development and limited involvement with programs related to environmental education or sustainability projects at their respective schools. It was decided that recruiting six participants was enough because the intention was to conduct an in-depth analysis. This is in line with the dominant advice that a particular phenomenon involves an intensive look at a relatively small sample, rather than a surface look at a large sample (Patton, 2002; Sandelowski, 1995b).

Table 8.2 describes the interviewed sample. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, in the table and in the analysis to follow the teachers are referred to by pseudonyms. Three of the interviewed women were using *Flying High 6* and the other three *Traveller 6*. One of the teachers had a master's degree while the remaining five had a bachelor's degree, all in teaching English as a Foreign Language. All teachers had significant experience in EFL teaching, between a minimum of five years and up to 20 years. All of them have used the respective EFL textbooks for at least one academic year; three of them have used it for at least five years. The characteristics of the interview sample show that these are experienced EFL teachers who are in a good position to provide credible information related to the aims of this study.

Table 8.2. Participants in the teachers' interviews

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Adal</b>	<b>Ohoud</b>	<b>Hadeel</b>	<b>Areej</b>	<b>Elham</b>	<b>Amal</b>
<b>Textbook</b>	<i>Flying High 6</i>	<i>Flying High 6</i>	<i>Flying High 6</i>	<i>Traveller 6</i>	<i>Traveller 6</i>	<i>Traveller 6</i>
<b>City</b>	Al Taif	Al Taif	Al Taif	Makkah	Makkah	Jeddah
<b>Qualification</b>	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree
<b>Years teaching EFL</b>	7	10	11	5	17	24
<b>Years using this textbook</b>	3	4	6	1	3	4

The interviews were conducted via phone calls by the researcher. This was the most suitable way to collect the data due to difficulties associated with face-to-face interviews, such as limited transportation, restricted time availability due to other teaching duties, as the interviews were conducted during the school semester, and other constraints, such as childcare and other family responsibilities outside working hours.

The Voice Memo application was used to record the conversations. When requested for the interviews to be recorded, all but one of the participants agreed. The last participant was happy for notes to be taken and written down during the interview. All participants were advised that they could withdraw from the study if they decided to do so, but none took up this option. The semi-structured interviews consisted of the nine questions in Table 8.1 and were open in nature. All interviewees responded to all nine questions. When first contacted by the researcher, they were told that they were free to take the conversation in any direction they found suitable, and that they could say as much as they wished; there was no time limit for the interview. The interviews were all conducted in Arabic and lasted between 50 minutes and an hour.

After the interviews had all been audio-recorded, they were transcribed verbatim and then translated into English by the researcher, who is a native Arabic speaker. The researcher provided the interviewees who asked a copy of the interview transcript.

A separate Microsoft Word document was prepared for use for data management and analysis. In the translated versions of the interviews, repetitions, stuttering of words and redundant expressions were removed prior to the analysis phase.

The analysis of interviews was performed using Microsoft Word which allowed the qualitative data to be structured. According to Ose (2016), many researchers use Microsoft Office software, including Word and Excel, because it offers a system of coding and structuring interview data from basic functions in an easy and useful way. This approach was adopted, similar to previous investigations by Amozurrutia and Servos (2011), La Pelle (2004), Meyer and Avery (2009) and Ryan (2004), who all found Microsoft Office adequate.

The analysis process started by the researcher reading the transcripts several times. Coding the responses was done by assigning a code, term or phrase to information in the responses that was judged to be significant. All codes were clustered manually based on their recurrence, and these were categorised into themes in order to give meaning to the responses and to find associations between the data and the research questions. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue that

“... attaching codes to data and generating concepts have important functions in enabling us rigorously to review what our data are saying” (p. 27).

Particular consideration was given to the way the codes were developed. According to Forman and Damschroder (2007), codes used in interview qualitative analysis can be deductive, inductive or both. Deductive codes are identified before the data is collected, while inductive codes emerge during the process of analysis; however, it is common to use both deductive and inductive approaches, which is described as

“... using *priori* deductive codes as a way to ‘get into’ the data and an inductive approach to identify new codes and to refine or even eliminate *a priori* codes” (Forman & Damschroder, 2007, p. 47).

This was exactly the approach employed in the current study. The researcher classified the data deductively at the beginning according to the research questions, then clustered the emerged categories inductively into new themes. These new themes are discussed in section 8.5 below, according to the number of times they were repeated in interviews.

#### **8.4 Results from teachers’ interviews**

The results from the in-depth interviews with the six EFL teachers are presented following the sequence of questions in the questionnaire used during the conversations.



Many quotes are presented verbatim, and the title of the EFL textbook used is given in brackets following the teacher's name.

Prior to each interview, the participants were asked whether they were aware of the global sustainability agenda as represented by the SDGs. The majority commented that they were unaware of this and they were uninformed as to how these global transformational plans were associated the national Saudi Vision 2030. For example, Adal, who uses *Flying High 6*, said:

“First, I had to take a look at the goals of SD in its Arabic version, as this is the first time I have come across this topic in my teaching experience. Second, I certainly see that teaching EFL will definitely help to achieve these goals because it will help educate a generation that is able to research and enquire in another language and look for information that is difficult to locate in their mother tongue.”

The introduction of the link between the global sustainability agenda and Vision 2030 helped put the interview within the right context. This was followed by the specific questions in a free-flowing conversation.

***Q1: Do you think teaching English as a Foreign Language is important in achieving some of the Saudi sustainable development goals of Vision 2030? How is learning English related to Vision 2030?***

In response to Question 1, all six teachers, irrespective of the textbook they used, indicated that they feel English as a Foreign Language is important in achieving some of the Saudi sustainable development goals of Vision 2030. They saw learning English as directly related to Vision 2030 and indicated the need for an international language to facilitate connecting to others and communicating with the world. This was dominant in the following teachers' responses:

“It is very, very, very important to focus on teaching English as a language and that students should practise it as a language, not as a school subject, because Vision 2030's aim is to open the country to the world and for business. How are we going to communicate and reach for the others in the world if we don't have an international language?!” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

“English is used in industry and trade and contributes to development and the plans for 2030.” (Hadeel, *Flying High 6*)

This view was echoed by another informant, Areej (*Traveller 6*) who said:

“English instruction supports the Saudi Vision that aims for economic, cultural and social openness to the world outside.”

Most of the responses share the view that English facilitates communication between cultures. Adal was able to confirm this well-known fact in KSA about English by using words such as communication and connections to other cultures. The acquisition of a second language in general is believed by most teachers to contribute to

“... the process of connecting and communicating with other cultures which is important in bridging the gaps between people from different backgrounds, especially when these gaps and conflicts do not interfere with the limits of our Islamic sharia” (Adal, *Flying High 6*).

Only one response referred to English as the language of research:

“I believe that studying English facilitates learning science and enables easier and faster communication with the world.” (Hadeel, *Flying High 6*)

Overall, the participants demonstrated no awareness of the national sustainability goals in Vision 2030, including the transition to a knowledge-based economy, and the importance of English in facilitating this.

Most of the participants saw the contribution of English instruction, SD and Vision 2030 as being inherent in the country’s economic agenda of the current generation:

“This generation is the one who are going to be the core part and the enablers of Vision 2030.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

Most of those interviewees indicated that English is a qualification for the jobs needed for the Vision, as this generation are the enablers, and parents and caregivers are aware of this fact.

“This language is used in everything, in the devices, in the electronics, it is used as a means of communication. So, if a person wants to develop, I expect that he

or she must learn and master other languages than his or her first language and the most important language is English.” (Hadeel, *Flying High 6*)

“Most parents believe that it could add to the qualifications of their children and they are always enquiring about their children’s level in English. They are requiring more teaching of it. Parents always ask who is teaching English at school and whether the teachers are qualified in teaching it, more than about any other subject.” (Hadeel, *Flying High 6*)

“... very important ... English is a language of communication and knowledge. Our students are aware of this and so are their families” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

The teachers brought out the problem of the low level of achievement of students for this question. The current status of EFL teaching faces deficiency in language usage and low levels of language proficiency:

“The deficiency in learning the language is quite a big problem that we should stop and think about and work towards an end, where the student completes the secondary school and is able to communicate effectively. Our curriculum falls short in supporting this, and recently the company Tatweer started to develop English instruction but I don’t see their efforts being enough because in the textbook we are using, I feel there are topics that we are not supposed to be teaching and most students are not interested in such topics, but teachers find themselves forced to deal with this.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

“The condition of being able to master a second language is not for all people in any given country, but at least they need to have some sort of a minimal practice of a second language other than their own.” (Hadeel, *Flying High 6*)

“To the honest, the level is very, very discouraging. I am in an economically weak neighbourhood and they do not have the possibility to study and intensify their English outside school or at home and I feel sad for them. I am in high school and students are divided into two pathways: the scientific section and the literature section. The level of girls in the literature section is very weak in English, the scientific level is better in EFL and more ambitious to peruse their study at university.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

Elham further suggested that the EFL curriculum "... should be different for the two different pathways to ensure that students have something close to their abilities and interests."

***Q2: To what extent do you think that the current EFL curriculum, including the textbook you use, supports and contributes to the Saudi sustainable development plan in Vision 2030? For example, in the EFL textbook you use, have you encountered sustainable development topics related to the Vision 2030's goals, such as environmental conservation, water preservation, employment in Saudi Arabia, national health improvement and women empowerment goals?***

A range of responses was elicited from both groups of teachers using the two different textbooks. Most of the responses revealed an inadequate incorporation of global SD topics. Some participants indicated the vagueness in the topics related to sustainability in the existing curriculum. As Elham (*Traveller 6*) said:

"Directly, topics about sustainable development are not available. Maybe these topics exist, but they are not given the importance they should be given because sustainable development issues have unclear boundaries in the society."

One teacher felt that sustainability is presented only generally:

"I believe that there is a general line related to sustainability which has been integrated into the topics in the *Traveller* series, and this also goes for third grade secondary school, but I believe these topics were so broad and general." Areej (*Traveller 6*)

Environmental pollution in the Kingdom and the countries of the world was designated as the most important issue in relation to SD, and Vision 2030 as seen in most of the responses. Many referred to the fact that there are no topics related to the environment or environmental pollution in either textbook:

"There is one line in the Space passage that talks about environmental pollution in space. I would like to see topics about environmental pollution on the Earth. True, space is important, but there are more important points about environmental pollution on the Earth that we must address in light of the current situation of

environmental pollution in the Kingdom and the countries of the world.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

Incorporating topics related to the environment, the economy and local society was seen by Amal (*Traveller 6*) as the most important and urgent issue. She believed that it is the responsibility of the MoE to raise the cognizance of sustainability given the Vision 2030’s short timeframe and imperative transformations needed to be done.

Another topic that saw consensus from participants from both groups is the fact that a lot of the topics in their textbooks were unnecessary and not of particular interest to the students:

“There are no interesting and important topics about the environment, nor about climate change, nor about the recently incepted Vision, nor about health awareness. Most of the units are about unimportant things, such as space. These things don’t really matter to students.” Hadeel (*Flying High 6*)

“The first and second units about the students’ future study plans — this is great, it is really great, and the second unit speaks about exposure to different work experiences ... I remember one lesson is about your future dream job and the girls have come up with jobs that have recently become available for women in the country, which is very encouraging. Even the terms that we used in these two units are very useful in educating students and discussing with them about their time and work options, part-time and full-time. However, the third unit was completely different and talked about space pollution, and I feel that there might have been more important topics about Earth pollution, for example, that students will benefit from.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

The interviewees from both groups point to the limited topics focused on Saudi community issues. The teachers made it clear that both textbooks are short on local topics of interest to students. Hadeel (*Flying High 6*) said:

“All of these issues have no focus on Saudi local community issues and that is what I strongly emphasise, to the point that many times when I explain certain things in the textbook I mention to the students that these things do not exist in Saudi Arabia. The curriculum is American or British and the issues in it are appropriate for the countries of origin of these curricula.”

The comment below illustrates the disconnection of the existing textbooks to local Saudi sustainability issues:

“As for Saudi Arabia, I believe that the curriculum is completely devoid of issues related to development in the local communities of Saudi Arabia and the Vision, and we are supposed to make these associations. We have to combine the existing topics and link them to the Vision.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

Talking about this issue, Areej (*Traveller 6*) explains:

“There is this topic called ‘Saudi Vision 2030: a vision of wellbeing’ in unit 6. The whole unit introduces several topics regarding health and wellbeing as the main idea in each activity. This important topic specifically came at the end of the textbook and it was the last reading activity in a unit full of activities around wellbeing, where the teacher has the choice of either teach it or simply skip it, especially since it sits at the end of the semester and teachers at that time are quite busy trying to complete their curriculum and writing the final exams, and are busy doing the conversation and the listening test for their students. If it were introduced at the beginning of the unit, I would have taken more time to reflect with my students on this issue from all its angles. I believe this should be placed as the main topic in the unit, as this issue is quite big in Saudi Arabia, and the issue of high rates of obese students is considered to be one of the important issues the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health are trying to raise the awareness of students at school about its dangerous effects on their lives, and it is one of the objectives of the Vision 2030.”

It was suggested by participants from both groups that exposure to Western culture is dominant in the texts more than the local culture, and they need to adapt:

“I often mention to the students that there are things that are not present on the ground in Saudi universities, and they are only present at universities in America and Britain.” (Hadeel, *Flying High 6*)

“The book is a foreign source, but I was able to activate it to serve the Saudi reality.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

Most responses from the EFL teachers created the impression that they are disconnected from Vision 2030. It depends on the extent to which teachers are personally interested in such topics for them to be able to make these connections:

“The disconnection I see between EFL teachers and the Vision 2030 and its associated SD values makes me feel oblivious to these issues, and I had to develop my information. It was all personal effort, because I have become interested in such issues.” (Adal, *Flying High 6*)

“We are supposed to make these associations, we have to combine the existing topics and link them to the Vision. As for me, I have an awareness of the goals of the Vision, and I have a personal interest in the subject, so I find it easier for me when I relate the topic that I teach to the goals of the Vision.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

Some EFL teachers referred to the understanding of the SD in general, and Vision 2030 in particular. Areej (*Traveller 6*) pointed out that she had not had an adequate understanding of sustainability before this study:

“With regard to other topics related to sustainability as you described in your question, I believe they do exist in the textbook and in the series in general, but I never looked at these topics as they are related to sustainability, maybe because I don’t have a complete understanding of sustainability itself.”

***Q3: How do you approach teaching sustainable development issues with the present textbook? Do you make references to Vision 2030? Do you tend to avoid or do you integrate topics related to Vision 2030? Why?***

Most of the responses from both groups reported that teachers are currently making a great effort to establish connections between the textbooks and students’ real lives and to Vision 2030:

“I found some topics, like I mentioned earlier, that are not directly linked to SD or to the Vision. For example, the student’s future academic specialisation unit and the choice of the future profession. I found another topic about shopping, and it could have been presented in a better way to be about the Vision and sustainability in it by teaching economics, extravagance and savings. As for the

environment, the approach is very limited. I did not find anything that talks about environmental pollution or climate change, unfortunately.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

Hadeel (*Flying High 6*) also argued that teachers need to intervene and make connections to students’ lives and experiences, and by doing so, SD would be an additional benefit to the already strong academic textbook:

“I believe that the current long compulsory curriculum and the limited EFL classes can benefit from an additional revision to the already strong academic textbook by adding more interesting SD topics that will make EFL education even stronger. There is a need for a guidance form the MoE regarding SD issues and how to approach teaching these topics.”

According to Elham (*Traveller 6*):

“The last lesson in every single unit is specific to the Kingdom and its culture, but it is not sufficient to convey important issues regarding sustainability in the KSA or in the world. I believe that teachers who are interested in sustainability issues are usually able to approach this lesson by twisting it to another direction towards sustainability issues as I usually do.”

She also adds:

“I personally like to associate these lessons with something realistic that has to do with our religious, culture, society and environment so that I find connections.”

The teachers were of the opinion that there is a need for a guidance form the MoE regarding SD issues and how to approach teaching these topics including the national Vision 2030:

“If topics related to the SDG or the Vision 2030 are found in the textbook in an authoritative manner then teachers will be much confident in the material they are offering.” (Adal, *Flying High 6*)

“I suggest that the MoE is perhaps the responsible authority that should enhance and activate the current curriculum and bring it into line with the Vision. The Ministry should do that, because teachers need a precise plan on this, they like



to have a specific and codified agenda to integrate SD and the Vision into their teaching practices. I am asking for a specific plan for this integration because even if I, or another teacher did this as a personal effort, they will always question themselves and feel that their work is not complete because it is a personal effort and I could possibly be wrong.” (Hadeel, *Flying High 6*)

Another issue is that there are not enough topics about Saudi Arabia at present and should be enhanced with the Vision’s objectives, taking into consideration the students’ backgrounds and interests. According to Hadeel (*Flying High 6*):

“The cultural page located at the last page in each unit presents topics about Saudi Arabia, and I think that if this page was activated by topics close to the students and their interests, realities, backgrounds, it would make a difference and the student will interact with them more.”

From both groups, the informants reported that SD would be an additional benefit to the already strong academic textbook. Hadeel (*Flying High 6*) believed:

“It would definitely serve the teachers and students and would be an additional gift added to the curriculum.”

She further indicated that EFL instruction should contribute to students’ understanding of SD and the objectives of the Saudi national Vision:

“I see that EFL classes should enhance the discussion by including such topics, and teachers should open the door for dialogue on these subjects. It is one of the aims of EFL as a subject, which supports critical teaching and higher thinking skills, because the student will think, pay attention and complete, then think, create, complete and give me their opinions. This is important. These topics can be worked on by projects, suggestions and solutions, if there is a specific problem that the student is looking at, whether it is in the school, neighbourhood or city, and they link it to the ground. Why don’t we have our projects in a meaningful topic so the student will benefit from it and our country in general?”

Areej (*Traveller 6*) said: “I believe that integrating themes related to sustainable development across the existing curriculum would enhance our instruction and would make the students more connected to the material and, in the way you describe it, it

would allow for more interaction between the book and the students and teachers in a better way.”

In answering this question, there is also a lack of consensus about the idea of adding additional topics without giving more time for EfSD. Some teachers thought that this would be a burden on the already heavy curriculums. Areej (*Traveller 6*) argued that this could work if these topics were selected carefully and more time were given to EFL classes:

“I believe that integrating themes related to sustainable development across the existing curriculum would enhance our instruction if topics are clever enough to discuss issues related to sustainability in the KSA and the Vision 2030 and the topics related to its agenda and how the Vision will solve some of the problems the country is facing; for example, the high obesity level and the high levels of consumption.”

Although Ohoud (*Flying High 6*) also supports inclusion of SD, she is concerned about how this would be accepted by the teachers:

“The Vision and its related SD issues should be part of the basic curriculum, but my imagination says this might add another burden to some teachers who are not interested in such topics. Some would say that this is difficult because we must train students, and it would take more time for the course.”

***Q4: To what extent can EFL help building capacity in the new generation to achieve Vision 2030 and its sustainability agenda through more and focused instruction that supports students in their different high-school pathways?***

The responses elicited from both groups of teachers indicated different viewpoints. *Flying High* teachers believed that different curriculums for the two pathways would not be beneficial to build the capacity in learning English:

“No, it never helps in acquiring a language. The teaching method is traditional, even if we introduce new strategies and modern ideas into teaching that the Ministry demands from us, because basically the system in teaching the language is not motivating. It is also a system of evaluation and tests.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

“I don’t think different curriculums for different pathways would change anything in the problem of low level of [language] acquisition.” (Hadeel, *Flying High 6*)

Adal (*Flying High 6*) took the same view, but she suggested the exchange of existing impractical themes with topics related directly to the different pathways that add up not only to students’ knowledge of their specialities, but also to their acquisition of these new skills.

The other group took the opposite direction and all participants believed that there should be more focus in the foreign language classes on what students are learning in their pathways. This should enhance their cumulative learning attainment towards their current high-school and future university pathways.

“Yes, definitely, I believe there should be two different curriculums for the different high school pathways.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

“I think English language is supposed to be taught in a way where different teaching is geared to suit literary disciplines and the scientific disciplines. Subjects should be oriented to students’ preferences for disciplines in the university. This is because apparently girls who take the scientific pathways, like the medical specialties and nursing, find scientific terms difficult because they are not familiar with them.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

Teachers from both groups argued that only a small number of topics are related to science, medical or technical concepts, and that results in students’ limited familiarity with English terms related to these important specialities, which has an impact on their preparatory and first year in Science majors at university:

“I believe that the English subject in the current practice, using the current method of teaching the language, is not preparing students for a smooth transition to their university stage and doesn’t qualify them to completely understand the university courses. The evidence is that the time male and female students spend in the preparatory year at university to qualify them to enter the desired major and understand its terms, is not successful. The student during the preparatory year will study high levels of language and many students cannot pass this stage and may leave the university for this reason, or they may transfer to

departments other than the specialisation they prefer because of the linguistic complexity.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

“We practically have this curriculum that is in very nice shape and has very good activities, but for some reason I feel that students in my class lack the interest in the topics it presents and [the curriculum] lacks topics related to their preferred majors in the future.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

“I believe in the last year of high school we should focus our teaching to what students will need in the next few years ahead ... One of my students said that there were no medical terms she studied in high school, to serve her in her studies in medicine, so she had to find books and learn from them, but she said that she would have liked to have read a few in secondary school. And there would not need for a preparatory year, such as most of the Kingdom’s students need now.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

Both groups agreed on the stress associated with assessing teachers according to whether they have completed the EFL curriculum, which places no importance on reflecting the learning aspect of students:

“Now the curriculum is defined by eight heavy units that come at the end of the semester and the teacher must sign to complete it. So, the goal becomes, for the teacher, the quantity, and not how important it is to understand the students, in the accomplished marathon of the curriculum ... because the supervisor at the end of the year comes and expects you to have completed the curriculum, examines the books of the female students and makes sure that you have completed the curriculum.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

“Many teachers complain about the lack of time and the many activities in the students’ workbooks.” (Hadeel, *Flying High 6*)

“The textbook activities are very huge for the time it is given in the school day. [The textbook] contains eight units; the last four are optional. The compulsory units are good, to some extent, to enhance the language learning, but the time available limits the potential to be taught in a proper way. Four hours a week are not enough to teach the designated content. I always tend to teach the activities within that tight time, and most days I don’t have time to cover all the remaining

activities in each lesson — such as the listening and writing and speaking. Most of the time teachers focus on reading, grammar, and vocabulary; if there is time, they will do one more activity. For this reason, I believe the book is good to some extent, particularly if more time is allocated for actually teaching its content.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

Elham (*Traveller 6*) refers to the abundance of grammatical activities at the expense of students’ preferences. This view is supported by most of the teachers using these textbooks, who explain that the emphasis on grammar makes the material difficult and less attractive:

“It is true that the grammar sections in the textbook are very intensive and full of details, which might be the only drawback I have for this series, especially for the low-level of girls. The textbook as a whole suits the age of high-school students, but the amount of grammar is not appropriate for the learning styles of the new generation. I feel that the girls want the least amount of time spent on grammar as they are not interested and would rather have a short and easier content for any grammar rule.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

“When I explain the grammar to my class, I feel that they are disconnected to me due to the difficulty in these lessons and I find *Flying High* as a textbook, and the grammar sections in it, much harder and more intensive than the textbooks I used to study at university. For example, the conditional ‘if’ as a grammar rule in this textbook is more detailed and heavier than what I used to have at university. As if deliberately, the book is straining the student with an enormous amount of rules and structures.” (Hadeel, *Flying High 6*)

“Most of the time, teachers focus on grammar and then it comes to reading and vocabulary, if the time permits they will do one more activity. For that reason, I believe the book is good to some extent, if more time is allocated to teaching its content and focus less on its grammatical content.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

“In each unit there are nine lessons, the most important of which is the very high proportion of grammar within each unit, and the four units are very concentrated. So, the first drawback for this book is that it focuses on grammar lessons that do not serve the students. The second thing is the vocabulary used; I believe it’s

heavy, disconnected to what they might need in the future university pathways, and might not attend to their needs and interests. Sometimes I feel the words are far away or maybe not important.” (Hadeel, *Flying High 6*)

Distinctly different responses emerged from the two groups of teachers when answering this question and each response is supported with some interview quotes as follows:

1. *The tendency to limit sustainability-related topics to subjects other than English:*

“I previously attended a meeting in the educational supervision department on the environment, that encouraged teachers to activate the interest in these topics during the activity classes. It is strange that the speaker limited the interest in the environment to Science teachers, which made some teachers argue whether these topics are limited to specific disciplines. For me, I believe that everyone shares the responsibility to raise the awareness of the importance of a comprehensive cognizance in the environment by the entire school staff, and not confining it to specific disciplines, because we are all human and the globe is our responsibility and we must strive to preserve it and educate ourselves and our students towards it.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

2. *The problem about EFL teacher-training programs in the country and negative experiences of teachers with unqualified instructor:*

“First of all, we have this problematic issue in teacher-training programs in the country. Every so often the person who is supposed to train you in the new teaching strategies and practices is not qualified to do this task. You might end up with useless one or two weeks with a bad trainer. Most of the trainers under this category will give you a theoretical talk regarding any new strategies, and would not give you the application for a lesson ... I have attended so many of this kind, with supervisors who give you lectures about theories. And to be honest, I didn't use any of their theories in my class because I need to see how these theories could be applied in the classroom, which is something supervisors never provide.” (Hadeel, *Flying High 6*)

3. *The perception that EfSD will improve the instruction of foreign languages:*

Areej (*Traveller 6*) was very vocal about this issue. She provided an extensive account of how EfSD is an important issue that has to be taken seriously, and that it should be connected in everything we do and every subject we teach, even foreign languages. She also explained that the textbook was developed before Vision 2030, which to a certain degree justifies its inadequacy.

“I believe EfSD will improve the instruction of foreign languages and it will broaden students’ thoughts and interests. Students also will take the lead in solving some of their school’s issues and in raising the awareness of other students in the school on issues related to consuming water, electricity, junk food, unhealthy snacks. When connecting the foreign language instruction to the Saudi Vision 2030, I believe students will realise that EfSD is a serious issue that has to be taken seriously as a philosophy in the new generation of the young nation of Saudi Arabia, and that EfSD should be connected in everything we do and every subject we teach, even foreign languages.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

“The existing curriculum and its series were developed before the Saudi Vision and that may be an excuse as why it doesn’t include any topics that support the Vision and its objectives because of the different aims before and after the Vision.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

4. *The role of the MoE is to integrate EfSD in English learning and teaching*

“For me, I believe that the Vision is a collective program that should be integrated in our teaching and in every curriculum, where the Ministry of Education should go further in the inclusion of its objective from only a logo that is copied in its textbooks and formal papers to a whole and meaningful integration of all its aspects.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

5. *Adapting English teaching strategies to include EfSD and Vision 2030*

Although there is recognition of the role the MoE should play in updating the current approach to the teaching of English, using active learning-teaching strategies might help to solve the current deficiencies of the textbooks until revisions are made that take into consideration the new Saudi Vision. For example, an important strategy currently

used in EFL classes is in line with Vision 2030 where self-learning is one of its objectives:

“I also noticed that activating the cooperative learning strategy is beneficial and has changed my role as a teacher. It gives more power to the students in how they learn the language. Teachers now are seen as facilitators and only would give guidelines. This method will come in handy and will serve the girls when they enter the university. In high school, girls are trained to rely on self-learning, as they are encouraged to search for information, go to YouTube, understand and help themselves to be more active learners, which would allow for a smoother transition to university. The new paradigm of introducing more active learning and educational strategies serves us not only in the education process but also it is in line with the Vision 2030 where self-learning is one of the objectives of the Vision. However, these strategies must be chosen with care to find the correct strategies that serve the lesson and the students. On the other hand, there are some teachers who would fill their classroom with five or six strategies during the 45-minute class, which might divert the students’ attention.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

***Q5: Are women represented adequately in the EFL textbook you use?***

When the participants were asked about their perceptions of whether a sufficient representation of women was achieved in their EFL textbook, there was consensus from all of them. They all agreed that women, whether Saudi or non-Saudi, are not represented at all:

“Women are not represented at all, whether Saudi or non-Saudi.” (Adal, *Flying High 6*)

“I don’t feel they are represented in the textbook.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

“No, not at all. I barely see any representation of women, either in general or from KSA.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

“No, frankly, women are not there in any topic.” (Hadeel, *Flying High 6*)

Nevertheless, some acknowledged that the reality for women has become much better in Saudi Arabia and this is not reflected in the textbooks:



“Although the situation is much better now in reality, I don’t feel they are represented in the textbook. Didn’t you notice a post that was received today in our teacher WhatsApp group? The sarcastic post was referring to the era where Saudi women used to wish that they were born boys and how this has changed after the inception of the Vision 2030 and the current changes in the Saudi policy regarding women’s rights and privileges. The post refers to the current policy amendments that give women most of their current rights whether in driving or in the workforce and how the society has changed that boys in this era wished they were born girls. This week, students in my class had a discussion about their plans for their jobs of the future. One of them told me that she will be a pilot and the other said that she will be an engineer. These professions were impossible for women in the KSA in the past.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

“While there is a different shift in reality towards empowering women that all the society has recently witnessed, the textbook did not reflect the reality in the country with regard to women’s representation in the work life or in general.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

Ohoud (*Flying High 6*) added that recently key changes have been made to university majors. They have diversified and the girls have a high awareness of that now.

Although the question did not ask explicitly about possible impacts from the limited representation of women in the EFL textbooks, respondents from both groups gave some possible implications, such as on the way female students perceive themselves, their rights and their prospects for future job choices.

“The recent women empowerment movement in the country gives girls the entitlement to negotiate and discuss their representation in textbooks.” (Adal, *Flying High 6*)

The low representation of women is perceived by Ohoud (*Flying High 6*) to have affected female students’ choices of role models, which include no women:

“What is funny is that I only found in the book a topic about prominent personalities in society and influential people, and they are all men. Since this text is taught at all-girls schools, then there should be topics referring to influential Saudi women. When I asked the students last week about the role

model in their lives, they all answered that their heroes are men. Some said their father, their grandfather, Ahmed Al Shugairi [a young Saudi influencer]. None of them said ‘my Mum’ or any other unique female from the past or the present, which made me stop and think.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

Respondents using both textbooks believed that the topics not only neglected women’s physical representation in photos, their representations in examples in the four language-skills activities and also topics in the two texts are far away from female interests and preferences. Areej (*Traveller 6*) said:

“I even noticed that female names in grammatical examples and expressions are rarely used and I don’t know why that is.”

According to Elham:

“In the Body and Mind module, the topics included sports, namely aggressive sports, in an extensive way and these sports are not available to Saudi women. And it is to some extent still socially unacceptable, if female students would like to participate in such sports. Especially, all athletes in the photos are men, and not a single woman has been mentioned in these sports, as the issue here constitutes the formation of perceptions of what is possible and what women cannot practise in the field of sports. As long as a Muslim woman practises sports within the framework of the teachings of Islam, then why should the woman not be seen as playing sport, and why are all represented while practising in the curriculum as male students?” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

This section also saw some participants take the initiative and responsibility to integrate women in the issues covered in the text:

“Some teachers are aware of lower representation of women in the textbook and they would try to include female examples in their class activities.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

“I believed that most of our female students are programmed to choose a character of a man as their role model, as talking about male role models and showing their good deeds and heroics are socially accepted, easier and less problematic than choosing a woman as a role model. When I asked the students

why there are no female role models among their answers, they said that they are used to reading topics about male heroes, which are always available in every school textbook. They also said that if they are to talk about women, they are often in the generation of the Prophet and his companions, and most of them no longer remember their names and their heroics.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

***Q6: Are women represented in the EFL textbook you use (whether in traditional or non-traditional and anticipated roles in Vision 2030) at an equal rate to men?***

All respondents observed that nothing at all related to women, and that the textbook was designed entirely for boys. Some of the responses are:

“Nothing at all relates to women and the textbook is designed totally for boys.” (Adal, *Flying High 6*)

“Not equal at all.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

“Not at all equal with regard to their representation in traditional or non-traditional roles.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

“Women are totally not mentioned in the book. You are speaking now and I remember completely that there is not one photo or drawing of a woman in the book in any role.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

There were some suggestions from the participants that changes and revisions have to be made in both textbooks. Ohoud (*Flying High 6*) believed that the MoE has to “make simple changes to the same edition to match the correct status of women in society”. Elham (*Traveller 6*) said, “although I repeat and repeat that the book is wonderful, it should be made to serve the Saudi society and Saudi girls”.

Areej (*Traveller 6*) argued that this neglect affects how female students look at themselves as women. As the interviewee put it:

“I feel that this abandonment will affect how students look at themselves as women and will reinforce the false understanding of women’s roles in society” (Areej, *Traveller 6*).

The comment below illustrates the bitterness in female students' reaction to the unequal representation:

“I was surprised by the resentment in girls' views and how most of the class, if not all, believe they are being neglected. When I asked whether they see that their representation would confront their religious beliefs and contradict society's norms, they said: ‘This book is taught by female teachers in all-female schools to female students and it is neglecting us as a gender and as influencer in society’. Most of them have shown me their textbooks with the boys' characters in the photos and how they have changed their faces to look like females and they draw accessories around their necks and arms to assimilate women in society. I felt the bitterness in their voices and how they look uncertain with regard to why this is happening in the first place.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*).

Another response pointed to the important issue of “how will female students ever complete her studies whether at home or abroad, with this view about themselves in these textbooks?” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

In all cases, the informants reported that representation of only men in significant roles in the workforce is the only available scenario. Another response to this question was:

“The book is full of pictures and photos that represent men in significant roles in the workforce and in society, but not women. Apparently, this might be something required by the MoE and the book publisher has to conform with it.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

Another interviewee alluded to the notion of the great academic EFL textbooks but limited awareness of cultural privacy of the country where English is taught:

“And again as I told you in the first question, I am changing a little the topic that was written in a country completely different from us and the book has no awareness of the details of the life of a Saudi woman.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

Talking about this issue, an interviewee said:

“I would like to see women in the workforce keeping their veil on in all cases, if they choose to, and I would like to see women in the curriculum within the

Islamic framework ... this will connect female students more to the content they are studying.” (Adal, *Flying High 6*)

Commenting on cultural privacy, one of the interviewees said:

“The pictures are very few and often the woman is either giving her back to the screen or she would be wearing a full Abaya at home settings. Unlike what happens in reality, for example a Muslim woman when she is at home, is not wearing Abaya [the full black gown that Muslim women wear in the presence of a male outside her family]. However, the book shows her wearing the Abaya even while she is sitting eating lunch or watching TV with her family.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

Irrespective of what is the reason behind the limited presence of women in EFL textbooks, the students

“... actually would like to see women represented no matter what the reason for this neglect is and I believe this is their right.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

***Q7: What do you think is the reason for the degree of representation of women in the EFL textbook you use?***

Most respondents indicated that religious and social reasons are always the motive behind the exclusion of women from the EFL textbooks:

“I think the reason is that this might be the Ministry’s recommendations, to make sure that the woman’s appearance is very small and in line with the recommendations, the woman must be fully modest. Also, because the book is a single version that is circulated in schools for boys and for girls, this will reduce costs. Also, the Ministry does not want to collide with society, and fears the parents’ reaction if women appeared intensively in the book.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

“As I said before, I believe that the reason is due to misunderstanding of women’s roles by some religious viewpoints that tend to believe that women should only work in traditional roles that have always been seen to suit women’s

nature and ability, also this may be due to the fear by the MoE to break the social norms that have been spread for generations.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

“I suspect social reasons to be 99%, religious 1%, because we understood religion in the wrong way for women.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

One participant (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*) suggested that economic considerations might also play some role and that the MoE would not have two different versions — one for boys and another for girls. In one case, Adal (*Flying High 6*) thought that:

“None of the reasons this study mentioned and it is basically related to the topics in the textbook. They are neutral and no need for women precisely to be present.”

It is interesting to note that a “neutral” topic cannot be equally represented by women.

The rooted contradictions between what is religious and what is tribal was also mentioned by Ohoud (*Flying High 6*) when she argued that

“... it is important to have women represented in the book, because I know that a woman is able to do anything in society, and that will not contradict Islamic teaching or their tribal customs and traditions.”

A comparison with driving was also made:

“This reminded me of the issue with the lifting of the former ban on Saudi women driving in the country that had a lot of opponents because they feared that women would go astray of the Islamic teachings and they would have to reveal their faces as a result of driving. After the government gave the permission for women to drive, we find streets full of veiled women who drive their cars and would never take their veils off.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

Several teachers alluded to the current situation of women’s empowerment in the country and the need for this to find its way into the curriculum in the classrooms accordingly. Some of the responses are:

“We must establish the role of women and strive for their existence, and not underestimate the importance of their current emergence as leaders or as workers in the workforce, because that will create a good impact on our students who will

see themselves as being able to do anything and break the stereotypical roles that society has had for generations regarding women's abilities and rights." (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

"As for the roles, I believe at this stage of women's empowerment in the Vision 2030, I am excited to see women in non- traditional roles in the society." (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

"I don't think it is economic, because we have the current trend of the government to direct the state institutions to enhance women's presence as partners to men in the field of work, in all shades of Muslim women — veiled and non-veiled Saudi women." (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

This current movement of women's empowerment in the country creates the urgent need for a thorough revision of the current curriculums. The response below illustrates this:

"I am sure that the MoE will respond soon according to the new social roles and norms and to the more tolerant religious understanding of women's roles. This is going to happen, but I believe the MoE is responding in a slow manner. So I believe a thorough revision of the curriculum is needed to ensure that women are well and equally represented, not only in the workforce but also in all kinds of textbooks, in a sufficient and quality manner." (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

Some responses went further to indicate that, in the past, the

"... fear of the presence of women in the curriculum for unrealistic reasons made the MoE exclude women in the curricula as if they were not present, even in curricula taught and studied only by women" (Elham, *Traveller 6*).

The case of no female role models in the curriculum and in girls' choices in their writings was also relevant in the respondents' views. They refer to this issue in several ways. Adal (*Flying High 6*) gave a hint about the role model topic when she pointed out that

"... a woman example instead of a man as a role model would be better to capture students' attention and to connect them to the content of the book as girls will be influenced by a female heroine's experiences."

Elham (*Traveller 6*) was able to extensively relate to this issue:

“You drew my attention to a question I raised in the classroom. I was asking my students for an important person in your life, or an ‘idol’, as I remember. None of them ever mentioned a female role model, not even their mother. Some of the role models mentioned are their fathers, well-known historians and international heroes, some social media influencers and some media influencers such as Ahmed Al Shugairi.”

She referred again to the teachers’ current practices in integrating SD values into the existing curriculum when she said:

“But through the questions of your research, you made me pay attention next year when I teach the same version of the textbook. I will give them [the students] a reminder at the beginning of the class that if there is a significant female heroine, to talk about her, then this is excellent. What I think is that we have the community’s approval for the woman to come second. Women may be more successful than their fathers, brothers, or husbands, but the first rank always would be given to men in the family. This is not natural and unacceptable that a woman is not represented as a successful professional in the textbook and that she has an impact on society.” Elham (*Traveller 6*)

She asserted not only the need for showcasing women to the community in all shades but also the necessity for an early exposure for children to equal representation of both genders and its impact on the young generation’s perceptions about gender roles:

“If the woman can be a successful doctor, teacher and engineer and could work efficiently in any given job, as well as men, it is supposed to have this half of the society represented in the curriculum; she could be presented veiled or un-veiled in the curriculum. And if a veiled or un-veiled woman appeared in the children's books as well, driving the car or practising her work, it would have paved the way for boys at an early age that they must respect women and that they should view women as a partner in the field of work or in the use of public utilities like the man and find acceptance from the current generation to form a promising future that is fully accepting and tolerating the presence of women in the curriculum or on the ground in the field of work or in public spheres.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)



***Q8: Do you think a traditional or non-traditional representation of women in the textbook you use will affect your students' employment pathway later on?***

The majority of the respondents reported that it will affect the students' future and how they see themselves:

“Yes, for sure. What we teach and don't teach at school for the students emphasises their role in society, especially if this role is devoted by untrue stereotypes about women and their role, or if it is emphasised by a certain radical and false understanding of religious teachings. If the student sees her ineffectiveness in society through the curriculum, in what way will she see herself?” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

The limited representation maintains the stereotypical view of women in society:

“Yes, I believe when you deny girls' rights to be represented in the textbook they study, and deliberately define what women can and can't do in the society, you are negating their rights to be a normal human being who is happy with who they really are and proud of their abilities and what they can do and achieve.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

“Yes, it's absence, or representation only in traditional roles, that perpetuates the stereotypical view of women in the society.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

Two interviewees argued that:

“The limited representation of women in the book will not affect students' future job aspirations, because if you are believing that you would like to do this or that in the future, then you will definitely reach your goals.” (Adal, *Flying High 6*).

“ The limited representation of females in the textbook didn't affect women chances of employment at all because like me and you we all have a respected jobs in the country because we were qualified and we worked hard to deserve these jobs” ( *Amal, Traveller 6*)

Most of those interviewed indicated that the stereotypical view of women is taken for granted in the curriculum, as some of the responses indicate:

“The stereotypical view of women is conserved in the curriculum, but we hope that there will be more alterations at a policy level to stop practices that limit women’s ambition and effectiveness by some male guardians.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

“Many girls will comply with this imposed unhealthy and unfair way of thinking and will choose to not contradict this view in society. By this way we are losing a huge amount of valuable minds and they will choose to have a minor job that is way off what they can really do.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

“The girl who wishes to specialise in a specific field that is not represented in the curricula or only represented by men, she will believe within her that this field is not suitable for her. This representation is sending messages to the whole community and emphasises even more that women’s roles are to be only seen within these specific frameworks.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

In most cases, the informants reported that girls now are inspired by the new Vision 2030 and they already feel empowered. Some felt that:

“The tendency that I see is that the new generation is open and knows that the government has opened new job opportunities and attempts to empower women in particular with the support of parents. Girls now, more than any time in the history of the KSA, know that the future is promising for them and that the opportunities are more and more equal to men and many of them aspire to enter specialisations that were not previously available, to challenge themselves and prove themselves with their confidence that they are able to achieve what their male counterparts achieve in the labour market.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*).

Others considered that Vision 2030 is empowering Saudi women and that the MoE should work to fulfil this through a revision of the current curriculums:

“I believe, as well as most of my students, that the Vision 2030 has discerned that and women’s empowerment is going in a very unprecedented, steady and powerful way ... I believe that the MoE is supposed to revise the current curriculums in relation to women’s equal representation and quality of the representation to ensure a generation of women who are perceived by the Vision

as equal counterparts for men in society and who are at the core of the recent development projects.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

Elham (*Traveller 6*) was able to point to the notion of confronting the stereotype and societal restrictions on what female students can do in the labour market through textbooks and still be within the Islamic framework:

“We will not change our society except through education. Female students spend a long time at school, when they take mathematics, religion, Arabic and English. They should be represented as being able to innovate in any field required by the labour market through curricula that support the role of women and represent the Muslim woman in a suitable and appropriate manner and integrate society members from the other sex — fathers, brothers and men in society, with the components of the curriculum.” Elham (*Traveller 6*)

The participants in general demonstrated the potentially negative impact of the limited representation of females in the workforce in school textbooks on the individual woman and on the whole community:

“The consequences of this is that the government will have to replace this gap and the unused minds of females with qualified foreigners to ensure the requirements of the workforce. This way will cost the country more and is in contrast with any plans for development for any given country.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

“If the student sees her ineffectiveness in society through the curriculum, in what way will she see herself? I think the topic is deeper and rooted, and we should start opening the most important and deepest chapters of the role of women in the KSA during the last 30 years.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

In congruence with this, it was reported that presenting female characters in EFL textbooks is seen to have a positive impact on individuals and the whole community:

“This will confront the stereotype and societal restrictions on what female students can do in the labour market. This way we can ensure female students a fair, parallel and high-quality education. Curricula must be supported by successful female characters. Women in the textbook are in isolation from the

labour market. They are defined only by their traditional roles that restrict and devote them to more societal restrictions. Equal representation for women in the textbook will ensure that members of the society will be more tolerant to the idea of more female doctors, engineers, or astronauts — females who will help create more acceptance of a variety of fields of work for a Saudi woman. If this thing is present in every home and every school textbook, I believe this will greatly support the Vision 2030. (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

***Q9: Do you think the textbook you use will prepare female students for their new roles in Vision 2030?***

Most of those interviewed indicated that the current textbook is not preparing students for their new roles in Vision 2030. Some of the responses are:

“I don’t think so. The text book is not helping to expose students to new fields and experiences in the Saudi workforce.” (Adal, *Flying High 6*)

“The textbook needs some adjustments that make it a vital curriculum that interacts with the Vision and opens horizons for students for the next stage.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

“To be honest, I believe that the academic part of the textbook is strong but the only two drawbacks of this text that I can think of, are that it is bursting with grammar structures and roles for girls which terrifies our students to see the English subject as only a book that is jam-packed with grammar. They believe it reduces their chances of getting good marks and shrinks their likelihood of getting into their favourite major at uni. The second is that it deliberately ignores the presence of women in society, which is not at all still acceptable.” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

“The book, to put it bluntly, does not represent women at all, ignoring their experiences, and I do not know the reasons. It was acceptable for me and my generation that women were not represented in the curricula, but this is not acceptable for the generation of my daughter and students, as I think it is necessary for the curriculum to keep pace with the Vision. The MoE should devote curricula to treasure women’s presence and experiences and provide good female role models.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

In all cases, the informants insisted upon the MoE's role in revising the current curricula to empower women.

“The textbook needs some adjustments that make it a vital curriculum that interacts with the Saudi Vision 2030 and opens horizons for students for the next stage.” (Ohoud, *Flying High 6*)

“This text will be quite a valuable resource if a revision takes into consideration these two deficits [too much grammar and women being under-represented].” (Areej, *Traveller 6*)

“If the aims of the textbook were directly to the generation with the goals that we want in the Vision 2030, it would be better and more efficient. Not all teachers have awareness about the issues of sustainability goals, including women's empowerment. Some teachers will give the lesson required of them without connecting the content of the lesson to students' real life or the required goals of Vision 2030. In order for teachers and EFL classes to contribute to Vision 2030, the goals of the Vision should be clearly and explicitly stated in the textbooks by the MoE in order for teachers to implement them.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

The role of MoE in shifting the thinking paradigm to empower women was discussed extensively by Elham (*Traveller 6*) in her response:

“The Ministry of Education has a rôle to play through the curricula in the next stage, and an attempt to change the view of society is required. This is the first obstacle to all the things we lack in society as women. It is because of the view held in the society that is supported by false social and religious understanding.” Elham (*Traveller 6*)

While most teachers reported that there is a need for women's inclusion in the content of textbooks of the MoE, this response also emphasises their roles:

“Women should be represented in textbooks also in non-traditional and significant roles in the society, in the business sector, and we have to be proud to have successful Saudi women and embrace their accomplishments. Female students colour the pictures of boys in the textbook, they put makeup, hair, and

accessories by drawing on the picture, and this is almost a phenomenon that is widespread in the English language textbooks from even older generations. This indicates that there is a need for the student to see herself represented in the book.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*)

Elham (*Traveller 6*) referred to the notion that isolating women and their significant experiences from textbooks is not acceptable any more. She also asserted the need to empower women:

“The MoE should devote curricula to treasure women’s presence and experiences and provide good female role models. As this would increase female students’ self-esteem and the male students’ appreciation for their female counterparts, and raise women’s empowerment rate to its highest levels. There is a program called *From Below Zero* on TV, which provides wonderful accounts of successful Saudi women. The program became famous on television and has had a great feedback from the whole society, and the Ministry of Education still ignores the inclusion in our curricula of successful Saudi women.” (Elham, *Traveller 6*).

## **8.5 Discussion**

The teachers’ responses to the interview questions generated seven themes. They are organised in this section according to the number of times they were repeated.

### **8.5.1 *Limited EfSD awareness among teachers***

A concept that occurs repeatedly in the responses by the participants was the lack of teachers’ awareness about national and international issues related to sustainability. This is not dissimilar to experiences in other countries, although on an international level, SD is broadly believed to be an essential part of formal education, and a vital concept in school textbooks and curricula.

Researchers have argued that subject-teachers’ competence to teach sustainability issues is not very high, and they feel unsure about sustainability education. Borg et al. (2014) examined the impact of teaching practices and the obstacles teachers experienced in implementing EfSD in the Swedish school system. A questionnaire containing questions requiring Likert-scale and multiple-choice responses was answered by a total of 3229 teachers from various disciplines, such as Science, Social Science, Languages, vocational and esthetical–practical teachers. The results from this

study show that teachers were influenced by their own subject traditions (Borg et al., 2014). For example, Science teachers confirmed to be influenced by the fact-based tradition that uses lectures as the most common teaching strategy in the classroom. Teachers of Social Science appeared to be the only participants in this study who were fully aligned with the required EfSD approach. What is of particular interest is that the responses of participant Language teachers, who represented 41 percent of the study's sample, indicated that they did not include any SD issues in their teaching (Borg et al., 2014). The study identified several barriers to the inclusion of EfSD, such as the shortage of motivating examples and the lack of the needed expertise regarding SD pedagogies.

The word 'awareness', and the lack of it, was also repeatedly referred to by the interviewed Saudi teachers who reported unfamiliarity with issues related to sustainability, and the lack of acknowledgement of SD issues in the Saudi EFL curriculum. This might eventually create a generation of learners and educators who lack awareness of such issues, let alone teaching them at school. It appears to be a common theme in most of the teachers' responses, where they explicitly confirm their lack of awareness of the concept of SD.

For the few teachers who came to know or understand the concept, it was a result of their own personal efforts to educate themselves about the Vision 2030 that eventually led them to understand that this vision is the country's development plan and that sustainability is part of it. Teachers believed that the former Saudi curriculum development plans and current educational system are not geared to recognise either global or local SD concepts, or to work upon its agendas in a clear manner.

English teachers felt isolated from benefiting from programs related to Vision 2030 on any environmental or SD issues, because many think that their job is only to teach EFL skills (which is similar to the attitudes reported by Borg et al. (2014). The small group of teachers who have some awareness of EfSD topics have done so as a result of their own efforts and curiosity; not many of their colleagues share the same passion.

### ***8.5.2 A significant role of EFL for EfSDG and the KSA Vision 2030***

Although most of the teachers in this research were unaware of the connections between global SDG and the Saudi Vision 2030's sustainability agenda before the

beginning of the study, they realised the important role that English can play and its association to EfSD in general. As described in the literature review, languages, and EFL instruction in particular, have a very important role in the international pursuit for achieving the SDG, and that gives EFL a very important place in the realisation of the Saudi Vision. This study confirms the results by Al-Zahrani and Rajab (2017) who showed that the majority of the 1000 EFL teachers, 550 of whom are female, expressed their willingness to develop their academic and scientific level of knowledge to be in line with Vision 2030 for improving the educational process, especially promoting English language teaching.

Previous studies have also noted the importance of English in several aspects of development in the case of KSA. A study by Alzahrani (2017) pointed out the prospective contribution of EFL to the achievement of the national KSA Vision 2030. The research examined the current EFL instruction in practice and at policy levels and how EFL could support the country's sustainability agenda through preparation of capable labour, development of cultural resources and technology. The results of Alzahrani's (2017) study indicate that in order to support the advancement of a knowledge-based economy and to see the change and progress required by the Vision, policy-makers should be responsive to the utilisation of foreign language instruction.

According to the teachers who participated in this research, the very few references to the Vision in the textbooks were not given the importance they should have.

Alnasser (2018) asserted that

“... the use of English as a lingua franca concurs with the government's Vision 2030 (c.f. official Vision website: <http://vision2030.gov.sa/en>), in which a shift in the economy and the attraction of international investments have been rigorously planned for, all of which considers English as a lingua franca” (p. 159).

The limited references to the Vision in the two textbooks as seen by the teachers in this study is a result of the fact that the existing EFL curriculum and its series were developed before 2016 when this new ambitious blueprint for Saudi Arabia was adopted. Alzahrani (2017) refers to the insufficiency of the current practices of EFL teaching and learning to meet the Vision 2030's objectives, and how the current curriculums — which are disconnected both from KSA and their native Western



cultures — did not produce highly-skilled market-ready students. He concluded that substantial reforms should be made to address the powerful role of language in the economy. Most importantly, Vision 2030 calls for a detailed plan for language education in the country. The plan, according to Alzahrani (2017) should establish special language programs at the national level (e.g., diplomas), which should focus on the needs of the market. Also, special language courses designed specifically for the market are needed, and teaching should adopt standards that would enhance English language skills for all of Saudi society.

In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that the significance of EFL in the KSA is based on its role in the economy, communications and research. For example, there should be more effort in the development of foreign language education, which corresponds to the objectives of Vision 2030 for raising the capacity of the two holy mosques (Makkah and Al-madinah) to receive more visitors.

### ***8.5.3 Low level of EFL acquisition by KSA students and its impact on achieving Vision 2030***

This research confirmed the fact that EFL is important for the realisation of Vision 2030 and its SD agenda as seen by teachers of EFL in the field. As described in the literature review, learning languages is contributing to EfSD through quality education that takes into consideration ability to communicate and share common understandings.

Although the initial objective of this research was to examine teachers' perceptions regarding the possible contribution of EFL to the EfSD and to the incepted Saudi Vision 2030, the study identified the issue repeatedly brought up by teachers about the low level of English acquisition by the students. This problem was raised even in response to questions which were not soliciting such information. This finding, while preliminary, suggests that EFL teachers stress the need to address this issue urgently in order to achieve the quality education required for EfSD and Vision 2030.

Another important finding of this study is that EFL teachers agree that the current policy and practice in teaching English is not preparing students for a smooth transition to their university stage. This finding has important implications for developing EFL instruction, since the current practice is not supporting the objectives of Vision 2030. Teachers also suggested that different curriculums for different high-school pathways to

support EfSD and the Vision's objectives is a valid way to overcome the current practice in EFL instruction which is not delivering the desired outcomes.

#### ***8.5.4 Current practice of EfSD in EFL classes in KSA: integration, insufficiency and challenges***

Education for sustainable development is commonly described as

“... integrating the principles and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning, to encourage changes in knowledge, values and attitudes with the vision of enabling a more sustainable and just society for all” (UNESCO, 2014, p. 5).

According to McKeown (2000), the four thrusts of EfSD are:

1. Access and retention in basic quality education;
2. Reorienting existing education to address sustainable development;
3. Increasing public awareness of sustainability; and
4. Providing training for all sectors of the workforce.

All EFL teachers in this study reported that they feel that they have a role in integrating SD and Vision 2030, and that they already do that in the classroom whenever possible. They also believe that they are in charge of making the connections between the current topics in both textbooks and the national and international sustainability issues. While this is what they believe, they should also do. Some of them have already done so, but they refer to the fact that the priority in EFL classes is usually language skills rather than the issues and themes in the text. Teachers have a very heavy workload, and are always on the run and busy completing the compulsory modules. Time limitations affect teachers' reflections on their own work; the rule of assessing teachers according to whether or not they have completed the curriculum gives no importance to pondering the learning aspects of the students. This has its implications in students' linguistic achievements, knowledge learned, values gained and attitudes towards the importance of SDG in general. In that regard, teachers pointed out several times in their interviews the importance of being able to employ communication and conversation skills on local or global issues. Teachers have noticed the importance of speaking skills, and that students tend to be more open to perform, participate and in

some cases initiate a conversation in EFL classes when the topics are related to EfSD. Their eagerness to discuss environmental, economic and social issues is more apparent than when the activities are geared towards other language skills such as reading, listening and writing. This finding also supports the finding in Chapter 6, that students choose 'speaking' as their preferred activity for learning about SD issues.

The teachers' positive attitude towards EfSD integration into EFL instruction matches that observed in Chapter 6, where it is noted that female high-school students are interested in SD issues, and would like to see SD concepts incorporated in their school textbooks.

There are similarities between the attitudes expressed by the teachers participating in a study by Wheeler and Byrne (2003) and those described in the present study. They asserted that sustainability education is seen by an increasing cadre of progressive K–12 educators to have a crucial role in a student's sense of responsibility regarding their future.

Wheeler and Byrne (2003) argue that desirable transformations in classrooms where sustainability education is integrated as a result of systemic reform efforts, will impact the future policy and practices of higher education. In relation to this, some teachers in the present research pointed to the flexibility of EfSD and that sustainability themes could be infused into the current curriculums without adding more burden to the teachers' busy schedules and students' heavy learning load. A suggestion for overcoming not only the current limited acquisition of English terms related to Science, Medicine, or technical concepts, but also to extend general knowledge and values pertinent to sustainability, was to exchange existing topics in EFL texts with others relevant to the different high-school pathways to support future university majors and preferences.

Johnston (2012) confirmed the importance of the school system in providing students with a range of sustainability themes in all subjects and from an early age. Johnston (2012) argued that the readiness of higher education students to comprehend and work upon EfS depends on their engaging from an early age in a meaningful education where schools support sustainability. The teachers interviewed in the present research believe that the number of topics directly related to EfSD is limited, and the issues of this kind that are included in the curriculum are mostly general and not enough to raise

cognizance, given the Vision 2030's short timeframe and important and ambitious sustainability transformations plans.

The participants also referred to EfSD's thrusts according to McKeown (2000), as they pointed to the role of EFL teacher-training programs in relation to the Vision and the issue about negative experiences with unqualified instructors. This has negative implications for the quality education required to realise SDG and the KSA Vision 2030.

#### ***8.5.5 The need for local sustainability issues infused in the current textbooks***

The UNESCO (2004) DESD declaration indicates that there is no universal model of EfSD. Variations in the implementation of EfSD is due to local contexts and priorities. Every country has to outline its main national concerns and arrangements to achieve an economic, environmental and social integration of EfSD (UNESCO, 2004).

The analysis of the two textbooks shows that the local issues pertaining to sustainability were completely neglected in them, but it is not clear whether or not the curriculum developers were asked to ignore such themes. The teachers confirmed this limited acknowledgement of such topics, and it was recurrent in their responses, as they felt that it was a flaw of these textbooks. They indicated that exposure to Western cultures dominates the text much more than local perspectives. The teachers believe that the topics should be enhanced with the Vision's objectives and should take into consideration students' backgrounds and interests. They also asserted that EfSD topics and discussion in the classroom would be an additional benefit to the already strong academic textbook, as this would allow more interaction in a meaningful way between the students, their textbook and the teacher.

Relevant curriculum content would ensure more engagement of both the student and the teacher. This study confirms the findings by Laurie et al. (2016), who explain that education for sustainable development contributes to quality education as an important thrust of EfSD. Through interviews with teachers, students and curriculum developers, their research emphasised the importance of integrating EfSD across all subjects in primary and secondary curriculums in countries such as Australia, Japan, Mongolia, South Korea and the USA. Their research argues that the failure to fully integrate the concepts of EfSD would make it one of several competing priorities, as is the case in

Japan. In Germany, it was also perceived as being imposed on schools; in Peru, it is seen as deviating from existing priorities.

According to Laurie et al. (2016), 11 reports from Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, England, Mongolia, The Netherlands, Peru, Scotland, Taiwan, and the USA confirmed that students find that the integration of local SD issues generates an interesting learning context that gives meaning to the school curriculum. Their research also emphasised the importance of adapting the local-themes-and-priorities approach to establish its relevance in the students' learning content. Students in countries such as South Korea were able to recognise their roles in society when exposed to local issues pertaining to EfSD. Laurie et al. (2016) concluded that, generally, an increase of curricular relevance associated with EfSD leads to improved student engagement and commitment. The teachers in this current study support the evidence from previous observations (e.g., Laurie et al., 2016) that meaningful projects in EFL education are important to achieve quality education.

#### ***8.5.6 Limited female representation in EFL textbooks contradicting the Vision 2030's objectives for women's empowerment***

The 1981 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Article 10(c), recommends:

“... the elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods” (UNESCO, Making textbook content inclusive: A focus on religion, gender, and culture, 2017, p. 27).

In the 2017 UNESCO publication “UNESCO, Making textbook content inclusive: A focus on religion, gender, and culture”, inclusive education takes into its heart the themes of equal representation of both genders in textbooks. Moreover, UNESCO acknowledges the financial support of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the development of this publication. This indicates the KSA Government's intent to provide more inclusive guidelines for textbook development policies in the country.

The female EFL teachers in this study asserted that the new generation, more precisely girls, are aware of the government's efforts to empower women and they already felt inspired by the Vision 2030 and its various projects and policies to empower women across the country. Yet among the critical concerns of the Saudi female teachers in this research is the limited representation of women in texts or in illustrations in both textbooks under examination. These research results corroborate the findings of Al Jumiah (2016), who suggested that these textbooks enhance authorising the superiority of white males and produce inequitable hidden ideologies that endorse women's subordination.

According to the teachers, this limited representation and neglect impacts on the individual students and on the whole community. In accordance with the present results, previous studies such as Ouedraogo, (1998) have demonstrated the undesirable impact of a constricted and incomplete image of women and its consequences on society. In agreement with Ouedraogo, (1998), teachers in the present research also argued that the limited representation not only affects students' self-esteem and future work choices, but it also perpetuates the stereotypical view of women in Saudi society. Some of the issues emerging from this finding relate specifically to what Ouedraogo (1998 ) describes as feelings of frustration that deter the progress of the girl's personality and denies her emotional and intellectual abilities. All of these adverse implications, according to Ouedraogo, (1998) maintain society's enslavement of productive human capital that affect its progress and development.

This may explain what the teachers reported as lack of interest shown by the female students in the topics in both textbooks. The teachers repeatedly emphasised the lack of female role models as being a big issue that should be taken seriously in these textbooks if they are to support the Vision 2030 of social change towards a higher realisation of women's empowerment in society. Textbooks play a key role in society through their contribution to

“... learning through dissemination of knowledge, but they also play a role in children's upbringing by directly or indirectly transmitting models of social behaviour, norms and values” (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009.p. 14).

The results of this study support the significance of providing textbooks with females as role models, as girls will be more affected by women's experiences. Also, this will

significantly contribute to male students' understanding and appreciation of female roles on the new national Vision stage.

Several teachers alluded to the need for an Islamic framework for women's equal representation in textbooks to ensure social acceptance. These results are in line with the UN recommendations that aim to promote gender equality through textbooks. UNESCO emphasises the role of textbooks as ...

“... a tool for both education and social change. To monitor their content, ensure that they are distributed and guarantee their use in society, a clear policy is necessary” (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009.p. 1).

The results from this study, while preliminary, suggest that future research should look at the implications of such limited women's representation on female students' prospective university major preferences and future job choices. Blumberg (2007) indicated the need for impact studies on gender bias in school textbooks, to look at whether

“... strong female students would have gone farther occupationally, and ended up in less gender stereotyped fields had they not been subtly affected by gender bias in textbooks and curricula” (p. 28).

#### ***8.5.7 MoE's role in implementing EfSD in the curriculums***

Some of the issues emerging from the findings of this study relate specifically to the MoE's role in implementing EfSD in the curriculums. While the role of teachers is vital at this transformational phase, McKeown (2002) argued that

“... reorienting education to address sustainability will require new financial resources. One of the major problems with EfSD is that current education must continue while the new curriculum is being designed and developed. The reality is that educators are so busy with the task at hand — planning, daily teaching, evaluating progress, writing reports — that they have little time or energy to research and create new curriculum. Teachers cannot be expected to do two jobs — design curriculum and teach — during the transition phase” (p. 35).

Education is powerful in changing society and enhancing the integration of SD values and issues including the Vision 2030 as seen by EFL female teachers. Therefore, changes and revisions have to be made to both textbooks, and this was required by

teachers. An implication of this is the need for guidance from the MoE regarding SD issues and how to approach teaching these topics. This will allow teachers to embrace and feel comfortable with teaching issues related to the SDG of the Vision 2030. If these topics are incorporated in the textbook in an authoritative manner, then teachers would be much more confident in the material they are offering.

## **8.6 Concluding Remarks**

The findings from the interviews with the female EFL teachers raise intriguing questions regarding the nature and extent of embracing EfSD by professional educators in the education field. They also have important implications for EfSD in general and specifically for curriculum developers and policy-makers to guarantee a successful transformation of KSA from an oil-based economy to a knowledge-based society that needs a new generation of young people, male and female, who are fully equipped with quality education that embraces EfSD, and also with the good English skills that will allow them to participate in today's globalised world.



# Chapter 9:

## Conclusion

### 9.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the current approach to teaching English as a Foreign Language in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its appropriateness for building the capacity to transfer the current education system towards the sustainable development agenda of the KSA Vision 2030. This chapter provides a summary of what the thesis has been able to achieve by revisiting the research question and objectives. It also formulates policy recommendations and outlines the study's limitations and directions for further research.

However, prior to this, a brief description of what has been attained is presented. The first three chapters provide justifications for the research context, methodologies and theoretical framework used. Chapter 1 gives an overview of the KSA Vision 2030 as the motivating impetus for the study. It also elaborates on what this Vision anticipates and how it relates to sustainable development and particularly the Sustainable Development Goals of the Vision. Chapter 1 also provides an account of why education for sustainability is an important aspect of implementing the Vision and how English as a Foreign Language features in its application.

Chapter 2 introduces the research question and fundamental objectives of the study as well as the central methodologies which best serve the investigation on the integration of education for sustainable development through EFL instruction in light of the KSA

Vision 2030. The chapter reviews a collection of research methodologies, including document analysis, textbook analysis, survey of high-school female students, and semi-structured interviews with teachers as the primary methods used to conduct the study. Chapter 3 reviews a collection of research literature on education for sustainable development which establishes the conceptual framework for this research. The chapter also sheds light on EfSD in the school system and university level and its implications for the curriculum, particularly for English as a Foreign Language education.

Chapter 4 examines specifically the documents governing EfSD in the Saudi education system; Chapter 5 analyses the two EFL textbooks, namely *Flying High 6* and *Traveller 6*, used in the final year of all-girls high schools in the cities of Jeddah, Makkah and Al Taif. This is followed by a survey of the students' experiences of working with the textbooks in relation to EfSD (Chapter 6) and women's representation (Chapter 7), and an analysis of the interviews conducted with EFL teachers (Chapter 8). The current concluding chapter draws things together.

It is hoped that the study will contribute towards a better positioning of Saudi EFL education, and particularly skills development for girls, for the emerging opportunities in the new economy of the country.

## **9.2 Research question and objectives revisited**

English as a Foreign Language instruction (EFL) is a powerful tool in preparing the future Saudi workforce as the country's economy undergoes significant changes in two main directions. First, a transition towards a more sustainable development is a guiding priority outlined in Vision 2030, and English is the language of communication in a globalised world. Second, the country is expecting higher employment participation by its female population, and girls' high schools provide the fundamentals for the new skills and knowledge required by the Saudi economy, including English language proficiency.

To examine how EFL can contribute to education for sustainable development in light of the Vision 2030 of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the following overarching research question was developed:

**To what extent is the current approach of EFL instruction appropriate for building the capacity to position the current education system towards integrating the sustainable development agenda of the Vision 2030 of KSA?**

In order to answer this broad research question, four specific objectives were identified. They are as follows:

1. To analyse documents pertaining to the reforming of the KSA education policy and curriculum development plans.
2. To analyse two currently used EFL textbooks in all-girls' high schools in relation to EfSD and to the Saudi Vision 2030.
3. To examine the role of the current EFL instruction towards achieving the objectives of the Vision 2030 as seen by female high-school students and EFL teachers.
4. To make recommendations to improve EFL by strengthening its capacity to respond to the needs of the transitioning Saudi economy.

The answer to the main research question of the thesis is that despite some positive signs, there is a lot more that needs to be done to position the KSA's education system, and particularly its EFL component, to respond to the priorities identified in Vision 2030. Some of the positive developments are the fact that the EFL teachers realise the importance of sustainability and are already incorporating related material, taking the initiative to enrich their students' skills and knowledge. Overall, the existing policy documents encourage such an integration, but this is yet to be translated into curriculum reforms. Although Vision 2030 is relatively new, the imperatives associated with the sustainable development goals of climate change (SDG13), gender equity (SDG5) and meaningful and appropriate employment (SDG8), require a quick response from the education sector to better place the country firmly on a sustainability path. There is a wide understanding of the importance of EFL, but the two main (compulsory) textbooks do not contain the right material to encourage women's empowerment and employment and mainstream sustainability with its economic, social and environmental pillars. This is currently an omission but also a big opportunity for the country to position its education system towards complying with the global sustainability agenda.

Further details as to how the four research objectives were achieved, and the insights generated from the study, are set out below.

The first aim of this research was to analyse documents pertaining to the reformation of education policy and the curriculum development plans. Based on the conducted content analysis, it became clear that the Vision 2030 and the 2020 NTP directly endorse sustainability and these policy documents assign a role to education to contribute to EfSD and the national developmental objectives. The expectation is that a new, quality education should be delivered that responds to the global ecological, social and economic objectives required by the national and international community.

These findings contribute to understanding sustainability and education for sustainable development within the Saudi context; this had not been attempted prior to the present study. It is clear that, while the policy has been formulated at a higher level, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has been slow to respond to the changing educational landscape. The findings from this analysis provide recommendations for the MoE's planning and practices, accentuating in particular the Vision's emphasis on learning for working and women's participation in the workforce. They have not realised that the way women are represented in textbooks has significant implications for women's empowerment. Given the historical role of EFL instruction in the country and in the Vision, curriculum reformation must respond to the spirit of these policy documents. The complete suite of recommendations is given later in this chapter.

The second objective of this research was to achieve a better understanding of the current situation of EfSD integration in the curriculum by analysing two currently used EFL textbooks (namely *Flying High 6* and *Traveller 6*) from the perspective of sustainability and the Saudi Vision 2030. A considerable amount of recent research has demonstrated the importance of embedding SD in all school subjects, including English as Foreign Language instruction. The analysis of the two EFL textbooks shows categorically that *Flying High 6* offers a richer pattern of sustainability issues than *Traveller 6* — the total number of SD themes is only 29 in *Traveller 6* and double this number, at 58, in *Flying High 6*. This difference applies throughout all three sustainability dimensions, including twice as many environmental themes in *Flying High 6*. Both textbooks incorporate a considerable range of social concepts, but both books under-represent the 'perspectives' unit of the analysis. This is an important omission because within the wide-ranging social aspects category, students' perspectives are an important area for discussion in relation to local and global issues. *Flying High 6* also outperformed *Traveller 6* with regard to the number of sustainable

development goals covered — respectively, 12 compared to six topics. These findings can inform the MoE and other stakeholders about the suitability of the two textbooks and the need for improvement, and better ways to align the integrated EfSD and various learning strategies with sustainability.

The third aim was to examine the role of the EFL instruction currently delivered by the MoE towards achieving the objectives of the Vision 2030, which relates to EfSD and women's empowerment, as seen by the high-school students in their last year of school and their teachers. Based on the exploratory survey of 279 high-school female students in the cities of Jeddah, Makkah and Al Taif, the depicted picture of the integration of EfSD and the Vision 2030's objectives in their EFL instruction is not very satisfactory. Although the majority of the students have encountered the Saudi sustainable development agenda at their school, a large share of them: 47 percent believed that EfSD topics were not discussed during their English classes. Only 46 percent believed that sustainable development topics related to Vision 2030 were encountered in their EFL textbooks, with the remaining 7 percent being unsure. These results provided further evidence about the lack of adequate teaching of SD topics. Even when they are present in the EFL textbooks, they might not have been actually covered in the classroom. The interviews with teachers offer some possible explanations, related to time constraints and lack of Saudi-specific examples. They also show that some teachers are taking the initiative to enrich these topics, but such a decision is the result of personal preferences and the individual's value system. There is abundant room for further progress to be made in determining how best EFL instruction and textbooks can support the achievement of the national Vision 2030 through an education that enriches students' awareness of their world and enhances their learning experiences, taking into consideration the sensitivity and priorities of this current phase of Saudi Arabia's history and its contribution towards a more sustainable world.

Based on a refereed book chapter and interviews with teachers, the findings related to women's empowerment and representation in the EFL textbooks also indicate room for significant improvement. The high-school girls indicated that they are visually under-represented as images of women in the school texts, and their roles in the Saudi workforce were constrained to the traditional private roles. On the other hand, the changing political and social environment in the country stresses the importance of

capturing the women's under-utilised talents in the workforce. However, the EFL textbooks do not reflect these changes and hence do not encourage the students to explore new futures for Saudi women in the workforce. Most of the female respondents had a clear awareness of the limited representation of women in their textbooks. *Traveller 6*, which does not contain any images of women and refers to women in only a few places in the text, saw a smaller share of respondents supporting the opinion that women are under-represented in the text. These results indicate that the invisibility of women in this textbook makes no difference to the way the girls perceive themselves and their role in society. *Flying High 6* on the other hand contains 10 visual images of women in a mix of traditional and non-traditional roles. A large majority of the students who studied EFL using *Flying High 6* liked seeing images of women in all disciplines and fields. This share was higher than for *Traveller 6*. This result indicates association between the images of women in school texts and girls' awareness of their right to have a proper representation in their textbooks. In fact, some have actually modified several male textbook pictures to represent women. It is clear that a revised textbook content needs to offer positive role modelling for women's empowerment and promoting gender parity as a Saudi value envisioned in Vision 2030.

The semi-structured detailed interviews with the six EFL female teachers generated the following seven themes:

- a. *Limited awareness about EfSD among teachers* — the few teachers who had some awareness of EfSD topics have developed this as a personal effort; many of the others expressed interest for EfSD to be part of the renewed curriculum.
- b. *A significant role of EFL for ESDG and the KSA Vision 2030* — although the interviewed teachers at first showed inadequate awareness of the connections between global SDG and the Saudi Vision 2030's, they fully realised the important role EFL can play. As the textbooks were developed prior to Vision 2030, they were in need of updating to reflect the government's ambitions.
- c. *Low level of EFL acquisition by KSA students and its impact on achieving Vision 2030* — the teachers repeatedly showed their concerns regarding the low level of English acquisition and achievement by the students. These concerns are brought up even in response to questions which were not soliciting such information. A possible explanation for this might be that EFL teachers are foreseeing the urgent

inevitability to address the problems related to EFL policy and practices in the country. The teachers also put forward the idea about specific EFL curriculums for different high school pathways to support EfSD and the Vision's objectives as the old practices in teaching and learning English are not delivering the anticipated outcomes.

- d. *Current practice of EfSD in EFL classes in KSA: integration, insufficiency and challenges* — In all six interviews, the EFL teachers reported they felt they had a role to play in integrating SD and Vision 2030 and that they already did that in the classroom whenever possible. They were ready and enthusiastic to perform better in this regard. These attitudes were also matched by the student survey results, where the majority indicated that they are interested in SD issues and would like to see more of these incorporated in their school texts. The current study found that time limitation, heavy curriculums and prioritizing language skills in their teaching practices affect EFL teachers' ability for real integration of knowledge learned, values gained and attitudes towards SDG.
- e. *Need for local sustainability issues infused in the current textbooks* — All teachers confirmed the limited acknowledgement of local issues pertaining to sustainability. This was a recurrent point raised in their responses indicating a flaw in the textbooks used. The teachers believed that relevant curriculum content associated with EfSD leads to improved student engagement and commitment to their learning, as well as improved student outcomes across the four targeted English language skills.
- f. *Limited female representation in EFL textbooks contradicting the Vision 2030's objectives for women's empowerment* — This was of critical concern to the Saudi female teachers in both textbooks, both for women in the text or in illustrations. The teachers were of the view that such inadequate representation impacts negatively on students' self-esteem and future work choices, and perpetuates the stereotypical view of women in Saudi society. Given Vision 2030 and its women's empowerment objectives, the current curriculums must be revised to align them with workforce needs. This finding has implications for textbook development policies in the country across all curriculums, as more inclusive guidelines to achieve gender parity are required. Some teachers argued for the introduction of "an Islamic framework for women's equal representation in textbooks" to ensure social acceptance in a country that sees Islam as its cornerstone.

- g. *The role of the Ministry of Education in implementing EfSD in the curriculums* — The teachers in this study asserted that their own role in the current practices is not clear. Even those who show interest in providing SD content using the existing curriculum are not quite confident in their practices in relation to EfSD integration. Those teachers want to see the MoE taking a more proactive role in implementing EfSD in the curriculum, as its present approach to revising the current curriculum to align with Vision 2030 is unclear. There needs to be guidance from the MoE regarding SD issues and how to approach the teaching of these topics, to ensure quality education in line with Vision 2030.

### **9.3 Recommendation targeting curriculum developers**

Measures need to be taken to ensure that prospective educational policy documents, including the English as a Foreign Language framework in Saudi Arabia, will have a significant integration of education for sustainable development which takes into consideration the critical role of English in the development of the country and the new role of women as contributors towards supporting and achieving sustainability in Vision 2030. The emphasis of the national policy document of Vision 2030 is on learning for working and women's participation in the workforce.

Many recommendations are made throughout the individual chapters of this thesis. Here they are summarised to present a distinctive picture as to how Saudi Arabia needs to move forward in achieving its national objectives but also the global SDGs agenda:

- Ensuring gender parity of women's representation in textbooks — on the surface, this may appear to be an easy thing to do; however, at its core is a long tradition and culture of defining Saudi women only with traditional roles, and in the confinement of their home. Saudi women are now well educated and keen to make their active contribution towards improving the future of the country and its transforming economy. This is clearly set out in Vision 2030, and should be the underlying objective in any curriculum updates, revisions and reforms.
- Although inconsistencies in understanding the national and international knowledge evidence, issues, values and perspectives associated with EfSD will always play a part in defining the most appropriate EfSD topics and their complexity within the context of one nation and even within smaller communities, curriculum developers should consider the broader range of urgent EfSD issues that significantly reflect



the educational ambitions of the KSA as intended in its Vision 2030 and ensure their presence in EFL textbooks.

- Thought-provoking questions are raised in this research regarding the nature and extent of embracing EfSD by female EFL professional educators-teachers to provide quality education that welcomes EfSD within a beneficial English education, to help guarantee a successful transformation of KSA from an oil-based economy to a knowledge-based society and win an advanced position in today's globalised world. This ambitious vision requires united effort from across all sectors of society. The educational system must play a leading role, as it is responsible for the future generation of Saudi professionals. The way they perceive the world and the place of Saudi Arabia in it, is in many ways defined by their exposure to the fundamental concepts of sustainability during their high-school education.

Even though this research was initially meant to focus on EFL instruction and textbooks, its findings may inform other disciplines and school subjects taught by educational bodies in Saudi Arabia and beyond. Its findings have raised some specific issues for EFL curriculum developers and policy makers, but also about EfSD in general as a concept and framework oriented towards the future while dealing with the problems of today.

#### **9.4 Limitations**

This study adds to the growing body of research that indicates the need for assessing the current status of EfSD in the field of education. It represents the first comprehensive assessment of the current approach in integrating EfSD into EFL curriculum in the Saudi context. As with any other case-study approach, it is left to future researchers and policy-makers to perceive similarities or be informed by the findings and conclusions based on shared circumstances, attitudes and values. Only the future can judge the applicability of this analysis to other organisational structures. Nevertheless, even within the Saudi Arabian context, this study has some limitations.

First, it was a study to be conducted by one person over a defined limited period of three years. Hence, the scope of interviewees in this study was limited in terms of the number of participants who were able and willing to share their experiences and views within the time constraints and the full schedules of teachers in the field. It is

recognised that the student survey was exploratory only; given the novelty of the topic, no attempt or claim was made for it to be representative.

Second, there are currently twelve EFL textbooks in the two series used during the three years of high school, and only two of these were analysed. Since the study was limited to the two textbooks taught in the second semester of the school year, it was not possible to establish a full account of the quantity or quality of EfSD that EFL students received during their entire three high-school years. Although no particular bias is expected to exist, the teacher and student samples were selected from only three locations within Saudi Arabia.

In spite of this limitations, the study certainly adds to unveiling the gaps observed in relation to education for sustainable development and the potential offered by EFL education. Many insights emerged from a socio-cultural environment which is seen as unexplored and different, but at the same time extremely important given the scale of transformation that Saudi Arabia and other non-English speaking, oil-dependent economies are undergoing.

### **9.5 Future research**

This study tackles an important issue, but many other opportunities for future research remain within the EfSD framework. For example, similar questions can be asked in relation to subjects other than EFL in the current school curriculum and their contribution to EfSD and Vision 2030. Eliciting feedback from boys, not just girls, in relation to women's place within Saudi society would similarly be an intriguing line of investigation. Comparisons with other countries where English as a Foreign Language is taught in their school system could be another line of inquiry.

“Continued investment in education and training is essential so that our young men and women are equipped for the jobs of the future. We are focused on developing early childhood education refining our national curriculum and training our teachers and educational leaders. We are also redoubling our efforts to ensure that the outcomes of our education system are in line with market needs.” (KSA, 2016a, p. 36)

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